

God; it is also in itself exceedingly *unreasonable*.

What is religion? It is God putting Himself in communication with man; the Creator with the creature, the infinite with the finite. There already, without going further, is a mystery; a mystery common to all religions, impenetrable in all religions. If, then, everything which is a mystery offends you, you are arrested on the threshold, I will not say of Christianity, but of every religion; I say, even of that religion which is called *natural*, because it rejects revelation and miracles; for it necessarily implies, at the very least, a connection, a communication of some sort between God and man—the contrary being equivalent to atheism. Your claim prevents you from having any belief; and because you have not been willing to become Christians, it will not allow you to be *Deists*.

"It is of no consequence," they say, "we pass over that difficulty; we suppose between God and us connections we cannot conceive; we admit them because they are necessary to us. But this is the only step we are willing to take: we have already yielded too much to yield more." Say more—say you have granted too much not to have granted much more, not to grant all! You have consented to admit, without comprehending it, that there may be communications from God to you, and from you to God. But consider well what is implied in such a supposition. It implies that you are dependent, and yet free—this you do not comprehend;—it implies that the Spirit of God can make Itself understood by your spirit—this you do not comprehend;—it implies that your prayers may exert an influence on the will of God—this you do not comprehend. It is necessary you should receive all these mysteries, in order to establish with God connections the most vague and superficial, and by the very side of which atheism is placed. And when, by a powerful effort with yourselves, you have done so much as to admit these mysteries, you recoil from those of Christianity! You have accepted the foundation, and refuse the superstructure! You have accepted the principle, and refuse the details! You are right, no doubt, so soon as it is proved to you that the religion which contains these mysteries does not come from God; or rather, that these mysteries contain contradictory ideas. But you are not justified in denying them, for the sole reason that you do not understand them; and the reception you have given to the first kind of mysteries compels you, by the same rule, to receive the others.

This is not all. Not only are mysteries an inseparable part, nay, the very substance of all religion, but it is absolutely impossible that a true religion should not present a great number of mysteries. If it is true, it ought to teach more truths respecting God and Divine things than any other, than all others

together; but each of these truths has a relation to the infinite, and by consequence borders on a mystery. How should it be otherwise in religion, when it is thus in nature itself? Behold God in nature! The more He gives us to contemplate, the more He gives to astonish us. To each creature is attached some mystery. A grain of sand is an abyss! Now, if the manifestation which God has made of Himself in nature suggests to the observer a thousand questions which cannot be answered, how will it be, when to that first revelation, another is added; when God the Creator and Preserver reveals Himself under new aspects as God the Reconciler and Saviour? Shall not mysteries multiply with discoveries? With each new day shall we not see associated a new night? And shall we not purchase each increase of knowledge with an increase of ignorance? Has not the doctrine of grace, so necessary, so consoling, alone opened a profound abyss, into which, for eighteen centuries, rash and restless spirits have been constantly plunging?

It is, then, clearly necessary that Christianity should, more than any other religion, be mysterious, simply because it is so true. Like mountains, which, the higher they are, cast the larger shadows, the Gospel is the more obscure and mysterious on account of its sublimity. After this, will you be indignant that you do not comprehend everything in the Gospel? It would, forsooth, be a truly surprising thing if the ocean could not be held in the hollow of your hand, or uncreated wisdom within the limits of your intelligence! It would be truly unfortunate if a finite being could not embrace the infinite, and that, in the vast assemblage of things there should be some idea beyond its grasp! In other words, it would be truly unfortunate if God Himself should know something that man does not know!

Let us acknowledge, then, how insensate is such a claim when it is made with reference to religion.

But let us also recollect how much, in making such a claim, we shall be in opposition to ourselves; for the submission we dislike in religion, we cherish in a thousand other things. It happens to us every day to admit things we do not understand, and to do so without the least repugnance. The things, the knowledge of which is refused us, are much more numerous than we perhaps think. Few diamonds are perfectly pure; still fewer truths are perfectly clear. The union of our soul with our body is a mystery—our most familiar emotions and affections are a mystery—the action of thought and of will is a mystery—our very existence is a mystery. Why do we admit these various facts? Is it because we understand them? No, certainly, but because they are self-evident, and because they are truths by which we live. In religion, we have no other course.