

THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF DE TRIBUS IMPOSTORIBUS, A. D. 1230: THE
THREE IMPOSTORS, BY SAMUEL BRIGGS

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Editor: Samuel Briggs

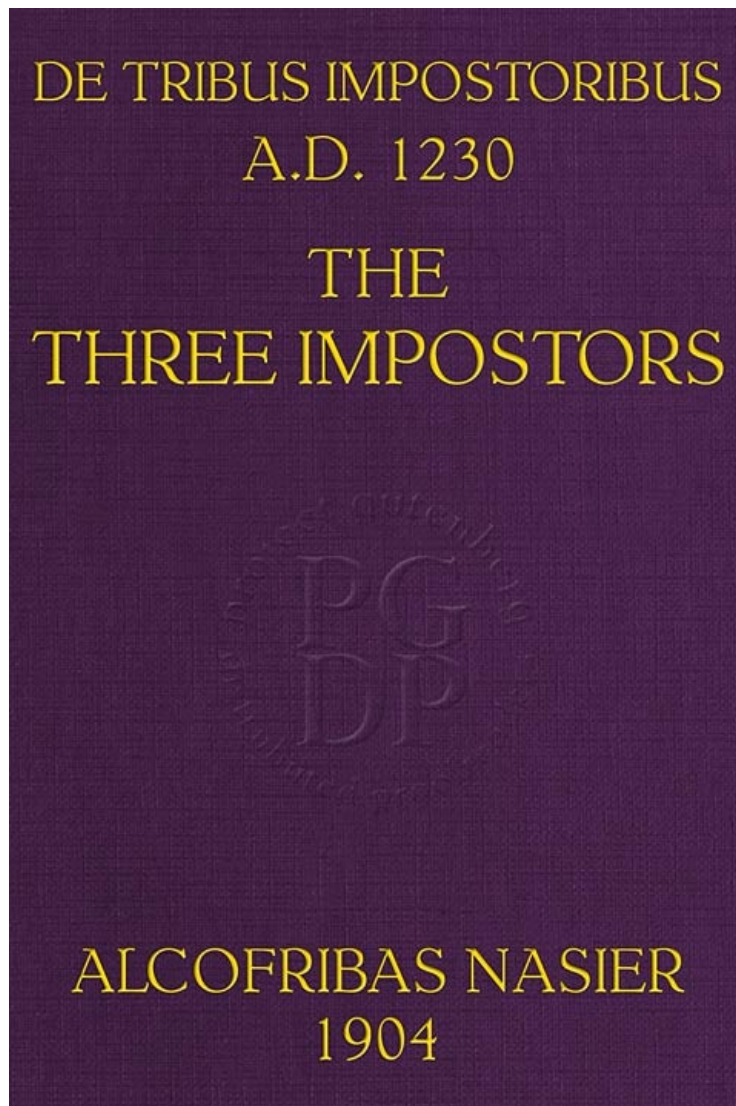
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DE TRIBUS
IMPOSTORIBUS, A. D. 1230: THE THREE IMPOSTORS ***

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DE TRIBUS IMPOSTORIBUS,

A. D. 1230.

THE THREE IMPOSTORS

TRANSLATED

(with Notes and Comments)

FROM A FRENCH MANUSCRIPT OF THE WORK
WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1716,

WITH A DISSERTATION ON THE ORIGINAL TREATISE

AND

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE VARIOUS EDITIONS

BY

ALCOFRIBAS NASIER, THE LATER.

PRIVATELY PRINTED
FOR THE SUBSCRIBERS.
1904.

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AN INDEX EXPURGATORIUS.

The man who marks or leaves with pages bent
The volume that some trusting friend has lent,
Or keeps it over long, or scruples not
To let its due returning be forgot;
The man who guards his books with miser's care,
And does not joy to lend them, and to share;
The man whose shelves are dust begrimed and few,
Who reads when he has nothing else to do;
The man who raves of classic writers, but
Is found to keep them with their leaves uncut;
The man who looks on literature as news,
And gets his culture from the book reviews;
Who loves not fair, clean type, and margins wide—
Or loves these better than the thought inside;
Who buys his books to decorate the shelf,
Or gives a book he has not read himself;
Who reads from priggish motives, or for looks,
Or any reason save the love of books—
Great Lord, who judgest sins of all degrees,
Is there no little private hell for these?

Edition 352 copies.

12 on large paper.

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INTRODUCTION.

This pamphlet in its present form is the result of an inquiry into the characters represented in a historical grade of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite, and the probability of their having existed at the date mentioned in the said grade. Few appeared to have any very clear notion of the relation of the characters to the period—Frederick II. being confounded with his grand-father, Frederick Barbarossa—and the date of the supposed foundation of the Order of Teutonic Knights, 1190, being placed as the date of the papacy of Oronata, otherwise Honorius III. Inquiry being made of one in authority as to the facts in the case—he being supposed to know—elicited the reply that the matter had been called to

his attention some months previous by an investigator—now deceased—but the matter had been dropped. It was also surmised by the same authority that an error might have been made by one of the committee having ritualistic matter in charge—but he, having also been gathered to his fathers, was not available for evidence.

It is stated that the action took place when Frederick II. was Emperor of Germany, and Honorius III. presided over spiritual conditions; but this Pope, according to *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates*, reigned 1216–1227, and the dissertation on the pamphlet names Gregory IX., successor to Honorius, (1227–1241) as the Pope against whom the treatise was written. The infamous book mentioned in the representation no one seemed to have any knowledge of. Inquiry made concerning the treatise at various libraries supposed to possess it, and of various individuals who might know something of it, elicited but the information that it was purely “legendary,” that, “it had no existence except by title,” and that “it was an item of literature entirely lost.”

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Having been a book collector and a close reader of book catalogs for over twenty-five years, I had never noted any copy offered for sale, but a friend with the same mania for books, had seen a copy mentioned in a German catalog, and being interested in “*de tribus Impostoribus*” for reasons herein mentioned, had sent for and procured the same—an edition of a Latin version compiled from a Ms. 1598, with a foreword in German. The German was familiar to him, but the Latin was not available.

About the same time I found in a catalog of a correspondent of mine at London, a book entitled “*LES TROIS IMPOSTEURS. De Tribus Impostoribus et dissertation sur le livre des Trois Imposteurs, sm. 4to. Saec. XVIII.*,” and succeeded in purchasing it.

The manuscript is well written, and apparently by two different hands, which would be probable from the facts set forth in the “Dissertation.” A copy of the translation from the Latin is probably deposited in the library of Duke Eugene de Subaudio as set forth in the colophon at end of the manuscript.

The manuscript is written in the French of the period, and is dated in the colophon as 1716. The discovery of the original Latin document is mentioned in the “Dissertation” as about 1706. It has been annotated by another hand, as shown by foot notes, and several inserted sheets containing notes in still another hand, were written evidently about 1746, as one of the sheets is a portion of a letter postmarked *4e Aout* in latter year.

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I append a bibliography from Weller’s Latin reprint of 1598 which will show that the pamphlet has “been done before”; but it will be noted that English versions are not so plenty as those in other tongues, and but one is known to have been printed in the United States.

I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Doctissimus vir Harpocrates, Col. F. Montrose, and Maj. Otto Kay for valued assistance in languages with which I am not thoroughly familiar, and also to Mr. David Hutcheson, of the Library of Congress, for favors granted.

Ample apologies will be found for the treatise in the several introductions quoted from various editions, and those fond of literary curiosities will certainly be gratified by its appearance in the twentieth century.

A. N.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY.

In 1846, Emil Weller published “*De Tribus Impostoribus*,” and also a later edition in 1876, at Heilbronn, from a Latin copy of one of the only four known to be in existence and printed in 1598. The copy from which it was taken, consisting of title and forty-six leaves, quarto, is at the Royal Library at Dresden, and was purchased for one hundred gulden.

The other three, according to Ebert in his “*Bibliographical Lexicon*,” are as follows: one in the Royal Library at Paris, one in the Crevanna Library and the other in the library of Renouard.

An edition was published at Rackau, in Germany, in 1598, and Thomas Campanella (1636), in his "*Atheismus Triumphatus*," gives the year of its first publication as 1538.

Florimond Raimond (otherwise Louis Richeome,) claims to have seen a copy owned by his teacher, Peter Ramus, who died in 1572.

All the talk of theological critics that the booklet was first printed in the seventeenth century, is made out of whole cloth.

There is nothing modern about the edition of 1598. It may be compared, for example, with Martin Wittel's print of the last decade of the sixteenth century, by which it is claimed that it could not have been printed then, as the paper and printing of that period closely resembles that of the eighteenth century.

With the exception of the religious myths, few writings of the dark ages have had as many hypotheses advanced in regard to origin as there have been regarding this one. [8]

According to John Brand it had been printed at Krakau, according to others, in Italy or Hungary as a translation of an Arabic original existing somewhere in France.

William Postel mentions a tract "*de Tribus Prophetis*," and gives Michael Servetus, a Spanish doctor, as the author.

The Capuchin Monk Joly, in Vol. III of his "Conference of Mysteries," assures us that the Huguenot, Nic. Barnaud, in 1612, on account of an issue of "*de Tribus Impostoribus*," was excommunicated as its author.

Johann Mueller, in his "*Besiegten Atheismus*," (Conquered Atheism), mentions a certain Nachtigal who published at Hague, in 1614, "*De Trib. Imp.*," and was therefore exiled.

Mosheim and Rousset accuse Frederick II as the author with the assistance of his Chancellor, Petrus de Vineis. Vineis, however, declares himself opposed even to the fundamental principles of the book, and in his "*Epist. Lib. 1, ch. 31, p. 211*," says he never had any idea of it.

Others place the authorship with Averroes, Peter Arretin and Petrus Pomponatius. Heinrich Ernst accuses the above mentioned Postel. Postel attributes it to Servetus, who, in turn, places it at the door of the Huguenot Barnaud.

The instigator of the treatise, it is claimed, should have been Julius Cesar Vanini, who was burned at Toulouse in 1619, or Ryswick, who suffered at the stake in Rome in 1612. [9]

Other persons accused of the authorship are Macchiavelli, Rabelais, Erasmus, Milton (John, born 1608,) a Mahometan named Merula, Dolet, and Giordano Bruno.

According to Campanella, to whom the authorship was attributed occasionally, Muret, or Joh. Franz. Poggio, were responsible. Browne says it was Bernhard Ochini, and Maresius lays it to Johann Boccaccio.

The "three cheats" are Moses, Jesus and Mahomet, but the tracts of each of the latter alleged authors treat only of Moses, of whom they say that his assertions in Genesis will not hold water, and cannot be proved.

Weller, in his edition of 1876, speaking of the copy of 1598, says that this issue should never be compared with any of the foregoing.

Many authors have written "*de Tribus Impostoribus*" because they had some special object in view; for instance, John Bapt. Morinus, when he edited, under the name of Vincentius Panurgius, in Paris, 1654, an argument against Gassendi, Neure, and Bernier.

Joh. Evelyn with a "*Historia de tribus hujus seculi famosis Impostoribus*," Padre Ottomano, Mahomed Bei, otherwise Joh. Mich. Cigala, and Sabbatai Sevi (English 1680, German 1669,)¹ Christian Kortholt "*de Tribus Impostoribus Magnus*," (Kiel 1680 and Hamburg 1701,) against Herbert, Hobbes and Spinosa, Hadrian Beverland, Perini del Vago, Equitis de Malta, "*Epistolium ad Batavum in Brittania hospitem de tribus Impostoribus*," (Latin and English 1709.) [10]

Finally, Michael Alberti, under the name of Andronicus, published a "*Tractatus Medico-historicus de tribus Impostoribus*," which he named the three great

Tempters of Humanity: 1. Tea and Coffee. 2. Laziness. 3. Home apothecaries.

Cosmopoli Bey (Peter Martin Roman), issued at Russworn in Rostock in 1731, and a new edition of same treatise—*De Trib. Imp.*—1738 and 1756.

For a long time scholars confused the genuine Latin treatise with a later one. De la Monnoye fabricated a long dissertation in which he denied the existence of the original Latin edition, but received a well merited refutation at the hands of P. F. Arpe.

The false book is French—“*La vie et l’esprit de Mr. Benoit Spinoza.*”² The author of the first part was Hofrath Vroes, in Hague, and the second was written by Dr. Lucas. It made its first appearance at Hague 1719, and later in 1721, under the title “*de Tribus Impostoribus,*” *des Trois Imposteurs*. Frankfort-on-the-Main at the expense of the Translator (*i. e.* Rotterdam.)

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Richard la Selve prepared a third edition under the original title of “The Life of Spinoza,” by one of his Disciples. Hamburg (really in Holland,) 1735.

In 1768 there was printed by M. M. Rey, at Amsterdam, a new edition called a “Treatise of the Three Impostors;” immediately after another edition appeared at Yverdoner 1768, another in Holland 1775, and a later one in Germany 1777.

The contents of “L’esprit de Spinoza” (German) by Spinoza II, or Subiroth Sopim—Rome, by Widow Bona Spes 5770—(Vieweg in Berlin 1787,) are briefly Chap. I, Concerning God. Chap. II, Reasons why men have created an invisible Being which is commonly called God. Chap. III, What the word Religion signifies, and how and why so many of these Religions have crept into the world. Chap. IV, Evident truths. Chap. V, Of the Soul. Chap. VI, Of Ghosts, Demons, etc. Then follows fifteen chapters which are not in the treatise (? Edition 1598.)

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The following became known by reason of peculiarities of their diction: 1. *Ridiculum et imposturae in omni hominum religione, scriptio paradoxa, quam ex autographo gallico Victoris Amadei Verimontii ob summam rei dignitatem in latinum sermonem transtulit ††† 1746.* Which according to Masch consists of from five to six sheets and follows the general contents, but not in the order of the original edition. 2. A second. *Quaedam deficiunt, s. fragmentum de libro de tribus impostoribus.* Fifty-one pages is a fragment. 3. One mentioned by Gottsched. *De impostoris religionum breve. Compendium descriptum ab exemplari MSto. quod in Bibliotheca Jo. Fried. Mayeri, Berolini Ao. 1716, publice distracta deprehensum et a Principe Eugenio de Sabaudio 80 Imperialibus redemptum fuit.* (forty-three pages.) The greater part of the real book in thirty-one paragraphs, the ending of which is *Communes namque demonstrationes, quae publicantur, nec certae, nec evidentes, sunt, et res dubias per alias saepe magias dubias probant, adeo ut exemplo eorum, qui circulum currunt, ad terminum semper redeant, a quo currere inceperunt. Finis.*³ A German translation of this is said to be in existence. 4. According to a newspaper report of 1716, there also should exist an edition which begins: *Quamvis omnium hominem intersit nosse veritatem, rari tamen boni illi qui eam norunt, etc.,*⁴ and ends, *Qui veritatis amantes sunt, multum solatii inde capient, et hi sunt, quibus placere gestimus, nil curantes mancipia, quae praejudicia oraculorum— infallibilium loco venerantur.*

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5. Straube in Vienna made a reprint of the edition of 1598 in 1753.

6. A new reprint is contained in a pamphlet edited by C. C. E. Schmid and almost entirely confiscated, entitled: *Zwei seltene antisupernaturalistische manuscripte.* Two rare anti-supernaturalistic manuscripts. (Berlin, Krieger in Giessen, 1792.)

7. There recently appeared through W. F. Genthe an edition, *De impostura religionum compendium s. liber de tribus impostoribus*, Leipsic, 1833.

8. Finally, through Gustav Brunet of Bordeaux an edition founded upon the text of the 1598 edition was produced with the title, *de Tribus Impostoribus*, MDIIC. Latin text collated from the copy of the Duke de la Valliere, now in the Imperial Library;⁵ enlarged with different readings from several manuscripts, etc., and philologic and bibliographical notes by Philomneste Junior, Paris, 1861 (?1867). Only 237 copies printed, and is out of print and rare.

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9. An Italian translation of the same appeared in 1864 by Daelli in Milan with title as above.

10. A Spanish edition also exists taken from the same source and under the same title. London (Burdeos) 1823.

Note. All the preceding Bibliography is from the edition of Emil Weller,

Heilbronn 1876.—A. N.

The only edition known to have been printed in the United States was entitled "[The Three Impostors](#)." Translated (with notes and illustrations) from the French edition of the work, published at Amsterdam, 1776. Republished by G. Vale, Beacon Office, 3 Franklin Square, New York, 1846, 84pp. 12°. A copy is in the Congressional Library at Washington.

From this I transcribe the following notes:

[Contents]

NOTE BY THE AMERICAN PUBLISHER.

We publish this valuable work, for the reasons contained in the following Note, of which we approve:

NOTE BY THE BRITISH PUBLISHER.

The following little book I present to the reader without any remarks on the different opinions relative to its antiquity; as the subject is amply discussed in the body of the work, and constitutes one of its most interesting and attractive features. The Edition from which the present is translated was brought me from Paris by a distinguished defender of Civil and Religious Liberty: and as my friend had an anxiety from a thorough conviction of its interest and value, to see it published in the English Language, I have from like feelings brought it before the public, and I am convinced that it is eminently calculated to promote the cause of Freedom, Justice and Morality.

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J. MYLES.

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PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

The Translator of the following little treatise deems it necessary to say a few words as to the object of its publication. It is given to the world, neither with a view to advocate Scepticism, nor to spread Infidelity, but simply to vindicate the right of private judgment. No human being is in a position to look into the heart, or to decide correctly as to the creed or conduct of his fellow mortals; and the attributes of the Deity are so far beyond the grasp of limited reason, that man must become a God himself before he can comprehend them. Such being the case, surely all harsh censure of each other's opinions and actions ought to be abandoned; and every one should so train himself as to be enabled to declare with the humane and manly philosopher

"Homo sum, nihil humani me alienum puto."

Dundee, September 1844.

The Vale production is evidently translated from an edition derived from the Latin manuscript which is the basis of the translation given in this volume. The variations in the text of each not being important, but simply due to the different modes of expression of the translators—the ideas conveyed being the same.

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The Treatise in Vale's edition concludes with the following:

"Happy the man who, studying Nature's laws,
Through known effects can trace the secret cause;
His mind possessing in a quiet state,
Fearless of Fortune, and resigned to Fate."

—Dryden's *Virgil. Georgics Book II, l. 700.*

There is also in the Library of Congress a volume entitled "*Traité des Trois Imposteurs.*" *En Suisse de l'imprimerie philosophique*—1793. Boards 3½ × 5¾ inches, containing the Treatise proper 112 pp. *Sentimens sur le traite des trois imposteurs*, (De la Monnaye) 32 pp. *Response a la dissertation de M. de la Monnaye* 19 pp. signed J. L. R. L. and dated at Leyden 1 Jan., 1716, to which this

note is appended: "This letter is from Sieur Pierre Frederic Arpe, of Kiel, in Holstein, author of the apology of Vanini, printed at Rotterdam in 8^o, 1712." The letter contains the account of the discovery of the original Latin manuscript at Frankfort-on-the-Main, in substance much the same as the translation given in this edition.

In the copy at the Congressional Library, I find the following manuscript notes which may be rendered as follows: "Voltaire doubted the existence of this work, this was in 1767. See his letter to his Highness Monseigneur The Prince of ——. Letter V, Vol. 48 of his works, p. 312."

See Barbier *Dict. des ouv. anon.* Nos. 18250, 19060, 21612.

De Tribus Impostoribus. Anon.

L'esprit de Spinosa trad. du latin par Vroes.

In connection with this latter note, and observing the name written at end of the colophon of the manuscript from which the present edition is translated, it is probable that this same *Vroese* was the author of another translation.

Another remarkable copy is contained in the Library of Congress, the title page of which is displayed as follows:

TRAITÉ
DES
TROIS IMPOSTEURS
DES
RELIGIONS DOMINANTES

ET DU CULTE
d'après l'analyse conforme à l'histoire.

CONTENANT
nombre d'observations morales, analogues à celles mises
à l'ordre du jour, pour l'affermissement de la République,
sa gloire, et l'édification des peuples de tous les pays.

ORNÉ DE TROIS GRAVURES.

À PHILADELPHIE
sous l'auspices du général WASHINGTON
ET SE TROUVE
A PARIS chez le citoyen MERCIER, homme de lettres,
rue du Coq Honoré, No. 120,
LONDON, at M. Miller, libryre, Boon Street,
PICCADELLY.

M.DCC.XCVI.

TRAITÉ
DES
TROIS IMPOSTEURS
DES
RELIGIONS DOMINANTES
ET DU CULTE
d'après l'analyse conforme à l'histoire.

CONTENANT
nombre d'observations morales, analogues à celles mises à l'ordre du
jour, pour l'affermissement de la République, sa gloire, et l'édification
des peuples de tous les pays.

ORNÉ DE TROIS GRAVURES.
À PHILADELPHIE
sous l'auspices du général WASHINGTON
ET SE TROUVE

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[18]

A PARIS chez le citoyen MERCIER, homme de lettres, rue du Cocq
Honoré, No. 120,
LONDON, at M. Miller, libryre, Boon Street,
PICCADELLY.
M.DCC.XCVI.

NOTE.—This edition has undoubtedly been translated from the original Latin manuscript.—A. N.

Translation. Treatise of the Three Impostors of the governing Religions and worship, after an examination conformable to history, containing a number of moral observations, analogous to those placed in the order of the day for the support of the republic, its glory, and the edification of the people of all countries. Ornamented with three engravings. At Philadelphia under the auspices of General Washington, and may be found at Paris at the house of Citizen Mercier (Claude Francois Xavier⁶), man of letters, 120 Cocq Honoré street, and at London at Mr. Miller's, bookseller, Boon street, Piccadelly, 1796.

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On the following page may be found the following:

LE PEUPLE
FRANÇAIS
RECONNANT
L'ÊTRE SUPRÊME
L'IMMORTALITÉ DE L'ÂME
ET LA LIBERTÉ DES CULTES

—7

TRAITÉ
DES
RELIGIONS DOMINANTES⁸

Chapter I. Concerning God, 6 paragraphs.
Chapter II. Reasons, etc., 11 „
Chapter III. Religious, 9 „

“Les prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple pense
Notre crédulité fait toute leur science.”

Priests are not what vain people think,
Our credulity makes all their science.

Chapter IV. Moses, 2 paragraphs.
Chapter V. Jesus Christ, 10 „

Paragraph 2. *Politics*; paragraph 6. *Morals*.

Chapter VI. Mahomet, 2 paragraphs.
Chapter VII. Evident Truths, 6 „
Chapter VIII. The Soul, 7 „
Chapter IX. Demons, 7 „

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Facing page twenty-seven is a medallion copper plate of MOSES, around which are these words (translated): “Moses saw God in the burning bush,” and beneath the following from *Voltaire's Pucelle* (translated):

Alone on the summit of the mysterious mount
As he desired, he closed his fortieth year.
Then suddenly he appeared upon the plain
With buck's horns⁹ shining on his forehead.
Which brilliant miracle in the mind of the philosopher
Created a prompt effect.”

In a note to par. II. occur the following lines which translated read:

“How many changes a revolution makes:
Heaven has brought us forth in happy time
To see the world—Here the weak *Italian*
Is frightened at the sight of a stole:
The proud Frenchman astonished at nothing
Boldly goes to defy the Pope at his capital
And the grand Turk in turban, like a good Christian,
Recites the prayers of his faith
And prays to God for the pagan Arab,

Having no thought of any kind of expedient
Nor means to destroy altars and idol worship.
The Supreme Being his only and sole support,
Does not exact for offering a single coin
From any sect, from Jew nor plebeian:
What need has He of Temple or archbishop?
The heart of the just and the general good
Shines like a brilliant sun on the halo of glory."

Then follows a "BOUQUET FOR THE POPE":

"Thou whom flatterers have invested with a vain title,
Shalt thou at this late day become the arbiter of Europe?
Charitable pontiff, and friend of humanity,
Having so many sovereigns as fathers of families,
The successors of Christ, in the midst of the sanctuary
Have they not placed unblushingly, incest and adultery?
Be this the last of imposture and thy last sigh.
Do thyself more honor, esteem and pleasure,
Than all the monuments erected to the glory
Of thy predecessors in the temple of memory.
Let them read on thy tomb 'he was worthy of love,
The *father* of the *Church* and *oracle of the day*.'" [21]

On the following page is a copper plate profile portrait of Pius VI. surrounded by the words "*Senatus Populus Que Romanus*." At the side *Principis Ecclesiae dotes vis Cernere Magni*. (Senate and People of Rome—Prince of the Church endowed with power and great wisdom.) Beneath:

"The talents of the learned and the virtues of the wise,
A noble and beneficent manner with which all are charmed,
Depict much better than this image
The true portrait of Pius VI."

Facing page fifty-one is a copper plate portrait of *Mahomet*, and beneath this tribute:

"Know you not yet, weak and superb man,
That the humble insect hidden beneath a leaf
And the imperious eagle who flies to heaven's dome,
Amount to nothing in the eyes of the Eternal.
All men are equal: not birth but virtue
Distinguishes them apart."

Then there are inserted a number of verses, some of the titles reading:

"Homage to the Supreme Being."
"Voltaire Admitted to Heaven."
"Homage to the Eternal Father."
"Bouquet to the Archbishop of Paris."
"Infinite Mercy—Consolation for Sinners."
"Lots of Room in Heaven."
"The Holy Spirit Absent from Heaven," etc.

Concluding with "A Picture of France at the Time of the Revolution." [22]

"Nobility without souls, a fanatical clergy.
Frightful tax gatherers gnawing a plucked people.
Faith and customs a prey to designing persons.
A price set upon the head of the CHANCELLOR (Maupeou).
The skeleton of a perfidious Senate.
Not daring to punish a parricidal conspiracy.
O, my country! O, France! Thy miseries
Have even drawn tears from Rome.¹⁰
If you have no REPUBLIC, and no pure legislators
Like exist in America, to deliver you from the oppression
Of a tyrannous empire of knaves, brigands and robbers;
Like the British cabinet and the skillful Pitt, chief of flatterers,
Who with his magic lantern fascinates even the wise ones.
This clique will soon be seen to fall, if the French become the conquerors
Of this ancient slavery, and show themselves the proud protectors
Of their musical CARMAGNOLE.
In the name of kings and emperors, how much iniquity and horror
Which are recorded in history, cause the reader to shudder with fright.
The entrance of friends in BELGIUM, to the eyes of those who know,
Is it not an unique epoch?"

And this most flattering tie, sustained by a heroic compact,
Will be the desire of all hearts."

À BOSTON

under the protection of Congress.

Bound in this volume is a pamphlet entitled "LA FABLE DE CHRIST DEVOILÉE." Paris: Franklin Press. 75 Rue de Clery. 2nd year of the Republic. Also, "ÉLOGE NON-FUNÈBRE DE JESUS ET DU CHRISTIANISME. Printed on the débris of the Bastille, and the funeral pile of the Inquisition. 2nd year of Liberty, and of Christ 1791."

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Another closes the volume: "LETTRES PHILOSOPHIQUE SUR ST. PAUL: sur sa doctrine, politique, morale, & religieuse, & sur plusieurs points de la religion chrétienne considérées politiquement." (J. P. Brissot de Warville.) Translated from the English by the philosopher de Ferney and found in the portfolio of M. V. his ancient secretary. Neuchatel en Suisse 1783.

Note translated from the edition "En Suisse, de l'imprimerie philosophique," 1793.

In a response to M. de la Monnoye, who laboriously endeavored to refute the existence of the treatise entitled "The Three Impostors," and which reply in addition to M. de la Monnoye's arguments appear in connection with some of the translations of the treatise, occurs the following introduction to the account of the discovery of the original manuscript: "I have by me a more certain means of overturning this dissertation of M. de la Monnoye, when I inform him that I have read this celebrated little work and that I have it in my library. I will give you and the public an account of the manner in which I discovered it, and as it is in my possession I will subjoin a short but faithful description of it."

Here follows a summary of the contents and the Dissertation, in substance the same as our manuscript; the response concluding as follows:

"Such is the anatomy of this celebrated work. I might have given it in a manner more extended and more minute; but besides that this letter is already too long, I think that enough has been said to give insight into the nature of its contents. A thousand other reasons which you will well enough understand, have prevented me from entering upon it to so great length as I could have done; "*Est modus in rebus.*"¹¹

[24]

"Now although this book were ready to be printed¹² with the preface in which I have given its history, and its discovery, with some conjectures as to its origin, and a few remarks which may be placed at its conclusion, yet I do not believe that it will live to see the day when men will be compelled all at once to quit their opinions and their imaginations, as they have quitted their syllogisms, their canons, and their other antiquated modes. As for me I will not expose myself to the *Theological stylus*¹³—which I fear as much as Fra-Poula feared the Roman stylus—to afford to a few learned men the pleasure of reading this little treatise; but neither will I be so superstitious, on my death bed, as to cause it to be thrown into the flames, which we are informed was done by Salvius, the Swedish ambassador, at the peace of Munster. Those who come after me may do what seems to them good—they can not disturb me in the tomb. Before I descend to that, I remain with much respect, your most obedient servant,

[25]

J. L. R. L.

"Leyden, 1st January, 1716."

This letter was written by Mr. Pierre Frederick Arpe, of Kiel, in Holstein; the author of an apology for Vanini, printed in octavo at Rotterdam, 1712.



1 THE HISTORY OF THE THREE INFAMOUS IMPOSTORS OF THIS AGE.

[26]

1. *Padre Ottomano*, a pretended son of the Sultan of Turkey who flourished about 1650, and who latterly, under the above title, became a *Dominican Friar*.

2. *Mahomed Bei*, alias *Joannes Michael Cigala*, who masqueraded as a Prince of the Ottoman family, a descendant of the Emperor Solymán the Magnificent, and in other characters about 1660.

3. *Sabbatai Sevi*, the pretended Messiah of the Jews, “the Only and First-borne Son of God,” who amused the Jews and Turks about 1666. ↑

2 *La vie et l'esprit de M. Benoit de Spinosa* was published without the author's name, in Amsterdam 1719. In the “Preface du Copiste” it is stated that the author of it is not known, but that if a conjecture might be permitted it might be said, perhaps with certitude, that the book is the work of the late Mr. Lucas, so famous for his Quintessences and for his manners and way of living.

Kuno Fischer, in his *Descartes und seine Schule*. Zweiter Theil, Heidelberg, 1889, p. 101, says:

“The real author of the work is not known with entire certainty; probably the author was Lucas, a physician at the Hague, notorious in his own day; others name as author a certain Vroese.”

Freudenthal, in his *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's*. Leipzig, 1899, writing of the various conjectures as to the authorship of the book, states that W. Meyer has lately sought to prove that Johan Louckers, a Hague attorney, was the author, but that the authorship had not been settled.

Oettinger in his *Bibliographie Biographie Universelle*, Bruxelles 1854, p. 1707, gives Lucas Vroese as the author.

It has also been suggested that Lucas and Vroese were two men and together wrote the book.

The authority for ascribing the book to Vroese, of whose life no particulars seem to have been recorded, appears to be the following passage in the *Dictionnaire Historique*, par Prosper Marchand, à la Haye, 1758, v. 1., p. 352:

“A la fin d'une copie manuscrit de ce Traité que j'ai vû et lûe, on lui donne pour véritable Auteur a Mr. Vroese, conseiller de la cour de Brabant à la Haie, dont Aymon et Rousset retouchèrent le langage; et que ce dernier y ajouta la *Dissertation* ou *Réponse* depuis imprimée chez Scheurleer.”

The name “Vroese” appears at the side of the colophon at end of our translation, but probably as a reference only. ↑

3 This is probably a Latin edition of the original manuscript from which our translation was made.—Ed. ↑

4 See translation Chap. 1 “Of God,” first two lines. ↑

5 DISRAELI'S CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE.

Title, “Literary Forgeries.”

“The Duc de la Valliere and the Abbe de St. Leger, once concerted together to supply the eager purchaser of literary rarities with a copy of “De Tribus Impostoribus,” a book, by the date, pretended to have been printed in 1598, though probably a modern forgery of 1698. The title of such a book had long existed by rumor, but never was a copy seen by man. Works printed with this title have all been proved to be modern fabrications—a copy however of the ‘introuvable’ original was sold at the Duc de la Valliere’s sale. The history of this volume is curious. The Duc and the Abbe having manufactured a text had it printed in the old Gothic character, under the title ‘De Tribus Impostoribus.’ They proposed to put the great bibliopobet, De Bure, in good humor, whose agency would sanction the imposition. They were afterwards to dole out copies at 25 louis each, which would have been a reasonable price for a book which no one ever saw! They invited De Bure to dinner, flattered and cajoled him, and, as they imagined at the moment they had wound him up to their pitch, they exhibited their manufacture—the keen-eyed glance of the renowned cataloguer of the ‘Bibliographie Instructive’ instantly shot like lightning over it, and like lightning, destroyed the whole edition. He not only discovered the forgery but reprobated it! He refused his sanction; and the forging Duc and Abbe, in confusion suppressed the ‘livre introuvable’; but they owed a grudge to the honest bibliographer and attempted to write down the work whence the De Bures derive their fame.” ↑

6 The names are noted on title page in pencil. ↑

7 The French nation recognize the Supreme Being, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Freedom of Worship. ↑

8 Treatise of the Dominant Religions. ↑

9 In old prints Moses is always depicted with horns on his forehead. ↑

10 When they weep at Rome, they do not laugh in Paris. ↑

11 There is a measure in everything. ↑

12 As to the *printing* of the book they can bring forward no *proof* whatever of its having being done prior to this date (1716) and it is impossible to conceive that Frederick, surrounded as he was by enemies, would have circulated a work which gave a fair opportunity of proclaiming his infidelity. It is probable therefore that there were only two copies, the original one and that sent to Otho of Bavaria. J. L. R. L. ↑

13 This phrase is frequently employed to express ecclesiastical criticism. Its first application however had a more pungent meaning. The individual here alluded to having boldly assailed the errors of the Church was attacked one evening by an assassin. Fortunately the blow did not prove fatal; but the weapon (a stylus, or dagger, which is also the Latin name for a pen) having been left in the wound, on his recovery he wore it in his girdle labelled, “The Theological Stylus,” or Pen of the Church. The trenchant powers of this instrument have more frequently been employed to repress truth, than to refute argument. ↑

DISSERTATION ON THE BOOK OF THE THREE IMPOSTORS.

More than four hundred years have elapsed since this little treatise was first mentioned, the title of which has always caused it to be qualified as impious, profane and worthy of the fire. I am convinced that none of those who have mentioned it have read it, and after having examined it carefully, it can only be said that it is written with as much discretion as the matter would allow to a man persuaded of the falsehood of the things which he attacked, and protected by a powerful prince, under whose direction he wrote.

There have been but few scholars whose religious beliefs were dubious, who have not been credited with the authorship of this treatise.

Averroes, a famous Arabian commentator on Aristotle's works, and celebrated for his learning, was the first to whom this production was attributed. He lived about the middle of the twelfth century when the "three impostors" were first spoken of. He was not a Christian, as he treated their religion as "the Impossible," nor a Jew, whose law he called "a Religion for Children," nor a Mahometan, for he denominated their belief "a Religion for Hogs." He finally died a Philosopher, that is to say, without having subscribed to the opinions of the vulgar, and that was sufficient to publish him as the enemy of the law makers of the three Religions that he had scorned.

Jean Bocala, an Italian scholar of a happy disposition, and consequently not much imbued with bigotry, flourished in the middle of the fourteenth century. A fable that he ventured in one of his works, concerning "Three Rings," has been regarded as evidence of this execrable book whose author was looked for, and this was considered sufficient to attribute the authorship to him long after his death.

[27]

Michael Servetus, burned at Geneva (1553) by the pitiless persecution of *Mr. John Calvin*, he not having subscribed to either the Trinity or the Redeemer, it became proper to attribute to him the production of this impious volume.

Etienne Dolit, a printer at Paris, and who ranked among the learned, was led to the stake—to which he had been condemned as a Calvinist in 1543—with a courage comparable to that of the first martyrs. He therefore merited to be treated as an atheist, and was honored as the author of the pamphlet against the "Three Impostors."

Lucilio Vanini, a Neapolitan, and the most noted atheist of his time, if his enemies may be believed, fairly proved before his judges—however he may have been convinced—the truth of a Providence, and consequently a God. It sufficed however for the persecution of his enemies, the Parliament of Toulouse, who condemned him to be burned as an atheist, and also to merit the distinction of having composed, or at least having revived, the book in question.

I am not sure but what *Ochini* and *Postel*, *Pomponiac* and *Poggio* the Florentine, and *Campanella*, all celebrated for some particular opinion condemned by the Church of their time, were for that reason accused as atheists, and also adjudged without trouble, the authors of the little truth for whom a parent was sought.

[28]

All that famous critics have published from time to time of this book has excited the curiosity of the great and wise to determine the author, but without avail.

I believe that several treatises printed with the title "*de Tribus Impostoribus*," such as that of *Kortholt* against *Spinosa*, *Hobbes* and the *Baron Cherbourg*; that of the false *Panurge* against *Messieurs Gastardi*, *de Neure* and *Bernier* have furnished many opportunities for an infinity of half-scholars who only speak from hearsay, and who often judge a book by the first line of the title. I have, like many others who have examined this work, done so in a superficial manner. Though I am a delver in antiquities, and a decipherer of manuscript, chance having caused the pamphlet to fall into my hands at one time, I avow that I gave neither thought to the production nor to its author.

Some business affairs having taken me to *Frankfort-on-the-Main* about the month of April, (1706), that is about fifteen days after the Fair, I called on a friend named *Frecht*, a Lutheran theological student, whom I had known in Paris. One day I went to his house to ask him to take me to a bookseller where he could serve me as interpreter. We called on the way on a Jew who furnished me with money and who accompanied us.

Being engaged in looking over a catalog at the book store, a German officer entered the shop, and said to the bookseller without any form of compliment, "If among all the devils I could find one to agree with you, I would still go and look for another dealer." The bookseller replied that "500 Rix dollars was an excessive price, and that he ought to be satisfied with the 450 that he offered." The officer told him to "go to the Devil," as he would do nothing of the sort, and was about to leave. *Frecht*, who recognized him as a friend, stopped him and having renewed his acquaintance, was curious to know what bargain he had concluded with the bookseller. The officer carelessly drew from his pocket a packet of parchment tied by a cord of yellow silk. "I wanted," said he, "500 Rix dollars to satisfy me for three manuscripts which are in this package, but Mr. Bookseller does not wish to give but 450." *Frecht* asked if he might see the curiosities. The officer took them from his pocket, and the Jew and myself who had been merely spectators now became interested, and approached *Frecht*, who held the three books.

[29]

The first which *Frecht* opened was an Italian imprint of which the title was missing, and was supplied by another written by hand which read

"Specchia della Bestia Triomphante." The book did not appear of ancient date, and had on the title neither year nor name of printer.

We passed to the second, which was a manuscript without title, the first page of which commenced "OTHONI *illustrissimo amico meo charissimo. F. I. s. d.*" This embraced but two lines, after which followed a letter of which the commencement was "*Quod de tribus famosissimis Nationum Deceptoribus in ordinem. Justu. meo digesti Doctissimus ille vir, que cum Sermonem de illa re in Museo meo habuisti exscribi curavi atque codicem illum stilo aequae, vero ac puro scriptum ad te ut primum mitto, etenim ipsius per legendi te accipio cupidissimum.*"

The other manuscript was also Latin, and without title like the other. It commenced with these words—from *Cicero* if I am not mistaken: "*An. I. liber de Nat. Deor. Qui Deos esse dixerunt tantu sunt in Varietate et dissentione constituti ut eorum molestum sit dinumerare sententias. Altidum freri profecto potest ut eorum nulla, alterum certi non potest ut plus unum vera fit. Summi quos in Republica obtinnerat honores orator ille Romanus, ea que quam servare famam Studiate curabat, in causa fuere quod in Concione Deos non ansus sit negare quamquam in contesta Philosophorum, etc.*"

[30]

We paid but little attention to the Italian production, which only interested our Jew, who assured us that it was an invective against Religion. We examined several phrases of the latter by which we mutually agreed that it was a system of *Demonstrated Atheism*. The second, which we have mentioned, attracted our entire attention, and *Frecht* having persuaded his friend, whose name was *Tausendorff*, not to take less than 500 Rix dollars, we left the bookseller's shop, and *Frecht*, who had his own ideas, took us to his inn, where he proposed to his friend to empty a bottle of good wine together. Never did a German decline a like proposition, so *Frecht* immediately ordered the wine, and asked *Tausendorff* to tell us how these manuscripts fell into his possession.

After enjoying his portion of *six* bottles of old Moselle, he told us that after the victory at Hochstadt¹ and the flight of the Elector of Bavaria, he was one of those who entered Munich, and in the palace of His Highness, he went from room to room until he reached the library. Here his eyes fell by chance on the package of parchments with the silk cord, and believing them to be important papers or curiosities, he could not resist the temptation of putting them in his pocket. He was not deceived when he opened the package and convinced himself. This recital was accompanied by many soldier-like digressions, as the wine had a little disarranged the judgment of *Tausendorff*. *Frecht*, who, during the story, perused the manuscript, took the chance of a refusal by asking his friend to allow him to take the book until the next day. *Tausendorff*, whom the wine had made generous, consented to the request of *Frecht*, but he exacted a terrible oath that he would neither copy it or cause it to be done, promising to come for it on Sunday and empty some more bottles of wine, which he found to his taste.

[31]

This obliging officer had no sooner left than we commenced to decipher it. The writing was so small, full of abbreviations, and without punctuation, that we were nearly two hours in reading the first page, but as soon as we were accustomed to the method we commenced to read it more easily. I found it so accurate and written with so much care, that I proposed to *Frecht* an equivocal method of making a copy without violating the oath which he had taken: which method was to make a *translation*. The conscience of a *theologian* did not but find difficulties in such proposal, but I removed them as I could, assuming the sin myself, and in the end he consented to work on the translation which was

finished before the time fixed by Tausendorff.

This is the way in which this book came into our hands. Many would have desired to possess the original but we were not rich enough to buy it. The bookseller had a commission from a Prince of the House of Saxony, who knew that it had been taken from the library at Munich, and he was to spare no effort to secure it, if he found it, by paying the 500 Rix dollars to Tausendorff who went away several days after, having regaled us in his turn. [32]

Passing to the origin of the book, and its author, one can hardly give an account of either only by consulting the book itself in which but little is found except for the base of conjecture. There is only a letter at the beginning, and which is written in another character from the rest of the book, which gives any light. We find it addressed *OTHONI, Illustrissimo*. The place where the manuscript was found, and the name OTHO put together warrants the belief that it was addressed to the *Illustrious Otho, lord of Bavaria*. This prince was grandson of *Otho, the Great; Count of Schiren and Witelspach* from whom the House of Bavaria and the Palatine had their origin. The Emperor *Frederick Barbarossa*² had given him Bavaria for his fidelity, after having taken it from *Henry the Lion* to punish him for his inconsistency in taking the part of his enemies. *Louis I.* succeeded his father, *Otho the Great*, and left Bavaria—in the possession of which he had been disturbed by *Henry the Lion*—to his son *Otho*, surnamed the *Illustrious*, who assured his possession by wedding the daughter of Henry. This happened about the year 1230, when *Frederick II.*, Emperor of Germany, returned from Jerusalem, where, at the solicitation of *Pope Gregory IX.*, he had pursued the war against the Saracens, and from whence he returned irritated to excess against the Holy Father who had incensed his army against him, as well as the *Templars* and the *Patriarch of Jerusalem*, until the Emperor refused to obey the Pope. [33]

Otho the Illustrious recognizing the obligations that his family were under to the family of the Emperor, took his part and remained firmly attached to him, notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of fortune of Frederick.

Why these historical reminiscences? To sustain the conjecture that it was to this *Otho the Illustrious* that this copy of the pamphlet of the *Three Impostors* was addressed. By whom? This is why we are led to believe that the F. I. s. d. which follows *L'amico meo carissimo*, and which we interpret FREDERICUS. *Imperator salutem Domino*. Thus this would be by The *Emperor Frederick II.*, son of *Henry IV.* and grandson of *Frederick Barbarossa*, who, succeeding to their Empire, had at the same time inherited the hatred of the Roman Pontiffs.³ [34]

Those who have read the history of the Church and that of the Empire, will recall with what pride and arrogance the indolent *Alexander III.* placed his foot on the neck of *Frederick Barbarossa*, who came to him to sue for peace. Who does not know the evil that the Holy See did to his son *Henry VI.*, against whom his own wife took up arms at the persuasion of the Pope? At last *Frederick II.* uniting in himself all the resolution which was wanting in his father and grandfather, saw the purpose of *Gregory IX.*, who seemed to have marshalled on his side all the hatred of *Alexander, Innocent* and *Honorius* against his *Imperial Majesty*. One brought the steel of persecution, and the other the lightning of excommunication, and furiously they vied with each other in circulating infamous libels. This, it seems to me, is warrant sufficient to apply these happenings to the belief that this book was by order of the Emperor, who was incensed against religion by the vices of its Chief, and written by the *Doctissimus vir*, who is mentioned in the letter as having composed this treatise, and which consequently owes its existence not so much to a search for truth, as to a spirit of hatred and implacable animosity. [35]

This conjecture may be further confirmed by remarking that this book was never mentioned only since the *régime* of that Emperor, and even during his reign it was attributed him, since *Pierre des Vignes*, his secretary, endeavored to cast this false impression on the enemies of his master, saying that they circulated it to render him odious.

Now to determine the *Doctissimus vir* who is the author of the book in question. First, it is certain that the epoch of the book was that which we have endeavored to prove. Second, that it was encouraged by those accused of its authorship, possibly excepting *Averroes*, who died before the birth of *Frederick II.* All the others lived a long time, even entire centuries after the composition of this work. I admit that it is difficult to determine the author only by marking the period when the book first made its appearance, and in whatever direction I turn, I find no one to whom it could more probably be attributed than *Pierre des Vignes* whom I have mentioned.

If we had not his tract "*De potestate Imperiali*," his other epistles suffice to show

with what zeal he entered into the resentment of *Frederick II.* (whose Secretary he was) against the Holy See. Those who have spoken of him, *Ligonius*, *Trithemus* and *Rainaldi*, furnish such an accurate description of him, his condition and his spirit, that after considering this I cannot remark but that this evidence favors my conjecture. Again, as I have remarked, he himself spoke of this book in his epistles, and he endeavored to accuse the enemies of his master to lessen the clamor made to encourage the belief that this Prince was the author. As he had taken the greater part, he did not greatly exert himself to lessen the injurious noise, so that if the accusation was strengthened by passing for a long time from mouth to mouth it would not fall from the Master on his Secretary, who was probably more capable of the production than a great Emperor, always occupied with the clamors of war and always in fear of the thunders of the Vatican. In one word, the Emperor, however valiant and resolute, had no time to become a scholar like *Pierre des Vignes*, who had given all the necessary attention to his studies, and who owed his position and the affection of his Master entirely to his learning.

I believe that we can conclude from all this, that this little book *Tribus famosissimus Nationum Deceptoribus*, for that is its true title, was composed after the year 1230 by command of the Emperor *Frederick II.* in hatred of the Court of Rome: and it is quite apparent that *Pierre des Vignes*, Secretary to the Emperor, was the author.⁴

This is all that I deem proper for a preface to this little treatise, and as it contains many naughty allusions, to prevent that in the future, it may not be again attributed to those who perhaps never entertained such ideas.

¹ Sep. 20, 1703. †

² *Frederick Barbarossa* was Emperor of Germany in 1152 and was drowned during Crusade in Syria June 10, 1190. He created *Henry the Lion* (? Henry VI.) Duke of Bavaria in 1154, expelled him in 1180, and Henry died 1195.

Otho the Great, Count of Witelspach, was made Duke of Bavaria 1180, and died 1183. He was the grandfather of *Otho the Illustrious*, who gained the Palatinate and was assassinated in 1231. He married the daughter of *Henry the Lion* about 1230.

Henry VI succeeded to the Empire on death of his father, *Frederick Barbarossa*, 1190, and died 1195—that is if *Henry the Lion* and *Henry VI* are identical.

Frederick II, son of *Henry VI*, began to reign (?) 1195, and was living 1243.

The succession of Popes during the period 1152-1254 (Haydn's Dict. of Dates), was as follows:

Anastasius IV, 1153, *Adrian IV*, 1154, (Nicholas Brakespeare, the only Englishman elected Pope. Frederick I. prostrated himself before him, kissed his foot, held his stirrup, and led the white palfrey on which he rode.)

Alexander III. 1159, (Canonized Thomas à Becket and resisted Frederick I.) *Victor V*. 1159, *Pascal III*. 1164, *Calixtus III*. 1168, *Lucius III*. 1181.

Urban III. 1185, (opposed Frederick I.) *Gregory VIII*. (2 months) 1187. *Clement III*. 1187, proclaimed third Crusade.

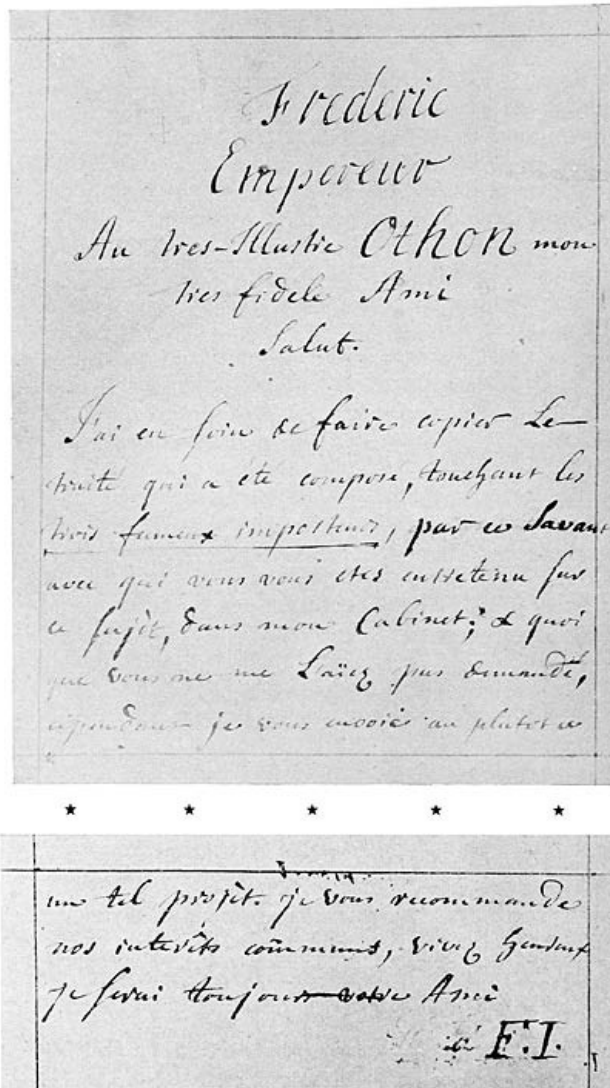
Celestin III. 1191. *Innocent III*. 1198, excommunicated John, King of England. *Honorius III*. 1216, learned and pious. *Gregory IX*. 1227, preached new Crusade. *Celestine IV*. 1241. *Innocent IV*. 1243-1254 (opposed Frederick II.).

If *Frederick II.* caused pamphlet to be written about 1230, it could not have been burned by *Honorius III.*, who reigned as Pope 1216-1227, but by *Gregory IX.*, who reigned 1227-1241, who sent *Frederick II.* to the Crusades, upset his affairs while he was gone, and against whom the "Dissertation" says the pamphlet was written. †

³ Carlyle, in his "*History of Frederick II. of Prussia, called Frederick the Great*," mentions Hermann von der Saltza, a new sagacious *Teutschmeister* or *Hochmeister* (so they call the head of the Order) of the Teutonic Knights, a far-seeing, negotiating man, who during his long Mastership (A. D. 1210-1239,) is mostly to be found at Venice and not at Acre or Jerusalem.

He is very great with the busy Kaiser, Frederick II., Barbarossa's grandson, who has the usual quarrels with the Pope, and is glad of such a negotiator, statesman as well as armed monk. A Kaiser not gone on the Crusade, as he had vowed: Kaiser at last suspected of free thinking even:—in which matters Hermann much serves the Kaiser.—*People's Edition, Boston, 1885, Vol. 1, p. 92.* †

⁴ *Pierre des Vignes*, suspected of having conspired against the life of the Emperor, was condemned to lose his eyes, and was handed over to the inhabitants of Pisa, his cruel enemies: and where despair hastened his death in an infamous dungeon where he could hold intercourse with no one. †



FREDERICK EMPEROR

[37]

to the very ILLUSTRIOUS OTHO
my very faithful Friend,

GREETING:

I have taken the trouble to have copied the Treatise which was made concerning the *Three Famous Impostors*, by the learned man by whom you were entertained on this subject, in my study, and though you have not requested it, I send you the manuscript entire, in which the purity of style equals the truth of the matter, for I know with what interest you desired to read it, and also I am persuaded that nothing could please you more.

It is not the first time that I have overcome my cruel enemies, and placed my foot on the neck of the Roman Hydra whose skin is not more red than the blood of the millions of men that its fury has sacrificed to its abominable arrogance.

Be assured that I will neglect nothing to have you understand that I will either triumph or perish in the attempt; for whatever reverses may happen to me, I will not, like my predecessors, bend my knee before them.

I hope that my sword, and the fidelity of the members of the Empire; your advice and your assistance will contribute not a little. But nothing would add more if all Germany could be inspired with the sentiments of the Doctor—the author of this book. This is much to be desired, but where are those capable of accomplishing such a project? I recommend to you our common interests, live happy. I shall always be your friend.

F. I.

[38]

TREATISE OF THE THREE IMPOSTORS.¹

CHAPTER I.

OF GOD.

[Contents]

I.

However important it may be for all men to know the Truth, very few, nevertheless, are acquainted with it, because the majority are incapable of searching it themselves, or perhaps, do not wish the trouble. Thus we must not be astonished if the world is filled with vain and ridiculous opinions, and nothing is more capable of making them current than ignorance, which is the sole source of the false ideas that exist regarding the Divinity, the soul, and the spirit, and all the errors depending thereon.

The custom of being satisfied with born prejudice has prevailed, and by following this custom, mankind agrees in all things with persons interested in supporting stubbornly the opinions thus received, and who would speak otherwise did they not fear to destroy themselves.

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II.

What renders the evil without remedy, is, that after having established these silly ideas of God, they teach the people to receive them without examination. They take great care to impress them with aversion for philosophers, fearing that the Truth which they teach will alienate them. The errors in which the partisans of these absurdities have been plunged, have thrived so well that it is dangerous to combat them. It is too important for these impostors that the people remain in this gross and culpable ignorance than to allow them to be disabused. Thus they are constrained to disguise the truth, or to be sacrificed to the rage of false prophets and selfish souls.

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III.

If the people could comprehend the abyss in which this ignorance casts them, they would doubtless throw off the yoke of these venal minds, since it is impossible for Reason to act without immediately discovering the Truth. It is to prevent the good effects that would certainly follow, that they depict it as a monster incapable of inspiring any good sentiment, and however we may censure in general those who are not reasonable, we must nevertheless be persuaded that Truth is quite perverted. These enemies of Truth fall also into such perpetual contradictions that it is difficult to perceive what their real pretensions are. In the meanwhile it is true that Common Sense is the only rule that men should follow, and the world should not be prevented from making use of it.

We may try to persuade, but those who are appointed to instruct, should endeavor to rectify false reasoning and efface prejudices, then will the people open their eyes gradually until they become susceptible of Truth, and learn that God is not all that they imagine.

[40]

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IV.

To accomplish this, wild speculation is not necessary, neither is it required to deeply penetrate the secrets of Nature. Only a little good sense is needed to see that God is neither passionate nor jealous, that justice and mercy are false titles attributed to him, and that nothing of what the Prophets and Apostles have said constitutes his nature nor his essence. In effect, to speak without disguise and to state the case properly, it is certain that these doctors were neither more clever

or better informed than the rest of mankind, but far from that, what they say is so gross that it must be the people only who would believe them.

The matter is self-evident, but to make it more clear, let us see if they are differently constituted than other men.

[Contents]

V.

As to their birth and the ordinary functions of life, it is agreed that they possessed nothing above the human; that they were born of man and woman and lived the same as ourselves. But for mind, it must be that God favored them more than other men, for they claimed an understanding more brilliant than others. We must admit that mankind has a leaning toward blindness, because it is said that God loved the prophets more than the rest of mankind, that he frequently communicated with them, and he believed them also of good faith. Now if this condition was sensible, and without considering that all men resembled each other, and that they each had a principle equal in all, it was pretended that these prophets were of extraordinary attainments and were created expressly to utter the oracles of God. But further, if they had more wit than common, and more perfect understanding, what do we find in their writings to oblige us to have this opinion of them?

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The greater part of their writings is so obscure that it is not understood, and put together in such a poor manner that we can hardly believe that they comprehended it themselves, and that they must have been very ignorant impostors. That which causes this belief of them is that they boasted of receiving directly from God all that they announced to the people—an absurd and ridiculous belief—and avowing that God only spoke to them in dreams. Dreams are quite natural, and a person must be quite vain or senseless to boast that God speaks to him at such a time, and when faith is added, he must be quite credulous since there is no evidence that dreams are oracles. Suppose even that God manifested himself by dreams, by visions, or in any other way, are we obliged to believe a man who may deceive himself, and which is worse, who is inclined to *lie*?

Now we see that under the ancient law they had for prophets none more esteemed than at the present day. Then when the people were tired of their sophistry, which often tended to turn them from obedience to their legitimate Ruler, they restrained them by various punishments, just as Jesus was overwhelmed because he had not, like Moses,² an army at his back to sustain his opinions. Added to that, the Prophets were so in the habit of contradicting each other that among four hundred not one reliable one was to be found.³

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It is even certain that the aim of their prophecies, as well as the laws of the celebrated legislators were to perpetuate their memories by causing mankind to believe that they had private conference with God. Most political objects have been projected in such manner. However, such tricks have not always been successful for those, who—with the exception of *Moses*—had not the means of providing for their safety.

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VI.

This being determined, let us examine the ideas which the Prophets had of God, and we will smile at their grossness and contradictions. To believe them, God is a purely corporeal being. *Micah* sees him seated. *Daniel* clothed in white and in the form of an old man, and *Ezekiel* like a fire. So much for the Old Testament, now for the New. The disciples of J. C. imagined the Holy Spirit in the figure of a dove; the apostles, in the form of tongues of fire, and *St. Paul*, as a light which dazzled the sight unto blindness.

To show their contradictory opinions, *Samuel*, ([I. ch. 15, v. 29](#)), believed that God never repented of his own resolution. Again, *Jeremiah*, ([ch. 18, v. 10](#)), says that God repented of a resolve he had taken. *Joel*, ([ch. 2, v. 13](#)), says that he only repents of the evil he has done to mankind. *Genesis*, ([ch. 4, v. 7](#)), informs us that man is prone to evil, but that He has nothing for him but blessings. On the contrary, *St. Paul*, ([Romans, ch. 9, v. 10](#)), says that men have no command of concupiscence except by the grace and particular calling of God. These are the noble sentiments that these good people have of God, and what they would have us believe. Sentiments, however, entirely sensible, and quite material as we see, and yet they say that God has nothing in common with matter, is a sensible and material being, and that he is something incomprehensible to our

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understanding. I should like to be informed how these contradictions may be harmonized, and how, under such visible and palpable conditions it is proper to believe them. Again, how can we accept the testimony of a people so clownish that they, notwithstanding all the artifices of Moses, should imagine a *calf* to be their God! But not considering the dreams of a race raised in servitude, and among the superstitious, we can agree that ignorance has produced credulity, and credulity falsehood, from whence arises all the errors which exist today.



¹ In "Volney's Lectures on History," it is said: "If a work be translated it always receives a colouring which is more or less faint or is vivid according to the opinions and ability of the Translator." From an examination of other translations of this Treatise, I am assured that Volney's statement above has actuated and governed all who have been previously engaged with this work. I can assure the readers hereof, that the Treatise contained herein is a literal translation of the manuscript and the notes found therein, and no liberties have been taken with the text.

Any additional notes from other sources are so marked. A. N. †

² Moses killed at one time 24,000 men for opposing his law. †

³ It is written in the [First Book of Kings, ch. 22, v. 6](#), that Ahab, King of Israel, consulted 400 prophets, and found them entirely false in the success of their predictions. †

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CHAPTER II.

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REASONS WHICH HAVE CAUSED MANKIND TO CREATE FOR THEMSELVES AN INVISIBLE BEING WHICH HAS BEEN COMMONLY CALLED GOD.

I.

Those who ignore physical causes have a natural fear born of doubt. Where there exists a power which to them is dark or unseen, from thence comes a desire to pretend the existence of invisible Beings, that is to say their own *phantoms* which they invoke in adversity, whom they praise in prosperity, and of whom in the end they make Gods. And as the visions of men go to extremes, must we be astonished if there are created an innumerable quantity of *Divinities*? It is the same perceptible fear of invisible powers which has been the origin of Religions, that each forms to his fashion. Many individuals to whom it was important that mankind should possess such fancies, have not scrupled to encourage mankind in such beliefs, and they have made it their law until they have prevailed upon the people to blindly obey them by the fear of the future.

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II.

The Gods having thus been invented, it is easy to imagine that they resembled man, and who, like them, created everything for some purpose, for they unanimously agree that God has made nothing except for man, and reciprocally that man is made only for God.¹ This conclusion being general, we can see why man has so thoroughly accepted it, and know for that reason that they have taken occasion to create false ideas of *good* and *evil*, *merit* and *sin*, *praise* and *blame*, *order* and *confusion*, *beauty* and *deformity*—and similar qualities.

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III.

It should be agreed that all men are born in profound ignorance, and that the only thing natural to them is a desire to discover what may be useful and proper, and evade what may be inexpedient to them. Thence it follows *first*, that we believe that to be free it suffices to feel personally that one can wish and desire

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without being annoyed by the causes which dispose us to wish and desire, because we do not know them. *Second*, it consequently occurs that men are contented to do nothing but for one object, that is to say, for that object which is preferable above all, and that is why they have a desire only to know the final result of their action, imagining that after discovering this they have no reason to doubt anything. Now as they find in and about themselves many means of procuring what they desire: having, for example, ears to hear, eyes to see, animals to nourish, a sun to give light, they have formed this reasoning, *that there is nothing in nature which was not made for them, and of which they may dispose and enjoy*. Then reflecting that they did not make this world, they believe it to be a well-founded proposition to imagine a Supreme Being who has made it for them such as it is, for after satisfying themselves that *they* could not have made it, they conclude that it was the work of one or several Gods who intended it for the use and pleasure of man alone. On the other hand, the nature of the Gods whom man has admitted, being unknown, they have concluded in their own minds that these Gods susceptible of the same passions as men, have made the earth only for them, and that man to them was extremely precious. But as each one has different inclinations it became proper to adore God according to the humor of each, to attract his blessings and to cause Him to make all Nature subject to his desires.

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IV.

By this method this precedent becomes Superstition, and it is implanted so that the grossest natures are believed capable of penetrating the doctrine of final causes as if they had perfect knowledge. Thus in place of showing that *nature has made nothing in vain*, they show that God and Nature dream as well as men, and that they may not be accused of doubting things, let us see how they have put forth their false reasoning on this subject.

Experience causing them to see a myriad of inconveniences marring the pleasure of life, such as storms, earthquakes, sickness, famine and thirst, they draw the conclusion that nature has not been made for them alone. They attribute all these evils to the wrath of the Gods, who are vexed by the offences of man, and they cannot be disabused of these ideas by the daily instances which should prove to them that blessings and evils have been always common to the wicked and the good, and they will not agree to a proposition so plain and perceptible.

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The reason for that is, it is more easy to remain in ignorance than to abolish a belief established for many centuries and introduce something more probable.

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V.

This precedent has caused another, which is the belief that the judgments of God were incomprehensible, and that for this reason, the knowledge of truth is beyond the human mind; and mankind would still dwell in error were it not that mathematics and several other sciences had destroyed these prejudices.

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VI.

By this it may be seen that Nature or God does not propose any end, and that all final causes are but human fictions. A long lecture is not necessary since this doctrine takes away from God the perfection ascribed to him, and this is how it may be proved. If God acted for a result, either for himself or another, he desires what he has not, and we must allow that there are times when God has not the wherewith to act; he has merely desired it and that only creates an impotent God. To omit nothing that may be applied to this reasoning, let us oppose it with those of a contrary nature. If, for example, a stone falls on a person and kills him, it is well known they say, that the stone fell with the design of killing the man, and that could only happen by the will of God. If you reply that the wind caused the stone to drop at the moment the man passed, they will ask why the man should have passed precisely at the time when the wind moved the stone. If you say that the wind was so severe that the sea was also troubled since the day before while there appeared to be no agitation in the air, and the man having been invited to dine with a friend, went to keep his appointment. Again they ask, for the man never got there, why he should be the guest of his friend at this time more than another, adding questions after questions, finally avowing that it was but the will of God, (which is a true "*asses bridge*") and the cause of this

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misfortune.

Again when they note the symmetry of the human body, they stand in admiration and conclude how ignorant they are of the causes of a thing which to them appears so marvelous, that it is a supernatural work, in which the causes known to us could have no part.

Thence it comes that those who desire to know the real cause of supposed miracles and penetrate like true scholars into their natural causes without amusing themselves with the prejudice of the ignorant, it happens that the true scholar passes for impious and heretical by the malice of those whom the vulgar recognize as the expounders of *Nature* and of *God*. These mercenary individuals do not question the ignorance which holds the people in astonishment, upon whom they subsist and who preserve their credit.

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VII.

Mankind being thus of the ridiculous opinion that all they see is made for themselves, have made it a religious duty to apply it to their interest, and of judging the price of things by the profit they gain. Thence proceed the ideas they have formed of *good*, and *evil*, of *order* and *confusion*, of *heat* and *cold*, of *beauty* and *ugliness*, which serve to explain to them the nature of things, which in the end are not what they imagine. Because they pride themselves in having free will they judge themselves capable of deciding between *praise* and *blame*, *sin* and *merit*, calling everything good which redounds to their profit and which concerns *divine worship*, and to the contrary denominate as evil that which agrees with neither. Because the ignorant are not capable of judging what may be a little abstruse, and having no idea of things only by the aid of *imagination* which they consider *understanding*, these folk who know not what represents *Order* in the world believe all that they imagine. Man being inclined in such a manner that they think things well or ill ordered as they have the facility or trouble to conclude when good sense would teach differently. Some are more pleased to be weary of the means of investigation, being satisfied to remain as they are, preferring order to confusion, as if order was another thing than a pure effect of the imagination of man, so that when it is said that *God has made everything in order*, it is recognizing that he has that faculty of imagination as well as man. If it was not so, perhaps to favor human imagination they pretend that God created this world in the easiest manner imaginable, although there are an hundred things far above the force of imagination, and an infinity which may be thrown into disorder by reason of weakness.

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VIII.

For other ideas, they are purely the effect of the same imagination, which have nothing real, and which are but the different modes of which this power is capable. For example, if the movement which objects impress upon the nerves by the means of the eyes is agreeable to the senses, we say that these objects are beautiful, that odors are good or bad, that tastes are sweet or bitter, that which we touch hard or soft, sounds, harsh or agreeable. According as odors, tastes or sounds strike and penetrate the senses, just so we find a belief that God is capable of taking pleasure in melody, that the celestial movements are a harmonious concert, proof evident that each one believes that things are such as they are imagined, or that the world is purely imaginary. That is why we should not be surprised if we rarely found two men of the same opinion, and some who glorify themselves in doubting everything. For while men have bodies which resemble each other in many particulars, they differ in some others, and it should not astonish us that what seems good to one appears bad to another: what pleases this one displeases the other, from which we may infer that opinions only differ by fancy, that understanding passes for little, and to conclude, things which happen every day are purely the effects of imagination. If one should consult the lights of understanding of philosophers he would have faith that everybody would agree to the truth, and that judgments would be more uniform and reasonable than they are.

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IX.

It is then evident that all the reasons of which men are accustomed to avail themselves when they endeavor to explain Nature, are only methods of imagination which prove nothing less than they pretend, and because they have

given to these reasons names so real that if they existed otherwise than in imagination I would not call them *reasonable beings*, but purely chimerical, seeing nothing more easy than to respond to arguments founded on these vulgar notions and which we oppose as follows.

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If it was true that the universe was a chance happening, and a necessary sequel of divine nature, whence come the imperfections and faults which we remark? For example, corruption which fills the air with bad odor, many disagreeable objects, so many disorders, so much evil, so many crimes and other like occurrences. Nothing is more easy than to refute these objections, for one cannot judge of the perfection of ancient existence only by knowing its essence and nature, and we deceive ourselves in thinking that a thing is more or less perfect, as it pleases or displeases, is useful or useless to human nature; and to close the mouths of those who ask why God has not created all men without exception that they might be guided by the light of reason, it is enough to say that it was because the material was not sufficient to give each being the degree of perfection that was most suitable for him, or to speak more proper, because the laws of nature were so ample and extensive that they could suffice for the production of all things of which an infinite understanding is capable.



¹ Man is the noblest work of God—but nobody ever said so but man.—*Fra Elbertus*. ↑

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CHAPTER III.

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WHAT GOD IS.

I.

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Until now we have fought the popular idea concerning the Divinity, but we have not yet said what God is, and if we were asked, we should say that the word represents to us an Infinite Being, of whom one of his attributes is to be a substance of extent and consequently eternal and infinite. The extent or the quantity not being finite or divisible, it may be imagined that the matter was everywhere the same, our understanding not distinguishing parts. For example, water, as much as water is imagined, is divisible, and its parts separable from one another, though as much as a *corporeal substance* it is neither separable nor divisible.¹ Thus neither matter or quantity have anything unworthy of God, for if all is God, and all comes surely from his essence, it follows quite absolutely that He is all that he contains, since it is incomprehensible that Beings quite material should be contained in a Being who is not. That we may not think that this is a new opinion, *Tertullian*, one of the foremost men among the Christians, has pronounced against *Apelles*, that, "that which is not matter is nothing," and against *Praxias*, that "all substance is matter," without having this doctrine condemned in the four first Councils of the Christian Church, œcumenical and general.²

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II.

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These sentiments are plain and the only ones that good and sound judgment can form of God. However, there are but few who are satisfied with such simplicity. Boorish people, who are accustomed to adulation of opinion, demand a God who resembles earthly kings. The pomp and circumstance surrounding them so fascinates, that to take away all hope of going after death to increase the number of heavenly courtiers enjoying the same pleasure which attaches to the Court of Kings, is to take away the consolation and the only things which prevent them from going to despair over the miseries of life. They want a *just* and *avenging* God, who *rewards* and *punishes* after the manner of kings, a God susceptible of all human passions and weaknesses. They give him feet, hands,

and ears, and yet they do not regard a God so constituted as material. They say that man is his masterpiece, and even his own image, but do not allow that the copy is like the original. In a word, the God of the people of today is subject to as many forms as Jupiter of the Pagans, and what is still more strange, these follies contradict each other and shock good sense. The vulgar reverence them because they firmly believe what the Prophets have said, although these visionaries among the Hebrews, were the same as the augurs and the diviners among the pagans.³ They consult the Bible as if God or nature was therein expounded to them in a special manner, however this book is only a rhapsody of fragments, gathered at various times, selected by several persons, and given to the people according to the fancy of the Rabbins, who did not publish them until after approving some, and rejecting others, and seeing if they were conformable or opposed to the Law of Moses.⁴ Yes, such is the malice and stupidity of men that they prefer to pass their lives disputing with one another, and worshipping a book received from ignorant people; a book with little order or method, which everyone admits as confused and badly conceived, only serving to foment divisions.

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Christians would rather adore this phantom than listen to the law of Nature which God—that is to say, Nature, which is the active principle—has written in the heart of man. All other laws are but human fictions, and pure illusions forged, not by Demons or evil spirits, which are fanciful ideas, but by the skill of Princes and Ecclesiastics to give the former more warrant for their authority, and to enrich the latter by the traffic in an infinity of chimeras which sell to the ignorant at a good price.

All other laws are not supported save on the authority of the Bible, in the original of which appear a thousand instances of extraordinary and impossible things,⁵ and which speaks only of recompenses or punishments for good or bad actions, but which are wisely deferred for a future life, relying that the trick will not be discovered in this, no one having returned from the other to tell the news. Thus, men kept ever wavering between hope and fear, are held to their duty by the belief they aver that God has created man only to render him eternally happy or unhappy, and which has given rise to the infinity of religions which we are about to discuss.

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¹ So of water, however, it may be subject to generation and corruption, as long as it is substance it is not subject to separation and division. †

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² The four first Councils were 1. That of Nice in the year 345, under the Emperor Constantine the Great, and under Pope Sylvester I.; 2. That of Constantinople in the year 381, under the Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodore and the Pope Damase I.; 3. That of Ephesus in the year 431, under the Emperor Theodore, the younger, and Valentinian and under the Pope Celestin; 4. That of Chalcedon in the year 451, under Valentinian and Martian, and under Pope Leo I. †

³ These, among us, are the Astrologers and Fanatics. †

⁴ The Talmud remarks that the Rabbins deliberated whether they should omit the Book of Proverbs and that of Ecclesiastes from the number of canonicals, and would have done so had they not found in several places that they eulogized the Mosaic law. They would have done the same with the prophecies of Ezekiel had not a certain Chananiah undertook to harmonize them with the same law. †

⁵ The versions that we have differ greatly in a thousand places, one with another, until the end of the book. †

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CHAPTER IV.

WHAT THE WORD RELIGION SIGNIFIES, AND HOW AND WHY SUCH A GREAT NUMBER HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED IN THE WORLD.

I.

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Before the word Religion was introduced in the world mankind was only obliged to follow natural laws and to conform to common sense. This instinct alone was the tie by which men were united, and so very simple was this bond of unity, that nothing among them was more rare than dissensions. But when fear created a suspicion that there were Gods, and invisible powers, they raised altars to these imaginary beings, so that in putting off the yoke of Nature and Reason, which are the sources of true life, they subjected themselves by vain ceremonies and superstitious worship to frivolous phantoms of the imagination, and that is whence arose this word Religion which makes so much noise in the world.

Men having admitted invisible forces which were all-powerful over them, they worshipped them to appease them, and further imagined that Nature was a being subordinate to this power, thence they had the idea that it was a great mace that threatened, or a slave that acted only by the order that such power gave him. Since this false idea had broken their will they had only scorn for Nature, and respect only for those pretended beings that they called their Gods. Thence came the ignorance in which mankind was plunged, and from which the well-informed, however deep the abyss, could have rescued them, if their zeal had not been extinguished by those who led them blindly, and who lived by imposture. But though there was but little appearance of success in the enterprise, it was not necessary to abandon the party of truth, and only in consideration of those who were afflicted with the symptoms of so great an evil, were generous souls available to represent matters as they were.

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II.

Fear which created Gods, made also Religion, and when men imbibed the notion that there were invisible agencies which were the cause of their good and bad fortune, they lost their good sense and reason substituting for their chimeras so many *Divinities* who had care of their conduct.

After having forged these Gods they were curious to know of what matter they consisted, and finally imagined that they should be of the same substance as the soul. Then being persuaded that the latter resembled the shadows which appear in a mirror, or during sleep, they believed that some Gods were real substances but so thin and subtile that to distinguish them from bodies they called them *Spirits*. So that bodies and spirits were in effect the same thing, and differed neither more nor less, and to be *both* corporeal and incorporeal is a most incomprehensible thing. The reason given is that each spirit has a proper form, and is included within some limit, that is to say that it has some boundaries, and consequently must be a body however thin and subtile it might be.¹

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III.

The ignorant, that is, the greater part of mankind having settled in this manner the substance of their Gods, tried also to determine by what methods these invisible powers produced their effects. Not being able to do this definitely by reason of their ignorance, they put faith in their conjectures, blindly judging the future by the past, while seeing neither cohesion nor dependence.

In all that they undertook they saw but the past, and foretold good or evil for the future according as the same enterprise had at another time turned out either good or bad. *Phormion* having defeated the *Lacedaemonians* at the battle of *Naupacte*, the Athenians, after his death, chose another general of the same name: *Hannibal* having succumbed to the arms of *Scipio Africanus*, the Romans, remembering this great success, sent another *Scipio* to the same country against *Cesar*, which acts gained nothing for either the Athenians or the Romans. So after two or three experiences, *good or bad fortune* is made *synonymous* with certain *names* or *places*; others make use of certain words called *enchantments*, which they believe to be efficacious; some cause trees to speak, create man from a morsel of bread, and transform anything that may appear before them. (Hobbes' *Leviathan de homine*. Cap. 12, p. 56-57.)

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IV.

Invisible powers being established in this way, straightway men revere them only as they do their rulers, that is to say, by tokens of submission and respect, as witness *offerings*, *prayers*, and similar things, I say at first, for nature has not yet learned to use on such occasions sacrifices of blood, which have only been

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instituted for the benefit of the sacrificers and the ministers called to the service of these *beautiful Gods*.

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V.

These causes of *Religion*, that is, *Hope* and *Fear*, leaving out the passions, judgments and various resolutions of mankind, have produced the great number of extravagant beliefs which have caused so much evil, and the many revolutions which have convulsed the nations.

The honor and revenue which attaches to the priesthood, and which has since been accorded to the ministry of the Gods, and those having ecclesiastical charges, inflame the ambition and the avarice of cunning individuals who profit by the stupidity of the people, who readily submit in their weakness, and we know how insensibly is caused the easy habit of encouraging falsehood and hating truth.

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VI.

The empire of falsehood being established, and the ambitious ones encouraged by the advantage of being above their fellows, the latter endeavor to gain repute by a pretense of being friendly with the invisible Gods whom the vulgar fear. For better success, each schemes in his own way, and multiplies deities so that they are met at every turn.

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VII.

The formless matter of the world they term the god *Chaos*, and the same honor is accorded to *heaven*, *earth*, the *sea*, the *wind*, and the *planets*, and they are made both male and female. Further on we find *birds*, *reptiles*, the *crocodile*, the *calf*, the *dog*, the *lamb*, the *serpent*, the *hog*, and in fact all kinds of animals and plants constitute the better part. Each river and fountain bears the name of a God, each house had its own, each man his genius; in fact all space above and beneath the earth was occupied by spirits, shades and demons. It was not sufficient to maintain a Divinity in all imaginable places, but they feared to offend *time*, *day*, *night*, *concord*, *love*, *peace*, *victory*, *contention*, *mildew*, *honor*, *virtue*, *fever*, and *health*, or to insult these charming divinities whom they always imagined ready to discharge lightning on the heads of men, provided temples and altars were not erected to them.

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As a sequel, man commenced to fear his own special *genius*, whom some invoked under the name of *Muses*, and others under the name of *Fortune* adored their own ignorance. The latter sanctified their debauches in the name of *Cupid*, their rage in the name of *Furies*, and their natural parts under the name of *Priapus*, in a word, there was nothing which did not bear the name of a *God* or a *Demon*. (Hobbes' *de homine*, Chap. 12, p. 58.)

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VIII.

The founders of Religion having based their impostures on the ignorance of the people, took great care to maintain them by the *adoration of images* which they pretended were inhabited by the *Gods*, and this caused a flood of gold and benefactions called holy things, to pour into the coffers of the priests. These gifts were regarded as sacred, and designed for the use of these holy ministers, and none were so audacious as to pretend to their office, or even to touch them. To allure the people more successfully, these priests made prophecies and pretended to penetrate the future by the commerce which they boasted of having with the Gods. There is nothing so natural as to know destiny. These impostors were too well informed to omit any circumstance so advantageous for their designs. Some were established at *Delos*, others at *Delphos* and elsewhere, where by ambiguous oracles they replied to the demands made of them. Women even were engaged in these impostures, and the Romans in their great *Calamities* had recourse to the *Sybilline books*; fools and lunatics passed for *enthusiasts*, and those who pretended to converse with the dead were called *necromancers*.

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Others read the future by the flight of birds, or by the entrails of beasts. Indeed

the *eyes*, the *hands*, the *face*, or an extraordinary object, all seemed to them to possess a good or bad omen, so it is true that the ignorant will receive any desired impression when the secret of their wish is found. (Hobbes' *de homine*, Chap. 12, pp. 58-59.)



¹ See Tertullian *ante*, also Hobbes' *Leviathan*, C. 12, p. 56. ↑

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CHAPTER V.

OF MOSES.

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I.

The ambitious, who have always been grand masters of the art of trickery, have always followed this method in expounding their laws, and to oblige the people to submit to them they have persuaded them that they had received them either from a *God* or a *Goddess*.

Although there was a multitude of Divinities, those who worshipped them called *Pagans* had no general system of Religion. Each republic, each state and city, each particular place had its own rites and thought of the Divinity as fancy dictated. Following this came legislators more cunning than these first tricksters, and who employed methods more studied and more certain for the propagation and perpetuity of their laws, as well as the culture of such ceremonies and fanaticism as they deemed proper to establish.

Among the great number Arabia and its frontiers has given birth to three who have been distinguished as much by the kind of laws and worship which they established, as by the idea they have given of a Divinity to their followers, and the means they have taken to cause this idea to be received and their laws to be approved.

Moses is the most ancient; *Jesus* coming after labored after his manner in preserving the foundation of his laws while abolishing the remainder; and *Mahomet* appearing later on the scene has taken from one and the other religion to compose his own, and therefore he is declared the enemy of all the Gods.

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Let us see the character of these three Legislators, examine their conduct, and then judge afterwards who are the best founded: those who revered them as Holy men and Gods, or those who treated them as schemers and impostors.

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II.

The celebrated *Moses*, grandson of a great magician,¹ by the account of *Justin Martyr*, had all the advantages proper for what he afterwards became. It is well known that the Hebrews, of whom he became the Chief, were a nation of shepherds whom King Pharaoh Orus I. received in his country in consideration of services that he had received from one of them in the time of a great famine. He gave them some lands in the east of Egypt in a country fertile in pasturage, and consequently adapted for their flocks.

During 200 years they rapidly increased, because, being considered foreigners they were not required to serve in the armies of Pharaoh, and because of the natural advantages of the lands which *Orus* had granted them. Some bands of Arabs came to join them as brothers, for they were of a similar race, and they increased so astonishingly that the land of Goshen not being able to contain them they spread all over Egypt, giving Pharaoh Memnon II. good reason to fear that they might be capable of some dangerous attempt in case Egypt was attacked (as happened soon after) by their active enemies, the Ethiopians.

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Thus a policy of state compelled this Prince to curtail their privileges, and to seek means to weaken and enslave them. Pharaoh Orus II. surnamed *Busiris* because of his cruelty, and who succeeded *Memnon*, followed his plan regarding the Jews. Wishing to perpetuate his memory by the erection of the Pyramids and building the city of Thebes, he condemned the Hebrews to labor at making bricks, the material in the earth of their country being adapted for this purpose. During this servitude the celebrated *Moses* was born, in the same year that the King issued an edict to cast all the male Hebrew children into the Nile, seeing that he had no surer means of exterminating this rabble of foreigners.

Moses was exposed to perish in the waters in a basket covered with pitch, which his mother placed in the rushes on the banks of the river. It chanced that *Thermitis*, daughter of *Orus*, was walking near the shore and hearing the cries of the child, the natural compassion of her sex inspired her to save it.

Orus having died, *Thermitis* succeeded him, and *Moses* having been presented to her, she caused him to be educated in a manner befitting the son of a Queen of the wisest and most polished nation of the universe. In a word he was *tutored in all the science of the Egyptians*, and it is admitted, and they have represented *Moses* to us as the greatest politician, the wisest philosopher and the most famous *magician* of his time. It followed that he was admitted to the order of Priesthood, which was in Egypt what the *Druids* were in Gaul, that is to say—*everything*.

Those who are not familiar with what the government of Egypt was, will be pleased to know that the famous dynasties having come to an end, the entire country was dependent upon one Sovereign who divided it into several provinces of no great extent. The governors of these countries were called *monarchs*, and they were ordinarily of the powerful order of Priests, who possessed nearly one-third of Egypt. The king named these *monarchs*, and if we can believe the authors who have written of *Moses* and compare what they have said with what *Moses* himself has written, we may conclude that he was *monarch* of the land of *Goshen*, and that he owed his elevation to *Thermitis*, who had also saved his life.

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We see what *Moses* was in Egypt, where he had both time and means to study the manners of the Egyptians, and those of his nation: their governing passions, their inclinations, and all that would be of service to him in his effort to excite the revolution of which he was the promoter.

Thermitis having died, her successor renewed the persecution against the Hebrews, and *Moses* having lost his previous favor, and fearing that he could not justify several homicides that he had committed, took the precaution to flee.

He retired to *Arabia Petrea*, on the confines of Egypt, and chance brought him to the home of a tribal chief of the country. His services, and the talents that his master remarked in him, merited his good graces and one of his daughters in marriage. It is here to be noted that *Moses* was such a bad Jew, and knew so little of the *redoubtable God* whom he invented later, that he wedded an idolatress, and did not even think of having his children circumcised.

It was in the Arabian deserts, while guarding the flocks of his father-in-law and brother-in-law, he conceived the design of avenging the injustice which had been done him by the King of Egypt, by bringing trouble and sedition in the court of his states; and he flattered himself that he could easily succeed in this by reason of his talents, as by the disposition which he knew he would find in his nation already incensed against the government by reason of the bad treatment that they had been caused to suffer.

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It appears by the history which he has told of this revolution, or at least by the author of the books attributed to *Moses*, that *Jethro*, his brother-in-law, was in the conspiracy, as well as his brother *Aaron* and his sister *Mary*, who had remained in Egypt, and with whom he could arrange to hold correspondence. As may be seen by the sequel he had formed a vast plan in good politics, and he could put in service against *Egypt* all the science he had learned there, and the pretended *Magic* in which he was more subtle and skillful than all those at the Court of Pharaoh who possessed the same accomplishments. It was by these pretended miracles that he gained the confidence of those of his nation that he caused to rebel. He joined to them thousands of mutinous Egyptians, Ethiopians and Arabs. Boasting the power of his *Divinity* and the frequent interviews he held with Him, and causing Him to intervene in all the measures he took with the chiefs of the revolt, he persuaded them so well that they followed him to the number of 600,000 combatants—besides the women and children—across the deserts of Arabia, of which he knew all the windings.

After a *six* days march on a laborious retreat, he commanded his followers to consecrate the *seventh* to his God by a *public rest*, to make them believe that

this God favored him, that he approved his sway, and that no one could have the audacity to contradict him.

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There were never any people more ignorant than the Hebrews, and consequently none more credulous. To be convinced of this profound ignorance, it is only necessary to recall the condition of these people in Egypt when *Moses* made them revolt. They were hated by the Egyptians because of their pastoral life, persecuted by the Sovereign and employed in the vilest labor.

Among such a populace it was not very difficult for Moses to avail himself of his talents. He made them believe that his God (whom he sometimes simply called an *angel*)—the *God of their Fathers*—appeared to him, that it was by his order that he took care to lead them, that he had chosen him for Governor, and that they would be the favored people of this God, provided they believed what he said on his part.

He added to his exhortations on the part of his God, the adroit use of his prestige, and the knowledge that he had of nature. He confirmed what he said to them by what might be called *miracles*, always easy to perform, and which made a great impression on an imbecile populace.

It may be remarked above all, that he believed he had found a sure method for holding this people submissive to his orders, in making accessory of the statement that God himself was their leader: by night a *column of fire* and a *cloud* by day. But it can be proved that this was the grossest trick of this impostor, and that it might serve him for a long time. He had learned during his travels that he had made in Arabia, a country vast and uninhabited, that it was the custom of those who traveled in companies to take guides who conducted them in the night by means of a brazier, the flame of which they followed, and in the day time by the smoke of the same brazier which all the members of the caravan could see, and consequently not go astray. This custom prevailed among the *Medes* and *Assyrians*, and it is quite natural that Moses used it, and made it pass for a *miracle*, and a mark of the protection of his God. If I may not be believed when I say that this was a trick, let Moses himself be believed, who in [Numbers, Chap. x. v. 29-33](#), asks his brother-in-law, Hobab, to come with the Israelites, *that he may show them the roads, because he knew the country*. This is demonstrative, for if it was God who marched before Israel night and day in the *cloud* and the *column of fire* could they have a better guide? Meanwhile here is Moses exhorting his brother-in-law by the most pressing motives of interest to serve him as *Guide*. Then the *cloud* and the *column of fire* was God only for the people, and not for Moses, who knew what it was.

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These poor unfortunates thus seduced, charmed at being adopted by the Master of God, as they were told, emerging from a hard and cruel bondage, applauded Moses and swore to obey him. His authority was thus confirmed. He sought to perpetuate it, and under pretext of establishing divine worship, or of a supreme God of whom he said he was the lieutenant, he made his brother and his children chiefs of the Royal Palace, that is to say, of the place where miracles were performed out of the sight and presence of the people.

So he continued these pretended miracles, at which the simple were amazed and others stupefied, but which caused those who were wise and who saw through these impostures to pity them. However skillful Moses was, and how many clever tricks he knew how to do, he would have had much trouble to secure obedience if he had not a strong army.² Deceit without force has rarely succeeded.

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It was in order to have assured means to maintain obedience against the discerning that he continued to place in his own faction those of his tribe, giving them all the important charges and exempting them from the greater part of the labors. He knew how to create jealousies among the other tribes, some of whom took his part against the others. Finally assuring adroitly to his interest those who appeared the most enlightened, by placing them in his confidence, he secured them by giving them employment of distinction.

After that he found some of these idiots had the courage to reproach his bad faith; that under his false pretense of justice and equity he was seizing everything. As the sovereign authority was vested in his blood in such manner that no one had a right to aspire to it, they considered finally that he was less their father than their tyrant.

On such occasions Moses by cunning policy confounded these *free-thinkers* and spared none who censured his government.

With such precautions, and cloaking his punishments under the name of *Divine* vengeance, he continued absolute, and to finish in the same way he began, that is to say by deceit and imposture, he chose an extraordinary death. He cast

himself in an abyss in a lonely place where he retired from time to time under pretext of conferring with God, and which he had long designed for his tomb. His body never having been found, it was believed that his God had taken him, and that he had become like Him.

He knew that the memories of the patriarchs who preceded him were held in great veneration when their sepulchres were found, but that was not sufficient for an ambition like his. He must be revered as a God for whom death had no terrors, and to this end all his efforts were directed since the beginning of his reign when he said that he was established of God—to be the *God of Pharaoh*. Elijah³ gave his example, also Romulus⁴, Empedocles⁵ and all those who from a desire to immortalize their names, have concealed the time and place of their death so that they would be deemed immortal.



¹ This word must not be taken in the ordinary sense, for what is called a magician among learned people means an adroit man, a skillful charlatan, and a subtle juggler whose entire art consists in dexterity and skill, and not in any compact with the devil as the common people believe. ↑

² He remained from time to time in a solitary place under pretext of privately conferring with God, and by this pretended intercourse with the Divinity he taught them a respect and obedience which was, in the meanwhile, unlimited. ↑

³ See Book of Kings, Chapter II. ↑

⁴ Romulus drowned himself in the morass of *Cherres*, and his body not being found, it was believed that he was raised to heaven and deified.

When Romulus was reviewing his forces in the plain of Caprae there suddenly arose a thunderstorm during which he was enveloped in so thick a cloud that he was lost to the view of his army: nor thereafter on this earth was Romulus seen. Livy I. 1, c. 16. ↑

⁵ Empedocles, a celebrated philosopher, threw himself into the crater of Mount Etna, to cause the belief that, like Romulus, he was raised to heaven. ↑

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CHAPTER VI.

OF NUMA POMPILIUS.

To return to the law-givers, there were none who, having attributed their laws to Divinity, did not endeavor to encourage the belief that they themselves were more than human.

Numa, having tasted the delights of solitude, did not wish to leave it for the throne of *Rome*, but being forced by public acclamation, he profited by the devotion of the Romans. He informed them that he had talked with God, and if they desired him for King they must observe the Divine laws and institutions which had been dictated to him by the nymph *Egeria*.¹

Alexander wished to be considered a son of *Jupiter*. *Perseus* pretended to be a son of the same God and the virgin *Danae*; Plato, of *Apollo*, and a virgin, which, perhaps, is the cause of the belief among the Egyptians that the *Spirit of God* Λνεῦρα Πνεῦμα² could get a woman with child as the wind did the Iberian mares.³

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¹ It is recorded by Livy (liber II., c. 21,) that there is a grove through which flowed a perennial stream, taking its origin in a dark cave, in which Numa was accustomed to meet the goddess, and to receive instructions as to his political and religious institutions. ↑

² Breath or inspiration of the Gods. ↑

³ The Tartars assert that Genghis Khan was born of a virgin, and that Foh, according to the Chinese belief, derived his origin from a virgin rendered pregnant by the rays of the sun.

Since the introduction of the umbrella or sun-shade into the Central Flowery Kingdom occurrences like the latter have been infrequent. ↑

CHAPTER VII.

OF JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus Christ, who was not unacquainted with the maxims and science of the Egyptians, among whom he dwelt several years, availed himself of this knowledge, deeming it proper for the design which he meditated. Considering that Moses was renowned because he commanded an ignorant people, he undertook to build on a similar foundation, and his followers were only some idiots whom he persuaded that the Holy Spirit was his Father, and his Mother a Virgin.¹ These good people being accustomed to be satisfied with dreams and fancies, adopted this fable, believed all that he wished, and even more willingly that a birth out of the natural order was not so marvelous a circumstance for them to believe. To be born of a *Virgin* by the operation of the *Holy Spirit*² was, in their estimation, as wonderful as what the Romans said of their founder, *Romulus*, who owed his birth to a *Vestal* and a *God*.

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This happened at a time when the Jews were tired of their God, as they had been of their Judges,³ and wished to have a visible God like other nations. As the number of fools is infinite, he found followers everywhere, but his extreme poverty was an invincible obstacle to his elevation. The *Pharisees*, delighted with the boldness of a man of their sect,⁴ while startled at his audacity, elevated or depressed him according to the fickle humor of the populace, so that when it became noised about concerning his *Divinity*, it was impossible—he being possessed of no power—that his design could succeed. No matter how many sick he cured, nor how many dead he raised, having no money and no army, he could not fail to perish, and with that outlook it appears that he had less chance of success than *Moses*, *Mahomet*, and all those who were ambitious to elevate themselves above others. If he was more unfortunate, he was no less adroit, and several places in his history give evidence that the greatest fault in his policy was not to have sufficiently provided for his own safety. So it may be seen that he did not manage his affairs any better than those two other legislators, of whose memory exists but the remains of the belief that they established among the different nations.

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¹ *Celsus* says, in *Origen*, that Jesus Christ was a native of a little hamlet in Judea, and that his mother was a poor villager who only existed by her labor. Having been convicted of adultery with a soldier named *Pandira*, she was induced to flee by her betrothed, who was a carpenter by trade, who condoned their offence, and they wandered miserably from place to place. She was secretly delivered of Jesus, and finding themselves in want, they were constrained to flee to Egypt. After several years, his services being of no value to the Egyptians, he returned to his own country, where, quite proud of the miracles he knew how to perform, he proclaimed himself *God*.

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Human nature was at those times not fundamentally different from what it is now, and we need, therefore, not be surprised to hear that one of the stalwart Roman warriors, whose name was *Pandira*, fell in love with one of the dark-eyed daughters of Nazareth, and that the fruit of their “illegitimate” union was a son whom they called *Jehoshua*, and who inherited from his father the manly pride of the Roman, and from his Jewish mother his almost feminine beauty and modesty.

Of *Jehoshua*’s mother, little is to be said. ***** Ignorant, innocent, and of modest manners, uneducated but kind, sympathetic and beautiful, *Stada*, like many others of her sex, was guided more by the decision of her heart than by the calculations of her intellect. Her heart yearned for love and she hoped to find in *Pandira* the realization of her ideal.—*Life of Jehoshua, The Prophet of Nazareth, an Occult Study and a Key to the Bible. Franz Hartmann, M. D., Boston, 1889.* †

² A beautiful dove overshadowed a virgin; there is nothing surprising in that. It happened frequently in Lydia, and the swan of Leda is the counterpart of the dove of Mary.

Qu’un beau Pigeon a tire d’aile	When a pretty dove under her wing
Vienne abombrer une Pucelle,	Happens to conceal a Virgin,
Rien n’est suprenant en cela;	There is nothing surprising in that.
L’on en vit autant en Lydie.	The same thing is known in Lydia,
Et le beau Cygne de Leda	For the beautiful swan of Leda
Vaut bien le Pigeon de Marie.	Is just as good as Mary’s pigeon.

³ In the book of *Samuel*, chap. vii, it is related that the Israelites being discontented with the sons of Samuel who judged them, demanded a King, the same as other nations, with whom they wished to conform. †

⁴ Jesus Christ was of the sect of the Pharisees, or the poor, who were opposed to the Sadducees, who formed the sect of the rich. †

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CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE POLICY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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I.

Is there anything, for example, more dextrous than the manner in which he treated the subject of the woman taken in adultery? (St. John, c. viii.) The Jews having asked if they should stone this unfortunate, instead of replying definitely, yes or no, by which he would fall in the trap set by his enemies: the negative being directly against the law, and the affirmative proving him severe and cruel, which would have alienated the saints. Instead of replying as any ordinary person but him would have done, he said, "*whoever is without sin, let him cast the first stone,*" a skillful response, which shows us his presence of mind.

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II.

Another time being asked if it was lawful to¹ *pay tribute to Cesar*, and seeing the image of the Prince on the coin that they showed him, he evades the difficulty by replying that they should "*render unto Cesar what belongs to Cesar, and unto God what belongs to God.*" The difficulty consisted in that he would be guilty of *lèse majesté* if he had said it was not permitted, and by saying that it was, he would reverse the law of Moses which he always protested he would not do, because he felt that he was either too weak, or that he would be worsted in the endeavor. So he made himself more popular, by acting with impunity after the manner of Princes, who allowed the privileges of their subjects to be confirmed while their power was not well established, but who scorned their promises when they were well enthroned.

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III.

He again skillfully avoided a trap that the Pharisees had set for him. They asked him—having in their minds thoughts which would only tend to convict him of lying—*by what authority he pretended to instruct and catechise the people.* Whether he replied that it was by human authority because he was not of the sacred body of Levites, or whether he boasted of preaching by the express command of God, his doctrine was contrary to the Mosaic law. To relieve this embarrassment, he availed himself of the questioners themselves by asking them in the name of whom they thought *John* baptized? The Pharisees, who for policy opposed the baptism by *John*, would be condemned themselves in avowing *that it was of God.* If they had *not* admitted it they would have been exposed to the rage of the populace, who believed the contrary. To get out of this dilemma, they replied that they knew nothing of it, to which Jesus answered that he was neither obliged to tell them why, nor in the name of whom he preached.

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IV.

Such were the skillful and witty evasions of the destroyer of the ancient law and the founder of the new. Such were the origins of the new religion which was built on the ruins of the old, or to speak disinterestedly, there was nothing more divine in this than in the other sects which preceded it. Its founder, who was not quite ignorant, seeing the extreme corruption of the Jewish republic, judged it as nearing its end, and believed that another should be revived from its ashes. The fear of being prevented by one more ambitious than himself, made him haste to

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establish it by methods quite opposed to those of Moses. The latter commenced by making himself formidable to other nations. Jesus, on the contrary, attracted them to him by the hope of the advantages of another life, which he said could be obtained by believing in him, while Moses only promised temporal benefits as a recompense for the observation of *his* law. Jesus Christ held out a hope which never was realized. The laws of one only regarded the exterior, while those of the other aimed at the inner man, influencing even the thoughts, and entirely the reverse of the law of Moses. Whence it follows that Jesus believed with *Aristotle* that it is with Religion and States, as with individuals who are begotten and die, and as nothing is made except subject to dissolution, there is no law which can follow which is entirely opposed to it. Now as it is difficult to decide to change from one law to another, and as the great majority is difficult to move in matters of Religion, Jesus, in imitation of the other innovators had recourse to *miracles*, which have always been the peril of the ignorant, and the sanctuary of the ambitious.

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V.

Christianity was founded by this method, and Jesus profiting by the faults of the Mosaic policy, never succeeded so happily anywhere, as in the measures which he took to render his law eternal. The Hebrew prophets thought to do honor to Moses by predicting a successor who resembled him. That is to say, a *Messiah*, grand in virtue, powerful in wealth, and terrible to his enemies; and while their prophecies have produced the contrary effect, many ambitious ones have taken occasion to proclaim themselves the promised Messiah, which has caused revolts that have endured until the entire destruction of their republic.

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Jesus Christ, more adroit than the Mosaic prophets, to defeat the purpose of those who rose up against him predicted ([Matthew xxiv. 4-5-24-25-26](#)[☞]. [II. Thessalonians ii. 3-10](#)[☞]. [John ii. 11-18](#)[☞]) that such a man would be a great enemy of God, the delight of the Devil, the sink of all iniquity and the desolation of the world. After these fine declarations there was, to my mind, no person who would dare to call himself *Anti-Christ*, and I do not think he could have found a better way to perpetuate his law. There was nothing more fabulous than the rumors that were spread concerning this pretended *Anti-Christ*. *St. Paul* said ([II. Thessalonians xi. 7](#)[☞]) of his existence, that "he was already born," consequently was present on the eve of the coming of *Jesus Christ* while more than twelve hundred years have expired since the prediction of this prophet was uttered, and he has not yet appeared.

I admit that these words have been credited to *Cherintus* and *Ebion*, two great enemies of Jesus Christ, because they denied his pretended divinity, but it also may be said that if this interpretation conforms to the view of the apostle, which is not credible; these words for all time designate an infinity of *Anti-Christ*, there being no reputable scholar who would offend by saying *that the² history of Jesus Christ is a fable, and that his law is but a tissue of idle fancies that ignorance has put in vogue and that interest preserves.*

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VI.

Nevertheless it is pretended that a Religion which rests on such frail foundations is quite divine and supernatural, as if we did not know that there were never persons more convenient to give currency to the most absurd opinions than *women* and *idiots*.

It is not strange, then, that Jesus did not choose Philosophers and Scholars for his Apostles. He knew that his law and good sense were diametrically opposed.³ That is the reason why he declaims in so many places against the wise, and excludes them from his kingdom, where were to be admitted the *poor in spirit*, the *silly* and the *crazy*. Again, rational individuals did not think it unfortunate to have nothing in common with *visionaries*.

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¹ By this Norman reply he eluded the question. A Norman never says yes, or no. *Blason populaire de la Normandie*. ↑

² *Vide* Boniface VIII. (1294) and Leo X. (1513) Boniface said that men had the same souls as beasts, and that these human and bestial souls lived no longer than each other. The Gospel also says that all other laws teach several virtues and several lies; for example, a *Trinity* which is false, the *child-birth of a Virgin* which is impossible, and the *incarnation* and *transubstantiation* which are ridiculous. I do not believe, continued he, other than that the *Virgin* was a *she-ass*, and her son the issue of a *she-ass*.

Leo X. went one day to a room where his treasures were kept, and exclaimed "we must admit that this fable of Jesus Christ has been quite profitable to us." †

3 The belief in the Christian doctrine is strange and wild to reason and human judgment. It is contrary to all Philosophy and discourse of Truth, as may be seen in all the articles of faith which can neither be comprehended nor understood by human intellect, for they appear impossible and quite strange. Mankind, in order to believe and receive them, must control and subject his reason, submitting his understanding to the obedience of the faith. *St. Paul* says that if man considers and hears philosophy and measures things by the compass of Truth, he will forsake all, and ridicule it as folly.

That is the avowal made by *Charron* in a book entitled "*The Three Truths*," page 180. Edition of Bordeaux, 1593.⁴ †

⁴ This inserted note is written on the back of a portion of a letter addressed to "*Prince graaft by de Spiegelstraat. A Amsterdam*," postmarked "*Ce 4e. Aout. 1746*." †

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CHAPTER IX.

OF THE MORALS OF JESUS CHRIST.

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I.

As for his *Morals*, we see nothing more divine therein than in the writings of the ancients, or rather we find only what are only extracts or imitations. *St. Augustin* (ch. 9 and v. 20 of the Confessions, Book 7,) even admits that he has found in some of their works nearly all of the beginning of the Gospel according to *St. John*. As far as may be seen, that Apostle is believed, in many places, to have stolen from other authors, and that it was not difficult to rob the Prophets of their enigmas and visions to make his *Apocalypse*. Whence comes the conformity which we find between the doctrine of the Old Testament and that of *Plato*? to say nothing of what the Rabbins have done, and those who have fabricated the *Holy Writings* from a mass of fragments stolen from this Grand Philosopher.

Certainly the birth of the world has a thousand times more probability in his *Timaeus* than in Genesis, and it cannot be said that that comes from what *Plato* had read in the books of the Jews during his travels in Egypt, for according to *St. Augustin* himself, (Confessions, Book 7, ch. 9, v. 20,) *Ptolemy* had not yet translated them. The description of the country of which *Socrates* speaks to *Simias* in the *Phaedon* (?) has infinitely more grace than the *Terrestrial Paradise* (of Eden) and the *Androgynus*¹ is without comparison, better conceived than what *Genesis* says of the extraction of Eve from one of the sides of Adam. Is there anything that more resembles the two accidents of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* than that which happened to *Phaeton*? Is there anything more alike than the fall of *Lucifer* and that of *Vulcan*, or that of the giants cast down by the lightnings of Jupiter? Anything more similar than *Samson* and *Hercules*, *Elijah* and *Phaeton*, *Joseph* and *Hippolitus*, *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Lycaon*, *Tantalus* and the tormented rich man ([Luke xvi. 24](#)), the *manna of the Israelites* and the *ambrosia of the Gods*? *St. Augustin*—quoted from God, Book 6, chap. 14,—*St. Cyrile* and *Theophylactus* compare *Jonah* with *Hercules*, surnamed *Trinitium* (?Trinoctius), because he had dwelt three days and three nights in the belly of a whale. The *river of Daniel*, spoken of in the *Prophets*, ch. vii, is a visible imitation of *Periphlegeton*, which is mentioned by *Plato* in the Dialogue on the "Immortality of the Soul."

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Original sin has been taken from *Pandora's box*, the sacrifice of *Isaac* and *Jephthah* from the story of *Iphigenia*, although in the latter a *hind* was substituted. What is said of *Lot and his wife* is quite like the tale which is told of *Baucis* and *Philemon*. In short, it is unquestionable that the authors of the Scriptures have transcribed word for word the works of *Hesiod* and *Homer*.

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II.

But it seems that I have made quite a digression which, however, may not be unprofitable. Let us return then to Jesus, or rather, to his *Morals*.

Celsus proves, by the account of *Origen* (Book VI, against *Celsus*), that he had

taken from *Plato* his finest sentiments, such as that which says (*Luke*, c. xviii, v. 25), *that a camel might sooner pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man should enter the Kingdom of God*. It was the *sect of Pharisees* of which he was, and who believed in him, which gave birth to this. What is said of the *Immortality of the Soul*, of the *Resurrection*, of *Hell*, and the greater part of his *Morals*, I see nothing more admirable than in the works of *Epictetus*, *Epicurus* and many others. In fact, the latter was cited by *St. Jerome* (Book VIII, against *Jovian*, ch. viii), *as a man whose virtue puts to the blush better Christians, observing that all his works were filled with but herbs, fruits and abstinence, and whose delights were so temperate that his finest repasts were but a little cheese, bread and water*. With a life so frugal, this Philosopher, pagan as he was, said that it was *better to be unlucky and rational, than rich and opulent without having good sense*, adding, *that it is rare that fortune and wisdom are found in the same individual, and that one could have no knowledge of happiness nor live with pleasure unless felicity was accompanied by prudence, justice and honesty, which are qualifications of a true and lasting delight*.

As for *Epictetus* I do not believe that any man, not excepting *Jesus* himself, was more austere, more firm, more equitable, or more moral. I say nothing but what is easy to prove, and not to pass my prescribed limit I will not mention all the exemplary acts of his life, but give one single example of constancy which puts to shame the weakness and cowardice of *Jesus* in the sight of death. Being a slave to a freeman named *Epaphroditus*, captain of the guards of Nero, it took the fancy of this brute to twist the leg of *Epictetus*. *Epictetus* perceiving that it gave him pleasure said to him, smiling, that he was well convinced that the game would not end until he had broken his leg; in fact, this crisis happened. "Well," said *Epictetus* with an even smiling face, "did I not say that you would break my leg?" Was there ever courage equal to that? and could it have been said of *Jesus Christ* had he been the victim? He who wept and trembled with fear at the least alarm, and who evinced at his death a lack of spirit that never was witnessed in the majority of his martyrs.

I doubt not but what it might be said of this action of *Epictetus* what the ignorant remark of the virtues of the Philosophers, that vanity was their principle, and that they were not what they seemed. But I say also that those who use such language are people who, in the pulpit, say all that comes into their heads—either good or evil—and they want the privilege of telling it all. I know also that when these babblers, sellers of air, wind and smoke, have vented all their strength against the champions of common sense they think they have well earned the revenues of their livings: that they have not merited a call to instruct the people unless they have declared against those who know what common sense and true virtue is.

So it is true that nothing in the world approaches so little to the manners of true scholars as the actions of the ignorant who decry them and who appear to have studied only to procure preferment which gives them bread; and which preferment they worship and magnify when this height is attained, as if they had reached a condition of perfection, which, to those who succeed, is a condition of self-love, ease, pride and pleasure, following nothing less than the maxims of the religion which they profess.

But let us leave these people who know not what virtue is, and examine the divinity of their Master.

¹ Hermaphrodites. †

CHAPTER X.

OF THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

After having examined his policy and morals we have seen nothing more Divine than in the writings and conduct of the ancients. Let us see if the reputation which followed him after his death is an evidence that he was God. Mankind is so accustomed to false reasoning that I am astonished that any one can reach a sane conclusion from their conduct. Experience shows that there is nothing they

followed that is in any wise true, and that nothing has been done or said by them which gives any evidence of stability. In the meanwhile it is certain that common opinions are continually surrounded with chimeras notwithstanding the efforts of the learned, which have always opposed them. Whatever care has been taken to extirpate follies the people have never abandoned them only after having been surfeited with them. Moses was proud to boast himself the Lieutenant of the Lord of Lords, and to prove his mission by extraordinary signs. If ever so little he absented himself (which he did from time to time to confer, as he said, with his God, as *Numa* and other lawgivers also did) he only found on his return traces of the worship of the Gods which the Israelites had seen in Egypt. He successfully held them forty years in the wilderness that they might lose the idea of those they had abandoned, and not being yet satisfied they obeyed him who led them, and bore firmly whatever hardship they were caused to suffer in this regard.

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Only the hatred which they had conceived for other nations, by an arrogance of which most idiots are susceptible, made them insensibly forget the Gods of Egypt and attach themselves to those of *Moses* whom they adored, and sometimes with all the circumstance marked in the laws. But when they quitted these conditions little by little to follow those of *Jesus Christ*, I cannot see what inconstancy caused them to run after the novelty and change.

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II.

The most ignorant Hebrews having given the most vogue to the law of Moses were the first to run after Jesus, and as their number was infinite and they encouraged each other, it is not marvellous that these errors spread so easily. It is not that novelty does not always beget suffering, but it is the glory that is expected that one hopes will smooth the difficulties. Thus the Disciples of Jesus, miserable as they were, reduced at times to nourish themselves with grains of corn which they gathered from the fields (Luke vi., 1), and seeing themselves shamefully excluded from places where they thought to enter to ease their fatigue (Luke ix., 52-53) they began to be discouraged with living; their Master being without the pale of the law and unable to give them the benefits, glory and grandeur which he had promised them.

After his death his disciples, in despair at seeing their hopes frustrated, and pursued by the Jews who wished to treat them as they had treated their Master, made a virtue of necessity and scattered over the country, where by the report of some women ([John xx. 18](#)) they told of his resurrection, his divine affiliation and the rest of the fables with which the Gospels are filled.¹ The trouble which they had to make progress among the *Jews* made them resolve to pass among the *Gentiles*, and try to serve themselves better among them; but as it was necessary to have more learning for that than they possessed—the Gentiles being philosophers and too much in love with truth to resort to trifles—they gained over a young man (Saul or St. Paul) of an active and eager mind and a little better informed than the simple fishermen or than the greater babblers who associated with them. A stroke from Heaven made him blind, as is said (without this the trick would have been useless) and this incident for a time attracted some weak souls.² By the fear of Hell, taken from some of the fables of the ancient poets, and by the hope of a glorious *Resurrection* and a *Paradise* which is hardly more supportable than that of *Mahomet*; all these procured for their *Master* the honor of passing for a God, which he himself was unable to obtain while living. In which this kind of *Jesus* was no better than *Homer*: six cities which had driven the latter out with contempt and scorn during his life, disputed with each other after his death to determine with whom remained the honor of having been his birth-place.

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By this it may be seen that Christianity depends, like all other things, on the caprice of men, in whose opinion all passes either for good or bad, according as the notion strikes them. Further, if Jesus was God, nothing could resist him, for St. Paul (Romans, v. 19), is witness that nothing could overcome his will. Yet this passage is directly opposed to another in Genesis (iv, 7), where it is said that as the *desires and appetites of man belong to him, who is the Master*, so it is agreed to accord free-will to the master of animals, that is to say, man, for whom it is said God has created the universe.

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But without wandering in a maze of errors and positive contradictions, of which we have discoursed sufficiently, let us say something of *Mahomet*, who founded a law upon maxims totally opposed to those of *Jesus Christ*.



¹ Which determined the *Emperor Julian* to abandon the sect of Nazarenes whose faith he regarded as a vulgar fiction of the human mind, which he found based solely on a simple tale of *Perdiccas*. †

² Also his belief in visions and the legend of his translation to Heaven. †

CHAPTER XI.

OF MAHOMET.

I.

Hardly had the Disciples of Jesus abandoned the Mosaic law to introduce the Christian, than mankind, with their usual caprice and ordinary inconstancy, suddenly changed their sentiments, and all the East was seen embracing the sentiments of the celebrated *Arius*, who had the boldness to oppose the fable of Jesus, and prove that he was no more a God than any other man. Thus Christianity was almost abolished, and there appeared a new law-giver, who, in less than ten years time, formed a considerable sect. This was *Mahomet*.¹

To be well acquainted with him, it must be known that the part of *Arabia* where he was born, was commonly called "the Happy," by reason of its fertility, and being inhabited by people who formed several Republics, each Republic being a family called a "tribe," and having for its head the chief of the principal family, among those which composed the "tribe."

That in which *Mahomet* was born was named the Tribe of *Koreish*, of which the principal family was that of *Hashem*, of which the chief was then a certain *Abdul Motallab*,² grandfather of *Mahomet*, whose father, eldest son of *Abdul Motallab*, was named *Abdallah*.²

This tribe inhabited the shores of the Red sea, and *Abdul Motallab* was High Priest of the Temple of Mecca where were worshipped the Idols of the country. As Chief of his Tribe he was Prince of this country in which quality he had sustained the war against the King of Persia and the Emperor of Ethiopia, which shows that *Mahomet* was not of the riff-raff of the people.

His father dying before his grandfather, his tender years caused him to lose the rights he had to the Sovereignty, which one of his uncles usurped. It was for this reason, not being able to succeed to the title of Prince, that he was reduced to the humble condition of shop-boy in the employ of a wealthy widow for whom he became afterwards factor. Having found him to her liking she married him and made him one of the richest citizens of Mecca. He was then about 30 years of age, and seeing at hand the means to enforce his rights, his ambitions awakened, and he meditated in what manner he could re-establish himself in the dignity of his grandfather.

The correspondence that he had had with *Christians* in *Egypt* and *Jews* in *Judea*, where he had traded a long time for his wife while he was only her factor, gave him an opportunity of knowing who Moses was and also Jesus Christ. He also had remarked into how many different sects their Religion was divided, and which produced such diversity of opinions, and the zeal of each sect. By this he profited, and he believed he could better succeed in the interest of establishing a new Religion. The conditions of the time when he formed this design were very favorable to him, for nearly all of the Arabs, disgusted with the worship of their Idols, were fallen into a species of *Atheism*. Thus *Mahomet* began by leading a retired life, being exemplary, seeking solitude, and passing the greater part of the day in prayers and meditations. He caused himself to be admired for his modest demeanor, and commenced to speak of revelations and visions. By such action is gained the credence of the populace, and by such methods Moses and Jesus commenced. He called himself a prophet and an envoy of God, and having as much skill as his predecessors in working miracles, he soon gained attention,

then admiration, and soon after the confidence of the people. A *Jew* and a *Christian monk* who were in his conspiracy aided him in his dextrous moves, and he soon became powerful enough to resist a *vigorous man* named *Corais*, a learned Arab, who endeavored to expose his imposture.

During this time his uncle, the governor of Mecca, died, and not being yet strong enough to assume the authority of sovereign, he was obliged to yield to one of his kinsmen who, penetrating his designs, obliged him to flee from *Mecca* and take refuge at *Medina*, where one party in the city who were Arian Christians joined him.

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Then he ceased to support his authority by argument, and persuaded his disciples to plant the Mussulman faith at the point of the sword. Having strengthened his party by alliances, marrying his daughters to four of the principal citizens of *Medina*, he was in condition to place armies in the field who subjugated the various tribes, one after the other, and with whom he finally seized *Mecca*. He did not die until after he had accomplished his purpose by his hypocrisy and imposture, which elevated him to the dignity of sovereign, which he transmitted to his successors, and his faith so well established that there has been no evidence of its failure for six hundred years, and yet it may be upon the eve of its destruction.

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II.

Thus Mahomet was more fortunate than Jesus Christ. After having labored during twenty-three years in the establishment of his Law and Religion, he saw its progress before his death, and having an assurance which Jesus Christ had not, that it would exist a long time after his death, since he prudently accommodated the genius and passions of his followers.

Such was the last of these three impostors. Moses threw himself into an abyss by an excess of ambition to cause himself to be believed immortal. Jesus Christ was ignominiously hung up between two thieves, being covered with shame as a recompense for his imposture, and lastly, Mahomet died in reality in his own bed, and in the midst of grandeur, but with his bowels consumed by poison given him by a young Jewess, to determine if he really was a prophet.

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This is all that can be said of these four³ celebrated impostors. They were just as we have painted them after nature, and without giving any false shading to their portraits, that it may be judged if they merited any confidence, and if it is excusable to be led by these guides, whom ambition and trickery have elevated, and whom ignorance has destroyed.



¹ A friend of the celebrated *Golius* having asked what the *Mahometans* said of their prophet, this wise professor sent him the following extract which contains an abridgement of the life of that Impostor taken from a manuscript in the Turkish language: "The Lord *Mahomet Mustapha*, of glorious memory, the greatest of the Prophets, was born in the fortieth year of the Empire of *Anal Schirwan*, the Just. His holy nativity happened the twelfth day in the second third of the month *Rabia*. Now, after the fortieth year of his age had passed, he was divinely inspired, received the crown of prophecy and the robe of Legation, which were brought him from God by the faithful messenger *Gabriel*, with instructions to call mankind to *Islamism*. After this inspiration from God was received, he dwelt at *Mecca* for thirteen years. He left there aged fifty-three years the eighth day of the month *Rabia*, which was a Friday, and took refuge at *Medina*. Now, it was there, after his retreat the twentieth day of the eleventh month, and the sixty-third year of his blessed life, he succeeded to the enjoyment of the divine presence. Some say that he was born while *Abelaka*,² his father, was yet living, others say after his death. Lady *Amina*, a daughter of the *Wahabees*, gave him for nurse lady *Halima*, of the tribe of *Beni-Saad*. *Abdo Imutalib*,² his grandfather, gave him the blessed name of *Mahomet*. He had four sons and four daughters. The sons were *Kasim*, *Ibrahim*, *Thajib* and *Thahir*, and the daughters, *Fatima*, *Omokeltum*, *Rakia* and *Zeineb*. The companions of this august envoy of God were *Abulekir*, *Omar*, *Osman* and *Ali*, all of sacred memory. †

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² These names, *Abdul-Motallab* and *Abdallah*, in Arabic, seem to be rendered *Abdo-Imutalib* and *Abelaka* in the Turkish language.—A. N. †

³ This includes *Numa Pompilius*.—A. N. †

SENSIBLE AND OBVIOUS TRUTHS.

I.

It is not sufficient to have discovered the disease if we do not apply a remedy. It would be better to leave the sick man in ignorance. Error can only be cured by Truth, and since *Moses, Jesus* and *Mahomet* were what we have represented them, we should not seek in their writings for the veritable idea of the Divinity. The apparitions and the divine conformation of the former and the latter, and the divine filiation of the second, are sufficient to convince us that all is but imposture.

II.

God is either a natural being or one of infinite extent who resembles what he contains, that is to say, that he is material without being, nevertheless, neither just nor merciful, nor jealous, nor a God in any way as may be imagined, and as a consequence is neither a punisher nor a remunerator. This idea of punishment and recompense only exists in the minds of the ignorant who only conceive that simple being called God, under images which by no means represent him. Those who use their understanding without confounding its operations with those of the imagination, and who are powerful enough to abandon the prejudice of a limited education, are the only ones who have sound, clear and distinct ideas. They consider him as the source of all beings which are produced without distinction: one being no more than another in His regard, and man no more difficult to produce than a worm or a flower.

III.

That is why it is not to be believed that this natural and infinite being which is commonly called God, esteems man more than an ant, or a lion more than a stone, or any other being more than a phantasy, or who has any regard for beauty or ugliness, for good or bad, for the perfect or imperfect. Or that he desires to be praised, prayed, sought for or caressed, or that he cares what men are, or say, whether susceptible of love or hate, or in a word that he thinks more of man than of any other creatures of whatever nature they be. All these distinctions are only the invention of a narrow mind, that is to say, ignorance has created them and interest keeps them alive.

IV.

Thus there is no good sensible man who can be convinced of hell, a soul, spirits or devils, in the manner of which they are commonly spoken. All these great senseless words have only been contrived to delude or intimidate the people. Let those then who wish to know the truth read what follows, with a liberal spirit and an intention to only give their judgment with deliberation.

V.

The myriads of stars that we see above us are allowed to be so many solid bodies which move, and among which there is not one designed as the Court Divine where God is like a King in the midst of his courtiers; which is the abode of the blest, and where all good souls fly after leaving this body and world. But without burdening ourselves with such a rude and ill-conceived opinion, and that it may not be entertained by any man of good sense, it is certain that what is called Heaven is nothing but the continuation of our atmosphere, more subtile and more refined, where the stars move without being sustained by any solid mass more than the Earth on which we live, and which like the stars is suspended in the midst of space.

As may be imagined, a Heaven intended for the eternal abode of the happy and of God, was the same among the Pagans. Gods and goddesses were also represented in the same way, also a Hell or a subterranean place where it was pretended that the wicked souls descended to be tormented. But this word "hell" taken in its proper and natural signification means nothing but a "lower place," which poets have invented to oppose the dwelling of the celestial inhabitants, who are said to be very sublime and exalted. That is what the Latin word *Infernus* or *inferi* signifies, and also the Greek word ᾠδης¹, that is to say, an *obscure* place like the sepulchre, or any other low and hidden place. All the rest of what has been said is only pure fiction and the invention of poets whose symbolical discourses are taken literally by feeble, timid and melancholy minds, as well as by those who are interested in sustaining this opinion.

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¹ Hades. ↑

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OF THE SOUL.

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I.

The Soul is something more delicate and more difficult to treat of than either Heaven or Hell. That is why it is proper to satisfy Your Majesty's curiosity, to speak of it a little more at length. Before saying what I desire on this subject, I will recall in a few words what the most celebrated Philosophers have thought of it.

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II.

Some have said that the Soul is a spirit or an immaterial substance; others, a kind of divinity; some, a very subtile air, and others a harmony of all parts of the body. Again, others have remarked that it is the most subtile and fine part of the blood, which is separated from it in the brain and is distributed by the nerves: so that the source of the Soul is the heart where it is produced, and the place where it performs its noblest function is the Brain, because there it is well purified from the grosser parts of the blood. These are the principal opinions which have been held concerning the Soul, but to render them more perceptible let us divide them into *material* and *spiritual*, and name the supporters of each theory that we may not err.

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III.

Pythagoras and *Plato* have said that the soul is *spiritual*, that is to say, a being capable of existence without the aid of the body, and can move itself: that all the *particular souls* of animals are portions of the *universal soul* of the world: that these portions are *spiritual* and *immortal*, and of the same nature, as we may conceive that one hundred little fires are of the same nature as the great fire at which they have been kindled.

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IV.

These philosophers believed the animated universe a substance, spiritual, immortal and invisible, pursuing always that which attracts, which is the source of all movements, and of all Souls which are small particles of it. Now, as Souls are very pure, and infinitely superior to the body, they do not unite immediately, but by means of a subtile body, such as flame, or that subtile and extensive air which the vulgar take for heaven. Afterwards they take a body less subtile, then another a little more impure, and always thus by degrees, until they can unite with the sensible bodies of animals, whence (*sic*) they descend like into dungeons or sepulchres. The death of the body, they say, is the life of the soul

wherein it was buried, and where it exercises but weakly its most beautiful functions.

Thus at the death of the body the soul comes out of its prison untrammelled by matter, and reunites with the soul of the universe, from whence it came. Thus, following this thought, all the Souls of animals are of the same nature, and the diversity of their functions comes only from the difference in the bodies that they enter.

Aristotle admits further, a universal understanding common to all beings, and which acts in regard to particular intelligences as light does in regard to the eyes; and as light makes objects visible, the universal understanding makes objects intelligible. This philosopher defines the Soul as that which makes us live, feel, think and move, but he does not say what the Being is that is the source and principle of these noble functions, and consequently we must not look to him to dispel the doubt which exists concerning the Nature of the Soul.

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V.

Dicearchus, *Asclesiade* (? Esculapius), and in some ways *Galen*, have also believed the soul to be incorporeal, but in another manner, for they have said that it is nothing more than the harmony of all parts of the body, that is to say, that which results in an exact blending and disposition of the humors and spirits. Thus, they say, health is not a part of him who is well, however it be his condition, so that, however, the soul be in the animal, it is not one of its parts, but a mutual accord of all of which it is composed. On which it is remarked that these authors believe the soul to be incorporeal, on a principle quite opposed to their intent, by saying that it is *not* a body, but only something inseparably attached *to* a body, that is to say, in good reasoning, that it is quite corporeal, since corporeality is not only that which *is* a body, but *all* which is *form* or *accident* that cannot be separated from matter.

These are the philosophers who have believed the soul incorporeal or immaterial, who, as you see, are not in accord with themselves, and consequently do not merit any belief. Let us now consider those who have avowed it to be a *body*.

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VI.

Diogenes believed that it was formed of air, from which he has inferred the necessity of breathing, and defines it as an air which passes from the mouth through the lungs to the heart, where it is warmed, and from whence it is distributed through the entire body.

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Leucippus and *Democritus* have claimed that it was Fire, as that element is composed of atoms which easily penetrate all parts of the body, and makes it move. *Hippocrates* has said that it is a composition of water and fire. *Empedocles* says that it includes the four elements. *Epicurus* believed like *Democritus*, that the soul is composed of fire, but he adds that in that composition there enters some air, a vapor, and another nameless substance of which is formed a very subtile spirit, which spreads through the body and which is called the soul.

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VII.

Not to shuffle, as all these philosophers have done, and to have as perfect an idea as is possible of the souls of animals, let us admit that in all, without excepting man, it is of the same nature, and has no different functions, but by reason of the diversity of organs and humors; hence we must believe what follows.

It is certain that there is in the universe a very subtile spirit, or a very delicate matter, and always in motion, the source of which is in the *Sun*, and the remainder is spread in all the other bodies, more or less, according to Nature or their consistency. That is the Soul of the Universe which governs and vivifies it, and of which some portion is distributed among all the parts that compose it. This Soul, and the most pure Fire which is in the universe does not burn of itself, but by the different movements that it gives to the particles of other bodies where it enters, it burns and reflects its heat. The visible fire has more of this

spirit than air, the latter more than water, and the earth much less than the latter. Among the mixed bodies, plants have more than minerals, and animals more than either. To conclude, this fire being enclosed in the body, it is rendered capable of thought, and that is what is called the soul, or what is called animal spirits, which are spread in all parts of the body. Now, it is certain that this soul being of the same nature in all animals, disperses at the death of man in the same manner as in other animals, from whence it follows that what Poets and Theologians sing or preach of the other world, is a chimera which they have invented, and which they narrate for reasons that are easy to guess.



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OF SPIRITS WHICH ARE CALLED DEMONS.

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I.

We have fully commented on how the belief in Spirits was introduced among men, and how these Spirits were but phantoms which existed in their imagination. The ancient Philosophers were not sufficiently clear to explain to the people what these phantoms were, and did not allow themselves to say that they could *raise* them. Some seeing that these phantoms dissolved and had no consistency, called them *immaterial, incorporeal*, forms without matter, or colors and figures, without being, nevertheless, bodies either colored or defined, adding that they could cover themselves with air like a mantle when they wished to render themselves visible to the eyes of men. Others said that they were animated bodies, but were composed of air, or some other more subtile matter which condensed at their will when they wished to appear.

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II.

These two kinds of Philosophers being opposed in the opinion which they had of phantoms, agreed in the name which they gave them, for all called them *Demons*, in which they were but little more enlightened than those who believed they saw in their sleep the souls of the dead, and that it is their soul which they see when they look in a mirror, and who also believed that they saw (reflected) in the water the souls of the stars. After this foolish fancy they fell into an error which is hardly less supportable, that is, the current idea that these phantoms had infinite power. An absurd but ordinary belief with the ignorant who imagined that whatever they did not understand was an infinite power.

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III.

This ridiculous opinion was no sooner published than the Sovereigns began to use it to support their power. They established a belief concerning spirits which they called *Religion*, so that the fear which the people possessed for invisible powers would hold them to their obedience. To have it carry more influence they distinguished the demons as good and bad. The latter to encourage men to obey their laws, and the former to restrain and prevent them from infringing them. Now to learn what these demons were it is only necessary to read the Greek poets and their histories, and above all what *Hesiod* says in his *Theogony* where he fully treats of the origin and propagation of the Gods.

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IV.

The Greeks were the first who invented them, and by them they were propagated through the medium of their colonies, and their conquests in Asia, Egypt and Italy. The Jews who were dispersed in Alexandria and elsewhere got

their acquaintance with them from the Greeks. They used them as effectively as the other peoples but with this difference, they did not call them *Demons* like the Greeks, but *good* and *bad* spirits; reserving for the *good Demons* the name of *Spirit of God*, and calling those *Prophets* who were said to possess this good spirit called the Divine, which they held as responsible for great blessings, and *cacodaemons* or *Evil spirits* on the contrary those which were provocative of *great Evil*.

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V.

This distinction of good and evil made them name as *Demoniacs* those whom we call lunatics, visionaries, madmen and epileptics, and those who spoke to them in an unknown tongue. A man ill-shaped and of evil look was to their notion possessed of an *unclean spirit*, and a mute of a *dumb spirit*. Now, these words *spirit* and *demon* became so familiar to them that they spoke of them on all occasions, so that it is evident that the Jews believed like the Greeks, that these phantoms were not mere chimeras and visions, but real beings that existed independent of imagination.

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VI.

So it happens that the Bible is quite filled with these words *Spirits*, *Demons* and *Fiends*, but nowhere is it said when they were first known, nor the time of their creation, which is hardly pardonable in Moses, who is earnest in depicting the Creation of Heaven, Earth and Man. No more then is Jesus Christ who had such close intimacy with them, who commanded them so absolutely according to the Gospel, and who spoke so often of angels and good and bad spirits, but without saying whether they were corporeal or spiritual; which makes it plain that he knew no more than the Greeks had taught other nations, in which he is not less culpable than for denying to all men the virtue of faith and piety which he professed to be able to give them.

But to return to the Spirits. It is certain that the words *Demon*, *Satan* and *Devil*, are not proper names which designated any individual, and which never have any credence but among the ignorant; as much among the Greeks who invented them, as among the Jews where they were tolerated. So the latter being overrun by them gave them names—which signified *enemy*, *accuser*, *inquisitor*,—as well to invisible powers as to their own adversaries, the Gentiles, whom they said inhabited the Kingdom of Satan; there being none but themselves, in their own opinion, who dwelt in that of God.

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VII.

As Jesus Christ was a Jew, and consequently imbued with these silly opinions, we read everywhere in the Gospels, and in the writings of his Disciples, of the *Devil*, of *Satan* and *Hell* as if they were something real and effective. While it is true, as we have shown, that there is nothing more imaginary, and when what we have said is not sufficient to prove it, but two words will suffice to convince the most obstinate. All Christians agree unanimously that God is the first principle and the foundation of all things, that he has created and preserves them, and without his support they would fall into nothingness. Following this principle it is certain that God must have created what is called the *Devil*, and *Satan*, as well as the rest, and if he has created both good and evil, why not all the balance, and if by this principle all evil exists, it can only be by the intervention of God.

Now can one conceive that God would maintain a creature, not only who curses him unceasingly, and who mortally hates him, but even who endeavors to corrupt his friends, to have the pleasure of being cursed by a multitude of mouths. How can we comprehend that God should preserve the Devil to have him do his worst to dethrone him if he could, and to alienate from his service his elect and his favorites? What would be the object of God in such conduct? Now what can we say in speaking of the Devil and Hell. If God does all, and nothing can be done without him how does it happen that the Devil hates him, curses him, and takes away his friends? Now he is either agreeable, or he is not. If he is agreeable, it is certain that the Devil in cursing him only does what he should, since he can only do what God wills. Consequently, it is not the Devil, but God in person who curses himself; a situation to my idea more absurd than ever.

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If it is not in accord with his will then it is not true that he is all powerful. Thus

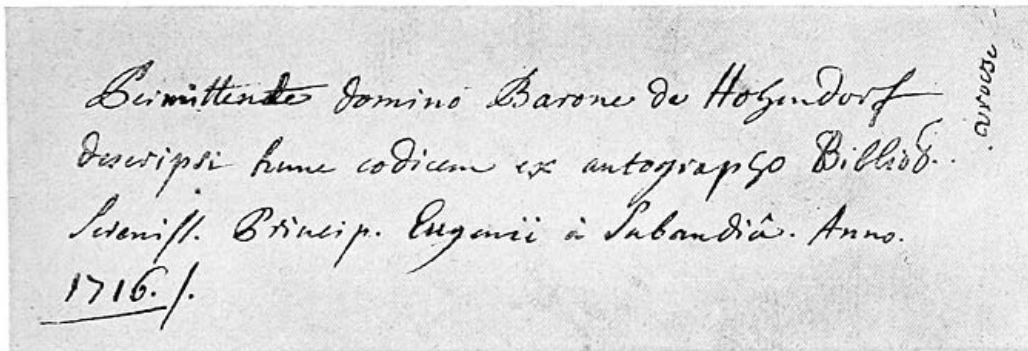
there are two principles, one of Good, the other of Evil, one which causes one thing and the other that does quite the contrary. To what does this reasoning lead us? To avow without contradiction that there is no God such as is conceived, nor Devil, nor Soul, nor Paradise, such as has been depicted, and that the Theologians, that is to say, those who relate fables for truth, are persons of bad faith who maliciously abuse the credulity of the ignorant by telling them what they please, as if the people were capable of nothing but chimera or who should be fed with insipid food in which is found only emptiness, nothingness and folly, and not a grain of the salt of truth and wisdom. Centuries have passed, one after the other, in which mankind has been infatuated by these absurd imaginations which have been combatted; but during all the period there have also been found sincere minds who have written against the injustice of the Doctors in Tiaras, Mitres and Gowns, who have kept mankind in such deplorable blindness which seems to increase every day.

FINIS.

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By permission of the Lord *Baron de Hohendorf* I have compiled this epitome out of the manuscript Library of his Most August Highness, Duke Eugene of Sabaudio, in the year 1716.



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APPENDICITIS.

A DISEASE COMMON TO NEARLY ALL WORKS OF THIS CHARACTER, AND WHICH CONDITION IS PAST ALL SURGERY.

Another sketch of Mahomet translated from the "Edition en Suisse," 1793, and which may interest worshippers of Arabian mysteries evolved from imaginative brains, tintured with extracts from "*Thory's Ada Latomorum*," and similar works, and embellished with effects from "*Michael Strogoff*."

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XXII.

OF MAHOMET.

Hardly had the disciples of Christ abolished the Mosaic law to introduce the Christian dispensation, than mankind, carried away by force, and by their ordinary inconstancy, followed a new law-giver, who advanced himself by the same methods as Moses. He assumed, like him, the title of prophet, and envoy of God, like him he performed miracles and knew how to profit by the passions of the people. First he was accompanied by an ignorant rabble, to whom he explained the new oracles of heaven. These unfortunates, seduced by the promises and fables of this new impostor, spread his renown and exalted him to a height that eclipsed his predecessors.

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Mahomet was not a man who appeared capable of founding an empire, as he excelled neither in politics¹ nor philosophy; in fact, could neither read nor write. He had so little firmness that he would often have abandoned his enterprise had he not been forced to persist in his undertaking by the skill of one of his followers. From that time he commenced to rise and become celebrated. Corais, a powerful Arab, jealous that a man of his birth should have the audacity to deceive the people, declared himself his enemy, and attempted to cross his enterprise, but the people persuaded that Mahomet had continual conferences with God and his angels caused him to prevail over his enemy. The tribe of Corais were at a disadvantage and Mahomet seeing himself followed by a crazy crowd who thought him a divine man, thought he would have no need of a companion, but fearing that the latter (Corais) might expose his impostures he tried to prevent it, and to do it more certainly he overwhelmed him with promises, and swore to him that he wished only to become great by sharing the power to which he had contributed. "We have reached," said he, "the moment of our elevation, we are sure of the great multitude we have gained, and we must now assure ourselves by the artifice you have so happily conceived." At the same time he induced him to hide himself in the cave of oracles. There was a dried-up well from which he made the people believe that the voice of God declared himself for Mahomet, who was in the midst of his proselytes. Deceived by the caresses of this traitor, his associate went into the well to counterfeit the oracle as usual; Mahomet then passing by at the head of an infatuated multitude a voice was heard saying: "I who am your God, declare that I have established Mahomet as the prophet of all nations: from him you will learn my true law which has been changed by the Jews and the Christians." For a long time this man played this game, but in the end he was paid by the greatest and blackest ingratitude. Mahomet hearing the voice which proclaimed him a divine being, turned towards the people and commanded them in the name of the God who recognized him as his prophet, to fill with stones the ditch from whence had issued such authentic testimony in his favor, in memory of the stone which Jacob raised to mark the place where God appeared to him.² Thus perished the unfortunate person who had contributed to the elevation of Mahomet; it was on this heap of stones that the last of the celebrated prophets established his law. This foundation is so stable and founded in such a way that after a thousand years of reign it has no appearance of being overthrown.

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¹ "Mahomet," says the Count de Boulainvilliers, "was ignorant of common knowledge, as I believe, but he assuredly knew much of what a great traveler might acquire with much native wit, when he employed it usefully. He was not ignorant of his own language, the use of which, and not by reading, taught him its nicety and beauty. He was not ignorant of the art of knowing how to render odious what was truly culpable, and to portray the truth with simple and lively colors in a manner which could not be forgotten. In fact, all that he has said is true in comparison with the essential dogmas of religion, but he has not said all that is true. It is in that particular alone that our Religion differs from his." He adds further on, "that Mahomet was neither rude nor barbarous, that he conducted his enterprise with all the art, delicacy, constancy, intrepidity, and all the other great qualities which would have actuated Alexander or Cesar were they in his place." *Life of Mahomet, by Count de Boulainvilliers. Book II., pp. 266-7-8. Amsterdam Edition, 1731.* †

² [Genesis ch. xxviii., v. 18](#) †

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A LITERAL TRANSLATION

DE TRIBUS
IMPOSTORIBUS.

ANNO MDIIC.

ZWEITE
MIT EINEM NEUEN VORWORT VERSEHENE AUFLAGE
VON
EMIL WELLER.

HEILBRONN
VERLAG VON GEBR. HENNINGER.
1876

DE TRIBUS IMPOSTORIBUS.

ANNO MDIIC.
ZWEITE
MIT EINEM NEUEN VORWORT VERSEHENE AUFLAGE
VON
EMIL WELLER.
HEILBRONN
VERLAG VON GEBR. HENNINGER.
1876

Many maintain that there is a God, and that he should be worshipped, before they understand either what a God is, or what it is to be, as far as being is common to bodies and spirits, according to the distinction they make; and what it is to worship God, although they regard the worship of God according to the standard of the honor given to ruling men. [112]

What God is, they describe according to the confession of their own ignorance. For it is inevitable that they declare how he differs from other things by the denial of former conceptions. They cannot comprehend that there is an infinite being; that is, one of whose limits they are ignorant. There is a creator of heaven and earth, they say, but who is *his* creator they do not say, because they do not know; because they do not understand. Some say that he is the origin of himself and maintain that he comes from nothing but himself. We do not understand his origin they say, therefore he has none (why so? if we do not understand God himself, is there, therefore, no God?) And this is the first principle of their ignorance.

There is no progression into infinity; why not? because the human intellect must have some foundation? because it is accustomed to this belief? because it cannot imagine anything beyond its own limits? As if, indeed, it followed, that if I do not comprehend infinity, therefore there is no infinity.

And nevertheless as is known from experience, some among the members of the sects of Christ, think there is an infinite progression of divine properties or persons, concerning the limitations of which, however, there has hitherto been dispute, and so indeed they think that there is a progression *into* infinity. For the son is begotten from infinity, and the holy spirit is breathed from infinity. This begetting and this procession goes on to infinity. For if that begetting or that breathing of the spirit had begun or should once have ceased, the conception of eternity would be destroyed. But if you should agree with them on this point also, that the creation of man can not be prolonged to infinity, which they infer, however, on account of their finite minds, it will not yet be evident whether other beings have not been begotten among the higher powers, in a peculiar manner and in great number, as well as among men on earth; and who of this great number should especially be accepted as God. For every religion admits [113]

that there are Gods who are mediators, although they are not all under equal limitations, whence that principle, that there must be one being only, raised above men by his own nature, is evidently demolished. And so it will be possible to say that from a diversity of Gods as creators, a diversity of religions, and a variety of kinds of worship afterwards arose: which the religious feeling of the heathen especially employed. But as to the objection which is raised about the murders and the concubinage of the Pagan Gods, aside from the fact that the Pagans have long since shown that these things must be understood as mysteries, similar things will be found in other religions.

The slaughter of many tribes was perpetrated by Moses and Joshua at the command of God. Even human sacrifice the God of Israel demanded of Abraham, but it was not carried into effect in this remarkable case.

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But he could either not have given a command, or Abraham could not have believed that it had been given in earnest, which would have been in itself utterly at variance with the nature of God. Mahomet promises the whole world as the reward offered by his religion, and Christians talk about the universal slaughter of their enemies and the subjugation of the foes of the church, which indeed has not been insignificant, from the fact that the church had the entire control of public affairs.

Was not polygamy also permitted by (Mohammed) Moses, and as some maintain, even in the New Testament, by Christ? Did not the Holy Spirit beget the son of God by a peculiar union with a betrothed virgin?

As for other objections which are made to the pagans about their ridiculous idols, and their misuse of worship, they are not so weighty that similar ones can not be made to the members of other sects; nevertheless it can easily be proved that these abuses have proceeded from the subordinates rather than from the leaders, from the disciples, rather than from the masters of religions.

But to return to the former argument. This *being*,—since the intellect limits its extent,—is what some call Nature and others God. On these points some agree, others disagree. Some fancy that the worlds have existed from eternity, and call the connection of things God; certain ones call God an individual being, which can be neither seen or known, although among these disputes are not infrequent.

Religion, as far as it concerns worship, some attribute to the fear, some to the love, of invisible powers. But if the invisible powers are false, idolatry is just as the principles of each worshipper demand.

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They will have it that love springs from kindness and refer it to gratitude; although nevertheless it chiefly arises from the sympathy of humors. The kind deeds of enemies inspire especially violent hatred although no one of the hypocrites has dared to confess it. But who would suppose that love arises from the kindness of him who gave to man the characteristics of a lion, a bear and other wild beasts that he might assume a nature contrary to the will of the creator? Who, well knowing the weakness of human nature, placed before [our progenitors] a tree, by which he was sure they would bring a fatal sentence upon themselves and their descendants (as some will have it)? And yet the latter are bound to worship and to perform deeds of gratitude, as if for a great favor, Forsooth! So the *Ithacan* may have it, *etc.* Take deadly arms, a sword for instance, and if you had the most certain foreknowledge (which some claim for God also in this very case, inasmuch as there can be no chance with God) of the very purpose that he, before whose eyes you place it, will seize it and inflict on himself and all his descendants the most dreadful death. (He who has still one drop of the milk of human kindness will shudder to do such a deed). Take, I say, a sword, you who are a father, for instance, or you who are a friend; and if you are a father, if you are a real friend, present it to your friend, or your children, with the command that they should *not* run upon it, you foreseeing beyond all doubt, nevertheless, that he *will* run upon it, and inflict on his children and those hitherto innocent, the most dreadful death. Consider, you who are a father, would you do such a thing? What is it to make a command a mockery, if this is not? And nevertheless God must have given such a command. But they maintain that God should be worshipped for his kindness, saying: If God *is*, he must be worshipped; just as they make this inference, the Great Mogul *is*, therefore he must be worshipped. His own people do indeed worship him, but why? assuredly that his unbridled pride and that of all great men may be gratified, and for no other reason. For he is worshipped chiefly on account of the fear of his visible power (hence at his death the worship ceases), and then too on account of the hope of rewards. This same reason exists for the reverence shown parents and other people in power; and since invisible powers are considered more important and greater than visible ones, therefore, they will have it that still more should they be worshipped. And this God should be worshipped on account of his love,

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they say. And what kind of love is it to expose innocent posterity to infinite suffering on account of the fall of one man, certainly foreseen and therefore foreordained (foreordained as far at least as being permitted). But, you say, they are to be redeemed. But how? The father exposes his only son to extreme suffering, that he may deliver the other man from tortures no greater, because of the redemption offered by the former.

The Barbarians had no such silly idea. But why should God be loved, why worshipped? because he created us? But to what end? that we should fall! because assuredly he had foreknowledge that [our progenitors] would fall, and set before them the medium of the forbidden fruit, without which they could not have fallen. Granted, however, that he should be worshipped because on him all things depend for their creation; some, nevertheless, add, for their continued existence also, and their preservation. Why should God be worshipped? Does he himself delight in worship? Certainly. Parents and benefactors are honored among us. But why is this honor given? Human nature has regard for mutual wants and, the bestowal of honor is due to the idea that we can be aided by a greater and more enduring power. No one wishes to aid another unless his own wants are satisfied in turn. That is called a person's recognition of kindness and gratitude, which demands a greater recognition of his own kindness; and in order that his reputation may be spread abroad, it demands that the other be ready, as a handmaid, so to speak, to inspire in others an idea of his fame and nobility. Doubtless the idea others may entertain of our ability to be of service to general or individual needs, tickles us, and raises plumes for us like those of a peacock, wherefore generosity is found among the virtues. But who does not see the imperfection of our nature? Who, however, would say that God, the most perfect of all beings, wants anything? Or that he wishes for any such thing if he is perfect and already self-sufficient and honored without any external honors. Who would say that he wants honor except those who persist in honoring him?

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The desire for honor is a sign of imperfection and lack of power.

The consensus of opinion among all races on this subject, is urged by those who have talked with scarcely all even of their own friends, or have examined three or four books treating of the testimony of the world, not even carefully considering how far the authors had knowledge of the customs of the world; but those excellent authors were not familiar with *all* customs. Notice, however, that when one is considering the matter, the objection here arises, that the fundamental reasons for worship are connected with God himself and his works, and not with the elementary constitution of any society. For there is no one who is not aware that worship is due to the custom, prevalent among the ruling and rich classes especially, of maintaining some external form of religion in order to calm the passions of the people.

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But if you are concerned about the former reason, who would believe that in the principal seat of the Christian religion,—Italy,—there are so many free-thinkers, or to speak more meaningfully, Atheists, and if he should believe it, would say that there is a consensus of opinion among all races. God *is*, therefore should he be worshipped? Because, forsooth, the wiser men at least say so? Who, pray, are the wiser? The high priest, the augurs, the soothsayers of the ancients, Cicero, Caesar, the leading men and their priestly adherents, etc.

Would they let it be known that such practices were to their interests? Doubtless those in control of public affairs, deriving their profits from the credulity of the people, told fear-inspiring stories of the power and vengeance of the invisible gods, and lied about their own occasional meetings and association with them; and demanded in proportion to their own luxury beings suitable for or even surpassing themselves. For it is not to be wondered at that priests promulgate such teachings, since this is their method of maintaining their own lives. And such are the teachings of the wiser men.

This world may depend on the control of a prime mover; this is certainly the fact—that the dependence will be only at the start. For why might there not have been a first command of God, such that everything would go in a foreordained course to a fixed end, if he wished to fix one. There would no longer be need of new care, dependence or support, but he might at first have endowed every one with sufficient powers. And why should it not be said that he did this? For it is not to be supposed that he visits all the elements and parts of the universe as a physician does a sick man.

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What then is to be said of the testimony of conscience? and whence would come those fears of the mind because of wrong-doing, were it not evident that there is near us a higher power who sees and punishes us, whom wrong-doing displeases just as it is altogether at variance with worship of him? It is not now my purpose to inquire more deeply into the nature of good and evil nor the dangers of prejudice and the folly of great fear which springs from preconceived ideas. This

merely I say. Whence did they arise? especially since all evil-doing depends on the corruption and destruction of the harmony resulting from the interchange of services in the wants to which the human race is subject, and since the idea about one who wishes to *increase* rather than to be of *aid* in those wants, renders him an object of hatred. Whence it happens that he himself may fear lest he may incur the hatred and contempt of others, or a like refusal to satisfy his wants; or may lose his power of being of service not only to others but to himself, in so far indeed as he needs to fear any harm from being wronged by others.

And so, they say, those who do not have the light of Holy Scriptures, follow the natural light in accordance with the dictates of their consciences, which proves to be sure, that God has endowed the intellect of all men with some sparks of his own knowledge and will, and if they act according to these it must be said that they have done right. For what reason of theirs can be a command to worship God if this is not? But it is maintained on many grounds that beasts act according to the guide of reason, and this matter has not yet been decided; nevertheless I do not urge this. Who has said anything to you to prove that this does not occur, or that a trained animal does not at times surpass an ignorant and uneducated man in intellect and powers of judgment? But to speak to the point, the majority of men of leisure who have had time to consider subtle ideas and those beyond the comprehension of the ordinary intellect, in order to gratify their own pride and promote their own advantage, have devised many subtle principles for which Alexis and Thyrsis, prevented by their pastoral and rustic duties, could have had no leisure. Wherefore, the latter have placed confidence in the philosophers of leisure, as if they were wiser, while they are more fitted to impose on the foolish. Hence, good Alexis, go to, worship the sylvan Pans, Satyrs and Dianas, etc. For the great philosophers will tell you about the dream of Numa Pompilius, and narrate to you the story of his concubinage with the nymph Aegeria, and they will wish by this very account to bind you to his worship, and as a reward for this pious work, because of the reconciliation and favor of those invisible powers, they will demand for their own support, the flower of your flock and your labor as a sacrifice. And hence, since Titius worshipped Pan, Alexis, the Fauns, Rome, the Gods of War, Athens, the unknown Gods, is it to be supposed that those good men learned from the light of reason certain tales which were the idle inventions and ideas of philosophers? not to attack too harshly the religion of others.

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And why did not this reason also tell that they were mistaken in their worship, in foolishly worshipping statues and stones, as if they were the dwelling places of their Gods? But is it indeed to be supposed that since good women bestowed such worship on Francis, Ignatius and Dominicus and such men, reason teaches that at least some one among holy men should be worshipped? That they learn from the light of nature the worship of some superior power no longer visible, although, nevertheless, such are the fabrications of our priests of leisure for the more splendid increase of their own means of support.

Therefore, there is no God? Suppose there is (a God.) Therefore, should he be worshipped? But this does not follow, because he desires worship as far as he has inscribed it in the heart. What more then? We should then follow the guide of our nature. But this is known to be imperfect. In what respects? For is it sufficient enough to maintain the society of men peacefully? Because other religious people, following revelation, do not pass more tranquil lives?

But is it rather because God demands of us especially a more precise idea of God? But nevertheless you who promise this of any religion whatsoever, do not supply it. For any revelation of what God is, is far more unintelligible than before. And how will you make this clearer by the conception of the intellect, since he limits every intellect?

What do you think of these things?

No one, I say, has a knowledge of God, moreover eye has not seen him, and he dwells in unapproachable light, and from the time of revelation till now, in allegory. But I suppose every one knows how clear an allegory is. Wherefore do you indeed believe that God makes such demands? or is it from the desire of the intellect to surmount the limitations of its own capacity in order to comprehend everything more perfectly than it does, or from something else? Who of you is there who speaks from special revelation? Good God! what a hodge-podge of revelations. Do you point to the oracles of the heathen? Antiquity has already held them up to ridicule. To the testimony of your priests? I can show you priests who will contradict them. You may protest in your turn, but who will be the judge? Who will put an end to these disputes? Do you call attention to the writings of Moses, the Prophets and Apostles? I bring to your notice the Koran, which says that, according to a new revelation, these are corrupt and its author boasts of having settled by the sword the corruptions and altercations of

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Christians as did Moses those of the heathen. For by the sword Mahomet and Moses subjugated Palestine, each instructed by great miracles. And the writings of the Sectarrians as well as of the Vedas and the Brahmins 1300 years back, are in opposition, to say nothing of the Sinenses.¹ You, who in some remote spot in Europe are disputing about such things disregard or deny these writings. You yourself should see very clearly that with equal ease they deny *your* writings. And what proofs not miraculous, would be sufficient to convince the inhabitants of the world, if it were evident from the first three books of Veda, that the world was contained in and came from an egg of a scorpion, and that the earth and first elements of things was placed on the head of a bull, if some envious son of the Gods had not stolen these first three volumes. In our times this would be laughed at; and among those people there would not be this strange argument to establish their religion if it did not have its origin in the brains of these priests.

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And whence else came those many immense volumes concerning the gods of the pagans and those wagon loads of lies? Moses acted very wisely in first becoming skilled in the arts of the Egyptians, that is in the mastery of astrology and magic, and then by cruel war driving from their homes the petty kings of Palestine, and pretending a conference like that of Numa Pompilius. Leading his army, confident of their fortunes, into the possessions of peaceful men; in order that he, forsooth, might be a great general and his brother high priest, and that he himself might be a leader and dictator. But of what a people! Others by milder means and by pulling the wool over the eyes of the people under cover of profound sanctity (I am afraid to mention other things,) and by the pious deceits of members of their sect in secret assemblies, first got control of the ignorant country people and then, because of the growing strength of the new religion, they got control of those who feared for themselves, and hated a leader of the people. At length another eager for war, by feigning miracles attached to himself the more ferocious people of Asia, who had suffered ill treatment at the hands of commanders of the Christians, and who, like Moses, with the promise of many victories and favors, he subjugated the warring and peaceful leaders of Asia, and established his religion by the sword. The first is considered the reformer of the heathen, the second of Judaism and the third the reformer of both. It remains to be seen who will be the reformer of Mahomet and Mahometanism. Doubtless then, the credulity of men is likely to be imposed on, and to take advantage of this under the pretense of some gain to be derived, is rightly called *imposture*.

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It would be too long and tedious to show more at length in this place, the nature and forms of what goes under the name of imposture, but we must observe, that, even if natural religion is granted and the worship of God is right as far as it is said to be commanded by nature; that up to this time the leader of every new religion has been suspected of imposture, especially since it is evident to all and is obvious from what has been said or can be said, how many deceptions have been used in propagating any religion.

It remains then unanswerable according to the previous argument, that religion and the worship of God according to the promptings of natural light, is consistent with truth and justice; but if any one wishes to establish any new principles in religion, either new or displeasing, and that by the authority of invisible powers, it will evidently be necessary for him to show his power of reforming, unless he wishes to be considered by all an impostor. Since, not under the conclusions of natural religion, nor under the authority of special revelation, he offers opposition to the ideas of all. Moreover he should be so upright in life and character that the people may believe him worthy of being associated with so high and holy a power, who does not approve of anything impure. Nor can merely his own confession, nor the holiness of a past life, nor any miracles—that is extraordinary deeds—prove this; for this is common rather among the skillful and the deceivers of men, lying hypocrites who pursue their own advantage and glory in this way. For it is not worth considering that some reached such a degree of madness that they voluntarily sought death, in order that it might be supposed that they despised and conquered everything, like different ones among the ancient philosophers. Nor is it to be supposed that they were upheld by special divine powers in that which they did because of foolish fancies and fond hopes of mountains of gold, rising from a defective judgment. For they did not give the matter the proper consideration, nor did the real teachers, for in order that you may come to a fair decision about them, I have said not only is their own testimony not sufficient, but in order to reach the truth of the matter, they must be compared with one another; and other witnesses with them, and then their acquaintances and friends, and then strangers, then friends and enemies; and then after the testimony is all gathered in, that of each teacher concerning himself, and then that of others must be compared. And if we do not know the witnesses, we must consult the witnesses *of* the witnesses, and so on; besides instituting an investigation as to *your* powers of distinguishing from the true and the false involved in such or other circumstances. Especially in similar ones, inquiring, moreover, whence you desired data to learn the truth,

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for this purpose comparing the judgment of others, as to what they infer from such an investigation or from the testimony of witnesses. And from these data it will be permissible to infer whether he who makes this claim, is a true messenger of the revelation of divine will and whether his teachings should be gradually adopted. But at this point we must be very careful not to get into a circle. Whenever the nature of important religions may be such that one supplants another, as that of Moses, Paganism, that of Mahomet, Christianity,—the later one may not always nor in every particular cast aside the earlier, but only in certain parts, to such an extent that the latter is founded on the former, it will be necessary to investigate carefully not only either the last, or the middle, or the first, but all, especially since the charge of imposture is brought by every sect. So the ancients were charged with it by Christ, because they corrupted the law; the Christians by Mahomet, because they corrupted the gospels, a fact not to be wondered at, inasmuch as one sect of Christians charges the other with corrupting texts of the New Testament, so that it can [not] be ascertained whether he who is offered as an example is a teacher of a true religion or how far those who claim to have been given authority, should be listened to. For in an investigation no sect must be overlooked, but each must be compared with the rest without any prejudice. For if one is overlooked, that perhaps, is the very one which is nearer the truth. Thus, those who followed Moses, have followed the truth according to the Christians also, but they ought not to have paused at that point, but should examine the truth of the Christian religion also.

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Each sect maintains that its own teachers are the best and that it has had and is daily having proof of this, and that there are no better ones, so that either every one must believe it, which would be absurd, or no one, which is the safer plan, until the true way is known, though no sect should be disregarded in a comparison.

There is no need of presenting the objection that it is known that all mathematicians agree that twice two is four. For it is not a similar case, since no one has been known to doubt whether twice two is four, while on the contrary religions agree neither in end, beginning nor middle. Suppose that I do not know the true way of salvation; I follow, however, the Brahmins or the Koran. Will not Moses and the rest say: What wrong have we done you that you thus reject us, though we are better and nearer the truth? What reply shall we make? I believed in Mahomet or the Gymnosophistes², in whose teachings I was born and brought up, and from them I learned that your religion and that of the Christians which followed, have long since decayed and grown corrupt, and are still misleading. Will they not reply that they do not know anything about the others and that these do not know anything about the true guide to salvation, since they know that those who are corruptors of the people are impostors, feigning miracles, or by lies pulling the wool over the eyes of the people. Nor should faith be thus simply given to one man or one sect, rejecting all others without a complete and proper investigation. For with equal right the Ethiopian, who has not left his own land, says that there are no men under the sun except those of a black color.

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Moreover, this precaution also should be taken in the investigation of other sects, that equal care should be used in an investigation of all, and while one is explained with great pains, the other should not be slighted, because one claim or another at first sight seems to be wrong, or because of the evil reports of gossip concerning the leader of that sect, while other reports are cast aside. For that should not be set down as doctrine or indubitable testimony, which the first vagabond that comes along asserts about a hostile religion. Indeed, with equal right on account of common gossip and the mere mention of a name, the Christian religion was to some an object of horror, and to others an object of scorn. With the latter because the Christians worshipped the head of an ass, and with the former because they ate and drank their God, so that at length the report became current that to be a Christian was to be a deadly enemy of God and men; when, nevertheless, such tales were either things which had been misunderstood or skillfully told lies, which were then confirmed, and having some foundation, spread abroad because an enemy of that religion had absolutely no intercourse, or no proper intercourse, with the Christians themselves, or the more learned among them, but believed the first ignorant person or deserter or enemy of that religion. Such a method of investigation being decided upon, it would always be a matter of great difficulty. What shall we say about women, what about children, what about the majority of the masses of the people? All children will be excluded from a feeling of security in regard to their religion, and the majority of women to whom even those matters which have been most clearly explained by the leaders of any religion, as far as can be done, are obscure: also from their manner of life you rightly perceive that with the exception of a very few superior ones, they have no accurate powers of comprehending mysteries of such a character, to say nothing of the countless numbers of insignificant persons and country people for whom the question of their own support is the most important subject for the exercise of their powers

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of reason, while other matters they accept or reject in good faith. Doubtless there is only a very small part of the world, who weigh all religions, compare their own carefully with others and correctly distinguish true reasons from false, in details in which deception may creep in; but the majority rather adopt the faith of others, of teachers of sacred matters especially, whose knowledge and powers of judgment in sacred matters are considered noteworthy.

And so in any religion this is done, especially by those who can not read and write or do not have anything to read. But it should have been observed that in this matter it is not sufficient that the teachers of any religion should have the power, because of very exact powers of judgment and avowed experience, of distinguishing the true from the false. Indeed it ought to be very certain to others, with powers of judgment no less exact, that those teachers have not only the ability to distinguish the true from the false, but the desire as well, and indeed we ought to be especially certain that he who professes such a knowledge and desire is neither deceived nor wishes to be.

And what choice shall we make here among so many teachers so much at variance in even one eminent sect? For when we look at our comrades and associates, who disagree on many subjects, although they are most friendly in other respects, one of the two disputants will maintain his opinion on account of some defect, either because he has not a correct understanding of the matter, and lacks the power of judgment, or because he does not wish to give up, and so does not desire to confess the truth. But although it might be matters of secondary importance in which this happened, nevertheless the result will be that they will be mistrusted in other matters also. Each doubtless is in possession of one truth, and he who gives this up in one place, either from a defect of judgment or a wrong desire is deservedly mistrusted of doing the same thing in other cases.

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Therefore, that you may judge of the ability and honesty of any teacher in religion, *first*, it is necessary for you to be just as able as he; for otherwise he will be able to impose on you very easily, and, moreover, if he is unknown to you, he will need the testimony of others, and these again of others, and so on indefinitely; not only in regard to his truthfulness, that he really taught such doctrines, but in regard to his honesty, that he did this without deceit. And the same method must at once be employed in regard to the witnesses of his honesty and his teachings. But where will you place an end to this? It is not enough that such discussions have already taken place among others; you must consider how well this has been done. For the ordinary proofs which are set forth are neither conclusive nor manifest, and prove doubtful matters by others more doubtful, so that, like those who run in a circle, you return to the starting point.

In order that it may be manifest whether any one is a teacher of a true religion or an impostor, there is need either of personal knowledge, which we can not have in the case of the three great founders of the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Mahometanism, inasmuch as they lived in far distant places and died long before our time; or of the knowledge of others, which, if any one imparts it to you, we call testimony.

Between these, there is still another way of knowing any one, namely through his own writings, which may be called one's own testimony concerning himself. And concerning Christ, there is no such testimony; concerning Moses, it is doubtful whether there is; concerning Mahomet, there is the Koran. The testimony of others is of two classes—that of friends and that of enemies. Between these extremes there is no third class, according to the saying, "who is not with me is against me." Mahomet in his writings assumes and attributes to himself the same divine qualities as did Moses and another. Moreover the friends of Mahomet and members of his sect wrote the same things concerning him as did the members of the sects of the others concerning their masters, and the enemies of the others wrote just as disparagingly of them as *their* friends did of Mahomet. As for the rest, the testimony of any one concerning himself is too unreliable to inspire implicit confidence, and is of no consequence except, perchance, to perplex a thoughtless hearer. The assertions of friends, who doubtless unaniously repeat the sayings of their masters, are of the same nature. Nor should the enemies of any one be heeded on account of their prejudices. But as it is, in spite of these facts, it is for such trivial reasons, which are confirmed only by the master's own boasts, the assertions of friends, or the calumnies of enemies, that every follower of any one of the three assumes that the claims of his enemy are based wholly on imposture, while the teachings of his master are founded wholly on truth. Nevertheless Mahomet is undoubtedly considered an impostor among us; but why? Not from his own testimony or that of his friends but from that of his enemies. Then, on the contrary, among the Mahometans he is considered a most holy prophet; but why? From his own testimony, but especially from that of his friends. Whoever considers Moses an

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impostor or a holy teacher employs the same method of reasoning. And there is equal reason in the case of Mahomet as in the case of the others, either for charging him with imposture or for answering that charge, although, nevertheless, the former are considered holy, while he is considered a scoundrel, contrary to all the demands of justice. To put it in the scholastic manner, then, the following conclusions are most firmly established: Whenever there is the same reason as in the case of Mahomet for charging any person with imposture or for answering that charge, they should be placed in the same category. And for example, in the case of Moses, there is the same reason, therefore justice should be demanded just as in the case of Mahomet, nor should he be considered an impostor.

PROOF OF MINOR PREMISE.

(a.) In regard to the rebuttal of the charge of imposture: this is based on the above-mentioned testimony not only of Mahomet concerning himself in his well-known writings, but on that of every one of his friends concerning their master, and hence, it logically follows:

(I.) Whatever value the testimony of Moses' friends has in defending him on the charge of imposture, the testimony of Mahomet's friends ought to have the same value. And whatever the value of the acquittal, though their favorable testimony, etc., etc. Therefore, etc.

(II.) And whatever value the books of Moses have for this purpose, the same value the Koran has also. And so, etc. Therefore, etc.

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Moreover, the Mussulmen, from the very books of the New Testament (although according to these very persons, these books have been much corrupted in other respects,) draw various arguments even in support of their Mahomet, and especially that prediction of Christ concerning the future Paraclete.³ They maintain that he came and exposed the corruption of the Christians, and established a new covenant. And although at other times the Koran is charged with many silly, nay impious tales, all these nevertheless, can be explained in a spiritual sense or smoothed over in other ways, since the rest of the teachings insist on nothing but extreme sanctity and a stringent mode of morals, but especially on temperance and abstinence from wine. And to the objection frequently raised that wine is the gift of God, the reply can be made that so also are poisons, and yet we are not supposed to drink them. The further objection often made that the spirit of the Koran is too carnal, and fills eternal life with pleasures of the world and the flesh, polygamy moreover being so indiscriminately permitted, it is not of such weight that it can not be confuted, since Moses also permitted polygamy and in the New Testament life eternal admits of banquets, e. g., you will sit down with Abraham and Isaac, etc., etc. Again, I shall not taste wine except in the Kingdom of my Father. It is said that all those pleasures mentioned in the Song of Solomon, which is, of course, also instanced, are not wrong, and when explained in a spiritual sense imply no wrong, although the same thing is not said of the Koran. And if we are too severely critical of the words of the Koran, we ought to employ the same severity of criticism against the writings of Moses and others. Moreover the arguments which are offered from Moses himself in answer to the charge of imposture, do not seem reasonable nor of sufficient weight.

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(I.) Our knowledge of the intercourse Moses had with God depends on his own testimony and that of his friends, and hence such evidence can have no more weight than similar arguments of the Mussulmen concerning the conference that Mahomet had with Gabriel; and what is more, this intercourse of Moses, according to Moses himself (if all those sayings are Moses', which are commonly attributed to him) is open to the suspicion of imposture, as is to be shown below.

(II.) No one indeed who is acquainted with the many very grave crimes of Moses, will be able to say easily or at least justly, that his holiness of life can not easily be matched. His crimes then are the following:

(a.) Fraud, which none but his friends have palliated, but they are not impartial judges of the matter; nor does that commendatory passage of Luke in the Acts of the Apostles form any apology, for there is dispute as to the honesty and veracity of that witness.

(b.) The stirring up of rebellion; for it can not be proved that this was due to a command of God, nay, the contrary is clear, since elsewhere Moses is urged to forbid resistance to tyrants.

(c.) Wars, although murder is contrary to the V. and VII. (?VI.)⁴ commandments of Moses himself, unrestrained plunder, etc., etc.; just as the high priest in India, or Mahomet in his land, offering the command of God as a pretext, drove from

their territory the former possessors. Moses slew thousands and gave them over to slaughter in order to insure salvation to himself and his people.

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(d.) The teaching concerning the taking of the property of others under the pretense of a loan.

(e.) The prayer to God in which Moses desired to die eternally for his people, although this petition asked of God such things as would destroy his essence. See [Exodus xxxii. 31, 32](#).⁵

(f.) Neglect of the commands of God in regard to circumcision ([Exodus iv. 24, 25, 26](#)),⁶ and finally,

(g.) The chief of Moses' crimes, the extreme and stupid incredulity of one who was chosen to perform so many miracles by the power of God, and who nevertheless on account of his wavering faith was censured by God himself severely and with the threat of punishment. ([Numbers xx. 12](#)).⁷

As to

(b.) The proof of the other argument, namely, the charge of imposture, it can be said: We believe that Mahomet was an impostor, not from our personal knowledge, as was pointed out above, but from the testimony, not of his friends, but of his enemies. But all such are anti-Mahometans, according to the saying "Who is not with me is against me," etc., etc.: hence follows the conclusion: Whatever weight the testimony of enemies has in the case of one, that it ought to have in the case of the other also. Otherwise we shall be unjust in condemning one from the testimony of enemies and not the other; if this were done, all justice would be at an end.

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And in the case of Mahomet, the testimony of enemies has such weight, that he is considered an Impostor, therefore, etc., etc.

Furthermore, I say that reasons for suspecting Moses of imposture can be elicited not only from external, but from internal evidence, whereby imposture can be proved by his own testimony as well as by that of others, albeit, his followers, although there is still dispute.

(I.) Whether the books, which are said to be those of Moses, are his or (II.) those of compilers, (III.) or those of Esdras, especially, and (IV.) whether they were written in the Samaritan, or (V.) the real Hebrew language; and (VI.) if the latter, whether we can understand that language. All these matters are doubtful for many reasons, and especially it can be shown from the first chapters of Genesis that we can not correctly interpret that language. I confess I am unwilling to concern myself with these points, but I wish to discuss the man.

I. From Moses' own testimony and indeed

(a.) concerning his life and character which we have considered above, and which, if any blame is attached to Mahomet on account of the fierce wars he waged, especially against the innocent, is equally blamable, and in other respects does not seem at all different from Mahomet's.

(b.) Concerning the authority of his own teaching. And here applies what was said above about Moses' intercourse with God, which Moses indeed boasted of but evidently with too great exaggeration. For if any one boasts of intercourse with God of an impossible nature, his intercourse is properly doubted and Moses, etc. Therefore, etc. It is proved because he boasts of having seen that of which in the Old and in the New Testament afterward, it is very often said that no eye has seen (namely) God face to face. [Exodus xxxii. 11](#). [Numbers xii. 8](#).⁸ Thus he saw God (1) in his own form, not in a vision nor in a dream (2), but face to face as friend to friend when he spoke directly to him. But any vision, which (1) is like that of friends speaking face to face, directly to one another, (2) like that of the blessed in the other life, is properly called and considered a vision of God. And Moses, etc. Therefore, etc. The *Minor premise* is proved from the passages previously cited and from the words of the Apostle: then indeed face to face, etc., and there is the same argument in the passages of Moses and in that of the Apostle. And yet among Christians the belief is most firmly established that no unjust person can see God in this life. And in the above passage of [Exodus xxxiii. 20](#),⁹ it is expressly added: you will not be able to see my face. These words God addressed to Moses and they are in direct contradiction to the passages previously cited, so that these claims can be explained in no other way than by saying that they were added by a thoughtless compiler, but by so doing the whole is rendered doubtful.

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(c.) Concerning the teachings of Moses, which relate either to the laws or the

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gospel. Among the laws, all of which for the sake of brevity I can not now consider, the decalogue is most important, being called the special work of God and said to have been written on Mount Horeb. But it is evident it was devised by Moses before it was written by God, because these commands are not in themselves characterized by the perfection of God, since (1) they are either superfluous, namely the last three, arguing from the words of Christ in [Math. v](#),¹⁰ undoubtedly relating to the former, while the IX should not be separated from the X, and they will likewise be superfluous (2) or they are defective. For where are these commandments: thou shalt not desire to have other Gods, nor desire to curse God, nor desire to desecrate the Sabbath, nor to injure thy parents, and similar ones? And is it to be presumed that God would forbid the lesser sins of coveting a neighbor's house, land and property especially, and in an order so extraordinary, and not the greater? As to the teaching of Moses concerning the gospel, he establishes a very foolish and untrustworthy sign of the future great prophet, or Christ. [Deut. xviii, 21, 22](#),¹¹ since this sign makes faith impossible for a long time. From this dictum it follows that Christ, having predicted the fall of Jerusalem, ought not to have been considered a true prophet while that prophecy was as yet unfulfilled (nor should Daniel, until his prophecy had been fulfilled), and so those who lived in the interval between the time of Christ and the overthrow of Judea, can not be blamed for not believing in him, although Paul hurled anathemas at those who did not attach themselves to Christ before the fall.

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Whatever sign, then, permits people for a long time to believe what they please with impunity, can not proceed from God, but is justly subject to suspicion. And this sign was given, etc., therefore, etc.

What is said concerning the fulfillment of other prophecies is no objection. For it is the special and genuine sign of that great prophet, that his predictions are fulfilled. Wherefore, naturally, previous to this fulfillment he could not have been considered such a prophet.

The other absurd conclusion which evidently follows from this passage, is this: that although this sign ought to have been the proof of the divine inspiration of all prophets, in the case of certain prophets who made predictions, indefinite indeed, but in words not admitting a moral interpretation (such as soon, swiftly, near, etc.,) that sign can by no means be found, e. g. Many predict the last day of the world and Peter said that that day was at hand; therefore, so far, until it comes it will be impossible to consider him a true prophet.

For such is the express requirement Moses makes in the passage cited.

(d.) Concerning the histories of Moses. But if the Koran is charged with containing many fables, doubtless in Genesis there are many stories to arouse the suspicions of the thoughtful reader: as the creation of man from the dust of the earth, the inspiration of the breath of life, the creation of Eve from the rib of the man, serpents speaking and seducing human beings, who were very wise and well aware that the serpent was possessed by the father of lies, the eating of an apple which was to bring punishment upon the whole world, which would make finite one of the attributes of God, namely his clemency (the attributes of God being identical with his essence), as the redemption of the fallen would make finite the wrath of God, and so God himself: for the wrath of God is God himself; men eight or nine hundred years old; the passage of the animals into the ark of Noah, the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues, etc., etc. These and a thousand other stories can not fail to impress the investigating freethinker as being similar to the fables, especially of the Rabbins since the Jewish race is very much addicted to the use of fables; nor at all inconsistent with other works, to mention those of Ovid, the Vedas, those of the Sinenses and the Brahmins of India, who tell that a beautiful daughter born from an egg bore the world, and similar absurdities. But Moses especially seems to arrest our attention because he represents God as contradicting himself, namely, saying that all things were good and yet that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Whence it follows that there was something apart from Adam that was not good and so could injure the good condition of Adam, while, nevertheless, the solitude of Adam itself was the work of God, since he had created goodness not only of the essences but also of the qualities.

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For all things were good in that quality in which God had created them. I adduce as proof: It is impossible for any work created by God not to be good. And the solitude of Adam, etc., etc. Therefore, etc.

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Whoever enters upon the study of the genealogies of the Old Testament finds many difficulties in Moses. I shall not now cite all, contenting myself with merely this one example, since Paul, I. Tim. i., 4,¹² has taught that genealogies are useless, and the study of them unprofitable, nay, to be avoided. Of what use

were so many separate, nay, so oft times repeated, genealogies? And there is a remarkable example to arouse suspicion at least of the corruption of the text or of the carelessness of compilers, in the case of the wives of Esau and the different things said of them.

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WIVES OF ESAU.

[13Genesis xxvi. 34](#):

Judith, daughter of Berit, the Hittite.
Basnath, daughter of Elon, the Hittite.

[Genesis xxviii. 9](#):

Mahalaad, daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nabajoth, who is mentioned after the two former.

[Genesis xxxvi. 2](#):

Ada, daughter of Elon, the Hittite.
Akalibama, C. I.
Basnath, daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nabajoth.

The one who is called Ada in [Genesis xxxvi](#), is called Basnath in Gen. xxvi, namely, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, and the one who is called Basnath in [Gen. xxxvi](#), is called Mahalaad in [Gen. xxviii](#), namely, the sister of Nabajoth, although, nevertheless, Mahalaad, in the passage cited in [Gen. xxviii](#), is said to have been married after Judith and Basnath, previously mentioned in [Gen. xxvi](#).

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I do not yet see how these names are to be reconciled. And these and similar passages increase the suspicion that the writings of Moses which we have, have been put together by compilers and that errors in writing have crept in at some time.

Finally the most conclusive argument against the authenticity of Moses is the excessive tautology and useless repetition, with always the same amount of difference, as if different passages had been collected from different authors.

(II.) To prove that Moses is subject to suspicion from the testimony, not of his enemies only, but from that of those who openly professed to be his followers and disciples. And this testimony is

(g.) Of Peter, [Acts xv. 10](#),¹⁴ calling the yoke of Moses insupportable: and hence either God must be a tyrant, which would be inconsistent with his nature, or Peter speaks falsely, or the laws of Moses are not divine.

(h.) Of Paul always speaking slightly of the laws of Moses, which he would not do if he considered them divine. Thus [Gal. iv](#).¹⁵ he calls them

(a.) Bondage v. 3, 4, but who would have so called the laws of God.

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(b.) Beggarly commands v. 9.¹⁶

(c.) V. 30,¹⁶ he writes: Cast out the bondwoman and her son. Hagar, the bondwoman, is the covenant of Mount Sinai, which is the law of Moses according to v. 24.¹⁶ But who would tolerate the saying, cast out the law of God and its children, and followers, although Paul himself, as he asserts here and in the following chapter [Gal. iv. 2, 3](#),¹⁶ does not permit Timothy to be circumcised. Act xvi.¹⁷

(d.) He calls the law a dead letter, and what else does he not call it? [II. Cor. iii. 6-10](#)¹⁶ and following. Likewise he did not consider its glory worth considering. c. v., 10. Who would say such things of the most holy law of God? If it is just as divine as the gospel it ought to have equal glory, etc., etc.

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The testimony of those who are outside of the Jewish or Christian church, is etc., etc.



1 (?)Those holding sinecures. †

2 A sect of East Indian philosophers who went about almost naked, ate no flesh, renounced all bodily pleasures, and simply contemplated nature.

The "Pre-Adamite doctrine," similar to the above, was published by Isaac de Peyrere about 1655. These fanatics believed that mankind lost none of their innocence by the fall of Adam. Both men and women made their appearance in the streets of Munster, France, in *puris naturalibus*, as did our first parents in the Garden of Eden, before the fruit incident, which brought so much trouble into the world. The magistrates failed to put them down, and the military had some difficulty in abolishing this absurdity.—A. N. †

3 *An Intercessor, applied to the Holy Spirit.* †

4 Average seems to indicate the VI. Commandment.—A. N. †

5 [Exodus xxxii, 31, 32](#). And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. †

6 [Exodus iv, 24, 25, 26](#). Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his (?the Lord's) feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

So he (the Lord) let him (Moses) go: then she said, a bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision. †

7 [Numbers xx, 12](#). And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. †

8 [Exodus xxxii, 11](#). And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand?

[Numbers xii, 8](#). With him (Moses) will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparent and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? †

9 [Exodus xxxiii, 20](#). Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee in the place which I have prepared. †

10 [Matthew V](#). Sermon on the Mount, 17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, etc. Matt. x, 2? names Apostles. †

11 [Deuteronomy xviii, 21, 22](#). And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath *not* spoken?

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath *not* spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. †

12 [Paul to Timothy \(I.\) I, 4](#). Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, etc. †

13 [Genesis xxvi, 34, 35](#). And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri, the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah.

[Genesis xxviii, 9](#). Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the *wives which he had*, Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nabajoth, to be his wife.

[Genesis xxxvi, 2, 3](#). Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan, Adah, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, and Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, the Hivite, and Bashemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nabajoth. †

14 [Acts xv, 10](#). Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? †

15 [Galatians 3, 4](#). Even so we when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. v. 9. But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage.

v. 30. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.

v. 24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount of Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

[Galatians v, 2, 3](#). Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that is a debtor to do the whole law. †

16 [II. Cor. iii, 6-10](#). Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of

death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

[II. Cor. v. 10.](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. ↑

¹⁷ [Acts xvi. 1, 2, 3.](#) Then came he to Derbe and Lystra, and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek; which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek. ↑

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

In the library of Cornell University, at Ithaca, N. Y., is a large collection of Spinoza manuscripts and printed books by the same author. The collection was left to the library, and is known as the "Strauss Collection." In the collection is a manuscript copy of "*La vie et l'esprit de M. Benoit de Spinosa*," which includes "*Le traité des trois Imposteurs*."

This particular manuscript is much longer than any of the printed editions of *Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, and includes several more chapters than another manuscript which is in same library.

The printed editions usually contain six chapters, although the edition à *Philadelphie*, 1796, alluded to on pages 18-19, contains nine chapters. None of the printed editions that I have seen contains a chapter entitled *Numa Pompilius*.

The manuscript in Cornell library has six additional chapters more than our manuscript, 1716, which chapters are entitled: 1. *Religions*. 2. *Of the Diversity of Religions*. 3. *Divisions of Christians*. 4. *The Superstitious,—of the superstition and credulity of the people*. 5. *Of the Origin of Monarchies*. 6. *Of Legislators and Politicians, and how they serve themselves with Religion*.

These chapters being but an elaboration of the matters and ideas contained in our English translation.—A. N.

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TRANSLATIONS OF LATIN FOUND IN THE TEXT.

P. 8, paragraph 3, "*Atheismus Triumphatus*." Atheism destroyed.

P. 10, paragraph 1, "Perini del Vago, Equitis de Malta, *Epistolium ad Batavum in Brittaniam hospitem de tribus Impostoribus*," (3 Greek words omitted). Epistle to Batavus, a friend in Britain, about the Three Impostors (the Pamphleteers, Sycophants and so-called Doctors).

P. 12, line 2, "*Ridiculum et imposturae in omni hominum religione, scriptio paradoxa, quam ex autographo gallico Victoris Amadeo Verimontii ob summam rei dignitatem in latinum sermonem transtulit*." What is ridiculous, and the impostures in every religion of mankind, a strange writing, which he translated into Latin from the original French of Victor Amadeus Verimontius, on account of the great worth of the subject matter.

P. 12, line 9, "*Quaedam deficiunt s. fragmentum de libro de tribus impostoribus*." Certain things are missing. His fragment of the book about the three impostors.

P. 12, line 12, "*De imposturis religionum breve. Compendium descriptum ab exemplari manuscripto quod in bibliotheca J. Fred. Mayeri, Berolini, publice distracta deprehensum et a Principe Eugenio de Sabaudia, 80 Imperialibus redemptum fuit*." An abstract about the impostures of religions. An abridgment

copied from the original manuscript which, at the dispersal of the library of J. Fred. Mayer of Berlin, was discovered and repurchased by Prince Eugene de Sabaudia for 80 imperials.

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P. 12, line 18, "*Communes namque demonstrationes, quae publicantur, nec certae, nec evidentes, sunt, et res dubias per alias saepe magias dubias probant, adeo ut exemplo eorum, qui circulum currunt, ad terminum semper redeant, a quo currere inceperant. Finis.*" For the ordinary arguments which are set forth, are not established, nor are they evident, and prove doubtful matters by others often much more doubtful, just like those who run in a circle, and always return to the starting point. End.

P. 12, last 7 lines, "*Quamvis omnium hominem intersit nosse veritatem, rari tamen boni illi qui eam norunt,*" etc. Although it is to the interest of all men to know the truth, nevertheless those few good men who know it, etc.

"*Qui veritates amantes sunt, multum solatii inde capient, et hi sunt, quibus placere gestimus, nil curantes mancipia, quae prejudicia oraculorum— infallibilium loco venerantur.*" Those who are lovers of the truth will derive much comfort from this, and those are the ones whom we are anxious to please, not caring for those servile persons who reverence prejudices as infallible oracles.

P. 13, paragraph 7, "*De impostura religionum compendium s. liber de tribus impostoribus.*" Treatise about the imposture of religions. His book about the three impostors.

P. 15, paragraph 2, "*Homo sum, nihil humania me alienum puto.*" I am a man, I consider nothing human alien to me.

Page 29, 4th paragraph. Latin orthography corrected:

"*Quod de tribus famosissimis Nationum Deceptoribus in ordinem. Jussu. meo digessit Doctissimus ille vir, quocum Sermonem de illa re in Museo meo habuisti exscribi curavi atque codicem illum stilo aequae, vero ac puro scriptum ad te ut primum mitto, etenim ipsius perlegendi te accipio cupidissimum.*"

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This treatise about the three most famous impostors of the world, in accordance with my instructions was put in order by that scholar with whom you had the conversation concerning that matter in my library, I had it copied, and that MS. written in a style equally genuine and simple. I send you as soon as possible, for I am sure you are very eager to read it.

P. 29-30, last paragraph, (Latin orthography corrected), "*I. liber de Nat. Deor. Qui Deos esse dixerunt tanta sunt in Varietate et dissentione constituti ut eorum molestum sit dinumerare sententias. Alterum fieri profecto potest ut eorum nulla, alterum certe non potest ut plus unum vera fit. Summi quos in Republica obtinuerat honores orator ille Romanus, eaque quam servare famam Studiote curabat, in causa fuere quod in Condone Deos non ausus sit negare quamquam in contesta Philosophorum, etc.*"

I. Book about the nature of the Gods. "Those who have said that there are Gods, are characterized by such a variety of ideas and difference of belief, that it would be difficult to enumerate their opinions.

"On the one hand it might indeed happen that not one of their opinions was true, but on the other hand, certainly not more than one can be true." The great honors which that famous Roman orator had gained in the state, and that reputation, which he took the most zealous care to maintain, were the reason why in a public speech he dared not deny the Gods, although in a discussion of philosophers, etc.

P. 35, last paragraph, "*De poteste Imperiali,*"—Of the Imperial power.

P. 144, TANTUM—So FAR.

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QUIXOTISM.

Did you ever attend a meeting of the society for the—perhaps I had better not mention the name of the society, lest I tread on your favorite Quixotism. Suffice it to say that it has a noble purpose. It aims at nothing less than the complete transformation of human society, by the use of means which, to say the least,

seem quite inadequate. After the minutes of the last meeting have been read, and the objects of the society have been once more stated with much detail, there is an opportunity for discussion from the floor.

“Perhaps there is some one who may give some new suggestions, or who may desire to ask a question.”

You have observed what happens to the unfortunate questioner. What a sorry exhibition he makes of himself! No sooner does he open his mouth than every one recognizes his intellectual feebleness. He seems unable to grasp the simplest ideas. He stumbles at the first premise, and lies sprawling at the very threshold of the argument.

“If what I have taken for granted be true,” says the chairman, “do not all the fine things I have been telling you about follow necessarily?”

“But,” murmurs the questioner, “the things you take for granted are just what trouble me. They don’t correspond to my experience.”

“Poor, feeble minded questioner!” cry the members of the society, “to think that he is not able to take things for granted! And then to set up his experience against our constitution and by-laws!”

The Gentle Reader—Quixotism—Samuel M. Crothers.

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ERRATA.

P. 5, 2d paragraph, 1st line, *Werner* should read *Weller*.

P. 12, line 5, *sermonen* should read *sermonem*.

ORIGINAL MSS., A. D. 1716, CONTAINS—

Dissertation, pp. 26-36,	3300 words French.
Treatise, pp. 37-101,	<u>19800</u> ,, French.
Total,	23100 words.

Weller's reprint, 1876, Edition, 1598 contains 5800 words Latin.

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Corrections

The following corrections have been applied to the text:

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8	Atheist	Atheism
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9	Sabatai	Sabbatai
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10	W.	M.
10	schule	Schule
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