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# Religious and philosophical examination of the principle of authority

Élie Reclus

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authority

1851

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This is true for infinities which would be of the same nature. This would be true for the co-eternity of Good and Evil, the two sides of the same moral principle.

Is this true for infinities that are of a different nature?

I do not believe that.

I believe that infinite number of individuals would all have infinite value.

If the notion of individuality is identical to that of a being whose essence is absolutely sui generis, the notion of individuality is identical to that of infinity.

### **XVIII.**

God is love.

Man is love.

**End.**

### **XIII.**

One make of Christianity this,  
One make of it that.  
One tastes of the nut only the very bitter husk.  
One eats the fruit of it.

### **XIV.**

God is the supreme objectivity only because he is the supreme subjectivity.

### **XV.**

No one assimilates objectivity, except according to the power of his subjectivity. If I have no more self-awareness than the pebble in the road, I will not have the feeling of God any more than it has. My life is my love. —

### **XVI.**

A higher truth would be fatal to a lower life. The fish that must breathe the little air in the water suffocates in atmospheric air.

Everything is mortal for the being who balances between life and nothingness, but for life everything is life-giving.

This applies to faith, to love, to all energies of the heart.

### **XVII.**

It is said that two infinities cannot coexist without limiting themselves, that is to say without mutually destroying each other.

“You, who want to be under the law, do you hear the law!”

— Gal. iv, 21.

## Introduction.

At all times of transformation, the question of authority and freedom is increasingly debated. Whenever a new idea wants to creep into humanity, those who are afraid stop it in the process, and say to it: Who gave you the right to live? — *Non licet esse vos*, said the official world to nascent Christianity.

Now, that a new religious movement is being prepared, this is what everyone has a presentiment of, some with joy, others with apprehension; but whether we love spring or hate it, the swallows are back.

— I wanted to do a job of removing muck

It is only a question of the religious question here: to leave it is to descend.

It's not me speaking, it's the Idea: I have accepted the starting point of Authority, to produce all of its consequences, to multiply itself by itself. Evil reveals its ugliness by showing itself in broad daylight.

Having to deal only with ideas, I wanted to be severe, because the struggle is serious, it is even deadly. For my part, I refuse any quarter that I would not give; between force and idea, I sided with freedom, and I said: Live free or die!

## X.

Protestantism has severed the vital root of Catholicism by depriving it of its principle of authority, papal infallibility.

If Protestantism in turn materializes in any authority, it will perish through authority. Jesuitism and Calvinism represent the same principle of absolute authority; one stuck to the purely religious and metaphysical question, the other represented the authority of the Vice-God on earth, and stuck mostly to religion in its earthly dealings.

Jesuitism and Calvinism were born and died around the same time, today they are resurrected around the same time.

Representatives of the same principle, they have been the most violent enemies.

The authority of the last days had to be realized in the two most powerful extremes, the better to neutralize each other.

Because authority must perish.

## XI.

If fatalism is a pagan idea, through Calvinism and Augustinism, paganism has entered the Church.

As far as it was in him, Calvinism destroyed the redemption of Christ.

## XII.

One makes Christ an apostolic and Roman Catholic.

One makes him an "old Lutheran".

One makes a Calvin.

One makes him a rationalist.

Someone else does something else with it.

Certainly, Christ is the Christ.

If authority is only a question of fact, it will only have a matter value.

Now, if for the slave there is no Right against the Fact, for the free man there is no Fact against the Right.

## V.

Any power that wants to impose itself must be said to be of divine right; because man cannot have rights against man.

## VI.

If authority is the product of corruption, authority is corrupting.

## VII.

Denying individuality, authority denies the immortality of the soul.

Without absolute freedom, the eternity of man is nonsense.

If man has infinite duration, he must have infinite value.

## VIII.

I say that all Revelation, all Redemption was made against authority.

## IX.

To be free is my right and my duty.

# First Part. Absolute Authority.

# Chapter I.

## Absolute Authority as a Principle.

### *Sovereignty.*

I. What is authority?

Etymologically, authority means the power of the creator over the created thing. Factor, actor, auctor, auctoritas. In practice, this word designates the government and its delegates. In religion and philosophy, it applies to any principle that calls for obedience.

This is what is meant by authority, but it is about getting into the idea itself, understanding its content and consequences. — I say that it is power, that is to say, necessity, in the forms of right and of fact.

II. By analysis, particular objects break down into elements common to many others. Thanks to certain laws, gases form oak, moss, or seaweed; what constitutes a flower, a trunk or a fruit could have become charcoal, diamond or freestone. The individual exists only through the action of some law.

If there is an absolute law, it is correlative to the very idea of Being.

III. The Being is not yet life. The stone exists, but it does not live. The laws of Being can be summed up in mathematical laws, but if they had no other existence than the abstract reality of four equal to two plus two, they would be nothing. What is justice without a righteous being? Being as substance will have to take form and

## Theses

### I.

Ubi spiritus domini, ibi libertas. 2 Cor. III, 17.

Ubi spiritus diaboli, ibi auctoritas.

### II.

To argue with authority is madness. It accepts only one response: I am as strong as you, or this one, which is even better: I am stronger than you.

### III.

It is said: Authority is the bond of beings, therefore it is unity; it is the first principle, it is therefore life.

Paralogism.

If authority is a link, it only recognizes the enmity of two pre-existing objects.

There is better than a chain to unite two beings, and all the freedoms there is attraction and love.

### IV.

If the authority is legitimate by the sole fact of its existence, Freedom will find its justification in the sole fact of its existence.



Because they will be told: You are an ungodly and a blasphemer. They will be told: I excommunicate you, that is, if you take part in the meal of the saints and the blessed, I want the blood of Christ to become poison in your veins, and the flesh of Christ to become in you ferment of death

.Friends, in the name of the Idea, you advance against the sharp bayonet, and you advance against the whistling bullet, and you declare war on the Might, and you want to defeat the Force. So you will perish.

Let them cry out about madness, about immense madness! They will cry out about the madness of the faith and the absurdity of the miracle.

Go, noble prophet, go therefore and cry: That which is selfishness in the soul manifests itself in tyranny and bondage; what is love in the heart is revealed as Devotion and Freedom!

*Our father in heavens,  
May your kingdom come!*

life; it will act through individualization; through personality he will truly be a force, and will enter the world of facts and realities.

But the personality will never be anything but the expression of the laws of Being, from which it can no more be freed than nine of the laws of the ternary. Without individualization, the law would be an abstraction, but personality without a law, would be nothing at all. To be, yes or no, subject to its law, for each individuality, is to be, or not to be. Authority as law is summed up in the idea of Being, in that of the Supreme Being, who is God. Authority as a fact, in turn, is summed up in the primary personality, which is God. Authority is God, God is authority.

IV. Whoever unites with God becomes a participant of divine qualities, becomes a participant of impeccability and infallibility.

Communication with the Divinity carries with it the right of sovereignty. The respect due to the master is due to his representative, and to his ministers; now his ministers are the Prophet with the word of truth, the King with the sword of righteousness, and the priest with the bloody knife of atonement. The king, the pontiff and the prophet are in the midst of men the reflections of the divinity, as in the midst of pebbles, the diamond is the mirror of the sun.

V. The philosophical idea of the law brings us back to Being and to personality, that is, to God, the Law and the Lawgiver. But the religious man does not restrict himself to this detour; he accepts faith in the name of God, and God in the name of faith, he starts from obedience, and returns to obedience.

VI. All existence being only a living law, nature is only the system of laws, is only universal law. The law being the principle of cohesion and Being, outside of it there is nothing but nothing.

Who will tell all the laws of organic and inorganic matter, the laws of gases, liquids and solids, laws of light and heat, of electricity, of magnetism, of gravity, of expansion, and molecular unions? Where is the forgotten stone, where is the star in the heavens that

is not the culmination and the starting point of countless laws? Show it, you who say: I am free!

VII. The law, that is, the authority, is absolute. As absolute, it is the cause, goal and means of all things. As absolute, it is everywhere and always identical to itself. So, the essence of authority being absolute, so too will the attributes; therefore all manifestations of authority are equally just and legitimate.

VIII. Being absolute, it is the unity of all contradictions. One does not have to do with this or that change, it ignores them. The stream, the cloud and the ice cube are always water. Yesterday it was this, today it is, and tomorrow it will be quite another thing, but it will still be the authority.

IX. Authority, being the absolute principle, confiscates all others for its own benefit. It is she who calls herself the source of justice, of truth, of good and of beauty.

X. Authority begins by denying any intelligence towards it. For strength without intelligence is pure strength. What can intelligence do against force? Force institutes order, even without intelligence, but intelligence deprived of authority what can it achieve? Something less than disorder, nothingness.

Intelligence is only a passive view; the sight of what is inside and outside of man; it is the more or less obscure perception of objective laws. Man has reason to be proud of his intelligence, as the drop of water to be proud, because the sun has penetrated it with one of its rays, as the night because a lamp has entered its darkness. All subjectivities can only exist through their union with the Objective, that is, through their dependence on the primary fact. So everyone's reason is only the more or less misleading mirror of primary intelligence.

Any intellectual notion in accordance with the immutable laws of Necessity is true, any notion in disagreement with them is false. Intelligence is the apprehension of laws, intelligence itself is law like optics. The laws of intelligence are the laws of logic; the logical laws are the laws of equality, then of inferiority, or of superiority,

they burned the holy Joan of Arc. But will I say the names of the martyrs? Ask Torquemada, ask the Albigenses!

As for the people, they never recognized the man of God and cried out to him: Hail, O prophet! only when he saw her hanging bloody from the top of a cross. Who will speak of your sorrows, O martyrs of truth, you who have exercised righteousness! You have been stoned, you have been killed, you have been put to death by the edge of the sword, you have been grieved, tormented, you of whom the world was not worthy!

Oh ! when I look at the executioners dressed in purple reddened in the blood of martyrs, my heart trembles, and my flesh shivers. I shuddered with anguish and anger when I saw Faith, bloody Polyxena, dragging their hands behind their backs, before the altar of a black snake-headed fetish; they spread the dark veil of the criminal over her face, she lowered her head, then the priest cursed her, and the executioner plunged his knife into her chest.

Authority, bloody authority, I will not curse you, for I would make you hated by men weak of faith, and we must pray Forgive, O God, for they do not know what they are doing, to the executioner forgive, forgive because of the victim !

By accusing authority, I am accusing Humanity, and if I cursed it, I would curse my mother. For Humanity adores Necessity, peoples adore the Law of the sword with frightening fervor and immense cowardice.

All of them adore egoism, which imposes itself on other egoisms, and walks haphazardly across the world, all of them adore despotism, except a few men of desire and love who are lost here and there, near whom pass the people of the city who smile and say: Look at the poor dreamer!

You who cry out: Slave crouching in the mire, slave, with your head bowed between your knees, get up, get up, and be tall as a man! Poet, prophet, and you, preacher of truth, you are doing a work of greatness and nobility.

Help them, Lord!

## Conclusions.

There are three religions, that of Force, that of Wisdom and that of Freedom.

The religion of intelligence is the religion of the golden mean, and like any intermediary, it has only a transitional value, and resolves itself into dualism; it is in fact only the perpetual antinomy of the ego and the non-ego, and the eternal attempt at union between the finite and infinite world.

Sixty centuries have slowly come to parade before the God of Strength, all peoples have come down through the ages to bow down to the dark Majesty.

The God of authority is the Sanzaï, it is the terrible Siwas and the heavy Djaggernaut, it is Zeus and Jupiter, it is the Manitou, it is the bloody Teutatés, it is the great fetish of the Kohi desert, and of the black inhabitant of Guinea.

This God they also called Jehovah, and of Christ with a heart burning with love, the wicked have made the minister of anger and vengeance. On Golgotha stands an immense cross, which rises above the rolling and noisy waves of human generations; and from the cross of the Saint and the Righteous they made a gallows, and to its two arms they tied the sons of Liberty, it is there that they die condemned in the name of God, and of the Man of Sorrows and infinite compassion.

Night covers the fields of the past, but if you look in the dark you will see the red flame of the pyres, and on these pyres they burned Vanini, they burned the noble Arnold and Savonarola, the heralds of freedom, they burned Jean Huss and Giordano Bruno,

those of addition and subtraction, also those of multiplication and division; they present themselves, it is true, under various combinations, and under great philosophical names; but they are nothing else than mathematical laws, generally qualified as material. Since intelligence is valuable only through its submission to authority, intelligence in itself is null.

XI. Authority again says: I am justice, and outside of me there is nothing but nothingness and injustice. For justice is only harmony with the law, and the law is only the expression of authority. The law is the will of the legislator, and the pure Will is outside justice, it is arbitrary. If God had wanted good to be bad, good would be bad, and evil would be good.

Authority does justice to the most violent injustice. When Jehovah ordered the massacre of the inhabitants of Canaan, he gave an order that it would be a crime to find bad.

The law cannot be debatable, the law can only be fair. The law is not law because of its justice; on the contrary, it is just, because it is the law.

XII. Authority being the negation of freedom, its presentation begins and ends with the negation of freedom.

This negation has much more logical force, now that the authority has just eliminated reason and justice; while freedom can only live on the life of love and understanding.

Authority is therefore supreme freedom to itself, and to others supreme necessity.

XIII. As much as the vulgar apologists for authority and those for freedom have agreed to confuse the two terms, so do we strive to maintain their distinction. If Bahal is God, serve him; if the Lord is God, love the Lord.

The relative has only a relative value. Now, the relative is precisely what needs law. Whether there are relative authorities, whether there are so many and more, from delegation to delegation man must be able to ascend to the ultimate sovereignty, from which no one can call and say: I brave you; before which all will

bow down, as the grass bends in the wind. Under pain of suicide, the authority must crush all enemies; if authority is not binding, it will no longer be authority. Which means that authority has force for its essence, that is, necessity.

However, relative authority is not authority. Because as a relative, it can only engage man relatively, so it cannot constrain him, so it leaves man free.

We are a slave, or we are not.

Relative freedom is not freedom either. As soon as there is coercion, there is no more freedom. One is tied to a tree, were he only tied by a thin loose rope, if he were only tied by a very long rope, he is certainly not free. One with his hands tied behind his back, even if he can walk around the whole world, he is not free.

We are free, or we are not.

Authority, relative freedom, are only relative ideas. Both are only a swing between the two extremes and the two opposites, a compromise between Yes and No, an absurdity continues. Relative authority and freedom are the adulterous fruits of the union of Freedom and Necessity, of Being and of Non-Being.

The relative is a liar, there is only truth in the absolute.

Absolute sovereignty and relative authority correspond to the birth and childhood of man; however, it is in the very fact of childhood that it destroys itself by continuing; it is in the nature of authority to destroy itself by exercising.

This is the history of States, of Churches, it is the history of mankind.

### ***Summary.***

XLIII. Absolute sovereignty has proven by logical argument that it alone is true and that relative authority is absurd.

Relative authority has proven by the practical argument that only it is possible and that absolute authority is absurd.

Do we state an antinomy between fact and reason?

Yes, if there is no freedom.

Yes, if the freedom is not absolute.

— I believe in my infinite freedom.

thority, it is de facto and de jure annihilated; because if it can burn, it cannot convince.

As soon as relative authority, that is to say authority mixed with intelligence and liberty, has spend away its higher principle in favor of a people or an individual who has known how to assimilate them, it is then no more than pure authority; and it is precisely when it must perish that it proclaims itself eternal and absolute.

XL. Absolute sovereignty and relative authority agree that the measure of sin is that of their power.

Be it.

However, the authority being exercised by men, so much worth will be the subordinate, so much worth will be the master.

XLI. As far as the authority has been fair, as far it has developed the people towards morality, as far it will have done the work proposed by the tutor of Louis XV, who was working to render himself useless.

As far as it has been unjust, as far it will have developed the instincts of revolt and produced rebellion.

Thus the authority which is legitimized by the sole fact of its existence, is destroyed by the sole fact of its existence.

XLII. Who says relative authority, says authority which will end. For it can only have the practical value of time, accidents and circumstances, which vanishes as soon as we speak of God, conscience and eternity.

Relative authority is typified by paternal authority, which is also absolute at its origin. As long as the child is null as a force, he would be the victim of all external agents, if he did not have beside him a complementary being to be its strength and his intelligence. But as soon as the child is the smallest possible thing, it is only a question of relative authority, which in turn will decline in the face of the relative freedom of the child, from the day when the father has been somewhat wrong. ; finally, this authority will be nothing at all, when the son is morally up to his father.

## Chapter II. Absolute Authority as Fact.

### *Obedience*

XIV. Sovereignty having placed itself above intelligence, justice and freedom, affirms that it is nothing but Force. What is strength in turn? It is not an idea, it is not a principle, it is necessity, it is inevitability, it is chance, it is a fact.

It will therefore be the absolute fact.

XV. If authority is absolute, it is because it has no other reason than itself; it is sovereign, to exercise sovereignty. Why wouldn't the tyrant flog the slave? Now, the God of the slave, can and must only be a despot. For if no tyrant would find themselves before a slave that the slave would enslave themselves not to the free man, but to another slave. The servile soul enslaves itself to everything, it is afraid of what is good, as well as of what is bad, it is afraid even of what does not exist.

Free the slave? It's pointless and absurd, it's cruel.

XVI. From God man derives his being and his personality. He was plunged into the abysses of nothingness, and God, in giving him existence, committed himself to nothing, but committed him to everything. May God send him torment upon torment, man will perhaps owe him gratitude, always submission.

Moreover, he still continues to be before God only the nothingness from which he emerged; his ground is nothing, and the form which this nothing has taken has been given to him by a will other than his own. What does he have left for personal value?

Now, what are, vis-à-vis Omnipotence, what are the rights of nothingness?

XVII. Not being the cause of his life, of his inner principle, he is even less the creator of outer things that can happen to him. If the germ does not come from him, all the developments of the germ will be things beyond his control. Which means that the supreme fact is that of Predestination.

XVIII. The reason for predestination? — But there isn't, and there shouldn't be. Predestination is the pure fact, isolated from any consideration of justice and morality.

If a child dies at birth, and by some accident, has not received the waters of baptism, it is predestined to doom. Cardinal Séfrondate, a modest and pious man, had hoped that these poor innocent people would not go to the place of torture, but Bossuet, the last father of the Church, overwhelmed him:

“Low and angry feeling, which destroys the strength of piety, strange novelty, detestable error, incredible language which strikes us with astonishment!”

“The damnation of infants who die without baptism is of steadfast faith in the Church. They are guilty, since they are born under the wrath of God and in the power of darkness. Children of anger by nature, objects of hatred and aversion, thrown into hell with the other damned, they remain there eternally under the horrible power of the Demon.”

“So decided by the learned Denis Peteau, the eminent Henri Nolis, the eminent Bellarmine, the Council of Lyon, the Council of Florence, the Council of Trent. And such things are not decided by thin reasoning, but by the authority of the Scriptures!”

XIX. Whatever happens to you of joys and sorrows, O son of nothingness, comes to you by the express will of Him who, before

The golden mean is the balancing of the forces; a matter of statics, it is the neutralization of all powers, which he minimizes; he protests against any energetic movement, for then how would he control it? he does not like life, because life cannot be weighed, nor measured. It tends to stand still, it tends towards death. Indeed, the golden mean concentrates the universe at a mathematical point, and that point is it. This mathematical point, having neither width, nor length, nor height, nor thickness, would be the infinity of littleness, if it were not the golden mean between what is and what is not; and how would he want movement, it who does not know what space is, how would it want Spirit, it who protests against infinity?

XXXVIII. As a fact, relative authority will translate into relative fact. It will be the chance of the moment that will become the necessity of the moment. These are the laws and dogmas of a day, the merit of which is to be provisional and temporary, and the wrong of believing themselves to be eternal. This is how civil property is that which has been owned for thirty years, without question; for under pain of an eternal war, there must be a statute of limitations for all usurpations.

On the other hand of religious authority which does not claim to be absolute, there are very few; for almost all of them give themselves an eternal value. But for a dogma to be absolute, the faith of the believer is not absolute; which is also a way of relativizing the absolute.

XXXIX. Telling the facts of civil and religious authorities, wouldn't it be a reminder of the shame and pains of humanity? We therefore refrain from doing so here, and stop only at the flow of ideas.

Authority being a fact, authority is necessary as long as the devotee, the serf and the subject believe that he who commands them is more than them, and that he is more than a man; it is then true, indisputable, for we need it, for necessity is the first of laws and the best of reasons; but the moment one no longer believes in au-

By the sole fact of its exercise, relative authority becomes again theocratic despotism and divine right.

XXXVI. "Choose your government," says Freedom to Members of State and Church. "But stay loyal to it," adds relative authority.

This government, once established as best it can, wants, by the very logic of things, to realize the idea of government, that is to say to govern more and more. Relative freedom, in its turn, wants, no less logically, to be free more and more.

The struggle is therefore permanent; since there are governments and ruled, there has been religious heresy and civil revolt. Quite naturally, power will therefore compress more and more, just as freedom will react more and more. However, the compressive force on one side and the repulsive force on the other have the same goal: to break the existing union.

The old government will therefore be overthrown, another will be raised, and the struggle will never be more violent; for relative authority must reduce relative freedom, relative freedom must destroy relative authority.

XXXVII. If absolute authority is only a fact, with much more reason it is the same for relative authority which is only a compromise between two principles, which is therefore only their limitation, their mutual negation.

Relative authority is said to be the golden mean between absolute authority, which it calls despotism, and complete freedom which is only license to it.

The golden mean being the system of measurement, resent everything that goes too far to the right or too far to the left, because as soon as the two parties go to extremes, the union breaks up, the dualism of wills being irreducible. So, if a power understood its interests, it would only be the point common to all the parties (it is true that this power would only be one of the expressions of freedom), but always power is lost by ceasing to be the central point of opinions, becoming a party itself, an extreme.

children were born, loved Jacob and hated Esau. He created light and darkness, the fiber to suffer, and the heart to bleed; it is he who created the criminal and the torment, and the wicked for the day of wrath.

On feast evenings Christians and Christian women were brought into the emperor's gardens, tied to posts, smeared with pitch, and that pitch was set ablaze. And these men burned in the night, and died in excruciating pain, while Nero, accompanied by the imperial ladies, walked by the light of the horrible torches.

Nero had the right to do so; for he was absolute master.

And what you abominate in Nero, with your hand on your mouth, adore it in the strong and jealous God, who decreed the birth of Humanity, so that all of it, except "the little flock," may be destined for the sin and sorrow, and with infinite happiness, he looks upon his dreadful agony during the stream of eternities, and says: All is well, and I have done this for my glory.

XX. To say that authority is absolute as a fact and a principle is to say: de jure and de facto you are a slave.

But who to obey?

Since authority boils down to de facto necessity, one owes absolute submission to the Church or the religious community, in whose bosom one finds oneself by chance of birth.

Your Church will therefore impose some sort of dogma on you. Without discussion or murmur, you will accept them; with love, if she orders it; whether they are from the Thibetian catechism or from the La Rochelle Confession. It is of no importance that you understand them; you have to believe them; although absurd, because absurd, if you understand them, so much the better, but if you doubt, you are a criminal.

To the Church and its leaders, who impose dogmas, correspond the State and its leaders who impose laws. You will obey them.

Who is the legitimate authority in politics?

This question was urgently removed from the jurisdiction of individual reason. Legitimate authority is that under which one finds

oneself, whether it be that of a usurper of yesterday, or that of a descendant of the usurper of centuries gone by.

All power is sent from God, if you disobey the power, you insult the representative of the Divine Majesty, that is why you will be punished. The de facto authority is the de jure authority. The authority is the one who holds the scepter which is a staff, the one who holds the sword, and says to you: It is the sword of God. This sword will hurt you, it may kill him too, but would you resist God?

XXI. As much as absolute authority as a principle has denied relative freedom, so authority as fact will deny freedom of examination, which for it is the rotten fruit of a poisoned tree. So if we do not ignore it, it is not to clarify the question, it is only to better formulate it.

In examining the principle of authority, absolute sovereignty has been asserted objectively and a priori. Infinity being the cause and purpose of the finite, submission is required in the name of infinite power.

In the examination of the fact of authority, absolute obedience is justified subjectively and a posteriori. Man not being his own cause, man being only an effect, submission is demanded in the name of his infinite weakness.

This justification, for being only a way to put itself out of the question, is no less terrible. It is the authority that turns around and condemns who wants to judge it. Indeed, if it is in the nature of freedom to forgive, authority need to justify itself only by irony against whoever doubts, only by lashes and swords against who fight it.

XXII. Freedom of examination is a lie or obedience is a lie. Because if authority is authority only after being accepted by reason, it is reason that is the sovereign mistress. However, the spirit of each one is subjectivism, therefore dispute; intelligence by its nature is individual. What did I say ? The rights of individualism are the rights of intelligence, and before authority, the right of individualism is the right of revolt.

If man is necessarily bad, evil is necessary, evil is only mechanical and material, that is, the very notion of moral evil is destroyed.

XXXIII. If absolute authority brings out the idea of sin and perversity, the relative authority and freedom bring out human weakness, and reduce the principle of human corruption to be nothing but that of the sin of ignoring. Relative authority and freedom therefore have intellectualism as their religion; this is what we see in these religions of compromise between the two opposing tendencies, such as Semipelagianism, Arminianism, Jansenism, Socinianism, and so on.

Indeed, the principle of relative freedom is summed up not in the principle of creation, but in that of a choice between two extremes.

Relative authority and freedom will therefore be summed up in philosophy. And what philosophy?

For example, that of Monsieur Cousin. —

XXXIV. But as soon as it comes to rebuilding the overturned edifice, then the union between relative authority and freedom disappears. One wants to take the most, the other wants to give as little as possible; and the struggle has no other logical end than that of a common death.

The relative authority will copy the absolute sovereignty, that is to say, it will reproduce the brass colonnades, the marble porticoes, and the granite walls, with slabs of clay and wicker trays..

Instead of being based on the perversity of man, and his blindest unintelligence, it will be based only on weakness and ignorance, and while one claims Omnipotence and that everything be nothing but nothingness around it, the other will have for strength only the weakness of what surrounds it.

XXXV. Relative authority as authority will feel the need to go back to its principle and will always end up believing itself to be pure authority and giving precedence to sovereignty over reason and justice, in other words: “order comes before freedom, obey first, then you will claim. ”



thing is thus reduced to a mechanical-mathematical system of the attraction of similar and proportional, of opposites and homogeneous, everything is reduced to being nothing more than the product of the law of the vibrations of the strings, and of planetary gravitation..

But why?

“... Necessity,” we are told.

For their part, the Muslim and the Calvinist blame the atheist for not leaving the idea of pure Being, yet the pure Being, the God of the Neoplatonists has only a much less real existence than that of hydrogen gas. As for them, they bring everything back to a primary personality.

Very good.

But this personality is only the hypostasis of predestination, which is only eternal arbitrariness, despite its name of immutable justice.

If in the first system all the affections, from the dog's attachment to his master, to the love of man and woman, have no more moral significance than the fact of a stone which falls under the laws of earthly attraction; in the second, all loves, including the love of God for man and of man for God, have no more moral value than the fact of pebbles placed next to each other by a idle child.

The atheist naturalist says: There is no God, there is only the impersonal existence of cosmic laws. The supernaturalist says: There is only reality the divine personality, apart from it, to imagine itself to be something, it is the drop of dew which believes itself to be the sun.

Materialism on the one hand, pantheism on the other, blind fatalism on both sides.

XXXII. After denying the principles of absolute authority, we will deny the consequences.

If man is evil itself, if he can only be an abomination, he is no more wicked than the rolling mill which by chance crushes a poor worker between its rolls.

Individualism and authority are mortal enemies, they only fight to kill each other.

If the review confirms the value of the authority's orders, it is unnecessary; if it is against them, it is criminal. Why roll the dice, why risk the unnecessary against crime?

Who says freedom of examination, says absolute freedom. This man who maintains the autonomy of human reason vis-à-vis all revelations, would this man then abdicate his freedom to bow under a yoke? It would be absurd, it would be bitter madness.

Does he submit himself who submits only conditionally? If religious authority grants the right to scrutinize the Scriptures, it grants the right to reject them; if it is permissible to seek the rights of the pope, priest and pastor, the sincere man and the hypocrite will be able to claim that they are void.

Otherwise, the so-called freedom of examination is nothing but the freedom to find anything good; the executioner allows this to his victim.

Such were the consequences that Lamennais and J. de Maistre drew from the principle of the Reformation, and by denying them Protestantism lied to its principle and was cowardly of heart.

He therefore accuses the authority which wants it to be justified and which says to him: Wash away your iniquity. Whoever doubts today will attack tomorrow, for doubting is the first degree of disbelief, protest and hatred. The protest is revolt, and woe to the rebel!

The authority covers the idea and the ideologue of a sovereign contempt, it would gladly do like Nero, who, going for a walk in Greece, forbade the speaking of philosophy during his absence. Mystery and criticism are two contradictory ideas, and the very notion of mystery implies absurdity in the mind of whoever would like to judge it.

What is your right to judge, son of ignorance and desire, nothingness and greed? To be puffed up with pride and puffed up with vanity, which lives only by sucking the void, you would judge the laws

immutable and eternal! Say, blasphemer, who assert that God is this, that God is that, say, who are you? where did you come from? say where you will go Do you only know what is your thought, what is your will?

Whoever has not searched what is in a drop of water, would he scrutinize the mysteries of the divine essence? The unfortunate one would dare to judge the one to whom he must obey?

Why do you command the ox, the horse and the donkey, and impose on them the labors of hard slavery? Because you are smarter than the animal, that is also why you slaughter it and eat its flesh. Now the law which is just against the beast is also lawful against you, whose understanding is without virtue, and is only exalted a degree above that of the brute.

XXIII. Now, even in logic, the idea of ignorance resolves itself into that of sin, for ignorance can only be caused by estrangement from God, that is to say evil.

Sin has terrible significance.

Don't we say that the progress we make in our knowledge of the world and of ourselves is progress in the science of evil?

Whether you were created as one, or have become one, you are a villain; now, from the wicked one must take away his freedom and his life, if one can. You crush the barely hatched viper, which never bit or hurt, just as you crush the one you meet on your way. And you who, defiled from head to toe, dare to show yourself to the rays of the sun, you were created poisonous scorpion, poisonous scorpion, you will be killed and tormented.

The fruit of sin is death, and to him who has deserved death, the hardest slavery is commutation of punishment and a gift of mercy. For all sin is a violation of eternal laws, and before eternal laws there is not too great a penalty for the least of peccadilloes.

Sin, then, is the moral foundation of the idea of authority. Who says original sin, says absolute authority and complete perversity of human nature, and says that gangrene has rotted the head and the heart.

XXIX. Relative authority and relative freedom are just two sides of the same principle, that of the relative.

As much as the absolute is an enemy of the relative, so much is the antagonism between the two expressions of the same relative principle. So that relative authority fights relative freedom, and these two, leagued together, fight absolute authority and freedom. And yet relative authority has its source in absolute sovereignty, like relative freedom in absolute freedom.

XXX. Relative authority says that absolute sovereignty is impossible, by the very fact that it claims to be absolute. Man is not absolute, therefore nothing absolute can be imposed on him.

Moreover, absolute authority is absurd by the very fact that it places itself above, that is to say, beyond reason. Is absurd which-commands absurdity.

Likewise, absolute authority is immoral in that it places itself outside the laws of justice and morality.

XXXI. Relative authority is now fighting the religion of absolute sovereignty, having attacked its morals and philosophy.

If the good and the just are such only by the will of God, if what is false and bad today could cease to be so tomorrow, the good would only have a value of arbitrary, arbitrary willed from all eternity perhaps, but always arbitrary. It is to deprive God of all moral value. This is to say that the divine personality is only a blind and fatalistic will, caprice raised to the height of the absolute, fantasy in the power of eternity.

What are the consequences ?

It is that chance and necessity, despite their apparent or real enmity, are only a duality reducible in the same principle, that of fatalism. Chance is the cause of fatality, necessity its effect.

So that the religion of chance and that of necessity are the same, so that the philosophy of the atheist and the religion of the God of predestination are correlative.

The philosophy of the atheist thus says: There is no God, there are only logical laws, and the harmony of universal laws. Every-

## Second Part. Relative Authority.

### Chapter III.

#### *Sanction of authority.*

XXIV. When there is sin, authority is the punishment. If the crime calls for punishment, it is the authority that gives it. The great sanction of the law is retribution. The commanding word says: "Do this, or you will die." "The punishment, say the laws of Manon," the punishment governs the human race, the punishment keeps watch while all sleeps, the punishment is justice, the punishment is the most powerful of energies. "

Since man is evil and corrupt, can he do anything other than evil? The good is then that it is passive, entirely passive. Being absurd and wicked, he will obey by constraint; of intelligence he must have only to understand the order, of sensitivity, only to feel the lashes.

It doesn't matter to the authority whether you accept it or not; What does the resistance of the captive do to the heavy chain which seals him to the wall? Authority ignores your obedience, like your rebellion; but if you brave it, force will remain with the law, that is to say, you will be crushed and you will learn what is the reason of the saber and the logic of the grape shot.

XXV. Political and civil laws, as de facto authority, will have their de facto sanction. This is why the executioner closed the king's procession. This is why the state is calling for the prison and the guillotine.

In absolute authority, Church and State are brother and sister, and all religions give eternal condemnation as the last reason for their dogma. So much so that the believers, who tied Arnold de Brescia and Michel Servet to the stake and blew the flame there,

said: If it is right for God to burn the heretic throughout all eternity, it is our duty to burn them already in timely manner. The last religious formula is this: Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, or he will send you into the lake of fire and brimstone.

### *Summary.*

XXVI. Man now knows what to expect. The earth is only one of the dark satellites of a dark star, an atom in the luminous dust raised around it by the ten-millionth of those blue, green or red suns, which seek some radiant constellation in the boundless fields of space.

Lost on this earth, which seems so great to him, lost like the infusor in the drop of dew trembling at the end of a straw, what is a man in the peoples of humanity, in the generations of past, present and future?

It is the drop tossed from one wave of the sea to the other, and which swirls between the whitening ridges; and the drop cries out: My life is agitated, it is stormy like the ocean; it speaks of revolutions and historical cycles, as it dies in the course of wave to wave, while it vanishes under the vault of an air bubble.

Your cries of joy and sorrows, O generations without number, are they anything other than the little sizzling sound of foam, of foamy foam that melts and goes away!

XXVII. With respect to authority, man is only one of the forms of nothingness, he has no right but to worship in the dust. His intelligence will never receive any other explanation than: I want it, and it is enough for you! If reason wants to protest against this absolute obedience, it is because the demon of pride is in it; it is that the man who thinks is a depraved animal. If your hand wants to disobey, cut it off and throw it dead and bleeding, as you would throw

the slobbering head of a snake far away! Your submission should have no limits except that of your existence, miserable worm!

For it is not an exterior and passive submission that suffices, it is necessary interior and absolute.

The rights of human personality are not made for the slave, to whom the master owes nothing, not even his life. Whether the master chains him to the posts of his doors, so that he remains there from his youth until his very white old age, or that he has the body of the unfortunate thrown to the fish in his tank, the master is in his law.

The slave is one thing. He must annihilate his individuality in that of the master, he must "obey like the corpse," submission is eternal suicide.

Slave of authority, do you understand?

XXVIII. It follows from the above: That authority is no principle of greatness, beauty, justice or intelligence.

That authority is a fact, and that this fact is that of overwhelming force, the fact of necessity.

Let absolute authority deny relative authority.

That authority denies in man all freedom, all reason and all conscience, and reduce his value to the value of nothingness.