

VOLTAIRE

A PHILOSOPHICAL
DICTIONARY, VOLUME
01

Voltaire
A Philosophical
Dictionary, Volume 01

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A Philosophical Dictionary, Volume 01:

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François-Marie Arouet (AKA Voltaire) A Philosophical Dictionary, Volume 01

A

The letter A has been accounted sacred in almost every nation, because it was the first letter. The Egyptians added this to their numberless superstitions; hence it was that the Greeks of Alexandria called it *hier'alpha*; and, as omega was the last of the letters, these words *alpha* and *omega* signified the beginning and the end of all things. This was the origin of the cabalistic art, and of more than one mysterious folly.

The letters served as ciphers, and to express musical notes. Judge what an infinity of useful knowledge must thus have been produced. A, b, c, d, e, f, g, were the seven heavens; the harmony of the celestial spheres was composed of the seven first letters; and an acrostic accounted for everything among the ever venerable Ancients.

A, B, C, OR ALPHABET

Why has not the alphabet a name in any European language? *Alphabet* signifies nothing more than *A, B*, and *A, B*, signifies nothing, or but indicates two sounds, which two sounds have no relation to each other. *Beta* is not formed from *alpha*; one is first, the other is second, and no one knows why.

How can it have happened that terms are still wanting to express the portal of all the sciences? The knowledge of numbers, the art of numeration, is not called the *one-two*; yet the first rudiment of the art of expressing our thoughts has not in all Europe obtained a proper designation.

The alphabet is the first part of grammar; perhaps those who are acquainted with Arabic, of which I have not the slightest notion, can inform me whether that language, which is said to contain no fewer than eighty words to express a *horse*, has *one* which signifies the *alphabet*.

I protest that I know no more of Chinese than of Arabic, but I have read, in a small Chinese vocabulary, that this nation has always had two words to express the catalogue or list of the characters of its language: one is *ko-tou*, the other *hai-pien*; we have neither *ko-tou* nor *hai-pien* in our Occidental tongues. The Greeks, who were no more adroit than ourselves, also said *alphabet*. Seneca, the philosopher, used the Greek phrase to designate an old man who, like me, asks questions on grammar,

calling him *Skedon analphabetos*. Now the Greeks had this same alphabet from the Phœnicians – from that people called *the letter nation* by the Hebrews themselves, when the latter, at so late a period, went to settle in their neighborhood.

It may well be supposed that the Phœnicians, by communicating their characters to the Greeks, rendered them a great service in delivering them from the embarrassment occasioned by the Egyptian mode of writing taught them by Cecrops. The Phœnicians, in the capacity of merchants, sought to make everything easy of comprehension; while the Egyptians, in their capacity of interpreters of the gods, strove to make everything difficult.

I can imagine I hear a Phœnician merchant landed in Achaia saying to a Greek correspondent: "Our characters are not only easy to write, and communicate the thoughts as well as the sound of the voice; they also express our respective debts. My *aleph*, which you choose to pronounce *alpha*, stands for an ounce of silver, *beta* for two ounces, *tau* for a hundred, *sigma* for two hundred. I owe you two hundred ounces; I pay you a *tau*, and still owe you another *tau*; thus we shall soon make our reckoning."

It was most probably by mutual traffic which administered to their wants, that society was first established among men; and it is necessary that those between whom commerce is carried on should understand one another.

The Egyptians did not apply themselves to commerce until a very late period; they had a horror of the sea; it was their

Typhon. The Tyrians, on the contrary, were navigators from time immemorial; they brought together those nations which Nature had separated, and repaired those calamities into which the revolutions of the world frequently plunged a large portion of mankind. The Greeks, in their turn, carried to other nations their commerce and their convenient alphabet, which latter was altered a little, as the Greeks had altered that of the Tyrians. When their merchants, who were afterwards made demi-gods, went to Colchis to establish a trade in sheepskins – whence we have the fable of *the golden fleece*– they communicated their letters to the people of the country, who still retain them with some alteration. They have not adopted the alphabet of the Turks, to whom they are at present subject, but whose yoke, thanks to the Empress of Russia, I hope they will throw off.

It is very likely (I do not say it is certain – God forbid!) that neither Tyre nor Egypt, nor any other country situated near the Mediterranean Sea, communicated its alphabet to the nations of Eastern Asia. If, for example, the Tyrians, or the Chaldæans, who dwelt near the Euphrates, had communicated their method to the Chinese, some traces of it would have remained; we should have had the signs of the twenty-two, twenty-three, or twenty-four letters, whereas they have a sign for each word in their language; and the number of their words, we are told, is eighty thousand. This method has nothing in common with that of Tyre; it is seventy-nine thousand nine hundred and seventy-six times more learned and more embarrassing than our own. Besides this

prodigious difference, they write from the top to the bottom of the page; while the Tyrians and the Chaldæans wrote from right to left, and the Greeks, like ourselves, wrote from left to right.

Examine the Tartar, the Hindoo, the Siamese, the Japanese characters; you will not find the least resemblance to the Greek or the Phœnician alphabet.

Yet all these nations, and not these alone, but even the Hottentots and Kaffirs, pronounce the vowels and consonants as we do, because the larynx in them is essentially the same as in us – just as the throat of the rudest boor is made like that of the finest opera-singer, the difference, which makes of one a rough, discordant, insupportable bass, and of the other a voice sweeter than the nightingale's, being imperceptible to the most acute anatomist; or, as the brain of a fool is for all the world like the brain of a great genius.

When we said that the Tyrian merchants taught the Greeks their A, B, C, we did not pretend that they also taught them to speak. It is probable that the Athenians already expressed themselves in a better manner than the people of Lower Syria; their throats were more flexible, and their words were a more happy assemblage of vowels, consonants, and diphthongs. The language of the Phœnician people was rude and gross, consisting of such words as *Shasiroth*, *Ashtaroth*, *Shabaoth*, *Chotiket*, *Thopheth*, etc. – enough to terrify a songstress from the opera of Naples. Suppose that the Romans of the present day had retained the ancient Etrurian alphabet, and some Dutch traders brought

them that which they now use; the Romans would do very well to receive their characters, but it is not at all likely that they would speak the Batavian language. Just so would the people of Athens deal with the sailors of Capthor, who had come from Tyre or Baireuth; they would adopt their alphabet as being better than that of Misraim or Egypt, but would reject their speech.

Philosophically speaking, and setting aside all inferences to be drawn from the Holy Scriptures, which certainly are not here the subject of discussion, is not *the primitive language* a truly laughable chimera?

What would be thought of a man who should seek to discover what had been the primitive cry of all animals; and how it happens that, after a series of ages, sheep bleat, cats mew, doves coo, linnets whistle? They understand one another perfectly in their respective idioms, and much better than we do. Every species has its language; that of the Esquimaux was never that of Peru; there has no more been a *primitive language* or a *primitive alphabet* than there have been *primitive oaks* or *primitive grass*.

Several rabbis assert that the Samaritan was the original tongue; other persons say that it was that of Lower Brittany. We may surely, without offending either the people of Brittany or those of Samaria, admit *no* original tongue.

May we not, also, without offending any one, suppose that the alphabet originated in cries and exclamations? Infants of themselves articulate one sound when an object catches their attention, another when they laugh, and a third when they are

whipped, which they ought not to be.

As for the two little boys whom the Egyptian king *Psammeticus*— which, by the by, is not an Egyptian word — brought up, in order to know what was the primitive language, it seems hardly possible that they should both have cried *bee bee* when they wanted their breakfast.

From exclamations formed by vowels as natural to children as croaking is to frogs, the transition to a complete alphabet is not so great as it may be thought. A mother must always have said to her child the equivalent of *come, go, take, leave, hush!* etc. These words represent nothing; they describe nothing; but a gesture makes them intelligible.

From these shapeless rudiments we have, it is true, an immense distance to travel before we arrive at syntax. It is almost terrifying to contemplate that from the simple word *come*, we have arrived at such sentences as the following: *Mother, I should have come with pleasure, and should have obeyed your commands, which are ever dear to me, if I had not, when running towards you, fallen backwards, which caused a thorn to run into my left leg.*

It appears to my astonished imagination that it must have required ages to adjust this sentence, and ages more to put it into language. Here we might tell, or endeavor to tell, the reader how such words are expressed and pronounced in every language of the earth, as *father, mother, land, water, day, night, eating, drinking*, etc., but we must, as much as possible, avoid appearing

ridiculous.

The alphabetical characters, denoting at once the names of things, their number, and the dates of events, the ideas of men, soon became mysteries even to those who had invented the signs. The Chaldæans, the Syrians, and the Egyptians attributed something divine to the combination of the letters and the manner of pronouncing them. They believed that names had a force – a virtue – independently of the things which they represented; they went so far as to pretend that the word which signified *power* was *powerful* in itself; that which expressed an *angel* was *angelic*, and that which gave the idea of *God* was *divine*. The science of numbers naturally became a part of necromancy, and no magical operation could be performed without the letters of the alphabet.

Thus the clue to all knowledge led to every error. The magi of every country used it to conduct themselves into the labyrinth which they had constructed, and which the rest of mankind were not permitted to enter. The manner of pronouncing vowels and consonants became the most profound of mysteries, and often the most terrible. There was, among the Syrians and Egyptians, a manner of pronouncing Jehovah which would cause a man to fall dead.

St. Clement of Alexandria relates that Moses killed a king of Egypt on the spot by sounding this name in his ear, after which he brought him to life again by pronouncing the same word. St. Clement is very exact; he cites the author, the learned *Artapanus*.

Who can impeach the testimony of *Artapanus*?

Nothing tended more to retard the progress of the human mind than this profound science of error which sprung up among the Asiatics with the origin of truth. The universe was brutalized by the very art that should have enlightened it. Of this we have great examples in Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, etc.

Origen, in particular, expressly says: "If, when invoking God, or swearing by him, you call him *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* you will, by these words, do things the nature and force of which are such that the evil spirits submit to those who pronounce them; but if you call him by another name as *God of the roaring sea*, etc., no effort will be produced. The name of *Israel* rendered in Greek will work nothing; but pronounce it in Hebrew with the other words required, and you will effect the conjuration."

The same Origen had these remarkable words: "There are names which are powerful from their own nature. Such are those used by the sages of Egypt, the magi of Persia, and the Brahmins of India. What is called *magic* is not a vain and chimerical art, as the Stoics and Epicureans pretend. The name *Sabaoth* and *Adonai* were *not* made for created beings, but belong to a mysterious theology which has reference to the creator; hence the virtue of these names when they are arranged and pronounced according to rule," etc.

It was by pronouncing letters according to the magical method, that the moon was made to descend to the earth. Virgil must be pardoned for having faith in this nonsense, and speaking

of it seriously in his eighth eclogue:

Carmina de cœlo possunt de duocere lunam.

Pale Phœbe, drawn by verse, from heaven descends.

– *DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.*

In short, the alphabet was the origin, of all man's knowledge,
and of all his errors.

ABBÉ

The word *abbé*, let it be remembered, signifies father. If you become one you render a service to the state; you doubtless perform the best work that a man can perform; you give birth to a thinking being: in this action there is something divine. But if you are only *Monsieur l'Abbé* because you have had your head shaved, wear a small collar, and a short cloak, and are waiting for a fat benefice, you do not deserve the name of *abbé*.

The ancient monks gave this name to the superior whom they elected; the *abbé* was their spiritual father. What different things do the same words signify at different times! The spiritual *abbé* was once a poor man at the head of others equally poor: but the poor spiritual fathers have since had incomes of two hundred or four hundred thousand livres, and there are poor spiritual fathers in Germany who have regiments of guards.

A poor man, making a vow of poverty, and in consequence becoming a sovereign? Truly, this is intolerable. The laws exclaim against such an abuse; religion is indignant at it, and the really poor, who want food and clothing, appeal to heaven against *Monsieur l'Abbé*.

But I hear the *abbés* of Italy, Germany, Flanders, and Burgundy ask: "Why are not we to accumulate wealth and honors? Why are we not to become princes? The bishops are, who were originally poor, like us; they have enriched and

elevated themselves; one of them has become superior even to kings; let us imitate them as far as we are able."

Gentlemen, you are right. Invade the land; it belongs to him whose strength or skill obtains possession of it. You have made ample use of the times of ignorance, superstition, and infatuation, to strip us of our inheritances, and trample us under your feet, that you might fatten on the substance of the unfortunate. Tremble, for fear that the day of reason will arrive!

ABBEY – ABBOT

SECTION I

An abbey is a religious community, governed by an abbot or an abbess.

The word *abbot*—*abbas* in Latin and Greek, *abba* in Chaldee and Syriac – came from the Hebrew *ab*, meaning *father*. The Jewish doctors took this title through pride; therefore Jesus said to his disciples: "Call no one your father upon the earth, for one is your Father who is in heaven."

Although St. Jerome was much enraged against the monks of his time, who, in spite of our Lord's command, gave or received the title of *abbot*, the Sixth Council of Paris decided that if abbots are spiritual fathers and beget spiritual sons for the Lord, it is with reason that they are called abbots.

According to this decree, if any one deserved this appellation it belonged most assuredly to St. Benedict, who, in the year 528, founded on Mount Cassino, in the kingdom of Naples, that society so eminent for wisdom and discretion, and so grave in its speech and in its style. These are the terms used by Pope St. Gregory, who does not fail to mention the singular privilege which it pleased God to grant to this holy founder – that all

Benedictines who die on Mount Cassino are saved. It is not, then, surprising that these monks reckon sixteen thousand canonized saints of their order. The Benedictine sisters even assert that they are warned of their approaching dissolution by some nocturnal noise, which they call *the knocks of St. Benedict*.

It may well be supposed that this holy abbot did not forget himself when begging the salvation of his disciples. Accordingly, on the 21st of March, 543, the eve of Passion Sunday, which was the day of his death, two monks – one of them in the monastery, the other at a distance from it – had the same vision. They saw a long road covered with carpets, and lighted by an infinite number of torches, extending eastward from the monastery to heaven. A venerable personage appeared, and asked them for whom this road was made. They said they did not know. "It is that," rejoined he, "by which Benedict, the well-beloved of God, has ascended into heaven."

An order in which salvation was so well secured soon extended itself into other states, whose sovereigns allowed themselves to be persuaded that, to be sure of a place in Paradise, it was only necessary to make themselves a friend in it, and that by donations to the churches they might atone for the most crying injustices and the most enormous crimes.

Confining ourselves to France, we read in the "Exploits of King Dagobert" (*Gestes du Roi Dagobert*), the founder of the abbey of St. Denis, near Paris, that this prince, after death, was condemned by the judgment of God, and that a hermit named

John, who dwelt on the coast of Italy, saw his soul chained in a boat and beaten by devils, who were taking him towards Sicily to throw him into the fiery mouth of Etna; but all at once St. Denis appeared on a luminous globe, preceded by thunder and lightning, and, having put the evil spirits to flight, and rescued the poor soul from the clutches of the most cruel, bore it to heaven in triumph.

Charles Martel, on the contrary, was damned – body and soul – for having rewarded his captains by giving them abbeys. These, though laymen, bore the title of *abbot*, as married women have since borne that of *abbess*, and had convents of females. A holy bishop of Lyons, named Eucher, being at prayer, had the following vision: He thought he was led by an angel into hell, where he saw Charles Martel, who, the angel informed him, had been condemned to everlasting flames by the saints whose churches he had despoiled. St. Eucher wrote an account of this revelation to Boniface, bishop of Mayence, and to Fulrad, grand chaplain to Pepin-le-bref, praying them to open the tomb of Charles Martel and see if his body were there. The tomb was opened. The interior of it bore marks of fire, but nothing was found in it except a great serpent, which issued forth with a cloud of offensive smoke.

Boniface was so kind as to write to Pepin-le-bref and to Carloman all these particulars relative to the damnation of their father; and when, in 858, Louis of Germany seized some ecclesiastical property, the bishops of the assembly of Créci

reminded him, in a letter, of all the particulars of this terrible story, adding that they had them from aged men, on whose word they could rely, and who had been eye-witnesses of the whole.

St. Bernard, first abbot of Clairvaux, in 1115 had likewise had it revealed to him that all who received the monastic habit from his hand should be saved. Nevertheless, Pope Urban II., having, in a bull dated 1092, given to the abbey of Mount Cassino the title of *chief of all monasteries*, because from that spot the venerable religion of the monastic order had flowed from the bosom of Benedict as from a celestial spring, the Emperor Lothario continued this prerogative by a charter of the year 1137, which gave to the monastery of Mount Cassino the pre-eminence in power and glory over all the monasteries which were or might be founded throughout the world, and called upon all the abbots and monks in Christendom to honor and reverence it.

Paschal II., in a bull of the year 1113, addressed to the abbot of Mount Cassino, expresses himself thus: "We decree that you, as likewise all your successors, shall, as being superior to all abbots, be allowed to sit in every assembly of bishops or princes; and that in all judgments you shall give your opinion before any other of your order." The abbot of Cluni having also dared to call himself *the abbot of abbots*, the pope's chancellor decided, in a council held at Rome in 1112, that this distinction belonged to the abbot of Mount Cassino. He of Cluni contented himself with the title of *cardinal abbot*, which he afterwards obtained from Calixtus II., and which the abbot of *The Trinity* of Vendôme and

some others have since assumed.

Pope John XX., in 1326 granted to the abbot of Mount Cassino the title of bishop, and he continued to discharge the episcopal functions until 1367; but Urban V., having then thought proper to deprive him of that dignity, he now simply entitles himself *Patriarch of the Holy Religion, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Mount Cassino, Chancellor and Grand Chaplain of the Holy Roman Empire, Abbot of Abbots, Chief of the Benedictine Hierarchy, Chancellor Collateral of the Kingdom of Sicily, Count and Governor of the Campagna and of the maritime province, Prince of Peace.*

He lives, with a part of his officers, at San-Germano, a little town at the foot of Mount Cassino, in a spacious house, where all passengers, from the pope down to the meanest beggar, are received, lodged, fed, and treated according to their rank. The abbot each day visits all his guests, who sometimes amount to three hundred. In 1538, St. Ignatius shared his hospitality, but he was lodged in a house on Mount Cassino, six hundred paces west of the abbey. There he composed his celebrated Institute – whence a Dominican, in a work entitled, "The Turtle-Dove of the Soul," says: "Ignatius dwelt for twelve months on this mountain of contemplation, and, like another Moses, framed those second tables of religious laws which are inferior in nothing to the first."

Truly, this founder of the Jesuits was not received by the Benedictines with that complaisance which St. Benedict, on his arrival at Mount Cassino, had found in St. Martin the hermit,

who gave up to him the place in his possession, and retired to Mount Marsica, near Carniola. On the contrary, the Benedictine Ambrose Cajeta, in a voluminous work written for the purpose, has endeavored to trace the origin of the Jesuits to the order of St. Benedict.

The laxity of manners which has always prevailed in the world, even among the clergy, induced St. Basil, so early as the fourth century, to adopt the idea of assembling in one community the solitaries who had fled into deserts to follow the law; but, as will be elsewhere seen, even the *regulars* have not always been regular.

As for the secular clergy, let us see what St. Cyprian says of them, even from the third century: "Many bishops, instead of exhorting and setting an example to others, neglected the affairs of God, busied themselves with temporal concerns, quitted their pulpits, abandoned their flocks, and travelled in other provinces, in order to attend fairs and enrich themselves by traffic; they succored not their brethren who were dying of hunger; they sought only to amass heaps of money, to gain possession of lands by unjust artifices, and to make immense profits by usury."

Charlemagne, in a digest of what he intended to propose to the parliament of 811, thus expresses himself: "We wish to know the duties of ecclesiastics, in order that we may not ask of them what they are not permitted to give, and that they may not demand of us what we ought not to grant. We beg of them to explain to us clearly what they call *quitting the world*, and by what those

who quit it may be distinguished from those who remain in it; if it is only by their not bearing arms, and not being married in public; if that man has quitted the world who continues to add to his possessions by means of every sort, preaching Paradise and threatening with damnation; employing the name of God or of some saint to persuade the simple to strip themselves of their property, thus entailing want upon their lawful heirs, who therefore think themselves justified in committing theft and pillage; if to quit the world is to carry the passion of covetousness to such a length as to bribe false witnesses in order to obtain what belongs to another, and to seek out judges who are cruel, interested, and without the fear of God."

To conclude: We may judge of the morals of the regular clergy from a harangue delivered in 1493, in which the Abbé Tritême said to his brethren: "You abbés, who are ignorant and hostile to the knowledge of salvation; who pass your days in shameless pleasures, in drinking and gaming; who fix your affections on the things of this life; what answer will you make to God and to your founder, St. Benedict?"

The same abbé nevertheless asserted that one-third of all the property of Christians belonged of right to the order of St. Benedict, and that if they had it not, it was because they had been robbed of it. "They are so poor at present," added he, "that their revenues do not amount to more than a hundred millions of louis d'ors." Tritême does not tell us to whom the other two-thirds belong, but as in his time there were only fifteen thousand abbeys

of Benedictines, besides the small convents of the same order, while in the seventeenth century their number had increased to thirty-seven thousand, it is clear, by the rule of proportion, that this holy order ought now to possess five-sixths of the property in Christendom, but for the fatal progress of heresy during the latter ages.

In addition to all other misfortunes, since the Concordat was signed, in 1515, between Leo X. and Francis I., the king of France nominating to nearly all the abbeys in his kingdom, most of them have been given to seculars with shaven crowns. It was in consequence of this custom being but little known in England that Dr. Gregory said pleasantly to the Abbé Gallois, whom he took for a Benedictine: "The good father imagines that we have returned to those fabulous times when a monk was permitted to say what he pleased."

SECTION II

Those who fly from the world are wise; those who devote themselves to God are to be respected. Perhaps time has corrupted so holy an institution.

To the Jewish therapeuts succeeded the Egyptian monks—*idiotoi*, *monoi*—*idiot*—then signifying only solitary. They soon formed themselves into bodies and became the opposite of solitaries. Each society of monks elected its superior; for, in the early ages of the church, everything was done by the plurality

of voices. Men sought to regain the primitive liberty of human nature by escaping through piety from the tumult and slavery inseparably attendant on great empires. Every society of monks chose its *father*— its *abba*— its *abbot*, although it is said in the gospel, "call no man your father."

Neither abbots nor monks were priests in the early ages; they went in troops to hear mass at the nearest village; their numbers, in time, became considerable. It is said that there were upwards of fifty thousand monks in Egypt.

St. Basil, who was first a monk and afterwards Bishop of Cæsarea and Cappadocia, composed a code for all the monks of the fourth century. This rule of St. Basil's was received in the East and in the West; no monks were known but those of St. Basil; they were rich, took part in all public affairs, and contributed to the revolutions of empires.

No order but this was known until, in the sixth century, St. Benedict established a new power on Mount Cassino. St. Gregory the Great assures us, in his Dialogues, that God granted him a special privilege, by which all the Benedictines who should die on Mount Cassino were to be saved. Consequently, Pope Urban II., in a bull of the year 1092, declared the abbot of Mount Cassino chief of all the abbeys in the world. Paschal II. gave him the title of *Abbot of Abbots, Patriarch of the Holy Religion, Chancellor Collateral of the Kingdom of Sicily, Count and Governor of the Campagna, Prince of Peace, etc.* All these titles would avail but little were they not supported by immense riches.

Not long ago I received a letter from one of my German correspondents, which began with these words: "The abbots, princes of Kempten, Elvengen, Eudestet, Musbach, Berghsgaden, Vissemburg, Prum, Stablo, and Corvey, and the other abbots who are not princes, enjoy together a revenue of about nine hundred thousand florins, or two millions and fifty thousand French livres of the present currency. Whence I conclude that Jesus Christ's circumstances were not quite so easy as theirs." I replied: "Sir, you must confess that the French are more pious than the Germans, in the proportion of 4 16-41 to unity; for our consistorial benefices alone, that is, those which pay annats to the Pope, produce a revenue of nine millions; and two millions fifty thousand livres are to nine millions as 1 is to 4 16-41. Whence I conclude that your abbots are not sufficiently rich, and that they ought to have ten times more. I have the honor to be," etc. He answered me by the following short letter: "Dear Sir, I do not understand you. You doubtless feel, with me, that nine millions of your money are rather too much for those who have made a vow of poverty; yet you wish that they had ninety. I beg you will explain this enigma." I had the honor of immediately replying: "Dear Sir, there was once a young man to whom it was proposed to marry a woman of sixty, who would leave him all her property. He answered that she was not old enough." The German understood my enigma.

The reader must be informed that, in 1575, it was proposed in a council of Henry III., King of France, to erect all the abbeys

of monks into secular commendams, and to give them to the officers of his court and his army; but this monarch, happening afterwards to be excommunicated and assassinated, the project was of course not carried into effect.

In 175 °Count d'Argenson, the minister of war, wished to raise pensions from the benefices for chevaliers of the military order of St. Louis. Nothing could be more simple, more just, more useful; but his efforts were fruitless. Yet the Princess of Conti had had an abbey under Louis XIV., and even before his reign seculars possessed benefices. The Duke de Sulli had an abbey, although he was a Huguenot.

The father of Hugh Capet was rich only by his abbeys, and was called *Hugh the Abbot*. Abbeys were given to queens, to furnish them with pin-money. Oginge, mother of Louis d'Outremer, left her son because he had taken from her the abbey of St. Mary of Laon, and given it to his wife, Gerberge.

Thus we have examples of everything. Each one strives to make customs, innovations, laws – whether old or new, abrogated, revived, or mitigated – charters, whether real or supposed – the past, the present and the future, alike subservient to the grand end of obtaining the good things of this world; yet it is always for the greater glory of God.

ABLE – ABILITY

ABLE. – An adjective term, which, like almost all others, has different acceptations as it is differently employed.

In general it signifies more than *capable*, more than *well-informed*, whether applied to an artist, a general, a man of learning, or a judge. A man may have read all that has been written on war, and may have seen it, without being *able* to conduct a war. He may be *capable* of commanding, but to acquire the name of an *able* general he must command more than once with success. A judge may know all the laws, without being *able* to apply them. A learned man may not be *able* either to write or to teach. An *able* man, then, is *he who makes a great use of what he knows*. A *capable* man *can* do a thing; an *able* one *does* it. This word cannot be applied to efforts of pure genius. We do not say an *able* poet, an *able* orator; or, if we sometimes say so of an orator, it is when he has ably, dexterously treated a thorny subject.

Bossuet, for example, having, in his funeral oration over the great Condé, to treat of his civil wars, says that there is a penitence as glorious as innocence itself. He manages this point *ably*. Of the rest he speaks with *grandeur*.

We say, an *able* historian, meaning one who has drawn his materials from good sources, compared different relations, and judged soundly of them; one, in short, who has taken great pains.

If he has, moreover, the gift of narrating with suitable eloquence, he is more than *able*, he is a *great* historian, like Titus, Livius, de Thou, etc.

The word *able* is applicable to those arts which exercise at once the mind and the hand, as painting and sculpture. We say of a painter or sculptor, *he is an able artist*, because these arts require a long novitiate; whereas a man becomes a poet nearly all at once, like Virgil or Ovid, or may even be an orator with very little study, as several preachers have been.

Why do we, nevertheless, say, an *able* preacher? It is because more attention is then paid to art than to eloquence, which is no great eulogium. We do not say of the sublime Bossuet, *he was an able maker of funeral orations*. A mere player of an instrument is *able*; a composer must be more than able; he must have genius. The workman executes *cleverly* what the man of taste has designed *ably*.

An *able* man in public affairs is well-informed, prudent and active; if he wants either of these qualifications he is not *able*.

The term, *an able courtier*, implies blame rather than praise, since it too often means *an able flatterer*. It may also be used to designate simply a clever man, who is neither very good nor very wicked. The fox who, when questioned by the lion respecting the odor of his palace, replied that he had taken cold, was an *able* courtier; the fox who, to revenge himself on the wolf, recommended to the old lion the skin of a wolf newly flayed, to keep his majesty warm, was something more than *able*.

We shall not here discuss those points of our subject which belong more particularly to morality, as the danger of wishing to be *too able*, the risks which an *able* woman runs when she wishes to govern the affairs of her household without advice, etc. We are afraid of swelling this dictionary with useless declamations. They who preside over this great and important work must treat at length those articles relating to the arts and sciences which interest the public, while those to whom they intrust little articles of literature must have the merit of being brief.

ABILITY. – This word is to *capacity* what *able* is to *capable*—*ability* in a science, in an art, in conduct.

We express an acquired quality by saying, *he has ability*; in action, by saying, *he conducts that affair with ability*.

ABLY has the same acceptations; he works, he plays, he teaches *ably*. He has *ably* surmounted that difficulty.

ABRAHAM

SECTION I

We must say nothing of what is divine in Abraham, since the Scriptures have said all. We must not even touch, except with a respectful hand, that which belongs to the profane – that which appertains to geography, the order of time, manners, and customs; for these, being connected with sacred history, are so many streams which preserve something of the divinity of their source.

Abraham, though born near the Euphrates, makes a great epoch with the Western nations, yet makes none with the Orientals, who, nevertheless, respect him as much as we do. The Mahometans have no certain chronology before their hegira. The science of time, totally lost in those countries which were the scene of great events, has reappeared in the regions of the West, where those events were unknown. We dispute about everything that was done on the banks of the Euphrates, the Jordan, and the Nile, while they who are masters of the Nile, the Jordan and the Euphrates enjoy without disputing. Although our great epoch is that of Abraham, we differ sixty years with respect to the time of his birth. The account, according to the registers, is as follows:

"And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran. Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation."

It is sufficiently evident from the text that Terah, having had Abraham at the age of seventy, died at that of two hundred and five; and Abraham, having quitted Chaldæa immediately after the death of his father, was just one hundred and thirty-five years old when he left his country. This is nearly the opinion of St. Stephen, in his discourse to the Jews.

But the Book of Genesis also says: "And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

This is the principal cause (for there are several others) of the dispute on the subject of Abraham's age. How could he be at once a hundred and thirty-five years, and only seventy-five? St. Jerome and St. Augustine say that this difficulty is inexplicable. Father Calmet, who confesses that these two saints could not solve the problem, thinks he does it by saying that Abraham was the youngest of Terah's sons, although the Book of Genesis names him the first, and consequently as the eldest. According to Genesis, Abraham was born in his father's seventieth year; while, according to Calmet, he was born when his father was a hundred and thirty. Such a reconciliation has only been a new cause of controversy. Considering the uncertainty in which we are left by

both text and commentary, the best we can do is to adore without disputing.

There is no epoch in those ancient times which has not produced a multitude of different opinions. According to Moréri there were in his day seventy systems of chronology founded on the history dictated by God himself. There have since appeared five new methods of reconciling the various texts of Scripture. Thus there are as many disputes about Abraham as the number of his years (according to the text) when he left Haran. And of these seventy-five systems there is not one which tells us precisely what this town or village of Haran was, or where it was situated. What thread shall guide us in this labyrinth of conjectures and contradictions from the very first verse to the very last? Resignation. The Holy Spirit did not intend to teach us chronology, metaphysics or logic; but only to inspire us with the fear of God. Since we can comprehend nothing, all that we can do is to submit.

It is equally difficult to explain satisfactorily how it was that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was also his sister. Abraham says positively to Abimelech, king of Gerar, who had taken Sarah to himself on account of her great beauty, at the age of ninety, when she was pregnant of Isaac: "And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife." The Old Testament does not inform us how Sarah was her husband's sister. Calmet, whose judgment and sagacity are known to every one, says that she might be his

niece. With the Chaldæans it was probably no more an incest than with their neighbors, the Persians. Manners change with times and with places. It may be supposed that Abraham, the son of Terah, an idolater, was still an idolater when he married Sarah, whether Sarah was his sister or his niece.

There are several Fathers of the Church who do not think Abraham quite so excusable for having said to Sarah, in Egypt: "It shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife, and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake." She was then only sixty-five. Since she had, twenty-five years afterwards the king of Gerar for a lover, it is not surprising that, when twenty-five years younger, she had kindled some passion in Pharaoh of Egypt. Indeed, she was taken away by him in the same manner as she was afterwards taken by Abimelech, the king of Gerar, in the desert.

Abraham received presents, at the court of Pharaoh, of many "sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels." These presents, which were considerable, prove that the Pharaohs had already become great kings; the country of Egypt must therefore have been very populous. But to make the country inhabitable, and to build towns, it must have cost immense labor. It was necessary to construct canals for the purpose of draining the waters of the Nile, which overflowed Egypt during four or five months of each year, and stagnated on the soil. It was also necessary to

raise the town at least twenty feet above these canals. Works so considerable seem to have required thousands of ages.

There were only about four hundred years between the Deluge and the period at which we fix Abraham's journey into Egypt. The Egyptians must have been very ingenious and indefatigably laborious, since, in so short a time, they invented all the arts and sciences, set bounds to the Nile, and changed the whole face of the country. Probably they had already built some of the great Pyramids, for we see that the art of embalming the dead was in a short time afterwards brought to perfection, and the Pyramids were only the tombs in which the bodies of their princes were deposited with the most august ceremonies.

This opinion of the great antiquity of the Pyramids receives additional countenance from the fact that three hundred years earlier, or but one hundred years after the Hebrew epoch of the Deluge of Noah, the Asiatics had built, in the plain of Sennaar, a tower which was to reach to heaven. St. Jerome, in his commentary on Isaiah, says that this tower was already four thousand paces high when God came down to stop the progress of the work.

Let us suppose each pace to be two feet and a half. Four thousand paces, then, are ten thousand feet; consequently the tower of Babel was twenty times as high as the Pyramids of Egypt, which are only about five hundred feet. But what a prodigious quantity of instruments must have been requisite to raise such an edifice! All the arts must have concurred in

forwarding the work. Whence commentators conclude that men of those times were incomparably larger, stronger, and more industrious than those of modern nations.

So much may be remarked with respect to Abraham, as relating to the arts and sciences. With regard to his person, it is most likely that he was a man of considerable importance. The Chaldæans and the Persians each claim him as their own. The ancient religion of the magi has, from time immemorial, been called Kish Ibrahim, Milat Ibrahim, and it is agreed that the word *Ibrahim* is precisely the same as *Abraham*, nothing being more common among the Asiatics, who rarely wrote the vowels, than to change the *i* into *a*, or the *a* into *i* in pronunciation.

It has even been asserted that Abraham was the Brahma of the Indians, and that their notions were adopted by the people of the countries near the Euphrates, who traded with India from time immemorial.

The Arabs regarded him as the founder of Mecca. Mahomet, in his Koran, always viewed in him the most respectable of his predecessors. In his third *sura*, or chapter, he speaks of him thus: "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian; he was an orthodox Mussulman; he was not of the number of those who imagine that God has colleagues."

The temerity of the human understanding has even gone so far as to imagine that the Jews did not call themselves the descendants of Abraham until a very late period, when they had at last established themselves in Palestine. They were strangers,

hated and despised by their neighbors. They wished, say some, to relieve themselves by passing for descendants of that Abraham who was so much revered in a great part of Asia. The faith which we owe to the sacred books of the Jews removes all these difficulties.

Other critics, no less hardy, start other objections relative to Abraham's direct communication with the Almighty, his battles and his victories. The Lord appeared to him after he went out of Egypt, and said, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever."

The Lord, by a second oath, afterwards promised him all "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The critics ask, how could God promise the Jews this immense country which they have never possessed? And how could God give to them *forever* that small part of Palestine out of which they have so long been driven? Again, the Lord added to these promises, that Abraham's posterity should be as numerous as the dust of the earth – "so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."

Our critics insist there are not now on the face of the earth four hundred thousand Jews, though they have always regarded marriage as a sacred duty and made population their greatest object. To these difficulties it is replied that the church, substituted for the synagogue, is the true race of Abraham, which

is therefore very numerous.

It must be admitted that they do not possess Palestine; but they may one day possess it, as they have already conquered it once, in the first crusade, in the time of Urban II. In a word, when we view the Old Testament with the eyes of faith, as a type of the New, all either is or will be accomplished, and our weak reason must bow in silence.

Fresh difficulties are raised respecting Abraham's victory near Sodom. It is said to be inconceivable that a stranger who drove his flocks to graze in the neighborhood of Sodom should, with three hundred and eighteen keepers of sheep and oxen, beat a *king of Persia, a king of Pontus, the king of Babylon, and the king of nations*, and pursue them to Damascus, which is more than a hundred miles from Sodom. Yet such a victory is not impossible, for we see other similar instances in those heroic times when the arm of God was not shortened. Think of *Gideon*, who, with three hundred men, armed with three hundred pitchers and three hundred lamps, defeated a whole army! Think of *Samson*, who slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass!

Even profane history furnishes like examples. Three hundred Spartans stopped, for a moment, the whole army of Xerxes, at the pass of Thermopylæ. It is true that, with the exception of one man who fled, they were all slain, together with their king, Leonidas, whom Xerxes had the baseness to gibbet, instead of raising to his memory the monument which it deserved. It is moreover true that these three hundred Lacedæmonians, who guarded a

steep passage which would scarcely admit two men abreast, were supported by an army of ten thousand Greeks, distributed in advantageous posts among the rocks of Pelion and Ossa, four thousand of whom, be it observed, were stationed behind this very passage of Thermopyl.

These four thousand perished after a long combat. Having been placed in a situation more exposed than that of the three hundred Spartans, they may be said to have acquired more glory in defending it against the Persian army, which cut them all in pieces. Indeed, on the monument afterwards erected on the field of battle, mention was made of these four thousand victims, whereas none are spoken of now but the *three hundred*.

A still more memorable, though much less celebrated, action was that of fifty Swiss, who, in 1315, routed at Morgarten the whole army of the Archduke Leopold, of Austria, consisting of twenty thousand men. They destroyed the cavalry by throwing down stones from a high rock; and gave time to fourteen hundred Helvetians to come up and finish the defeat of the army. This achievement at Morgarten is more brilliant than that of Thermopylæ, inasmuch as it is a finer thing to conquer than to be conquered. The Greeks amounted to ten thousand, well armed; and it was impossible that, in a mountainous country, they could have to encounter more than a hundred thousand Persians at once; it is more than probable that there were not thirty thousand Persians engaged. But here fourteen hundred Swiss defeat an army of twenty thousand men. The diminished proportions of

the less to the greater number also increases the proportion of glory. But how far has Abraham led us? These digressions amuse him who makes and sometimes him who reads them. Besides, every one is delighted to see a great army beaten by a little one.

SECTION II

Abraham is one of those names which were famous in Asia Minor and Arabia, as *Thaut* was among the Egyptians, the first *Zoroaster* in Persia, *Hercules* in Greece, *Orpheus* in Thrace, *Odin* among the northern nations, and so many others, known more by their fame than by any authentic history. I speak here of profane history only; as for that of the Jews, our masters and our enemies, whom we at once detest and believe, their history having evidently been written by the Holy Ghost, we feel toward it as we ought to feel. We have to do here only with the Arabs. They boast of having descended from Abraham through Ishmael, believing that this patriarch built Mecca and died there. The fact is, that the race of Ishmael has been infinitely more favored by God than has that of Jacob. Both races, it is true, have produced robbers; but the Arabian robbers have been prodigiously superior to the Jewish ones; the descendants of Jacob conquered only a very small country, which they have lost, whereas the descendants of Ishmael conquered parts of Asia, of Europe, and of Africa, established an empire more extensive than that of the Romans, and drove the Jews from their caverns, which

they called *The Land of Promise*.

Judging of things only by the examples to be found in our modern histories, it would be difficult to believe that Abraham had been the father of two nations so widely different. We are told that he was born in Chaldæa, and that he was the son of a poor potter, who earned his bread by making little earthen idols. It is hardly likely that this son of a potter should have passed through impracticable deserts and founded the city of Mecca, at the distance of four hundred leagues, under a tropical sun. If he was a conqueror, he doubtless cast his eyes on the fine country of Assyria. If he was no more than a poor man, he did not found kingdoms abroad.

The Book of Genesis relates that he was seventy-five years old when he went out of the land of Haran after the death of his father, Terah the potter; but the same book also tells us that Terah, having begotten Abraham at the age of seventy years, lived to that of two hundred and five; and, afterward, that Abraham went out of Haran, which seems to signify that it was after the death of his father.

Either the author did not know how to dispose his narration, or it is clear from the Book of Genesis itself that Abraham was one hundred and thirty-five years old when he quitted Mesopotamia. He went from a country which is called idolatrous to another idolatrous country named Sichem, in Palestine. Why did he quit the fruitful banks of the Euphrates for a spot so remote, so barren, and so stony as Sichem? It was not a place of trade, and

was distant a hundred leagues from Chaldæa, and deserts lay between. But God chose that Abraham should go this journey; he chose to show him the land which his descendants were to occupy several ages after him. It is with difficulty that the human understanding comprehends the reasons for such a journey.

Scarcely had he arrived in the little mountainous country of Sichem, when famine compelled him to quit it. He went into Egypt with his wife Sarah, to seek a subsistence. The distance from Sichem to Memphis is two hundred leagues. Is it natural that a man should go so far to ask for corn in a country the language of which he did not understand? Truly these were strange journeys, undertaken at the age of nearly a hundred and forty years!

He brought with him to Memphis his wife, Sarah, who was extremely young, and almost an infant when compared with himself; for she was only sixty-five. As she was very handsome, he resolved to turn her beauty to account. "Say, I pray thee, that thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake." He should rather have said to her, "Say, I pray thee, that thou art my *daughter*." The king fell in love with the young Sarah, and gave the pretended brother abundance of sheep, oxen, he-asses, she-asses, camels, men-servants and maid-servants; which proves that Egypt was then a powerful and well-regulated, and consequently an ancient kingdom, and that those were magnificently rewarded who came and offered their sisters to the kings of Memphis. The youthful Sarah was ninety years

old when God promised her that, in the course of a year, she should have a child by Abraham, who was then a hundred and sixty.

Abraham, who was fond of travelling, went into the horrible desert of Kadesh with his pregnant wife, ever young and ever pretty. A king of this desert was, of course, captivated by Sarah, as the king of Egypt had been. The father of the faithful told the same lie as in Egypt, making his wife pass for his sister; which brought him more sheep, oxen, men-servants, and maid-servants. It might be said that this Abraham became rich principally by means of his wife. Commentators have written a prodigious number of volumes to justify Abraham's conduct, and to explain away the errors in chronology. To these commentaries we must refer the reader; they are all composed by men of nice and acute perceptions, excellent metaphysicians, and by no means pedants.

For the rest, this name of *Bram*, or *Abram*, was famous in Judæa and in Persia. Several of the learned even assert that he was the same legislator whom the Greeks called *Zoroaster*. Others say that he was the *Brahma* of the Indians, which is not demonstrated. But it appears very reasonable to many that this Abraham was a Chaldæan or a Persian, from whom the Jews afterwards boasted of having descended, as the Franks did of their descent from Hector, and the Britons from Tubal. It cannot be denied that the Jewish nation were a very modern horde; that they did not establish themselves on the borders of Phœnicia until a very late period; that they were surrounded

by ancient states, whose language they adopted, receiving from them even the name of *Israel*, which is Chaldæan, from the testimony of the Jew Flavius Josephus himself. We know that they took the names of the angels from the Babylonians, and that they called God by the names of *Eloi* or *Eloa*, *Adonai*, *Jehovah* or *Hiao*, after the Phœnicians. It is probable that they knew the name of *Abraham* or *Ibrahim* only through the Babylonians; for the ancient religion of all the countries from the Euphrates to the Oxus was called *Kish Ibrahim* or *Milat Ibrahim*. This is confirmed by all the researches made on the spot by the learned Hyde.

The Jews, then, treat their history and ancient fables as their clothesmen treat their old coats – they turn them and sell them for new at as high a price as possible. It is a singular instance of human stupidity that we have so long considered the Jews as a nation which taught all others, while their historian Josephus himself confesses the contrary.

It is difficult to penetrate the shades of antiquity; but it is evident that all the kingdoms of Asia were in a very flourishing state before the wandering horde of Arabs, called *Jews*, had a small spot of earth which they called their own – when they had neither a town, nor laws, nor even a fixed religion. When, therefore, we see an ancient rite or an ancient opinion established in Egypt or Asia, and also among the Jews, it is very natural to suppose that this small, newly formed, ignorant, stupid people copied, as well as they were able, the ancient, flourishing, and

industrious nation.

It is on this principle that we must judge of Judæa, Biscay, Cornwall, etc. Most certainly triumphant Rome did not in anything imitate Biscay or Cornwall; and he must be either very ignorant or a great knave who would say that the Jews taught anything to the Greeks.

SECTION III

It must not be thought that Abraham was known only to the Jews; on the contrary, he was renowned throughout Asia. This name, which signifies *father of a people* in more Oriental languages than one, was given to some inhabitant of Chaldæa from whom several nations have boasted of descending. The pains which the Arabs and the Jews took to establish their descent from this patriarch render it impossible for even the greatest Pyrrhoneans to doubt of there having been an Abraham.

The Hebrew Scriptures make him the son of Terah, while the Arabs say that Terah was his grandfather and Azar his father, in which they have been followed by several Christians. The interpreters are of forty-two different opinions with respect to the year in which Abraham was brought into the world, and I shall not hazard a forty-third. It also appears, by the dates, that Abraham lived sixty years longer than the text allows him; but mistakes in chronology do not destroy the truth of a fact. Supposing even that the book which speaks of Abraham had not been so sacred

as was the law, it is not therefore less certain that Abraham existed. The Jews distinguished books written by inspired men from books composed by particular inspiration. How, indeed, can it be believed that God dictated false dates?

Philo, the Jew of Suidas, relates that Terah, the father or grandfather of Abraham, who dwelt at Ur in Chaldæa, was a poor man who gained a livelihood by making little idols, and that he was himself an idolater. If so, that ancient religion of the Sabeans, who had no idols, but worshipped the heavens, had not, then, perhaps, been established in Chaldæa; or, if it prevailed in one part of the country, it is very probable that idolatry was predominant in the rest. It seems that in those times each little horde had its religion, as each family had its own peculiar customs; all were tolerated, and all were peaceably confounded. Laban, the father-in-law of Jacob, had idols. Each clan was perfectly willing that the neighboring clan should have its gods, and contented itself with believing that its own were the mightiest.

The Scripture says that the God of the Jews, who intended to give them the land of Canaan, commanded Abraham to leave the fertile country of Chaldæa and go towards Palestine, promising him that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It is for theologians to explain, by allegory and *mystical sense*, how all the nations of the earth were to be blessed in a seed from which they did not descend, since this much-to-be-venerated *mystical sense* cannot be made the object of a research purely

critical. A short time after these promises Abraham's family was afflicted by famine, and went into Egypt for corn. It is singular that the Hebrews never went into Egypt, except when pressed by hunger; for Jacob afterwards sent his children on the same errand.

Abraham, who was then very old, went this journey with his wife Sarah, aged sixty-five: she was very handsome, and Abraham feared that the Egyptians, smitten by her charms, would kill him in order to enjoy her transcendent beauties: he proposed to her that she should pass for his sister, etc. Human nature must at that time have possessed a vigor which time and luxury have since very much weakened. This was the opinion of all the ancients; it has been asserted that Helen was seventy when she was carried off by Paris. That which Abraham had foreseen came to pass; the Egyptian youth found his wife charming, notwithstanding her sixty-five years; the king himself fell in love with her, and placed her in his seraglio, though, probably, he had younger women there; but the Lord plagued the king and his seraglio with very great sores. The text does not tell us how the king came to know that this dangerous beauty was Abraham's wife; but it seems that he did come to know it, and restored her.

Sarah's beauty must have been unalterable; for twenty-five years afterwards, when she was ninety years old, pregnant, and travelling with her husband through the dominions of a king of Phœnicia named Abimelech, Abraham, who had not yet corrected himself, made her a second time pass for his sister. The

Phœnician king was as sensible to her attractions as the king of Egypt had been; but God appeared to this Abimelech in a dream, and threatened him with death if he touched his new mistress. It must be confessed that Sarah's conduct was as extraordinary as the lasting nature of her charms.

The singularity of these adventures was probably the reason why the Jews had not the same sort of faith in their histories as they had in their Leviticus. There was not a single iota of their *law* in which they did not believe; but the historical part of their Scriptures did not demand the same respect. Their conduct in regard to their ancient books may be compared to that of the English, who received the laws of St. Edward without absolutely believing that St. Edward cured the scrofula; or to that of the Romans, who, while they obeyed their primitive laws, were not obliged to believe in the miracles of the sieve filled with water, the ship drawn to the shore by a vestal's girdle, the stone cut with a razor, and so forth. Therefore the historian Josephus, though strongly attached to his form of worship, leaves his readers at liberty to believe just so much as they choose of the ancient prodigies which he relates. For the same reason the Sadducees were permitted not to believe in the angels, although the angels are so often spoken of in the Old Testament; but these same Sadducees were not permitted to neglect the prescribed feasts, fasts, and ceremonies. This part of Abraham's history (the journeys into Egypt and Phœnicia) proves that great kingdoms were already established, while the Jewish nation existed in a

single family; that there already were laws, since without them a great kingdom cannot exist; and consequently that the law of Moses, which was posterior, was not the first law. It is not necessary for a law to be divine, that it should be the most ancient of all. God is undoubtedly the master of time. It would, it is true, seem more conformable to the faint light of reason that God, having to give a law, should have given it at the first to all mankind; but if it be proved that He proceeds in a different way, it is not for us to question Him.

The remainder of Abraham's history is subject to great difficulties. God, who frequently appeared to and made several treaties with him, one day sent three angels to him in the valley of Mamre. The patriarch gave them bread, veal, butter, and milk to eat. The three spirits dined, and after dinner they sent for Sarah, who had baked the bread. One of the angels, whom the text calls *the Lord, the Eternal*, promised Sarah that, in the course of a year, she should have a son. Sarah, who was then ninety-four, while her husband was nearly a hundred, laughed at the promise – a proof that Sarah confessed her decrepitude – a proof that, according to the Scripture itself, human nature was not then very different from what it is now. Nevertheless, the following year, as we have already seen, this aged woman, after becoming pregnant, captivated King Abimelech. Certes, to consider these stories as natural, we must either have a species of understanding quite different from that which we have at present, or regard every trait in the life of Abraham as a miracle, or believe that it is

only an allegory; but whichever way we turn, we cannot escape embarrassment. For instance, what are we to make of God's promise to Abraham that he would give to him and his posterity all the land of Canaan, which no Chaldæan ever possessed? This is one of the difficulties which it is impossible to solve.

It seems astonishing that God, after causing Isaac to be born of a centenary father and a woman of ninety-five, should afterwards have ordered that father to murder the son whom he had given him contrary to every expectation. This strange order from God seems to show that, at the time when this history was written, the sacrifice of human victims was customary amongst the Jews, as it afterwards became in other nations, as witness the vow of Jephthah. But it may be said that the obedience of Abraham, who was ready to sacrifice his son to the God who had given him, is an *allegory* of the resignation which man owes to the orders of the Supreme Being.

There is one remark which it is particularly important to make on the history of this patriarch regarded as the father of the Jews and the Arabs. His principal children were Isaac, born of his wife by a miraculous favor of Providence, and Ishmael, born of his servant. It was in Isaac that the race of the patriarch was blessed; yet Isaac was father only of an unfortunate and contemptible people, who were for a long period slaves, and have for a still longer period been dispersed. Ishmael, on the contrary, was the father of the Arabs, who, in course of time, established the empire of the caliphs, one of the most powerful and most

extensive in the world.

The Mussulmans have a great reverence for Abraham, whom they call *Ibrahim*. Those who believe him to have been buried at Hebron, make a pilgrimage thither, while those who think that his tomb is at Mecca, go and pay their homage to him there.

Some of the ancient Persians believed that Abraham was the same as Zoroaster. It has been with him as with most of the founders of the Eastern nations, to whom various names and various adventures have been attributed; but it appears by the Scripture text that he was one of those wandering Arabs who had no fixed habitation. We see him born at Ur in Chaldæa, going first to Haran, then into Palestine, then into Egypt, then into Phœnicia, and lastly forced to buy a grave at Hebron.

One of the most remarkable circumstances of his life was, that at the age of ninety, before he had begotten Isaac, he caused himself, his son Ishmael, and all his servants to be circumcised. It seems that he had adopted this idea from the Egyptians. It is difficult to determine the origin of such an operation; but it is most likely that it was performed in order to prevent the abuses of puberty. But why should a man undergo this operation at the age of a hundred?

On the other hand it is asserted that only the priests were anciently distinguished in Egypt by this custom. It was a usage of great antiquity in Africa and part of Asia for the most holy personages to present their virile member to be kissed by the women whom they met. The organs of generation were looked

upon as something noble and sacred – as a symbol of divine power: it was customary to swear by them; and, when taking an oath to another person, to lay the hand on his *testicles*. It was perhaps from this ancient custom that they afterwards received their name, which signifies witnesses, because they were thus made a *testimony* and a pledge. When Abraham sent his servant to ask Rebecca for his son Isaac, the servant placed his hand on Abraham's *genitals*, which has been translated by the word *thigh*.

By this we see how much the manners of remote antiquity differed from ours. In the eyes of a philosopher it is no more astonishing that men should formerly have sworn by that part than by the head; nor is it astonishing that those who wished to distinguish themselves from other men should have testified by this venerated portion of the human person.

The Book of Genesis tells us that circumcision was a covenant between God and Abraham; and expressly adds, that whosoever shall not be circumcised in his house, shall be put to death. Yet we are not told that Isaac was circumcised; nor is circumcision again spoken of until the time of Moses.

We shall conclude this article with one more observation, which is, that Abraham, after having by Sarah and Hagar two sons, who became each the father of a great nation, had six sons by Keturah, who settled in Arabia; but their posterity were not famous.

ABUSE

A vice attached to all the customs, to all the laws, to all the institutions of man: the detail is too vast to be contained in any library.

States are governed by abuses. *Maximus ille est qui minimis urgetur*. It might be said to the Chinese, to the Japanese, to the English – your government swarms with abuses, which you do not correct! The Chinese will reply: We have existed as a people for five thousand years, and at this day are perhaps the most fortunate nation on earth, because we are the most tranquil. The Japanese will say nearly the same. The English will answer: We are powerful at sea, and prosperous on land; perhaps in ten thousand years we shall bring our usages to perfection. The grand secret is, to be in a better condition than others, even with enormous *abuses*.

ABUSE OF WORDS

Books, like conversation, rarely give us any precise ideas: nothing is so common as to read and converse unprofitably.

We must here repeat what Locke has so strongly urged—*Define your terms*.

A jurisconsult, in his criminal institute, announces that the non-observance of Sundays and holidays is treason against the Divine Majesty. *Treason against the Divine Majesty* gives an idea of the most enormous of crimes, and the most dreadful of chastisements. But what constitutes the offence? To have missed vespers? – a thing which may happen to the best man in the world.

In all disputes on *liberty*, one reasoner generally understands one thing, and his adversary another. A third comes in who understands neither the one nor the other, nor is himself understood. In these disputes, one has in his head the power of acting; a second, the power of willing; a third, the desire of executing; each revolves in his own circle, and they never meet. It is the same with quarrels about *grace*. Who can understand its nature, its operations, the *sufficiency* which is not sufficient, and the *efficacy* which is ineffectual.

The words *substantial form* were pronounced for two thousand years without suggesting the least notion. For these, *plastic natures* have been substituted, but still without anything being

gained.

A traveller, stopped on his way by a torrent, asks a villager on the opposite bank to show him the ford: "Go to the right!" shouts the countryman. He takes the right and is drowned. The other runs up crying: "Oh! how unfortunate! I did not tell him to go to *his* right, but to *mine*!"

The world is full of these misunderstandings. How will a Norwegian, when reading this formula: *Servant of the servants of God*; discover that it is the *Bishop of Bishops, and King of Kings* who speaks?

At the time when the "Fragments of Petronius" made a great noise in the literary world, Meibomius, a noted learned man of Lübeck, read in the printed letter of another learned man of Bologna: "We have here an entire Petronius, which I have seen with my own eyes and admired." *Habemus hic Petronium integrum, quem vidi meis oculis non sine admiratione*. He immediately set out for Italy, hastened to Bologna, went to the librarian Capponi, and asked him if it were true that they had the entire Petronius at Bologna. Capponi answered that it was a fact which had long been public. "Can I see this Petronius? Be so good as to show him to me." "Nothing is more easy," said Capponi. He then took him to the church in which the body of St. Petronius was laid. Meibomius ordered horses and fled.

If the Jesuit Daniel took a warlike abbot, *abbatem martialem*, for the abbot Martial, a hundred historians have fallen into still greater mistakes. The Jesuit d'Orleans, in his "Revolutions of

England," wrote indifferently *Northampton* or *Southampton*, only mistaking the north for the south, or *vice versa*.

Metaphysical terms, taken in their proper sense, have sometimes determined the opinion of twenty nations. Every one knows the metaphor of Isaiah, *How hast thou fallen from heaven, thou star which rose in the morning?* This discourse was imagined to have been addressed to the devil; and as the Hebrew word answering to the planet *Venus* was rendered in Latin by the word *Lucifer*, the devil has ever since been called Lucifer.

Much ridicule has been bestowed on the "Chart of the Tender Passion" by Mdlle. Cuderi. The lovers embark on the river *Tendre*; they dine at *Tendre sur Estime*, sup at *Tendre sur Inclination*, sleep at *Tendre sur Désir*, find themselves the next morning at *Tendre sur Passion*, and lastly at *Tendre sur Tendre*. These ideas may be ridiculous, especially when *Clelia*, *Horatius Cocles*, and other rude and austere Romans set out on the voyage; but this geographical chart at least shows us that love has various lodgings, and that the same word does not always signify the same thing. There is a prodigious difference between the love of Tarquin and that of Celadon – between David's love for Jonathan, which was stronger than that of women, and the Abbé Desfontaines' love for little chimney-sweepers.

The most singular instance of this abuse of words – these voluntary *equivoques*– these misunderstandings which have caused so many quarrels – is the Chinese *King-tien*. The missionaries having violent disputes about the meaning of this

word, the Court of Rome sent a Frenchman, named *Maigrot*, whom they made the imaginary bishop of a province in China, to adjust the difference. Maigrot did not know a word of Chinese; but the emperor deigned to grant that he should be told what he understood by *King-tien*. Maigrot would not believe what was told him, but caused the emperor of China to be condemned at Rome!

The abuse of words is an inexhaustible subject. In history, in morality, in jurisprudence, in medicine, but especially in *theology*, beware of ambiguity.

ACADEMY

Academies are to universities as maturity is to childhood, oratory to grammar, or politeness to the first lessons in civility. Academies, not being stipendiary, should be entirely free; such were the academies of Italy; such is the French Academy; and such, more particularly, is the Royal Society of London.

The French Academy, which formed itself, received, it is true, letters patent from Louis XIII., but without any salary, and consequently without any subjection; hence it was that the first men in the kingdom, and even princes, sought admission into this illustrious body. The Society of London has possessed the same advantage.

The celebrated Colbert, being a member of the French Academy, employed some of his brethren to compose inscriptions and devices for the public buildings. This assembly, to which Boileau and Racine afterwards belonged, soon became an academy of itself. The establishment of this Academy of Inscriptions, now called that of the *Belles-Lettres*, may, indeed, be dated from the year 1661, and that of the Academy of Sciences from 1666. We are indebted for both establishments to the same minister, who contributed in so many ways to the splendor of the age of Louis XIV.

After the deaths of Jean Baptiste Colbert and the Marquis de Louvois, when Count de Pontchartrain, secretary of state,

had the department of Paris, he intrusted the government of the new academies to his nephew, the Abbé Bignon. Then were first devised honorary fellowships requiring no learning, and without remuneration; places with salaries disagreeably distinguished from the former; fellowships without salaries; and scholarships, a title still more disagreeable, which has since been suppressed. The Academy of the Belles-Lettres was put on the same footing; both submitted to the immediate control of the secretary of state, and to the revolting distinction of *honoraries*, *pensionaries*, and *pupils*.

The Abbé Bignon ventured to propose the same regulation to the French Academy, of which he was a member; but he was heard with unanimous indignation. The least opulent in the Academy were the first to reject his offers, and to prefer liberty to pensions and honors. The Abbé Bignon, who, in the laudable intention of doing good, had dealt too freely with the noble sentiments of his brethren, never again set his foot in the French Academy.

The word *Academy* became so celebrated that when Lulli, who was a sort of favorite, obtained the establishment of his Opera, in 1692, he had interest enough to get inserted in the patent, *that it was a Royal Academy of Music, in which Ladies and Gentlemen might sing without demeaning themselves*. He did not confer the same honor on the dancers; the public, however, has always continued to go to the Opera, but never to the Academy of Music.

It is known that the word *Academy*, borrowed from the Greeks, originally signified a society or school of philosophy at Athens, which met in a garden bequeathed to it by *Academus*. The Italians were the first who instituted such societies after the revival of letters; the Academy *Delia Crusca* is of the sixteenth century. Academies were afterwards established in every town where the sciences were cultivated. The Society of London has never taken the title of *Academy*.

The provincial academies have been of signal advantage. They have given birth to emulation, forced youth to labor, introduced them to a course of good reading, dissipated the ignorance and prejudices of some of our towns, fostered a spirit of politeness, and, as far as it is possible, destroyed pedantry.

Scarcely anything has been written against the French Academy, except frivolous and insipid pleasantries. St. Evremond's comedy of "The Academicians" had some reputation in its time; but a proof of the little merit it possessed is that it is now forgotten, whereas the good satires of Boileau are immortal.

ADAM

SECTION I

So much has been said and so much written concerning Adam, his wife, the pre-Adamites, etc., and the rabbis have put forth so many idle stories respecting Adam, and it is so dull to repeat what others have said before, that I shall here hazard an idea entirely new; one, at least, which is not to be found in any ancient author, father of the church, preacher, theologian, critic, or scholar with whom I am acquainted. I mean the profound *secrecy* with respect to Adam which was observed throughout the habitable earth, Palestine only excepted, until the time when the Jewish books began to be known in Alexandria, and were translated into Greek under one of the Ptolemies. Still they were very little known; for large books were very rare and very dear. Besides, the Jews of Jerusalem were so incensed against those of Alexandria, loaded them with so many reproaches for having translated their Bible into a profane tongue, called them so many ill names, and cried so loudly to the Lord, that the Alexandrian Jews concealed their translation as much as possible; it was so secret that no Greek or Roman author speaks of it before the time of the Emperor Aurelian.

The historian Josephus confesses, in his answer to Appian, that the Jews had not long had any intercourse with other nations: "We inhabit," says he, "a country distant from the sea; we do not apply ourselves to commerce, nor have we any communication with other nations. Is it to be wondered at that our people, dwelling so far from the sea, and affecting never to write, have been so little known?"

Here it will probably be asked how Josephus could say that his nation affected *never to write anything*, when they had twenty-two canonical books, without reckoning the "*Targum*" by *Onkelos*. But it must be considered that twenty-two small volumes were very little when compared with the multitude of books preserved in the library of Alexandria, half of which were burned in Cæsar's war.

It is certain that the Jews had written and read very little; that they were profoundly ignorant of astronomy, geometry, geography, and physics; that they knew nothing of the history of other nations; and that in Alexandria they first began to learn. Their language was a barbarous mixture of ancient Phœnician and corrupted Chaldee; it was so poor that several moods were wanting in the conjugation of their verbs.

Moreover, as they communicated neither their books nor the titles of them to any foreigner, no one on earth except themselves had ever heard of *Adam*, or *Eve*, or *Abel*, or *Cain*, or *Noah*. *Abraham* alone was, in course of time, known to the Oriental nations; but no ancient people admitted that Abraham was the

root of the Jewish nation.

Such are the secrets of Providence, that the father and mother of the human race have ever been totally unknown to their descendants; so that the names of Adam and Eve are to be found in no ancient author, either of Greece, of Rome, of Persia, or of Syria, nor even among the Arabs, until near the time of Mahomet. It was God's pleasure that the origin of the great family of the world should be concealed from all but the smallest and most unfortunate part of that family.

How is it that Adam and Eve have been unknown to all their children? How could it be that neither in Egypt nor in Babylon was any trace – any tradition – of our first parents to be found? Why were they not mentioned by Orpheus, by Linus, or by Thamyris? For if they had said but one word of them, it would undoubtedly have been caught by Hesiod, and especially by Homer, who speak of everything except the authors of the human race. Clement of Alexandria, who collected so many ancient testimonies, would not have failed to quote any passage in which mention had been made of Adam and Eve. Eusebius, in his "Universal History," has examined even the most doubtful testimonies, and would assuredly have made the most of the smallest allusion, or appearance of an allusion, to our first parents. It is, then, sufficiently clear that they were always utterly unknown to the nations.

We do, it is true, find among the Brahmins, in the book entitled the "*Ezourveidam*" the names of *Adimo* and of *Procriti*,

his wife. But though *Adimo* has some little resemblance to our *Adam*, the Indians say: "We were a great people established on the banks of the Indus and the Ganges many ages before the Hebrew horde moved towards the Jordan. The Egyptians, the Persians, and the Arabs came to us for wisdom and spices when the Jews were unknown to the rest of mankind. We cannot have taken our *Adimo* from their *Adam*; our *Procriti* does not in the least resemble *Eve*; besides, their history and ours are entirely different.

"Moreover, the '*Veidam*' on which the '*Ezourveidam*' is a commentary, is believed by us to have been composed at a more remote period of antiquity than the Jewish books; and the '*Veidam*' itself is a newer law given to the Brahmins, fifteen hundred years after their first law, called *Shasta* or *Shastabad*."

Such, or nearly such, are the answers which the Brahmins of the present day have often made to the chaplains of merchant vessels who have talked to them of Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, when the traders of Europe have gone, with arms in their hands, to buy their spices and lay waste their country.

The Phœnician Sanchoniathon, who certainly lived before the period at which we place Moses, and who is quoted by Eusebius as an authentic writer, gives ten generations to the human race, as does Moses, down to the time of Noah; but, in these ten generations, he mentions neither Adam nor Eve, nor any of their descendants, not even Noah himself. The names, according to the Greek translation by Philo of Biblos, are *Æon*, *Gems*, *Phox*,

Liban, Usou, Halieus, Chrisor, Tecnites, Agrove, Amine; these are the first ten generations.

We do not see the name of *Noah* or of *Adam* in any of the ancient dynasties of Egypt: they are not to be found among the Chaldæans; in a word, the whole earth has been silent respecting them. It must be owned that such a silence is unparalleled. Every people has attributed to itself some imaginary origin, yet none has approached the true one. We cannot comprehend how the father of all nations has so long been unknown, while in the natural course of things his name should have been carried from mouth to mouth to the farthest corners of the earth.

Let us humble ourselves to the decrees of that Providence which has permitted so astonishing an oblivion. All was mysterious and concealed in the nation guided by God Himself, which prepared the way for Christianity, and was the wild olive on which the fruitful one has been grafted. That the names of the authors of mankind should be unknown to mankind is a mystery of the highest order.

I will venture to affirm that it has required a miracle thus to shut the eyes and ears of all nations – to destroy every monument, every memorial of their first father. What would Cæsar, Antony, Crassus, Pompey, Cicero, Marcellus, or Metellus have thought, if a poor Jew, while selling them balm, had said, "We all descend from one father, named Adam." All the Roman senate would have cried, "Show us our genealogical tree." Then the Jew would have displayed his ten generations, down to the time of Noah, and

the secret of the universal deluge. The senate would have asked him how many persons were in the ark to feed all the animals for ten whole months, and during the following year in which no food would be produced? The peddler would have said, "We were eight – Noah and his wife, their three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their wives. All this family descended in a right line from Adam."

Cicero, would, doubtless, have inquired for the great monuments, the indisputable testimonies which Noah and his children had left of our common father. "After the deluge," he would have said, "the whole world would have resounded with the names of Adam and Noah, one the father, the other the restorer of every race. These names would have been in every mouth as soon as men could speak, on every parchment as soon as they could write, on the door of every house as soon as they could build, on every temple, on every statue; and have you known so great a secret, yet concealed it from us?" The Jew would have answered: "It is because we are pure and you are impure." The Roman senate would have laughed and the Jew would have been whipped; so much are men attached to their prejudices!

SECTION II

The pious Madame de Bourignon was sure that Adam was an hermaphrodite, like the first men of the divine Plato. God had

revealed a great secret to her; but as I have not had the same revelation, I shall say nothing of the matter.

The Jewish rabbis have read Adam's books, and know the names of his preceptor and his second wife; but as I have not read our first parent's books, I shall remain silent. Some acute and very learned persons are quite astonished when they read the "*Veidam*" of the ancient Brahmins, to find that the first man was created in India, and called *Adimo*, which signifies *the begetter*, and his wife, Procriti, signifying *life*. They say the sect of the Brahmins is incontestably more ancient than that of the Jews; that it was not until a late period that the Jews could write in the Canaanitish language, since it was not until late that they established themselves in the little country of Canaan. They say the Indians were always inventors, and the Jews always imitators; the Indians always ingenious, and the Jews always rude. They say it is difficult to believe that Adam, who was fair and had hair on his head, was father to the negroes, who are entirely black, and have black wool. What, indeed, do they *not* say? As for me, I say nothing; I leave these researches to the Reverend Father Berruyer of the Society of Jesus. He is the most perfect *Innocent* I have ever known; the book has been burned, as that of a man who wished to turn the Bible into ridicule; but I am quite sure he had no such wicked end in view.

SECTION III

The age for inquiring seriously whether or not knowledge was infused into Adam had passed by; those who so long agitated the question had no knowledge, either infused or acquired. It is as difficult to know at what time the Book of Genesis, which speaks of Adam, was written, as it is to know the date of the "*Veidam*" of the "Sanskrit," or any other of the ancient Asiatic books. It is important to remark that the Jews were not permitted to read the first chapter of Genesis before they were twenty-five years old. Many rabbis have regarded the formation of Adam and Eve and their adventure as an allegory. Every celebrated nation of antiquity has imagined some similar one; and, by a singular concurrence, which marks the weakness of our nature, all have endeavored to explain the origin of moral and physical evil by ideas nearly alike. The Chaldæans, the Indians, the Persians and the Egyptians have accounted, in similar ways, for that mixture of good and evil which seems to be a necessary appendage to our globe. The Jews, who went out of Egypt, rude as they were, had heard of the allegorical philosophy of the Egyptians. With the little knowledge thus acquired, they afterwards mixed that which they received from the Phœnicians and from the Babylonians during their long slavery. But as it is natural and very common for a rude nation to imitate rudely the conceptions of a polished people, it is not surprising that the Jews imagined a woman

formed from the side of a man, the spirit of life breathed from the mouth of God on the face of Adam – the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile and the Oxus, having all the same source in a garden, and the forbidden fruit, which brought death into the world, as well as physical and moral evil. Full of the idea which prevailed among the ancients, that the serpent was a very cunning animal, they had no great difficulty in endowing it with understanding and speech.

This people, who then inhabited only a small corner of the earth, which they believed to be long, narrow and flat, could easily believe that all men came from Adam. They did not even know that the negroes, with a conformation different from their own, inhabited immense regions; still less could they have any idea of America.

It is, however, very strange that the Jewish people were permitted to read the books of Exodus, where there are so many miracles that shock reason, yet were not permitted to read before the age of twenty-five the first chapter of Genesis, in which all is necessarily a miracle, since the creation is the subject. Perhaps it was because God, after creating the man and woman in the first chapter, makes them again in another, and it was thought expedient to keep this appearance of contradiction from the eyes of youth. Perhaps it is because it is said that *God made man in his own image*, and this expression gave the Jews too corporeal an idea of God. Perhaps it was because it is said that God took a rib from Adam's side to form the woman, and the young and

inconsiderate, feeling their sides, and finding the right number of ribs, might have suspected the author of some infidelity. Perhaps it was because God, who always took a walk at noon in the garden of Eden, laughed at Adam after his fall, and this tone of ridicule might tend to give youth too great a taste for pleasantry. In short, every line of this chapter furnishes very plausible reasons for interdicting the reading of it; but such being the case, one cannot clearly see how it was that the other chapters were permitted. It is, besides, surprising that the Jews were not to read this chapter until they were twenty-five. One would think that it should first have been proposed to childhood, which receives everything without examination, rather than to youth, whose pride is to judge and to laugh. On the other hand, the Jews of twenty-five years of age, having their judgments prepared and strengthened, might be more fitted to receive this chapter than inexperienced minds. We shall say nothing here of Adam's second wife, named Lillah, whom the ancient rabbis have given him. It must be confessed that we know very few anecdotes of our family.

ADORATION

Is it not a great fault in some modern languages that the same word that is used in addressing the Supreme Being is also used in addressing a mistress? We not infrequently go from hearing a sermon, in which the preacher has talked of nothing but *adoring* God in spirit and in truth, to the opera, where nothing is to be heard but *the charming object of my adoration, etc.*

The Greeks and Romans, at least, did not fall into this extravagant profanation. Horace does not say that he *adores* Lalage; Tibullus does not *adore* Delia; nor is even the term *adoration* to be found in Petronius. If anything can excuse this indecency, it is the frequent mention which is made in our operas and songs of the gods of ancient fable. Poets have said that their mistresses were more adorable than these false divinities; for which no one could blame them. We have insensibly become familiarized with this mode of expression, until at last, without any perception of the folly, the God of the universe is addressed in the same terms as an opera singer.

But to return to the important part of our subject: There is no civilized nation which does not render public adoration to God. It is true that neither in Asia nor in Africa is any person forced to the mosque or temple of the place; each one goes of his own accord. This custom of assembling should tend to unite the minds of men and render them more gentle in society; yet have

they been seen raging against each other, even in the consecrated abode of peace. The temple of Jerusalem was deluged with blood by zealots who murdered their brethren, and our churches have more than once been defiled by carnage.

In the article on "China" it will be seen that the emperor is the chief pontiff, and that the worship is august and simple. There are other countries in which it is simple without any magnificence, as among the reformers of Europe and in British America. In others wax tapers must be lighted at noon, although in the primitive ages they were held in abomination. A convent of nuns, if deprived of their tapers, would cry out that the light of the faith was extinguished and the world would shortly be at an end. The Church of England holds a middle course between the pompous ceremonies of the Church of Rome and the plainness of the Calvinists.

Throughout the East, songs, dances and torches formed part of the ceremonies essential in all sacred feasts. No sacerdotal institution existed among the Greeks without songs and dances. The Hebrews borrowed this custom from their neighbors; for David *sang and danced before the ark*.

St. Matthew speaks of a canticle sung by Jesus Christ Himself and by His apostles after their Passover. This canticle, which is not admitted into the authorized books, is to be found in fragments in the 237th letter of St. Augustine to Bishop Chretius; and, whatever disputes there may have been about its authenticity, it is certain that singing was employed in all

religious ceremonies. Mahomet found this a settled mode of worship among the Arabs; it is also established in India, but does not appear to be in use among the lettered men of China. The ceremonies of all places have some resemblance and some difference; but God is worshipped throughout the earth. Woe, assuredly, unto those who do not adore Him as we do! whether erring in their tenets or in their rites. They sit in the shadow of death; but the greater their misfortune the more are they to be pitied and supported.

It is indeed a great consolation for us that the Mahometans, the Indians, the Chinese, the Tartars, all adore one only God; for so far they are our kindred. Their fatal ignorance of our sacred mysteries can only inspire us with tender compassion for our wandering brethren. Far from us be all spirit of persecution which would only serve to render them irreconcilable.

One only God being adored throughout the known world, shall those who acknowledge Him as their Father never cease to present to Him the revolting spectacle of His children detesting, anathematizing, persecuting and massacring one another by way of argument?

It is hard to determine precisely what the Greeks and Romans understood by *adoring*, or whether they adored fauns, sylvans, dryads and naiads as they adored the twelve superior gods. It is not likely that Adrian's minion, Antinous, was adored by the Egyptians of later times with the same worship which they paid to Serapis; and it is sufficiently proved that the ancient Egyptians

did not adore onions and crocodiles as they did Isis and Osiris. Ambiguity abounds everywhere and confounds everything; we are obliged at every word to exclaim, *What do you mean?* we must constantly repeat —*Define your terms.*

Is it quite true that Simon, called the *Magician*, was adored among the Romans? It is not more true that he was utterly unknown to them. St. Justin in his "Apology," which was as little known at Rome as Simon, tells us that this God had a statue erected on the Tiber, or rather near the Tiber, between the two bridges, with this inscription: *Simoni deo sancto*. St. Irenæus and Tertullian attest the same thing; but to whom do they attest it? To people who had never seen Rome – to Africans, to Allobroges, to Syrians, and to some of the inhabitants of Sichem. *They* had certainly not seen this statue, the real inscription on which was *Semo sanco deo fidio*, and not *Simoni deo sancto*. They should at least have consulted Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who gives this inscription in his fourth book. *Semo sanco* was an old Sabine word, signifying *half god and half man*; we find in Livy, *Bona Semoni sanco censuerunt consecranda*. This god was one of the most ancient in Roman worship, having been consecrated by Tarquin the Proud, and was considered as the god of alliances and good faith. It was the custom to sacrifice an ox to him, and to write any treaty made with a neighboring people upon the skin. He had a temple near that of Quirinus; offerings were sometimes presented to him under the name of *Semo the father*, and sometimes under that of *Sancus fidius*, whence Ovid says in

his "*Fasti*":

Quærebam nonas Sanco, Fidove referrem,
An tibi, Semo pater.

Such was the Roman divinity which for so many ages was taken for *Simon the Magician*. St. Cyril of Jerusalem had no doubts on the subject, and St. Augustine in his first book of "Heresies" tells us that Simon the Magician himself procured the erection of this statue, together with that of his *Helena*, by order of the emperor and senate.

This strange fable, the falsehood of which might so easily have been discovered, was constantly connected with another fable, which relates that Simon and St. Peter both appeared before Nero and challenged each other which of them should soonest bring to life the corpse of a near relative of Nero's, and also raise himself highest in the air; that Simon caused himself to be carried up by devils in a fiery chariot; that St. Peter and St. Paul brought him down by their prayers; that he broke his legs and in consequence died, and that Nero, being enraged, put both St. Peter and St. Paul to death.

Abdias, Marcellinus and Hegisippus have each related this story, with a little difference in the details. Arnobius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Sulpicius Severus, Philaster, St. Epiphanius, Isidorus of Damietta, Maximus of Turin, and several other authors successively gave currency to this error, and it was generally

adopted, until at length there was found at Rome a statue of *Semo sancus deus fidius*, and the learned Father Mabillon dug up an ancient monument with the inscription *Semoni sanco deo fidio*.

It is nevertheless certain that there was a Simon, whom the Jews believed to be a magician, as it is certain that there was an Apollonius of Tyana. It is also true that this Simon, who was born in the little country of Samaria, gathered together some vagabonds, whom he persuaded that he was one sent by God; he baptized, indeed, as well as the apostles, and raised altar against altar.

The Jews of Samaria, always hostile to those of Jerusalem, ventured to oppose this Simon to Jesus Christ, acknowledged by the apostles and disciples, all of whom were of the tribe of Benjamin or that of Judah. He baptized like them, but to the baptism of water he added fire, saying that he had been foretold by John the Baptist in these words: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I; *he* shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Simon lighted a lambent flame over the baptismal font with naphtha from the Asphaltic Lake. His party was very strong, but it is very doubtful whether his disciples adored him; St. Justin is the only one who believes it.

Menander, like Simon, said he was sent by God to be the savior of men. All the false Messiahs, Barcochebas especially, called themselves *sent by God*; but not even Barcochebas demanded to be adored. Men are not often erected into divinities

while they live, unless, indeed, they be Alexanders or Roman emperors, who expressly order their slaves so to do. But this is not, strictly speaking, adoration; it is an extraordinary homage, an anticipated apotheosis, a flattery as ridiculous as those which are lavished on Octavius by Virgil and Horace.

ADULTERY

We are not indebted for this expression to the Greeks; they called adultery *moicheia*, from which came the Latin *mæchus*, which we have not adopted. We owe it neither to the Syriac tongue nor to the Hebrew, a jargon of the Syriac, in which adultery is called *niuph*. In Latin *adulteratio* signified *alteration—adulteration, one thing put for another—a counterfeit, as false keys, false bargains, false signatures*; thus he who took possession of another's bed was called *adulter*.

In a similar way, by antiphrasis, the name of *coccyx*, a cuckoo, was given to the poor husband into whose nest a stranger intruded. Pliny, the naturalist, says: "*Coccyx ova subdit in nidis alienis; ita plerique alienas uxores faciunt matres*"—"the cuckoo deposits its eggs in the nest of other birds; so the Romans not unfrequently made mothers of the wives of their friends." The comparison is not over just. *Coccyx* signifying a cuckoo, we have made it *cuckold*. What a number of things do we owe to the Romans! But as the sense of all words is subject to change, the term applied to *cuckold*, which, according to good grammar, should be the gallant, is appropriated to the *husband*. Some of the learned assert that it is to the Greeks we owe the emblem of the *horns*, and that they bestowed the appellation of *goat* upon a husband the disposition of whose wife resembled that of a female of the same species. Indeed, they used the epithet *son of a goat*

in the same way as the modern vulgar do an appellation which is much more literal.

These vile terms are no longer made use of in good company. Even the word *adultery* is never pronounced. We do not now say, "*Madame la Duchesse* lives in adultery with *Monsieur le Chevalier*—*Madame la Marquise* has a criminal intimacy with *Monsieur l'Abbé*;" but we say, "*Monsieur l'Abbé* is this week the lover of *Madame la Marquise*." When ladies talk of their adulteries to their female friends, they say, "I confess I have some inclination for *him*." They used formerly to confess that they felt some *esteem*, but since the time when a certain citizen's wife accused herself to her confessor of having *esteem* for a counsellor, and the confessor inquired as to the number of proofs of esteem afforded, ladies of quality have *esteemed* no one and gone but little to confession.

The women of Lacedæmon, we are told, knew neither confession nor adultery. It is true that Menelaus had experienced the intractability of Helen, but Lycurgus set all right by making the women common, when the husbands were willing to lend them and the wives consented. Every one might dispose of his own. In this case a husband had not to apprehend that he should foster in his house the offspring of a stranger; all children belonged to the republic, and not to any particular family, so that no one was injured. Adultery is an evil only inasmuch as it is a theft; but we do not steal that which is given to us. The Lacedæmonians, therefore, had good reason for saying that

adultery was impossible among them. It is otherwise in our modern nations, where every law is founded on the principle of *meum* and *tuum*.

It is the greatest wrong, the greatest injury, to give a poor fellow children which do not belong to him and lay upon him a burden which he ought not to bear. Races of heroes have thus been utterly bastardized. The wives of the Astolphos and the Jocondas, through a depraved appetite, a momentary weakness, have become pregnant by some deformed dwarf – some little page, devoid alike of heart and mind, and both the bodies and souls of the offspring have borne testimony to the fact. In some countries of Europe the heirs to the greatest names are little insignificant apes, who have in their halls the portraits of their pretended fathers, six feet high, handsome, well-made, and carrying a broadsword which their successors of the present day would scarcely be able to lift. Important offices are thus held by men who have no right to them, and whose hearts, heads, and arms are unequal to the burden.

In some provinces of Europe the girls make love, without their afterwards becoming less prudent wives. In France it is quite the contrary; the girls are shut up in convents, where, hitherto, they have received a most ridiculous education. Their mothers, in order to console them, teach them to look for liberty in marriage. Scarcely have they lived a year with their husbands when they become impatient to ascertain the force of their attractions. A young wife neither sits, nor eats, nor walks, nor goes to the play,

but in company with women who have each their regular intrigue. If she has not her lover like the rest, she is to be *unpaired*; and ashamed of being so, she is afraid to show herself.

The Orientals proceed quite in another way. Girls are brought to them and warranted virgins on the words of a Circassian. They marry them and shut them up as a measure of precaution, as we shut up our maids. No jokes there upon ladies and their husbands! no songs! – nothing resembling our quodlibets about horns and cuckoldom! We *pity* the great ladies of Turkey, Persia and India; but they are a thousand times happier in their seraglios than our young women in their convents.

It sometimes happens among us that a dissatisfied husband, not choosing to institute a criminal process against his wife for adultery, which would subject him to the imputation of *barbarity*, contents himself with obtaining a separation of person and property. And here we must insert an abstract of a memorial, drawn up by a good man who finds himself in this situation. These are his complaints; are they just or not? —

A memorial, written by a magistrate, about the year 1764.

A principal magistrate of a town in France is so unfortunate as to have a wife who was debauched by a priest before her marriage, and has since brought herself to public shame; he has, however, contented himself with a private separation. This man, who is forty years old, healthy, and of a pleasing figure, has need of woman's society. He is too scrupulous to seek to seduce the wife of another; he even fears to contract an illicit intimacy with

a maid or a widow. In this state of sorrow and perplexity he addresses the following complaints to the Church, of which he is a member:

"My wife is criminal, and I suffer the punishment. A woman is necessary to the comfort of my life – nay, even to the preservation of my virtue; yet she is refused me by the Church, which forbids me to marry an honest woman. The civil law of the present day, which is, unhappily, founded on the canon law, deprives me of the rights of humanity. The Church compels me to seek either pleasures which it reprobates, or shameful consolations which it condemns; it forces me to be criminal.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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