

which nothing we know should lead us to expect. The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical

selves of a man is a Self of the *social* sort, it yet can find its only adequate *Socius* in an ideal world.

William James, *Psychology*, X

20.9 | Heresy and Unbelief

The quotations included in this section divide into two main groups, one dealing with orthodoxy and heresy, the other with that form of unbelief which undermines religion—atheism.

The epithet “atheist” or “infidel” is applied by the members of a religious community to those who deny or do not acknowledge the existence of the divinity worshiped in that community. Thus, for example, Spinoza was anathematized as an atheist by the Jewish community because his affirmation of God, heartfelt and impassioned as it was, involved the denial of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The heretic, in contrast, differs from other members of the religious community to which he belongs by advancing an interpretation of some point in their common faith that they regard as unsound. In the Jewish community, the decisive judgment defining or reaffirming orthodoxy and rejecting a particular heresy was rendered by the Sanhedrin; in the Christian community, by a church council, as, for example, the Council of Nicea in 325 which rejected the Arian heresy and formulated the orthodoxy of the Nicene or Athanasian creed.

Among the Fathers of the Church, Augustine is probably more responsible than any other for the formation of Christian orthodoxy through the definition and rejection of

the many heresies that abounded in the early centuries of Christianity. It would be impossible, within the scope of this book, to exemplify this by quotation from all his antiheretical tracts; but the reader will find a sampling of such polemics in the quotations from Augustine that attack the errors of the Manicheans. The names of other heresies and the disputes over them will be found in Gibbon’s report of this aspect of the development of Christianity within the Roman empire. The quotations from Aquinas and from Luther not only contribute a precise definition of heresy, but also discuss various ways of arguing with heretics and point out the useful service that heretics perform for the religious community that excommunicates them.

It is interesting to note that, in the group of quotations dealing with unbelief and atheism, post-Reformation authors predominate. They are concerned with the problems of religious tolerance and persecution and, in this context, with the treatment to be accorded infidels and atheists.

On both of the main subjects treated here the reader is referred for the discussion of relevant considerations to Section 6.5 on OPINION, BELIEF, AND FAITH and to Section 6.6 ON DOUBT AND SKEPTICISM.

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
Psalms 14:1

2 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

I Corinthians 11:18–19

3 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

Titus 3:9–11

4 I fell in with a sect of men [the Manicheans] talking high-sounding nonsense, carnal and wordy men. The snares of the devil were in their mouths, to trap souls with an arrangement of the syllables of the names of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, our Comforter. These names were always on their lips, but only as sounds and tongue noises; for their heart was empty of the true meaning. They cried out "Truth, truth;" they were forever uttering the word to me, but the thing was nowhere in them; indeed they spoke falsehood not only of You, who are truly Truth, but also of the elements of this world, Your creatures. Concerning these I ought to have passed beyond even the philosophers who spoke truly, for love of You, O my supreme and good Father, Beauty of all things beautiful. O Truth, Truth, how inwardly did the very marrow of my soul pant for You when time and again I heard them sound Your name. But it was all words—words spoken, words written in many huge tomes.

Augustine, Confessions, III, 6

5 Ham . . . who was the middle son of Noah, and, as it were, separated himself from both, and remained between them, neither belonging to the first-fruits of Israel nor to the fullness of the Gentiles, what does he signify but the tribe of heretics, hot with the spirit, not of patience, but of impatience, with which the breasts of heretics are wont to blaze, and with which they disturb the peace of the saints? But even the heretics yield an advantage to those that make proficiency, according to the apostle's saying, "There must also be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Whence, too, it is elsewhere said, "The son that receives instruction will be wise, and he uses the foolish as his servant." For while the hot restlessness of heretics stirs questions about many articles of the Catholic faith, the necessity

of defending them forces us both to investigate them more accurately, to understand them more clearly, and to proclaim them more earnestly; and the question mooted by an adversary becomes the occasion of instruction.

Augustine, City of God, XVI, 2

6 It is believed by some that those who do not abandon the name of Christ, and have been baptized in the Church and have not been cut off by any schism or heresy, no matter in what wickedness they live, not washing it away by penance nor redeeming it through almsgiving, but persevering in it stubbornly up to the last day of this life, are to be saved by fire (a fire made to endure in proportion to the magnitude of their evil deeds) and not to receive the punishment of eternal fire. But those who believe this and still are Catholics seem to me to be led astray by a kind of human benevolence.

Augustine, Enchiridion, XVIII

7 Many heretics abound; and God has permitted them to abound to this end, that we may not be always nourished with milk and remain in senseless infancy. For inasmuch as they have not understood how the divinity of Christ is set forth to our acceptance, they have concluded according to their will: and by not discerning aright, they have brought in most troublesome questions upon catholic believers; and the hearts of believers began to be disturbed and to waver. Then immediately it became a necessity for spiritual men, who had not only read in the Gospel anything respecting the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, but had also understood it, to bring forth the armour of Christ against the armour of the devil, and with all their might to fight in most open conflict for the divinity of Christ against false and deceitful teachers; lest, while they were silent, others might perish.

Augustine, On the Gospel of St. John, XXXVI, 6

8 Unbelievers cannot be said "to believe in a God" as we understand it in relation to the act of faith. For they do not believe that God exists under the conditions that faith determines. Hence they do not truly believe in a God, since . . . to know simple things defectively is not to know them at all.

Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 2, 2

9 To have the faith is not part of human nature, but it is part of human nature that man's mind should not go against his inner instinct, and the outward preaching of the truth. Hence, in this way, unbelief is contrary to nature.

Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 10, 1

10 In disputing about the faith, two things must be observed, one on the part of the disputant, the

other on the part of his hearers. On the part of the disputant, we must consider his intention. For if he were to dispute as though he had doubts about the faith, and did not hold the truth of faith for certain, and as though he intended to probe it with arguments, without doubt he would sin, as being doubtful of the faith and an unbeliever. On the other hand, it is praiseworthy to dispute about the faith in order to confute errors, or even for practice.

On the part of the hearers we must consider whether those who hear the disputation are instructed and firm in the faith, or simple and wavering. As to those who are well instructed and firm in the faith, there can be no danger in disputing about the faith in their presence. But as to simple-minded people, we must make a distinction. For either they are provoked and molested by unbelievers, for instance Jews or heretics, or pagans, who strive to corrupt the faith in them, or else they are not subject to provocation in this matter, as in those countries where there are no unbelievers. In the first case it is necessary to dispute in public about the faith, provided there be those who are equal and adapted to the task of confuting errors, since in this way simple people are strengthened in the faith, and unbelievers are deprived of the opportunity to deceive, while if those who ought to withstand the perverters of the truth of faith were silent, this would tend to strengthen error. Hence Gregory says: "Even as a thoughtless speech gives rise to error, so does an indiscreet silence leave those in error who might have been instructed." On the other hand, in the second case it is dangerous to dispute in public about the faith, in the presence of simple people, whose faith for this very reason is more firm, that they have never heard anything differing from what they believe. Hence it is not expedient for them to hear what unbelievers have to say against the faith.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 10, 7

- 11 There are two ways in which a man may deviate from the rectitude of the Christian faith. First, because he is unwilling to assent to Christ Himself; and such a man has an evil will, so to say, in respect of the very end. This pertains to the species of unbelief in pagans and Jews. Secondly, because, though he intends to assent to Christ, yet he fails in his choice of those things by which he assents to Christ, because he chooses, not what Christ really taught, but the suggestions of his own mind. Therefore, heresy is a species of unbelief pertaining to those who profess the Christian faith, but corrupt its dogmas.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 11, 1

- 12 With regard to heretics two points must be observed: one, on their own side, the other, on the side of the Church. On their own side there is the

sin, by which they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be severed from the world by death. For it is a much graver matter to corrupt the faith which quickens the soul, than to forge money, which supports temporal life. Therefore if forgers of money and other evil-doers are condemned to death at once by the secular authority, much more reason is there for heretics, as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death.

On the part of the Church, however, there is mercy which looks to the conversion of the wanderer, and therefore she condemns not at once, but *after the first and second admonition*.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 11, 3

- 13 I, who was desirous to behold the condition which such a fortress encloses, as soon as I was in, sent my eyes around; and saw, on either hand, a spacious plain full of sorrow and of evil torment. As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates, as at Pola near the Quarnaro gulf, which shuts up Italy and bathes its confines, the sepulchres make all the place uneven: so did they here on every side, only the manner here was bitterer: for amongst the tombs were scattered flames, whereby they were made all over so glowing-hot, that iron more *hot* no craft requires. Their covers were all raised up; and out of them proceeded moans so grievous, that they seemed indeed *the moans* of *spirits* sad and wounded. And I: "Master [Virgil], what are these people who, buried within those chests, make themselves heard by their painful sighs?" And he to me: "[Here] are the Arch-heretics with their followers of every sect; and much more, than thou thinkest, the tombs are laden. Like with like is buried here; and the monuments are more and less hot." Then, after turning to the right hand, we passed between the tortures and the high battlements.

Dante, *Inferno*, IX, 106

- 14 I saw many herds of naked souls, who were all lamenting very miserably; and there seemed imposed upon them a diverse law. Some were lying supine upon the ground; some sitting all crouched up; and others roaming incessantly. Those that moved about were much more numerous; and those that were lying in the torment were fewer, but uttered louder cries of pain. Over all the great sand, falling slowly, rained dilated flakes of fire, like *those* of snow in Alps without a wind. As the flames which Alexander, in those hot regions of India, saw fall upon his host, entire to the ground;

whereat he with his legions took care to tramp the soil, for the fire was more easily extinguished while alone:

so fell the eternal heat, by which the sand was kindled, like tinder under *flint and steel*, redoubling the pain.

Ever restless was the dance of miserable hands, now here, now there, shaking off the fresh burning.

I began: "Master, thou who conquerest all things, save the hard Demons, that came forth against us at the entrance of the gate,

who is that great spirit, who seems to care not for the fire, and lies disdainful and contorted, so that the rain seems not to ripen him?"

And he himself, remarking that I asked my Guide [Virgil] concerning him, exclaimed: "What I was living, that am I dead.

Though Jove weary out his smith, from whom in anger he took the sharp bolt with which on my last day I was transfixed;

and though he weary out the others, one by one, at the black forge in Mongibello, crying: 'Help, help, good Yulcan!'

as he did at the strife of Phlegra; and hurl at me with all his might, yet should he not thereby have joyful vengeance."

Then my Guide spake with a force such as I had not heard before: "O Capaneus! in that thy pride remains unquenched,

thou art punished more: no torture, except thy own raving, would be pain proportioned to thy fury."

Then to me he turned with gentler lip, saying: "That was the one of the seven kings who laid siege to Thebes; and he held, and seems to hold;

God in defiance and prize him lightly; but, as I told him, his revilings are ornaments that well befit his breast."

Dante, *Inferno*, XIV, 19

15 What greater rebellion against God, what greater wickedness, what greater contempt of God is there than not believing his promise? For what is this but to make God a liar or to doubt that he is truthful?—that is, to ascribe truthfulness to one's self but lying and vanity to God? Does not a man who does this deny God and set himself up as an idol in his heart? Then of what good are works done in such wickedness, even if they were the works of angels and apostles? Therefore God has rightly included all things, not under anger or lust, but under unbelief, so that they who imagine that they are fulfilling the law by doing the works of chastity and mercy required by the law (the civil and human virtues) might not be saved. They are included under the sin of unbelief and must either seek mercy or be justly condemned.

Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*

16 Heretics ought to be persuaded by argument, and not by fire; and this was the way of the early Fathers. If it were wise policy to suppress heretics by burning them, then the executioners would be the most learned teachers on earth. We should have no need to study books any longer, for he who could overthrow his fellow by violence would have the right to burn him at the stake.

Luther, *Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality*, III

17 We are brought back to the belief in God either by love or by force. Atheism being a proposition as it were unnatural and monstrous, difficult too and not easy to establish in the human mind, however insolent and unruly it may be, plenty of men have been seen, out of vanity and pride in conceiving opinions that are not common and that reform the world, to affect to profess it outwardly; who, if they are mad enough, are not strong enough nevertheless to have implanted it in their conscience. They will not fail to clasp their hands to heaven if you stick them a good sword-thrust in the chest.

Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 12, Apology for Raymond Sebond

18 This matter of divinity is handled either in form of instruction of truth, or in form of confutation of falsehood. The declinations from religion, besides the privative, which is atheism and the branches thereof, are three; heresies, idolatry, and witchcraft: heresies, when we serve the true God with a false worship; idolatry, when we worship false gods, supposing them to be true; and witchcraft, when we adore false gods, knowing them to be wicked and false.

Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II, XXV, 24

19 I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion: for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity. Nay, even that school which is most accused of atheism doth most demonstrate religion; that is, the school of Leucippus and Democritus and Epicurus. For it is a thousand times more credible, that four mutable elements and one immutable fifth essence, duly and eternally placed, need no God, than that an army of infinite small portions or seeds unplaced should have produced this order and beauty without a divine

marshal. The Scripture saith, *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God*: it is not said, *The fool hath thought in his heart*: so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it, or be persuaded of it. For none deny there is a God but those for whom it maketh that there were no God. It appeareth in nothing more, that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this; that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others.

Bacon, *Of Atheism*

- 20 All that is said by the atheist against the existence of God, always depends either on the fact that we ascribe to God affections which are human, or that we attribute so much strength and wisdom to our minds that we even have the presumption to desire to determine and understand that which God can and ought to do. In this way all that they allege will cause us no difficulty, provided only we remember that we must consider our minds as things which are finite and limited, and God as a Being who is incomprehensible and infinite.

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Pref.

- 21 By denying the existence or providence of God, men may shake off their ease, but not their yoke. But to call this power of God, which extendeth itself not only to man, but also to beasts, and plants, and bodies inanimate, by the name of *kingdom*, is but a metaphorical use of the word. For he only is properly said to reign that governs his subjects by his word and by promise of rewards to those that obey it, and by threatening them with punishment that obey it not. Subjects therefore in the kingdom of God are not bodies inanimate, nor creatures irrational; because they understand no precepts as his: nor atheists, nor they that believe not that God has any care of the actions of mankind; because they acknowledge no word for his, nor have hope of his rewards, or fear of his threatenings. They therefore that believe there is a God that governeth the world, and hath given precepts, and propounded rewards and punishments to mankind, are God's subjects; all the rest are to be understood as enemies.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II, 31

- 22 That Heresies should arise, we have the Prophecie of Christ; but that old ones should be abolished, we hold no prediction.

Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, I, 8

- 23 What reason have [atheists] for saying that we cannot rise from the dead? What is more difficult, to be born or to rise again; that what has never been should be, or that what has been should be again? Is it more difficult to come into existence

than to return to it? Habit makes the one appear easy to us; want of habit makes the other impossible. A popular way of thinking!

Why cannot a virgin bear a child? Does a hen not lay eggs without a cock? What distinguishes these outwardly from others? And who has told us that the hen may not form the germ as well as the cock?

Pascal, *Pensées*, III, 222

- 24 God (and the Apostles), foreseeing that the seeds of pride would make heresies spring up, and being unwilling to give them occasion to arise from correct expressions, has put in Scripture and the prayers of the Church contrary words and sentences to produce their fruit in time.

Pascal, *Pensées*, VIII, 579

- 25 *Chorus of Danites*. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to Men;
Unless there be who think not God at all,
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such Doctrine never was there School,
But the heart of the Fool,
And no man therein Doctor but himself.

Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 293

- 26 Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his Pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.

Milton, *Areopagitica*

- 27 Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when He ascended, and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.

Milton, *Areopagitica*

- 28 Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths,

which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all; besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion whereupon to challenge the privilege of a toleration. As for other practical opinions, though not absolutely free from all error, if they do not tend to establish domination over others, or civil impunity to the Church in which they are taught, there can be no reason why they should not be tolerated.

Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*

29 However clearly we may think this or the other doctrine to be deduced from Scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others as a necessary article of faith because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith, unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed upon us in the same manner, and that we should be compelled to receive and profess all the different and contradictory opinions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabaptists, and other sects which the contrivers of symbols, systems, and confessions are accustomed to deliver to their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the Holy Scripture. I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of those men who think that they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the Holy Ghost, the eternal and infinite wisdom of God.

Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*

30 The disbelief of a divine providence renders a man incapable of holding any publick station: for, since kings avow themselves to be the deputies of Providence, the Lilliputians think nothing can be more absurd, than for a prince to employ such men as disown the authority under which he acteth.

Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, I, 6

31 M. Bayle has pretended to prove that it is better to be an Atheist than an Idolater; that is, in other words, that it is less dangerous to have no religion at all than a bad one. "I had rather," said he, "it should be said of me that I had no existence than that I am a villain." This is only a sophism founded on this, that it is of no importance to the human race to believe that a certain man exists, whereas it is extremely useful for them to believe the existence of a God. From the idea of his non-existence immediately follows that of our independence; or, if we cannot conceive this idea, that of disobedience. To say that religion is not a restraining motive, because it does not always restrain, is equally absurd as to say that the civil laws are not a restraining motive. It is a false way of reasoning against religion to collect, in a large work, a long detail of the evils it has produced if

we do not give at the same time an enumeration of the advantages which have flowed from it. Were I to relate all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy, and from republican government, I might tell of frightful things. Were it of no advantage for subjects to have religion, it would still be of some, if princes had it, and if they whitened with foam the only rein which can restrain those who fear not human laws.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XXIV, 2

32 There is not a greater number of philosophical reasonings, displayed upon any subject, than those, which prove the existence of a Deity, and refute the fallacies of *Atheists*; and yet the most religious philosophers still dispute whether any man can be so blinded as to be a speculative atheist. How shall we reconcile these contradictions? The knights-errant, who wandered about to clear the world of dragons and giants, never entertained the least doubt with regard to the existence of these monsters.

Hume, *Concerning Human Understanding*, XII, 116

33 What conclusion shall we draw from all this? That atheism is a very pernicious monster in those who govern; that it is also pernicious in the persons around statesmen, although their lives may be innocent, because from their cabinets it may pierce right to the statesmen themselves; that if it is not so deadly as fanaticism, it is nearly always fatal to virtue. Let us add especially that there are less atheists to-day than ever, since philosophers have recognized that there is no being vegetating without germ, no germ without a plan, etc., and that wheat comes in no wise from putrefaction.

Some geometers who are not philosophers have rejected final causes, but real philosophers admit them; a catechist proclaims God to the children, and Newton demonstrates Him to the learned.

If there are atheists, whom must one blame, if not the mercenary tyrants of souls, who, making us revolt against their knaveries, force a few weak minds to deny the God whom these monsters dishonour. How many times have the people's leeches brought oppressed citizens to the point of revolting against their king!

Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary: Atheism*

34 Now, it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion. That will make him love his duty; but the dogmas of that religion concern the State and its members only so far as they have reference to morality and to the duties which he who professes them is bound to do to others. Each man may have, over and above, what opinions he pleases, without it being the Sovereign's business to take cognisance of them; for, as the Sovereign has no authority in the other

world, whatever the lot of its subjects may be in the life to come, that is not its business, provided they are good citizens in this life.

There is therefore a purely civil profession of faith of which the Sovereign should fix the articles, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject. While it can compel no one to believe them, it can banish from the State whoever does not believe them—it can banish him, not for impiety, but as an anti-social being, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty. If any one, after publicly recognising these dogmas, behaves as if he does not believe them, let him be punished by death: he has committed the worst of all crimes, that of lying before the law.

Rousseau, *Social Contract*, IV, 8

- 35 *Johnson*. Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency. To say the *magistrate* has this right, is using an inadequate word: it is the *society* for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (May 7, 1773)

- 36 *Johnson*. Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels. I have heard a person, originally a Quaker, but now, I am afraid, a Deist, say, that he did not believe there were, in all England, above two hundred infidels.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Apr. 14, 1775)

- 37 The opinions of the Academies and Epicureans were of a less religious cast; but whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ignorance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a Supreme Ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation, and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects; but the ingenuous youth who, from every part, resorted to Athens, and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed in every school to reject and to despise the religion of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible, that a philosopher should accept, as divine truths, the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity; or, that he should adore, as gods, those imperfect beings whom he must have despised, as men! Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious weapon. We may be well assured, that a writer conversant with the

world would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, II

- 38 It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors, or the followers, of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved: he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XV

- 39 So easily was he [the emperor Constantius] offended by the slightest deviation from his imaginary standard of Christian truth, that he persecuted, with equal zeal, those who defended the *consubstantiality*, those who asserted the *similar substance*, and those who denied the *likeness*, of the Son of God. Three bishops, degraded and banished for those adverse opinions, might possibly meet in the same place of exile; and, according to the difference of their temper, might either pity or insult the blind enthusiasm of their antagonists, whose present sufferings would never be compensated by future happiness.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XXI

- 40 Constantinople was the principal seat and fortress of Arianism; and, in a long interval of forty years, the faith of the princes and prelates who reigned in the capital of the East was rejected in the purer schools of Rome and Alexandria. The archiepiscopal throne of Macedonius, which had been polluted with so much Christian blood, was successively filled by Eudoxus and Damophilus. Their

diocese enjoyed a free importation of vice and error from every province of the empire; the eager pursuit of religious controversy afforded a new occupation to the busy idleness of the metropolis: and we may credit the assertion of an intelligent observer, who describes, with some pleasantry, the effects of their loquacious zeal. "This city," says he, "is full of mechanics and slaves, who are all of them profound theologians, and preach in the shops and in the streets. If you desire a man to change a piece of silver, he informs you wherein the Son differs from the Father; if you ask the price of a loaf, you are told, by way of reply, that the Son is inferior to the Father; and if you inquire whether the bath is ready, the answer is, that the Son was made out of nothing."

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XXVII

- 41 By a second edict he [Leo III] proscribed the existence as well as the use of religious pictures; the churches of Constantinople and the provinces were cleansed from idolatry; the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints were demolished, or a smooth surface of plaster was spread over the walls of the edifice. The sect of the Iconoclasts was supported by the zeal and despotism of six emperors, and the East and West were involved in a noisy conflict of one hundred and twenty years.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XLIX

- 42 The laws of the pious emperors, which seldom touched the lives of less odious heretics, proscribed without mercy or disguise the tenets, the books, and the persons of the Montanists and Manichæans: the books were delivered to the flames; and all who should presume to secrete such writings, or to profess such opinions, were devoted to an ignominious death.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, LIV

- 43 We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts; and that it cannot prevail long.

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

- 44 If, from a practical point of view, the hypothesis of a Supreme and All-sufficient Being is to maintain its validity without opposition, it must be of the highest importance to define this conception in a correct and rigorous manner—as the transcendental conception of a necessary being, to eliminate all phenomenal elements (anthropomorphism in its most extended signification), and at the same time to overflow all contradictory assertions—be they *atheistic*, *deistic*, or *anthropomorphic*. This is of course very easy; as the same arguments which

demonstrated the inability of human reason to affirm the existence of a Supreme Being must be alike sufficient to prove the invalidity of its denial. For it is impossible to gain from the pure speculation of reason demonstration that there exists no Supreme Being, as the ground of all that exists, or that this being possesses none of those properties which we regard as analogical with the dynamical qualities of a thinking being, or that, as the anthropomorphists would have us believe, it is subject to all the limitations which sensibility imposes upon those intelligences which exist in the world of experience.

A Supreme Being is, therefore, for the speculative reason, a mere ideal, though a *faultless* one—a conception which perfects and crowns the system of human cognition, but the objective reality of which can neither be proved nor disproved by pure reason. If this defect is ever supplied by a moral theology, the problematic transcendental theology which has preceded, will have been at least serviceable as demonstrating the mental necessity existing for the conception, by the complete determination of it which it has furnished, and the ceaseless testing of the conclusions of a reason often deceived by sense, and not always in harmony with its own ideas.

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*,
Transcendental Dialectic

- 45 Principle is a better test of heresy than doctrine. Heretics are true to their principles, but change to and fro, backwards and forwards, in opinion; for very opposite doctrines may be exemplifications of the same principle. Thus the Antiochenes and other heretics sometimes were Arians, sometimes Sabellians, sometimes Nestorians, sometimes Monophysites, as if at random, from fidelity to their common principle, that there is no mystery in theology. Thus Calvinists become Unitarians from the principle of private judgment. The doctrines of heresy are accidents and soon run to an end; its principles are everlasting.

Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Pt. II, V, 2

- 46 The path Alyosha chose was a path going in the opposite direction, but he chose it with the same thirst for swift achievement. As soon as he reflected seriously he was convinced of the existence of God and immortality, and at once he instinctively said to himself: "I want to live for immortality, and I will accept no compromise." In the same way, if he had decided that God and immortality did not exist, he would at once have become an atheist and a socialist. For socialism is not merely the labour question, it is before all things the atheistic question, the question of the form taken by atheism to-day, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to heaven from

earth but to set up heaven on earth.

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*,
Pt. I, I, 5

- 47 *Ivan*. "You see, only suppose that there was one such man among all those who desire nothing but filthy material gain—if there's only one like my old Inquisitor, who had himself eaten roots in the desert and made frenzied efforts to subdue his flesh to make himself free and perfect. But yet all his life he loved humanity, and suddenly his eyes were opened, and he saw that it is no great moral blessedness to attain perfection and freedom, if at the same time one gains the conviction that millions of God's creatures have been created as a mockery, that they will never be capable of using their freedom, that these poor rebels can never turn into giants to complete the tower, that it was not for such geese that the great idealist dreamt his dream of harmony. Seeing all that he turned back and joined—the clever people. Surely that could have happened?"

"Joined whom, what clever people?" cried Alyosha, completely carried away. "They have no such great cleverness and no mysteries and secrets. . . . Perhaps nothing but Atheism, that's all their secret. Your Inquisitor does not believe in God, that's his secret!"

"What if it is so! At last you have guessed it. It's perfectly true, it's true that that's the whole secret, but isn't that suffering, at least for a man like that, who has wasted his whole life in the desert and yet could not shake off his incurable love of humanity? In his old age he reached the clear conviction that nothing but the advice of the great dread spirit could build up any tolerable sort of life for the feeble, unruly, 'incomplete, empirical creatures created in just.' And so, convinced of this, he sees that he must follow the counsel of the wise spirit, the dread spirit of death and destruction, and therefore accept lying and deception, and lead men consciously to death and destruction, and yet deceive them all the way so that they may not notice where they are being led; that the poor blind creatures may at least on the way think themselves happy. And note, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man had so fervently believed all his life long. Is not that tragic? And if only one such stood at the head of the whole army 'filled with the lust of power only for the sake of filthy gain?'—would not one such be enough to make a tragedy? More than that, one such standing at the head is enough to create the

actual leading idea of the Roman Church with all its armies and Jesuits, its highest idea. I tell you frankly that I firmly believe that there has always been such a man among those who stood at the head of the movement. Who knows, there may have been some such even among the Roman Popes. Who knows, perhaps the spirit of that accursed old man who loves mankind so obstinately in his own way, is to be found even now in a whole multitude of such old men, existing not by chance but by agreement, as a secret league formed long ago for the guarding of the mystery, to guard it from the weak and the unhappy, so as to make them happy. No doubt it is so, and so it must be indeed."

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*,
Pt. II, V, 5

- 48 *The Visitor*. Oh, blind race of men who have no understanding! As soon as men have all of them denied God—and I believe that period, analogous with geological periods, will come to pass—the old conception of the universe will fall of itself without cannibalism, and, what's more, the old morality, and everything will begin anew. Men will unite to take from life all it can give, but only for joy and happiness in the present world. Man will be lifted up with a spirit of divine Titanic pride and the man-god will appear. From hour to hour extending his conquest of nature infinitely by his will and his science, man will feel such lofty joy from hour to hour in doing it that it will make up for all his old dreams of the joys of heaven.

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*,
Pt. IV, XI, 9

- 49 The existentialist . . . thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an *a priori* Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. Nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be honest, that we must not lie; because the fact is we are on a plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky said, "If God didn't exist, everything would be possible." That is the very starting point of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself.

Sartre, *Existentialism*