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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

# Old Thoughts

FOR

# New Thinkers.

*BEING SELECTIONS*

From the "Pensees Philosophiques" of Diderot.

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED BY

WILLIAM HARDAKER.

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"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."  
—ST. MATTHEW v., 15.

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## D I D E R O T

WAS born in the town of Langres, France, in October, 1713. The illustrious creator of the "French Encyclopedia" commenced his education at the Jesuits' College in his native town, where the sagacity of the priests of that astute order soon discovered his rare talents, and persuaded him to leave home without the knowledge of his parents, in order to qualify in Paris for the priesthood. But, like Voltaire, Denis Diderot was not destined to render the order of Loyala illustrious. At Harcourt College he received one of those solid educations which the reverend fathers knew so well how to give. In the office of the lawyer, Clément de Ris, he learned everything of law except its chicanery.

In 1743 he married against the wish of his father, and indeed of his mother-in-law, who knew him to be without means save a golden tongue. His married life was not happy. The first money he earned by literature was the translation of the History of Greece from the English. Being advanced in years, and still poor, he resolved to sell his library so that he might assure the future of his daughter, which was bought, without his solicitation, by the Empress of Russia, who also supplied him with the means to live in comfort for the short remainder of his days.

Diderot died on the 30th July, 1784, on the threshold of the Great Revolution, which he, with Rousseau and Voltaire, helped so materially to hasten.

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# OLD THOUGHTS FOR NEW THINKERS.

BEING

*Selections from the "Pensées Philosophiques" of DIDEROT.*

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED BY

**WILLIAM HARDAKER.**

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"I WRITE of God; I count on but few readers, and small approval. If these thoughts find favor with none, they may possibly be simply crass; but I hold them detestable if they please everyone."

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I KNOW the bigots: they are prompt to take alarm. If for a moment they judged that this book contained something contrary to their ideas, I should expect to hear all the calumnies they have spread abroad against a thousand men of greater worth than myself. If I am only a Deist; and only a scoundrel, I shall get off cheaply. They long ago damned Descartes, Montaigne, Locke, and Bayle, and I hope they will yet damn a great many others. I, however, declare to them that I do not count myself to be either a more honest man, or a better Christian, than the greater part of these philosophers. I was born in the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, and I submit, with all my might, to her decisions. I wish to die in the religion of my fathers, and I believe in it as much as it is possible for anyone who has never had direct intercourse with the Divinity, and who has never been eye-witness to any miracle. This is my profession of faith; I am almost certain they will be dissatisfied with it, although they have not, perhaps, one among them in a condition to make a better.

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You present to an unbeliever a volume of writings which you profess to demonstrate are of divine origin. But before enter-

ing upon an examination of your proofs, he will not fail to ask you: Has it always been the same? Why is it at present less ample than it was some centuries ago? By what authority have you banished such and such a work, revered by another sect, and retained such and such another which it has rejected? On what foundation have you given the preference to this manuscript? Who has directed you in the choice you have made between so many differing copies? What are the incontestable proofs that these sacred authors have been transmitted to you in their pristine purity? But if the ignorance of copyists, or the malice of heretics, has corrupted them, as you may easily imagine is possible, you will be obliged to restore them to their natural state before proving their divinity; for it is not from a collection of mutilated writings that proofs will fall with which to establish my faith; therefore to whom will you entrust this restoration? To the Church. But I am not able to believe in the infallibility of the Church until the divinity of the scriptures is proved. You see me, then, in an inevitable state of scepticism.

There is no answer to this difficulty, except by acknowledging that the first foundations of the faith are purely human; that the choice between the manuscripts; that the restitution of passages, in fact, that the collection is made by the rules of criticism, and I do not refuse to allow to the divinity of the sacred books a degree of faith in proportion to their consonance with the canons of criticism.

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I tell you there is no God; that the creation is a chimera; that the eternity of the universe is no more inconceivable than the eternity of a spirit; that because I do not know how motion has been able to engender this universe, which it knows so well to conserve, it is ridiculous to remove this difficulty by the suppositious existence of a being that I know still less; that if the brilliant marvels of the physical world discover an intelligence, the disturbances so rife in the moral world, wipe out providence. I say to you that if all is the work of a God, all should be the best possible; therefore, if all is not the best possible, God is either incapable or malevolent. This being so, of what good are your revelations? Even were it as well demonstrated as it is not, that all evil is the source of a good; that it was good that a Britannicus, one of the best of princes, perish; that a Nero, the worst of men, reign. How will it prove that it was impossible to attain the same end by other means? To permit vice in order that virtue may shine with greater lustre by contrast, is but a frivolous advantage to set against so serious an evil. This, says the Atheist, is what I object; what have you to say? . . . "*That I am a wretch; and*

that if I had nothing to fear of God, I should not dispute his existence."

Let us leave this phrase to the bigots; it may be untrue, politeness proscribes it, and is besides uncharitable. Because a man is wrong not to believe in God, shall we revile him? Invective is resorted to only in default of proofs. Between two disputants it is a hundred to one that he who is in the wrong will grow angry.

"Thou layest hold of thy thunder-bolts instead of replying, said Menippus to Jupiter; "thou art then in the wrong."

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I open the book of a celebrated professor, and I read: "Atheists, I grant you that movement is essential to matter; what can you make of it? . . . That the world is the outcome of a fortuitous aggregation of atoms? You may as well tell me that Homer's *Iliad* or *la Henriade* of Voltaire are the result of fortuitous combinations of accidents." I should be very careful not to offer such reasoning to an Atheist. The illustration would give him fine play.

According to the laws of the analysis of chances, he would say to me, I have no right to be surprised that a thing happens so long as it is possible, and that the difficulty of the event is compensated by the quantity of throws. In a certain number of throws I will wager, with the odds in my favor, that I turn up a hundred thousand sixes at a time with a hundred thousand dice. Whatever might be the definite number of characters with which it might be proposed I should fortuitously engender the *Iliad*, there is a possible sum of throws, which renders the proposition advantageous; my advantage would be infinite even, if the number of throws granted were infinite. You will, no doubt, agree with me, he would continue, that matter existed from all eternity, and that movement is essential to it. In return for this favor, I shall suppose, with you, that the world is boundless, that the multitude of atoms are infinite, and the marvellous order which fills you with astonishment does not belie the supposition. Then, from these reciprocal concessions, there results nothing more than that the possibility of engendering the universe by accident is very small, but that the number of chances is infinite; that is to say, that the difficulty of the event is more than sufficiently compensated by the multitude of throws. Therefore, if anything should be repugnant to reason, it should be the supposition that matter being self moved from all eternity, and that their being perchance, in the infinite number possible of combinations of forms, an infinite number of admirable arrangements, there should not be any of these suitable arrangements encountered in the infinite number of those

she has taken successively. Therefore, the hypothetic duration of chaos is more astounding than the real birth of the universe.

I divide Atheists into three classes. There are some who would tell you distinctly that there is no God, and would believe what they said; these are true Atheists. Another numerous class, who do not know what to think, and who would willingly decide the question by tossing heads or tails; these are sceptics Atheistic. There are many more who would like very much that there should not be a God, who seem to persuade themselves there is not, and who live as if they were so persuaded; these are blusterers, humbugs. I detest them; they are false. I pity the true Atheists. To me all consolation seems dead for them, and I pray to God for the sceptics that they may be enlightened.

Scepticism is not possible for everyone: It supposes profound and disinterested examination; he who doubts only because he does not understand the reasons for believing is simply one of the ignorant. The true sceptic has counted and weighed the reasons; but to weigh reasons is no small affair. Who among us knows exactly the value of reasoning? Bring a hundred proofs of the same truth, each one will have its partisans; each mind looking through its own telescope in its own fashion. An objection, which to my view appears a colossus, will diminish to the vanishing point in yours. You find a reason light, which crushes me under its weight. If we are divided on the question of intrinsic value, how can we hope to be agreed on the relative value? Tell me, how many moral proofs does it take to counterbalance a metaphysical conclusion? Are they my spectacles which sin, or yours? If then, it is so difficult to weigh reasons, and if there are no questions in which there is not a pro and a con, and almost always in equal measure why are we so peremptory? From whence comes this tone of decision? What is more revolting than a dogmatic self-sufficiency? "I am made to hate the things which appear true," said the author of the *Essais* "when they are forced upon me as infallible."

I love words which soften and moderate the boldness of our propositions, such as, "Perhaps it may be so," "Let us see," "It is so said," "I think," and others similar; and if I had the care of children, I would put into their mouths the habit of replying by questions and not by affirmation; as, "I do not understand," "It may possibly be so," "Is it true," so that they should rather use the manner of students at sixty than seem to be professors at sixteen.

Men of passionate temperament, of ardent imagination, cannot reconcile themselves to the indolence of the sceptic. They

will choose at hazard rather than not make a choice at all; deceive themselves rather than live in uncertainty. Whether it be that they mistrust their strength, or that they fear the depth of the flood, we see them for ever hanging to the branches of which they feel all the frailty, and to which they cling in preference to abandoning themselves to the torrent. They are sure in all things although nothing have they examined with care. They doubt of nothing, because they lack both the patience and the courage. Deciding by emotion, if by chance they encounter truth, it is not hesitatingly, but with a shock, and as a revelation. They are, amongst the dogmatic, such as were in the religious world styled the *illuminati*. I have seen individuals of this uneasy species who could not conceive it possible to ally tranquillity of mind with indecision.

To be able to live happy without knowing what we are, from whence we came, where we go, why we are here!

I pride myself on ignoring all that without being more unhappy, coldly replies the sceptic. It is not my fault if I have found my reason mute when I have questioned it on these things.

I shall never make myself unhappy over that which it is impossible for me to know. Why should I regret the want of a knowledge I am unable to procure, and which, doubtless, is not very necessary since I am deprived of it?

"I would as soon," said one of the first genuises of our age, "seriously afflict myself because I have not four eyes, four feet, and a pair of wings."

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It may be required that I seek for truth, but not that I find it. May not, possibly, a sophism be to me more forcible than a solid proof? I am in the necessity to consent to the false which I take for truth, and to reject the truth which I take for false; but what have I to fear if I deceive myself innocently? Since we are not rewarded in the next world for having had a brilliant intellect in this, should we be punished for our lack of understanding? To damn a man for being a bad reasoner, is to forget that he is a fool in order to punish him for wickedness.

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What is a sceptic? A philosopher who has doubted of all which he believes, and believes that which a legitimate use of his reason and his senses have demonstrated true. If you wish a more precise definition, render the pyrrhonian sincere and you will have the sceptic.

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| A semi-scepticism is the mark of a weak mind; it shows a

pusillanimous reasoner who allows himself to be afraid of the consequences; a superstitious person who fears to unmask to himself even; for if the truth has nothing to lose by examination, as the semi-sceptic is convinced, what does he think at the bottom of his heart of those concealed speculations, which he is afraid to bring to the light, and which are shrouded in a corner of his brain as in a sanctuary which he dare not approach?

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That which has never been questioned has not been proved; that which has never been examined without prejudice has never been thoroughly examined. Scepticism is then the first step towards truth. It ought to be general, for it is the touchstone of truth. If, to assure himself of the existence of God, the philosopher commences by doubting his existence, is there any proposition which ought to be withheld from proof?

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We risk as much by believing too much as by believing too little. There is neither more nor less danger by being polytheist as Atheist, hence scepticism alone can guarantee equally, in all times and all places, from those two opposed excesses.

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When the religious cry out against scepticism, it seems to me that they understand their interest badly, or that they contradict themselves. If it is certain that a true religion in order to be embraced, and a false religion in order to be abandoned, has need only to be well known, it ought to be wished that a universal doubt should spread over the whole surface of the earth, and that all the world should earnestly question the truth of their religions; our missionaries would thus find the better half of their great labors spared them.

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Reasoning which may be used equally by opposite parties proves nothing; either for the one or the other. If fanaticism has its martyrs as well as true religion; and if among those who have died for the true religion there were fanatics, we must either believe in proportion to the number of martyrs, or seek other motives for belief.

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Nothing is more calculated to confirm irreligious ideas than loose reasons for conversion. Sceptics are eternally taunted with—

“Who are you, to venture to attack a religion defended so courageously by a Paul, a Tertullian, an Athanasius, a Chry-



sostom, an Augustine, a Cyprian, and so many other illustrious personages? You have, no doubt, perceived some difficulty which had escaped these great men; show us, then, how much you know more than they, or sacrifice your doubts to their decisions, if you are agreed that they were wiser than yourself."

Most frivolous reasoning. The profound learning of ministers is not a proof of the truth of a religion. What cult could be more absurd than that of the Egyptians, and what ministers more enlightened? . . . No, I cannot adore an onion; what merit has it over other vegetables? I should be idiotic to prostitute my homage to things destined for my nourishment. The plant I water and tend, and which grows and dies in my garden-plot, is a droll sort of divinity! "Hold, wretch, thy blasphemies make me tremble. Who art thou to set thy reason against the sacred college? Who art thou to attack the gods and give lessons to their ministers? Art thou more enlightened than those oracles who were consulted by the entire universe? Whatsoever thy reply, I am astounded at thy impertinence and temerity." . . . Will Christians never abandon these miserable sophistries? Moral: Prodiges and dogmatic authority may make dupes or hypocrites; reason alone can make believers.

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It is allowed to be of the last importance not to employ other than solid reasons in the defence of religion, and yet those who expose its weaknesses are assailed with virulence. What! is not enough to be a Christian?—must one be so illogically?

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It was in the search for proofs that I found the difficulties. The books which held the motives for my belief offered at the same time reasons for being incredulous; they are a common arsenal. There I saw the Deist arm against the Atheist; the Deist and the Atheist contend with the Jew; the Atheist, the Deist, and the Jew league against the Christian; the Christian, the Jew, the Deist, and the Atheist take sides against the Mussulman; the Atheist, the Deist, the Jew, the Mussulman, and the multitudinous sects of Christianity come down upon the Christian, and the sceptic alone against all. I was judge of the blows; I held the balance between the combatants; the beam went up and down according to the weight of their respective argument. After long oscillations, the balance trembled almost imperceptibly on the side of the Christian. I will answer for my equity: it was not my fault if the difference were not greater; I call God to witness my sincerity.

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This diversity of opinion has evolved an argument for the

Deists more singular perhaps than solid. Cicero, having to prove the Romans the most bellicose people in the world, adroitly extracted this avowal from the mouths of their rivals:—"Gauls, to whom would you yield in courage if you yielded to any?—To the Romans. Parthians, after you, who are the most courageous?—The Romans. Africans, whom would you fear, if fear could enter your minds?—The Romans." Let us, following his example, interrogate the rest of the religions, say the Deists:—"Chinese, what religion would be the best, if it were not yours?—Natural religion. Mussulmans, what cult would you embrace if you abjured Mahomet?—Naturalism. Christians, which is the true religion, if perchance it is not Christianity?—The Jewish religion. But, you Jews, what is the true religion, if Judaism be false?—Naturalism." Therefore, continued Cicero, that which is by unanimous consent accorded the second place, and which itself concedes the first to none, merits incontestably to hold that position.

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"I had imagined," said Julian [called the Apostate], "that the chiefs of the Galileans would appreciate how greatly my proceedings are different from those of my predecessor, and that they would therefore bear me good will. Under his reign they suffered exile and imprisonment, and a multitude of those they deemed heretics among them were put to the sword. . . . Under mine the exiles have been recalled, the prisoners set at liberty, and the proscribed re-established in the possession of their estates. But such is the restlessness and the fury of this sort of men that, since they have lost the privilege of devouring each other, of tormenting both those who are attached to their dogmas, and those who follow the authorised religion; they spare no pains, they allow no occasion to escape of exciting revolts; fellows without regard for true piety, and without respect for our constitutions. . . . Nevertheless, we do not hear that they are dragged to the feet of our altars, or that they suffer violence.

. . . With respect to the common people, it appears to be their chiefs who foment among them a seditious spirit, furious at the limits we have fixed to their powers; for we have banished them from our tribunals, and they have not now facilities to dispose of testaments, to supplant the legitimate heirs, and gobble up the succession. . . . This is why we prohibit this people to create tumultuous assemblies and cabal at the houses of their seditious priests. . . . This ordinance is for the security of our magistrates, whom the rascals have insulted more than once and put in danger of being stoned. . . . That they go peaceably to their meetings, to pray, to be instructed, and to satisfy their desires in the culture of their religion, we permit; but they

must renounce their factious designs. . . . If these assemblies are made an occasion for revolt, it will be at their risk and peril; I warn them beforehand. . . . Infidel people, live in peace. . . . And you who have remained faithful to the religion of your country and to the gods of your fathers, do not persecute your neighbors, your fellow-citizens, whose ignorance is more to be pitied than their wickedness is to be blamed. . . . It is by reason, and not by violence, that men should be brought back to the truth. We enjoin, then, on you all, our faithful subjects, to leave the Galileans in peace."

Such were the sentiments of this prince, against whom we may bring the charge of paganism, but not of apostacy.

I am astonished at one thing, that is, that the works of this wise emperor have come down to our times. They contain passages which do no violence to the truth of Christianity, but which are disadvantageous enough to some Christians of his time, inasmuch as they show glimpses of the singular care which the fathers of the Church had taken to suppress the works of their enemies. It is from these predecessors apparently that St. Gregory the Great had inherited the barbarous zeal which animated him against letters and the arts, so that, had it rested with this pontiff, we should be in the case of the Mohammedans, who are reduced for all their reading to that of their Koran. For what had been the fate of these ancient writers in the hands of a man who ignored critical rules from religious principle; who imagined that to observe the rules of grammar was to submit Jesus Christ to Donat, and who believed himself obliged in conscience to increase the heaped up ruins of antiquity.

The divinity of the scriptures is not, however, a characteristic so clearly imprinted on the face of them that the authority of the sacred historians is absolutely independent of the testimony of profane authors. Where should we be if it was necessary to recognise the finger of God in the style of our Bible? How wretched is the Latin version! The originals even are not masterpieces of composition. The prophets, apostles, and evangelists wrote according to their capacity. Were it permitted to us to regard the history of the Jews as a simple human production, Moses and his successors would not bear away the palm from Titus Livy, Sallust, Cæsar, and Josephus, all of them writers of whom no one assuredly suspects that they wrote by inspiration.

"What is God?" is a question asked of children, and to which philosophers cannot give an answer. The age at

which children should begin to learn to read, to write, to dance, and to sing is pretty well understood. It is only in religious matters that the capacity of the child is not considered. Almost before he can speak he is asked, "What is God?" At the same time, and from the same lips, he learns that there are goblins, ghosts, vampires, and a God. The most important truths are inculcated in a manner to render them liable to be discredited at the tribunal of reason. It cannot be surprising if, finding, on reaching manhood, the existence of God mixed up in his head with a crowd of absurd and superstitious ideas, he should treat God as the magistrate treats an honest man discovered in the company of rogues.

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From the picture which is drawn of the supreme being, from his liking to be angry, from the rigor of his vengeance, from certain comparisons which show us the difference in number between those he leaves to perish and those to whom he deigns to offer the hand of salvation, the most pious soul would be tempted to wish that he did not exist. People would be comfortable enough in this world were they well assured they had nothing to fear in the other; the thought that there is no God at all has never yet affrighted mortal, but that there is such a God as he is painted has affrighted many.

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There are those who desire that God burn the wicked, who are powerless against him, in an everlasting fire; and it is not permitted a father to slay his son, who, perhaps, imperils his life, his honor, and his fortune!

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O Christians! you have, then, two differing ideas of goodness and of wickedness, of the truth and lies. You are either the most absurd dogmatists, or the most outrageous pyhrronians.

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All the evil of which one is capable is not all the evil possible: therefore, it is only he who is able to commit all the wickedness possible who can merit an eternal chastisement. To make God a being infinitely vindictive, you transform an earth-worm into a being infinitely powerful [to suffer].

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The word these atrocious Christians have translated by *eternal* signifies in Hebrew only *durable*. It is from ignorance of a Hebraism! and the ferocious humor of a translator whence comes the eternity of punishment.

The time of revelations, of prodigies, and of extraordinary missions is passed. Christianity has no longer any need of this kind of scaffolding. A man taking a fancy to play amongst us the character of Jonah; to run about the streets crying, "Yea, three days, and London will be destroyed; Cockneys, repent of your sins, cover yourselves with sackcloth and ashes, or in three days you will perish," would be incontinently collared by the first policeman he might fall in with, who would bring him before the police-magistrate of his district, who, in his turn, would not fail to have him dispatched to the county lunatic asylum. He might shout himself hoarse crying, "Are you less wicked than the men of Nineveh?" No one would trouble to reply to him; and to treat him as a madman, would not wait for the term of his prediction.

Elie may come from the other world whenever he may take the fancy. Men are so, in these days, that he will be compelled to perform stupendous miracles ere he be well received in this.

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A person was asked if there were any true Atheists. "Do you believe," replied he, "that there are any true Christians?"

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I hear an outcry from all sides against impiety. The Christian is impious in Asia, the Mussulman in Europe, the Papist in London, and the Calvinist in Paris. Who, then, is impious? All the world, or no one?

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When God, of whom we hold our reason, requires its sacrifice, he is like a mountebank who conjures away the gifts he pretends to confer.

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If my reason comes from on high, it is the voice of heaven which speaks by it. It is my duty to be guided by its counsels

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If reason is a gift of God, and if faith is also a gift of God, he has endowed us with two gifts, incompatible and contradictory.

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Bewildered in an immense forest in the night time, I have only a feeble lantern to light my path. Comes a stranger, who says to me: "Blow out thy candle to better find thy way." This stranger is the theologian.

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It is as sure as that two and two make four that Cæsar existed; it is also as sure that Jesus Christ existed as Cæsar. Then, it is also as sure that Jesus Christ was raised from the

dead as that he existed. What logic! The existence of Jesus Christ and of Cæsar is not a miracle.

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Man is as God or nature made him, and God or nature make nothing bad.

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Shade of Jenner! I am compelled to vaccinate my child to preserve it from the small-pox, and I am not allowed to kill it in order to save it from eternal hell? It is monstrous mockery!

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The precepts of religion and the law of society, which prohibit the murder of innocent children, are both absurd and cruel, when, in killing them, they are assured of an infinite happiness, and that, in leaving them to live, they are devoted almost surely to eternal damnation.

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The God of the Christians is a father who sets great store by his apples, but precious little by his children.

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No good father would wish to resemble our heavenly father.

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And why does he get so mad, this God? Are we not told that we cannot add to or detract from his glory, do anything for or against his repose, for or against his serene majesty?

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If it is necessary to believe in order to be saved, why was Christ crucified?

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If there are a hundred thousand damned for one saved, the devil has always the advantage, notwithstanding the death of Christ.

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A true religion would compel the attention of all men, in all times, in all conditions; would be eternal, universal, and evident. No religion has these three characteristics. All are therefore thrice demonstrated false.

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Facts of which only a few persons were witnesses are insufficient to prove a religion which is required to be believed by all the world.

The evidence in support of religion is ancient and marvellous; that is to say, the most suspicious possible; in proof of things the most incredible.

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To prove the gospel by a miracle is to prove an absurdity by an act contrary to nature.

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Why are the miracles of Christ true, and those of Esculapius, of Appollonius, of Tyanæus and of Mahomet false?

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The Jews living in Jerusalem at the time of Christ were no doubt converted on seeing his miracles? Not at all. So far from believing, they crucified him. It must be conceded that the Jews are a peculiar people; everywhere may be seen people carried away by a single false miracle; and yet Jesus Christ could not convert the Jews with a multitude of real miracles!

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"This God, who crucified God, to appease the wrath of God"; is an antithesis of more force in its pithy ridicule than a hundred folio volumes of grave controversy.

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It is said that he retired to the Mount of Olives to pray. And to whom prayed he? To himself!

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God the father judges all men worthy of eternal vengeance; God the son, worthy of infinite mercy; God the Holy Ghost remains neutral. How is this to be reconciled with the unity of the divine will.

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The question has been put to the theologians an infinite number of times—How can the dogma of eternal damnation be reconciled with the infinite mercy of God? They are still struggling with it!

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*Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petrum œdificabo ecclesiam meam*  
Is this the language of a God or of a Cogers' Hall punster?

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*In dolores paries* (Genes).—"Thou shalt engender in sorrow," said God to the prevaricating apple-eating woman. And what fault had the females of other animals committed that they also bring forth in pain?

If we must take literally the words, "Pater major me est," Jesus Christ is not God. If we must take literally, "Hoc est corpus meum," he gave his body to his apostles with his own hands—which is just as absurd as to say that Saint Denis kissed his head after it was cut from his shoulders.

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It is matchless impudence to cite the conformity of the gospels, while there are in some, very important statements of which not one word is said in the others.

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In the first centuries there were sixty gospels of almost equal authority. Fifty-six have been rejected for puerility and absurdity. Is there nothing of these in the four which have been retained?

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Pascal said: "If our religion is false, we risk nothing in believing it to be true; if it be true, we risk all in believing it false." A Mohammedan might say the same as Pascal.

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That Jesus Christ, who is God, was tempted of the devil, is a story worthy of the "Thousand and One Nights."

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A young woman who lived a very secluded life was one day visited by a young man, who brought a bird. She became *enceinte*, and it was asked how it happened? Ridiculous! It was the bird.

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Why do the stories of Leda and the swan excite a smile, and the little flames of Castor and Pollux risibility, when we accept in all seriousness the pigeon and the tongues of fire of the gospels?

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