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BARON D'HOLBACH

A Study of Eighteenth Century Radicalism in France

by

MAX PEARSON CUSHING

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in
the Faculty of Political Science,
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1914

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A une extreme justesse d'esprit il joignait une simplicité de moeurs tout-a-fait antique et patriarcale.

J. A. Naigeon, *Journal de Paris*, le 9 fev. 1789

INTRODUCTION

Diderot, writing to the Princess Dashkoff in 1771, thus analysed the spirit of his century:

Chaque siecle a son esprit qui le caracterise. L'esprit du notre semble etre celui de la liberte. La premiere attaque contre la superstition a ete violente, sans mesure. Une fois que les hommes ont ose d'une maniere quelconque donner l'assaut a la barriere de la religion, cette barriere la plus formidable qui existe comme la plus respectee, il est impossible de s'arreter. Des qu'ils ont tourne des regards menacants contre la majeste du ciel, ils ne manqueront pas le moment d'apres de les diriger contre la souverainete de la terre. Le cable qui tient et comprime l'humanite est forme de deux cordes, l'une ne peut ceder sans que l'autre vienne a rompre.

[Endnote 1:1]

The following study proposes to deal with this attack on religion that preceded and helped to prepare the French Revolution. Similar phenomena are by no means rare in the annals of history; eighteenth-century atheism, however, is of especial interest, standing as it does at the end of a long period of theological and ecclesiastical disintegration and prophesying a reconstruction of society on a purely rational and naturalistic basis. The anti-theistic movement has been so obscured by the less thoroughgoing tendency of deism and by subsequent romanticism that the real issue in the eighteenth century has been largely lost from view. Hence it has seemed fit to center this study about the man who stated the situation with the most unmistakable and uncompromising clearness, and who still occupies a unique though obscure position in the history of thought.

Holbach has been very much neglected by writers on the eighteenth century. He has no biographer. M. Walferdin wrote (in an edition of Diderot's Works, Paris, 1821, Vol. XII p. 115): "Nous nous occupons depuis longtemps a rassembler les materiaux qui doivent servir a venger la memoire du philosophe de la patrie de Leibnitz, et dans l'ouvrage que nous nous proposons de publier sous le titre "D'Holbach juge par ses contemporains" nous esperons faire justement apprecier ce savant si estimable par la profondeur et la variete de

ses connaissances, si precieux a sa famille et a ses amis par la purete et la simplicité de ses moeurs, en qui la vertu etait devenue une habitude et la bienfaisance un besoin." This work has never appeared and M. Tourneux thinks that nothing of it was found among M. Walferdin's papers. [2:2] In 1834 Mr. James Watson published in an English translation of the *Systeme de la Nature*, *A Short Sketch of the Life and the Writings of Baron d'Holbach* by Mr. Julian Hibbert, compiled especially for that edition from Saint Saurin's article in Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* (Paris, 1817, Vol. XX, pp. 460-467), from Barbier's *Dict. des ouvrages anonymes* (Paris, 1822) and from the preface to the Paris edition of the *Systeme de la Nature* (4 vols., 18mo, 1821). This sketch was later published separately (London, 1834, 12mo, pp. 14) but on account of the author's sudden death it was left unfinished and is of no value from the point of view of scholarship. Another attempt to publish something on Holbach was made by Dr. Anthony C. Middleton of Boston in 1857. In the preface to his translation to the *Lettres a Eugenia* he speaks of a "Biographical Memoir of Baron d'Holbach which I am now preparing for the press." If ever published at all this *Memoir* probably came to light in the *Boston Investigator*, a free-thinking magazine published by Josiah P. Mendum, 45 Cornhill, Boston, but it is not to be found. Mention should also be made of the fact that M. Assezat intended to include in a proposed study of Diderot and the philosophical movement, a chapter to be devoted to Holbach and his society; but this work has never appeared. [3:3]

Of the two works bearing Holbach's name as a title, one is a piece of libellous fiction by Mme. de Genlis, *Les Diners du baron d'Holbach* (Paris, 1822, 8vo), the other a romance pure and simple by F. T. Claudon (Paris, 1835, 2 vols., 8vo) called *Le Baron d'Holbach*, the events of which take place largely at his house and in which he plays the role of a minor character. A good account of Holbach, though short and incidental, is to be found in M. Avezac-Lavigne's *Diderot et la Societe du Baron d'Holbach* (Paris, 1875, 8vo), and M. Armand Gaste has a little book entitled *Diderot et le cure de Montchauvet, une Mystification litteraire chez le Baron d'Holbach* (Paris, 1895, 16vo). There are several works which devote a chapter or section to Holbach. [3:4] The French critics and the histories of philosophy contain slight notices; Rosenkranz's "Diderot's Leben" devotes a chapter to Granval, Holbach's country seat, and life there as described by Diderot in his letters to Mlle. Volland; and he is included in such histories of ideas as Soury, J., "Breviaire de l'histoire de Materialisme" (Paris, 1881) and Delvaile, J., *Essai sur l'histoire de l'idee de progres* (Paris, 1910); but nowhere else is there anything more than the merest encyclopedic account, often defective and incorrect.

The sources are in a sense full and reliable for certain phases of his life and literary activity. His own publications, numbering about fifty, form the most important body of source material for the history and development of his ideas. Next in importance are contemporary memoirs and letters including those of Voltaire,

Rousseau, Diderot, Grimm, Morellet, Marmontel, Mme. d'Epinay, Naigeon, Garat, Galiani, Hume, Garrick, Wilkes, Romilly and others; and scattered letters by Holbach himself, largely to his English friends. In addition there is a large body of contemporary hostile criticism of his books, by Voltaire, Frederick II, Castillon, Holland, La Harpe, Delisle de Sales and a host of outraged ecclesiastics, so that one is well informed in regard to the scandal that his books caused at the time. Out of these materials and other scattered documents and notices it is possible to reconstruct--though somewhat defectively--the figure of a man who played an important role in his own day; but whose name has long since lost its significance--even in the ears of scholars. It is at the suggestion of Professor James Harvey Robinson that this reconstruction has been made. If it shall prove of any interest or value he must be credited with the initiation of the idea as well as constant aid in its realization. For rendering possible the necessary investigations, recognition is due to the administration and officers of the Bibliotheque Nationale, the British Museum, the Library of Congress, the Libraries of Columbia and Harvard Universities, Union and Andover Theological Seminaries, and the Public Libraries of Boston and New York.

M. P. C.

NEW YORK CITY,
July, 1914.

CHAPTER I. HOLBACH, THE MAN.

Paul Heinrich Dietrich, or as he is better known, Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d'Holbach, was born in January, 1723, in the little village of Heildesheim (N.W. of Carlsruhe) in the Palatinate. Of his parentage and youth nothing is known except that his father, a rich parvenu, according to Rousseau, [5:5] brought him to Paris at the age of twelve, where he received the greater part of his education. His father died when Holbach was still a young man. It may be doubted if young Holbach inherited his title and estates immediately as there was an uncle "Messire Francois-Adam, Baron d'Holbach, Seigneur de Heeze, Leende et autres Lieux" who lived in the rue Neuve S. Augustin and died in 1753. His funeral was held at Saint-Roch, his parish church, Thursday, September 16th, where he was afterward entombed. [5:6] Holbach was a student in the University of Leyden in 1746 and spent a good deal of time at his uncle's estate at Heeze, a little town in the province of North Brabant (S.E. of Eindhoven). He also traveled and studied in Germany. There are two manuscript letters in the British Museum (Folio 30867, pp. 14, 18, 20) addressed by Holbach to John Wilkes, which throw some light on his

school-days. It is interesting to note that most of Holbach's friends were young Englishmen of whom there were some twenty-five at the University of Leyden at that time. [6:7] Already at the age of twenty-three Holbach was writing very good English, and all his life he was a friend of Englishmen and English ideas. His friendship for Wilkes, then a lad of nineteen, lasted all his life and increased in intimacy and dignity. The two letters following are of interest because they are the only documents we have bearing on Holbach's early manhood. They reveal a certain sympathy and feeling--rather gushing to be sure--quite unlike anything in his later writings, and quite out of line with the supposedly cold temper of a materialist and an atheist.

[Footnote: These letters, contrary to modern usage, are printed with all the peculiarities of eighteenth century orthography. It was felt that they would lose their quaintness and charm if Holbach's somewhat fantastic English were trifled with or his spelling, capitalization and punctuation modernized.]

HOLBACH TO WILKES

HEEZE Aug. 9, 1746

Dearest Friend

I should not have felt by half enough the pleasure your kind letter gave me, If I had words to express it; I never doubted of your friendship, nor I hope do you know me so little as to doubt of mine, but your letter is full of such favorable sentiments to me that I must own I cannot repay them but by renewing to you the entire gift of my heart that has been yours ever since heaven favour'd me with your acquaintance. I need not tell you the sorrow our parting gave me, in vain Philosophy cried aloud nature was still stronger and the philosopher was forced to yield to the friend, even now I feel the wound is not cur'd. Therefore no more of that--_Hope_ is my motto. Telling me you are happy you make me so but in the middle of your happiness you dont forget your friend, What flattering thought to me! Such are the charms of friendship every event is shar'd and nothing nor even the greatest intervals are able to interrupt the happy harmony of truly united minds. I left Leyden about 8 or 10 days after you but before my departure I thought myself obliged to let Mr Dowdenwell know what you told me, he has seen the two letters Mr Johnson had received and I have been mediator of ye peace made betwixt the 2 parties, I don't doubt but you have seen by this time Messrs Bland & Weatherill who were to set out for Engelland the same week I parted with them. When I was leaving Leyden Mr Vernon happen'd to tell me he had a great mind to make a trip to Spa. So my uncles' estate being on ye road I desir'd him to come along with me, he has been here a week and went on afterwards in his journey, at my arrival here, I found that General Count Palfi with an infinite number of military attendants had taken possession of my uncles' house, and that the 16 thousd men lately come from

Germany to strengthen the allies army, commanded by Count Bathiani and that had left ye neighborhood of Breda a few days before and was come to Falkenswert (where you have past in your journey to Spa) one hour from hence. Prince Charles arrived here the same day from Germany to take ye command of the allies, the next Day the whole army amounting to 70thd men went on towards the county of Liege to prevent the French from beseiging Namur, I hear now that the two armies are only one hour from another, so we expect very soon the news of a great battle but not without fear, Count Saxes army being, by all account of hundred ten thoud. men besides. Prince Counti's army of 50 thd. this latter General is now employ'd at the siege of Charleroy. that can't resist a long while, it is a report that the King of France is arrived in his army, I hope this long account will entertain you for want of news papers: Mr. Dowdeswell being left alone of our club at Leyden I Desir'd him to come and spend with me the time of his vacations here, which proposal I hope he will accept and be here next week. What happy triumvirat would be ours if you were to join: but that is impossible at present; however those who cant enjoy reality are fond of feeding their fancies with agreable Dreams and charming pictures; that helps a little to sooth the sorrow of absence and makes one expect with more pati[ence] till fortune allows him to put in execution the cherish'd systems he has been fed upon fore some [time] I shall expect with great many thanks the books you are to send me; it will be for me a dubble pleasure to read them, being of your choice which I value as much as it deserves, and looking at them as upon a new proof of your benevolence, as to those I design'd to get from Paris for you, I heard I could not get them before my uncles' return hither all commerce being stopt by the way betwixt this country and France.

A few days before my departure from Leyden I receiv'd a letter from Mr Freeman from Berlin, he seems vastly pleas'd with our Germany, and chiefly with Hambourg where a beautiful lady has taken in his heart the room of poor Mss. Vitsiavius, my prophesy was just; traveling seems to have alter'd a good deal his melancholy disposition as I may conjecture by his way of writing. He desired his service to you. As to me, Idleness renders me every day more philosopher every passion is languishing within me, I retain but one in a warm degree, viz, friendship in which you share no small part. I took a whim to study a little Physic accordingly I purchased several books in that Way, and my empty hours here are employ'd with them. I am sure your time will be much better employ'd at Alesbury you'll find there a much nobler entertainment Cupid is by far Lovlier than Esculapius, however I shall not envy your happiness, in the Contrary I wish that all your desires be crown'd with success, that a Passion that proves fatal to great many of men be void of sorrow for you, that all the paths of love be spread over with flowers in one Word that you may not address in vain to the charming Mss. M. I am almost tempted to fall in love with that unknown beauty, 't would not be quite like Don Quixotte for your liking to her would be for me a very strong prejudice of her merit, which the poor Knight had not in his love for Dulcinea.

I shall not ask your pardon for the length of this letter I am sure friendship will forgive the time I steal to Love however I cannot

give up so easily a conversation with a true friend with whom I fancy to speak yet in one of those delightfull evening walks at Leyden. It is a dream, I own it, but it is so agreable one to me that nothing but reality could be compared to the pleasure I feel: let me therefore insist a little more upon't and travel with my Letter, we are gone! I think to be at Alesbury! there I see my Dear Wilkes! What a Flurry of Panions! Joy! fear of a second parting! what charming tears! what sincere Kisses!--but time flows and the end of this Love is now as unwelcome to me, as would be to another to be awaken'd in the middle of a Dream wherein he is going to enjoy a beloved mistress; the enchantment ceases, the delightfull images vanish, and nothing is left to me but friendship, which is of all my possessions the fairest, and the surest, I am most sincerely Dear Wilkes

Your affectionate friend and humble servant

DE HOLBACH

Heze the 9th august 1746 N. S.

I shall expect with impatience the letter you are to write me from Alesbury. Will it be here very soon!

HOLBACH TO WILKES

[HEEZE Dec. 3rd. 1746]

Dearest Wilkes

During a little voyage I have made into Germany I have received your charming letter of the 8th. September O. S. the many affairs I have been busy with for these 3 months has hindered me hitherto from returning to you as speedy an answer as I should have done. I know too much your kindness for me to make any farther apology and I hope you are enough acquainted with the sincerety of my friendship towards you to adscribe my fault to forgetfulness or want of gratitude be sure, Dear friend, that such a disposition will allways be unknown to me in regard to you. I don't doubt but you will be by this time returned at London, the winter season being an obstacle to the pleasures you have enjoyed following ye Letter at Alesbury during the last Autumn. I must own I have felt a good deal of pride when you gave me the kind assurance that love has not made you forget an old friend, I need not tell you my disposition. I hope you know it well enough and like my friendship for you has no bounds I want expressions to show it. Mr Dowdeswell has been so good as to let me enjoy his company here in the month of August, and returned to Leyden to pursue his studies in the middle of September. We often wished your company and made sincere libations to you with burgundy and Champagne I had a few weeks there after I set out for Germany where I expected to spend the whole winter but the sudden death of my Uncle's Steward has forced me to come back here to put in order the affairs of this estate, I don't know how long I shall be obliged to stay in the meanwhile I act pretty well the part of a County Squire, id est, hunting, shooting, fishing, walking every day without to lay aside the ever charming conversation of Horace Virgil Homer and

all our noble friends of the Elysian fields. They are allways faithfull to me, with their aid I find very well how to employ my time, but I want in this country a true bosom friend like my dear Wilkes to converse with, but my pretensions are too high, for every abode with such a company would be heaven for me.

I perceive by your last letter that your hopes are very like to succeed by Mss Mead, you are sure that every happines that can befall to you will make me vastly happy. I beseech you therefore to let me know everytime how far you are gone, I take it to be a very good omen for you, that your lovely mistress out of compliance has vouchsafed to learn a harsh high-dutch name, which would otherwise have made her startle, at the very hearing of it. I am very thankful for her kind desire of seeing me in Engelland which I dont wish the less but you know my circumstances enough, to guess that I cannot follow my inclinations. I have not heard hitherto anything about the books you have been so kind as to send me over by the opportunity of a friend. I have wrote about it to Msrs Conrad et Bouwer of Rotterdam, they answered that they were not yet there. Nevertheless I am very much oblided to you for your kindness and wish to find very soon the opportunity of my revenge. Mr Dowderswell complains very much of Mrs Bland and Weatherill, having not heard of them since their departure from Leyden. I desire my compliments to Mr Dyer and all our old acquaintances. Pray be so good as to direct your first letter under the covert of Mr Dowderwell at Ms Alliaume's at Leyden he shall send it to me over immediately, no more at Mr Van Sprang's like you used to do. I wish to know if Mr Lyson since his return to his native country, continues in his peevish cross temper. If you have any news besides I'll be glad to hear them by your next which I expect very soon.

About politicks I cannot tell you anything at present, you have heard enough by this time the fatal battle fought near Liege in 8ber last; everybody has little hopes of the Congress of Breda, the Austrian and Piedmontese are entered into provence, which is not as difficult as to maintain themselves therein, I wish a speedy peace would enable us both to see the rejoicings that will attend the marriage of the Dauphin of France with a Princess of Saxony. I have heard that peace is made between England and Spain, which you ought to know better than I. We fear very much for the next campaign the siege of Maestrich in our neighborhood. These are all the news I know. I'll tell you another that you have known a long while viz. that nobody is with more sincerity My Dear Wilkes

Your faithfull humble Servant and Friend
HOLBACH
Heeze the 3 d Xber 1746 ns

By 1750 Holbach was established in Paris as a young man of the world. His fortune, his learning, his sociability attracted the younger literary set toward him. In 1749 he was already holding his Thursday dinners which later became so famous. Among his early friends were

Diderot, Rousseau and Grimm. With them he took the side of the Italian *Opera buffa* in the famous musical quarrel of 1752, and published two witty brochures ridiculing French music. [12:9] He was an art connoisseur and bought Oudry's *Chienne allaitant ses petits*, the *chef d'oeuvre* of the Salon of 1753. [12:10] During these years he was hard at work at his chosen sciences of chemistry and mineralogy. In 1752 he published in a huge volume in quarto with excellent plates, a translation of Antonio Neri's *Art of Glass making*, and in 1753 a translation of Wallerius' *Mineralogy*. On July 26, 1754, the Academy of Berlin made him a foreign associate in recognition of his scholarly attainments in Natural History, [12:11] and later he was elected to the Academies of St. Petersburg and Mannheim.

All that was now lacking to this brilliant young man was an attractive wife to rule over his salon. His friends urged him to wed, and in 1753 he married Mlle. Basile-Genevieve-Susanne d'Aine, daughter of "Maitre Marius-Jean-Baptiste Nicolas d'Aine, conseiller au Roi en son grand conseil, associe externe de l'Acad. des sciences et belles lettres de Prusse." [12:12] M. d'Aine was also Maitre des Requetes and a man of means. Mme. d'Holbach was a very charming and gracious woman and Holbach's good fortune seemed complete when suddenly Mme. d'Holbach died from a most loathsome and painful disease in the summer of 1754. Holbach was heart-broken and took a trip through the provinces with his friend Grimm, to whom he was much attached, to distract his mind from his grief. He returned in the early winter and the next year (1755) got a special dispensation from the Pope to marry his deceased wife's sister, Mlle. Charlotte-Susanne d'Aine. By her he had four children, two sons and two daughters. The first, Charles-Marius, was born about the middle of August, 1757, and baptized in Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, Aug. 22. He inherited the family title and was a captain in the regiment of the Schomberg-Dragons. [13:13] The first daughter was born towards the end of 1758 and the second about the middle of Jan., 1760. [13:14] The elder married the Marquis de Chatenay and the younger the Marquis de Nolivos, "Captaine au regiment de la Seurre, Dragons." Their Majesties the King and Queen and the Royal Family signed their marriage contract May 27, 1781. [13:15] Of the second son there seem to be no traces. Holbach's mother-in-law, Madame d'Aine, was a very interesting old woman as she is pictured in Diderot's *Memoires*, and there was a brother-in-law, "Messire Marius-Jean-Baptiste-Nicholas d'Aine, chevalier, conseiller du roi en ses conseils, Maitre des requetes honoraire de son hotel, intendant de justice, police, et finances de la generalite de Tours," who lived in rue Saint Dominique, paroisse Saint-Sulpice. There was in Holbach's household for a long time an old Scotch surgeon, a homeless, misanthropic old fellow by the name of Hope, of whom Diderot gives a most interesting account. [14:16] These are the only names we have of the personnel of Holbach's household. His town house was in the rue Royale, butte Saint-Roch. It was here that for an almost unbroken period of forty years he gave his Sunday and Thursday dinners. The latter day was known to the more intimate set of encyclopedists as the *jour du synagogue*. Here the *eglise philosophique* met regularly to discuss its doctrines and publish its propaganda of radicalism.

Holbach had a very pleasant country seat, the chateau of Grandval, now in the arrondissement of Boissy St. Leger at Sucy-en-Brie. It is pleasantly situated in the valley of a little stream, the Morbra, which flows into the Marne. The property was really the estate of Mme. d'Aine who lived with the Holbachs. Here the family and their numerous guests passed the late summer and fall. Here Diderot spent weeks at a time working on the Encyclopedia, dining, and walking on the steep slopes of the Marne with congenial companions. To him we are indebted for our intimate knowledge of Grandval and its inhabitants, their slightest doings and conversations; and as Danou has well said, if we were to wish ourselves back in any past age we should choose with many others the mid-eighteenth century and the charming society of Paris and Grandval. [14:17]

Holbach's life, in common with that of most philosophers, offers no events, except that he came near being killed in the crush and riot in the rue Royale that followed the fire at the Dauphin's wedding in 1770. [15:18] He was never an official personage. His entire life was spent in study, writing and conversation with his friends. He traveled very little; the world came to him, to the *Cafe de l'Europe*, as Abbe Galiani called Paris. From time to time Holbach went to Contrezeville for his gout and once to England to visit David Garrick; but he disliked England very thoroughly and was glad to get back to Paris. The events of his life in so far as there were any, were his relations with people. He knew intimately practically all the great men of his century, except Montesquieu and Voltaire, who were off the stage before his day. [15:19] Holbach's most intimate and life-long friend among the great figures of the century was Diderot, of whom Rousseau said, "A la distance de quelques siecles du moment ou il a vecu, Diderot paraitra un homme prodigieux; on regardera de loin cette tete universelle avec une admiration melee d'etonnement, comme nous regardons aujourd'hui la tete des Platon et des Aristote." [15:20] All his contemporaries agreed that nothing was so charged with divine fire as the conversation of Diderot. Gautherin, in his fine bronze of him on the Place Saint-Germain-des-Pres, seems to have caught the spirit of his talk and has depicted him as he might have sat in the midst of Holbach's society, of which he was the inspiration and the soul. Holbach backed Diderot financially in his great literary and scientific undertaking and provided articles for the Encyclopedia on chemistry and natural science. Diderot had a high opinion of his erudition and said of him, "Quelque systeme que forge mon imagination, je suis sur que mon ami d'Holbach me trouve des faits et des autorites pour le justifier." [16:21] Opinions differ in regard to the intellectual influence of these men upon each other. Diderot was without doubt the greater thinker, but Holbach stated his atheism with far greater clarity and Diderot gave his sanction to it by embellishing Holbach's books with a few eloquent pages of his own. Diderot said to Sir Samuel Romilly in 1781, "Il faut *sabrer* la theologie," [16:22] and died in 1784 in the belief that complete infidelity was the first step toward philosophy. Five years later Holbach was buried by his side in the crypt of the Chapel of the Virgin behind the high altar in Saint-Roch. No tablet marks their tombs, and although repeated

investigations have been made no light has been thrown on the exact position of their burial place. According to Diderot's daughter, Mme. Vandeuil, their entire correspondence has been destroyed or lost. [16:23]

Holbach's relations with Rousseau were less harmonious. The account of their mutual misunderstandings contained in the *_Confessions_*, in a letter by Cerutti in the *_Journal de Paris_* Dec. 2, 1789, and in private letters of Holbach's to Hume, Garrick, and Wilkes, is a long and tiresome tale. The author of *_Eclaircissements relatifs a la publication des confessions de Rousseau..._* (Paris, 1789) blames the *_club holbachique_* for their treatment of Rousseau, but the fault seems to lie on both sides. According to Rousseau's account, Holbach sought his friendship and for a few years he was one of Holbach's society. But, after the success of the *_Devin du Village_* in 1753, the *_holbachiens_* turned against him out of jealousy of his genius as a composer. Visions of a dark plot against him rose before his fevered and sensitive imagination, and after 1756 he left the Society of the Encyclopedists, never to return. Holbach, on the other hand, while admitting rather questionable treatment of Rousseau, never speaks of any personal injury on his part, and bewails the fact that "l'homme le plus eloquent s'est rendu ainsi l'homme le plus anti-litteraire, et l'homme le plus sensible s'est rendu le plus anti-social." [17:24] He did warn Hume against taking him to England, and in a letter to Wilkes predicted the quarrel that took place shortly after. In writing to Garrick [17:25] he says some hard but true things about Rousseau, who on his part never really defamed Holbach but depicted him as the virtuous atheist under the guise of Wolmar in the *_Nouvelle Heloise_*. Their personal incompatibility is best explained on the grounds of the radical differences in their temperaments and types of mind and by the fact that Rousseau was too sensitive to get on with anybody for any great length of time.

Two other great Frenchmen, Buffon and d'Alembert, were for a time members of Holbach's society, but, for reasons that are not altogether clear, gradually withdrew. Grimm suggests that Buffon did not find the young philosophers sufficiently deferential to him and to the authorized powers, and feared for his dignity,--and safety, in their company. D'Alembert, on the other hand, was a recluse by nature, and, after giving up his editorship on the Encyclopedia, easily dropped out of Diderot's society and devoted himself to Mlle. Lespinasse and Mme. Geoffrin. Holbach and Helvetius were life-long friends and spent much time together reading at Helvetius's country place at Vore. After his death in 1774, Holbach frequented Mme. Helvetius' salon where he knew and deeply influenced Volney, Cabanis, de Tracy, and the first generation of the Ideologists who continued his and Helvetius' philosophical doctrines. Among the other Frenchmen of the day who were on intimate relations with Holbach and frequented his salon were La Condamine, Condillac, Condorcet, Turgot, Morellet, Raynal, Grimm, Marmontel, Colardeau, Saurin, Suard, Saint-Lambert, Thomas, Duclos, Chastellux, Boulanger, Darcet, Roux, Rouelle, Barthes, Venel, Leroy, Damilaville, Naigeon, Lagrange and lesser names,--but well known in Paris in the eighteenth

century,--d'Alinville, Chauvelin, Desmahis, Gauffecourt, Margency, de Croismare, de Pezay, Coyer, de Valory, Charnoi, not to mention a host of others.

Among Holbach's most intimate English friends were Hume, Garrick, Wilkes, Sterne, Gibbon, Horace Walpole, Adam Smith, Benjamin Franklin, Dr. Priestley, Lord Shelburne, Gen. Barre, Gen. Clark, Sir James MacDonald, Dr. Gem, Messrs. Stewart, Demster, Fordyce, Fitzmaurice, Foley, etc. Holbach addressed a letter to Hume in 1762, before making his acquaintance, in which he expressed his admiration of his philosophy and the desire to know him personally. [18:26] In 1764 Hume came to Paris as secretary of the British Embassy and immediately called on Holbach and became a regular frequenter of his salon. It was to Holbach that he wrote first on the outbreak of his quarrel with Rousseau and they corresponded at length in regard to the publication of the *Expose succinct*, which was to justify Hume in the eyes of the French. Hume and Holbach had much in common intellectually, although the latter was far more thoroughgoing in his repudiation of Theism.

David Garrick and his wife were frequent visitors at the rue Royale on their trips to Paris where they were very much liked by Holbach's society. Nothing is more cordial or gracious than the compliments passed between them in their subsequent correspondence. There are two published letters from Holbach in Mr. Hedgecock's recent study of Garrick and his French friends, excellent examples of the happy spontaneity and sympathy that were characteristic of French sociability in the eighteenth century. [19:27] Holbach in turn spent several months with Garrick at Hampton.

Holbach's early friendship for Wilkes has already been mentioned. Wilkes spent a great deal of time in Paris on the occasion of his exiles from England and became very intimate with Holbach. They corresponded up to the very end of Holbach's life and there was a constant interchange of friendly offices between them. [19:28] Miss Wilkes, who spent much time in Paris, was a very good friend of Mme. Holbach and Mlle. Helvetius. Adam Smith often dined at Holbach's with Turgot and the economists; Gibbon also found his dinners agreeable except for the dogmatism of the atheists; Walpole resented it also and kept away. Priestley seems to have gotten on very well, although the philosophers found his materialism and unitarianism a trifle inconsistent. It was at Holbach's that Shelburne met Morellet with whom he carried on a long and serious correspondence on economics. There seem to be no details of Holbach's relations with Franklin, who was evidently more assiduous at the salon of Mme. Helvetius whom he desired to marry.

Holbach's best friend among the Italians was Abbe Galiani, secretary of the Neapolitan Embassy, who spent ten years in the salons of Paris. After his return to Naples his longing for Paris led him to a voluminous correspondence with his French friends including Holbach. A few of their letters are extant. Beccaria also came to Paris at the invitation of the translator of his *Crimes and Punishments*,

Abbe Morellet, made on behalf of Holbach and his society. Beccaria and his friend Veri, who accompanied him, had long been admirers of French philosophy, and the Frenchmen found much to admire in Beccaria's book. One *_avocat-general_*, M. Servan of the Parlement of Bordeaux, a friend of Holbach's, tried to put his reforms in practice and shared the fate of most reformers. Holbach was also in correspondence with Beccaria, and one of his letters has been published in M. Landry's recent study of Beccaria.

Among the other Italians whom Holbach befriended were Paulo Frizi, the mathematician; Dr. Gatti; Pincini, the musician; and Mme. Riccoboni, ex-actress and novelist; whose lively correspondence with Garrick whom she met at Holbach's sheds much light on the social relations of the century.

Among the other foreigners who were friends or acquaintances of Holbach were his fellow countrymen, Frederick Melchior Grimm, like himself a naturalized Frenchman and the bosom friend of Diderot; Meister, his collaborator in the *_Literary Correspondence_*; Kohant, a Bohemian musician, composer, of the *_Bergere des Alpes_* and Mme. Holbach's lute-teacher; Baron Gleichen, Comte de Creutz, Danish and Scandinavian diplomats; and a number of German nobles; the hereditary princes of Brunswick and Saxe Gotha, Baron Alaberg, afterwards elector of Mayence, Baron Schomberg and Baron Studitz.

Among the well known women of the century Holbach was most intimate with Mme. d'Epinay, who became a very good friend of Mme. Holbach's and was present at the birth of her first son, and, in her will, left her a portrait by Rembrandt. He was also a friend of Mme. Geoffrin, attended her salon, and knew Mlle. de Lespinasse, Mme. Houderot and most of the important women of the day.

There are excellent sources from which to form an estimate of this man whose house was the social centre of the century. Just after Holbach's death on January 21, 1789, Naigeon, his literary agent, who had lived on terms of the greatest intimacy with him for twenty-four years, wrote a long eulogy which filled the issue of the *_Journal de Paris_* for Feb. 9. There was another letter to the *_Journal_* on Feb. 12. Grimm's *_Correspondance Litteraire_* for March contains a long account of him by Meister, and there are other notices in contemporary memoirs such as Morellet's and Marmontel's. All these accounts agree in picturing him as the most admirable of men.

It must be remembered that Holbach always enjoyed what was held to be a considerable fortune in his day. From his estates in Westphalia he had a yearly income of 60,000 *_livres_* which he spent in entertaining. This freedom from economic pressure gave him leisure to devote his time to his chosen intellectual pursuits and to his friends. He was a universally learned man. He knew French, German, English, Italian and Latin extremely well and had a fine private library of about three thousand works often of several volumes each, in these languages and in Greek and Hebrew. The catalogue of this library was published by Debure in 1789. It would be difficult to imagine a more

comprehensive and complete collection of its size. He had also a rich collection of drawings by the best masters, fine pictures of which he was a connoisseur, bronzes, marbles, porcelains and a natural history cabinet, so in vogue in those days, containing some very valuable specimens. He was one of the most learned men of his day in natural science, especially chemistry and mineralogy, and to his translations from the best German scientific works is largely due the spread of scientific learning in France in the eighteenth century. Holbach was also very widely read in English theology and philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and derived his anti-theological inspiration from these two sources. To this vast fund of learning, he joined an extreme modesty and simplicity. He sought no academic honors, published all his works anonymously, and, had it not been for the pleasure he took in communicating his ideas to his friends, no one would have suspected his great erudition. He had an extraordinary memory and the reputation of never forgetting anything of interest. This plenitude of information, coupled with his easy and pleasant manner of talking, made his society much sought after. Naigeon said of him (in his preface to the works of Lagrange):

Personne n'était plus communicatif que M. le baron d'Holbach; personne ne prenait aux progrès de la raison un intérêt plus vif, plus sincère, et ne s'occupait avec plus de zèle et l'activité des moyens de les accélérer.

Egalement versé dans la plupart des matières sur lesquelles il importe le plus à des êtres raisonnables d'avoir une opinion arrêtée, M. le baron d'Holbach portait dans leur discussion un jugement sain, une logique sévère, et une analyse exacte et précise. Quelque fut l'objet de ses entretiens avec ses amis, ou même avec des indifférents, tels qu'en offrent plus ou moins toutes les sociétés; il inspirait sans effort à ceux qui l'écoutaient l'enthousiasme de l'art ou de la science dont il parlait; et on ne le quittait jamais sans regretter de n'avoir pas cultivé la branche particulière de connaissances qui avait fait le sujet de la conversation, sans désirer d'être plus instruit, plus éclairé, et surtout sans admirer la clarté, la justesse de son esprit, et l'ordre dans lequel il savait présenter ses idées.

This virtue of communicativeness, of sociabilité, Holbach carried into all the relations of life. He was always glad to lend or give his books to anyone who could make use of them. "Je suis riche," he used to say, "mais je ne vois dans la fortune qu'un instrument de plus pour opérer le bien plus promptement et plus efficacement." In fact Holbach's whole principle of life and action was to increase the store of human well being. And he did this without any religious motive whatsoever. As Julie says of Wolmar in La Nouvelle Héloïse, "Il fait le bien sans espoir de récompense, il est plus vertueux, plus désintéressé que nous." There are many recorded instances of Holbach's gracious benevolence. As he said to Helvetius, "Vous êtes brouillé avec tous ceux que vous avez obligé, mais j'ai gardé tous mes amis." Holbach had the faculty of attaching people to him. Diderot tells how at the Salon of 1753 after Holbach had bought Oudry's famous picture, all the collectors who had passed it

by came to him and offered him twice what he paid for it. Holbach went to find the artist to ask him permission to cede the picture to his profit, but Oudry refused, saying that he was only too happy that his best work belonged to the man who was the first to appreciate it. Instances of Holbach's liberality to Kohant, a poor musician, and to Suard, a poor literary man, are to be found in the pages of Diderot and Meister, and his constant generosity to his friends is a commonplace in their Memoirs and Correspondence. Only Rousseau was ungrateful enough to complain that Holbach's free-handed gifts insulted his poverty. His kindness to Lagrange, a young literary man whom he rescued from want, has been well told by M. Naigeon in the preface to the works of Lagrange (p. xviii).

But perhaps the most touching instances of Holbach's benevolence are his relations with the peasants of Contrexeville, one of which was published in the *Journal de Lecture*, 1775, the other in an anonymous letter to the *Journal de Paris*, Feb. 12, 1789. The first concerns the reconciliation of two old peasants who, not wanting to go to court, brought their differences to their respected friend for a settlement. Nothing is more simple and beautiful than this homely tale as told in a letter of Holbach's to a friend of his. The second, which John Wilkes said ought to be written in letters of gold, deserves to be reproduced as a whole.

L'eloge funebre que M. Naigeon a consacre a la memoire de M. le Baron d'Holbach suffit pour donner une idee juste de ses lumieres, mais le hasard m'a mis a portee de les juger encore mieux. J'ai vu M. le Baron d'Holbach dans deux voyages que j'ai faits aux eaux de Contrexeville. S'occuper de sa souffrance et de sa guerison, c'est le soin de chaque malade. M. le Baron d'Holbach devenait le medecin, l'ami, le consolateur de quiconque venait aux eaux et il semblait bien moins occupe de ses infirmités que de celles des autres. Lorsque des malades indigens manquaient de secours, ou pecuniaires ou curatifs, il les leur procurait avec un plaisir qui lui faisait plus de bien que les eaux. Je me promenais un soir avec lui sur une hauteur couverte d'un massif de bois qui fait perspective de loin et pres duquel s'eleve un petit Hermitage. La, demeure un cenobite qui n'a de revenu que les aumones de ceux dont il recoit les visites. Nous acquittames chacun notre dette hospitaliere. En prenant conge de l'Hermitage, M. le Baron d'Holbach me dit de le preceder un instant et qu'il allait me suivre. Je le precedai, et comme il ne me suivait pas je m'arretai, pour l'attendre sur un tertre exhausse d'ou l'on decouvre tout le pays. Je contemplais le canton que je dominais, plonge dans une douce reverie. J'en fus tire par des cris et je me retournai vers l'endroit d'ou ils partaient. Je vis M. le Baron d'Holbach environne d'une vieille femme et de deux villageois, l'un vieux comme elle et l'autre jeune. Tous trois, les larmes aux yeux, l'embrassaient hautement. Allez vous-en donc, s'ecrait M. le Baron d'Holbach; laissez moi, on m'attend, ne me suivez pas, adieu; je reviendrai l'annee prochaine. En me voyant arriver vers eux, les trois personnes reconnaissantes disparurent. Je lui demandai le sujet de tant de benedictions. Ce jeune paysan que vous avez vu s'etait engage, j'ai obtenu de son colonel sa liberte en payant les

cents ecus prescrits par l'ordonnance. Il est amoureux d'une jeune paysanne aussi pauvre que lui, je viens d'acheter pour eux un petit bien qui m'a coute huit cent francs. Le vieux pere est perclus, aux deux bras, de rhumatismes, je lui ai fourni trois boites du baume des Valdejeots, si estime en ce pays-ci. La vieille mere est sujette a des maux d'estomac, et je lui ai apporte un pot de confection d'hyacinthe. Ils travaillaient dans le champ, voisin du bois, je suis alle les voir tandis que vous marchiez en avant. Ils m'ont suivi malgre moi. Ne parlez de cela a personne. On dirait que je veux faire le genereux et le bon philosophe, mais je ne suis que humain, et mes charites sont la plus agreable depense de mes voyages.

This humanity of Holbach's is the very keynote of his character and of his intellectual life as well. As M. Walferdin has said, the denial of the supernatural was for him the base of all virtue, and resting on this principle, he exemplified social qualities that do the greatest honor to human nature. He and Madame Holbach are the only conspicuous examples of conjugal fidelity and happiness among all the people that one has occasion to mention in a study of the intellectual and literary circles of the eighteenth century. They were devoted to each other, to their children and to their friends. Considering the traits of Holbach's character that have been cited, there can scarcely be two opinions in regard to completeness with which he realized his ideal of humanity and sociability. M. Naigeon has well summed up in a few words Holbach's relation to the only duties that he recognized, "He was a good husband, a good father and a good friend."

CHAPTER II. HOLBACH'S WORKS.

Holbach's published works, with the exception of a few scattered ones, may be divided into three classes, viz., translations of German scientific works, translations of English deistical writings, and his own works on theology, philosophy, politics and morals. Those which fall into none of these categories can be dealt with very summarily. They are:

1. Two pamphlets on the musical dispute of 1752; *Lettre a une dame d'un certain age sur l'etat present de l'Opera*, (8vo, pp. 11) and *Arret rendu a l'amphitheatre de l'Opera*, (8vo, pp. 16,) both directed against French music and in line with Grimm's *Petit Prophete* and Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique francaise*.
2. A translation in prose of Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* (Paris, 1759, 8vo).
3. A translation of Swift's *History of the Reign of Queen Anne* in collaboration with M. Eidous (Amsterdam, 1765, 12mo, pp. xxiv + 416).
4. Translations of an *Ode on Human Life* and a *Hymn to the Sun*

in the *Varietes litteraires* (1768).

5. Articles on natural science in the *Encyclopedie* and article *Prononciation des langues* in the *Dictionnaire de Grammaire* of the *Encyclopedie methodique*.

6. Translation of Wallerius' *Agriculture reduced to its true principles* (Paris, 1774, 12mo).

7. Two *Faceties philosophiques* published in Grimm's *Correspondence Litteraire*. *L'Abbe et le Rabbin*, and *Essai sur l'art de ramper, a l'usage des courtisans*.

8. Parts of Raynal's *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes*.

9. Notes to Lagrange's *Vie de Seneque*.

Holbach's translations of German scientific works are as follows:
(Complete titles to be found in Bibliography, Pt. I.)

1. *Art de la Verrerie de Neri, Merret, et Kunckel* (Paris, Durand, 1752). Original work in Italian. Latin translation by Christopher Merret. German translation by J. Kunckel of Loewenstern. Holbach's translation comprises the seven books of Antonio Neri, Merret's notes on Neri, Kunckel's observations on both these authors, his own experiments and others relative to glass-making. The translation was dedicated to Malesherbes who had desired to see the best German scientific works published in French. In his *Preface du Traducteur* Holbach writes:

L'envie de me rendre utile, dont tout citoyen doit etre anime, m'a fait entreprendre l'ouvrage que je presente au Public. S'il a le bonheur de meriter son approbation, quoiqu'il y ait peu de gloire attachee au travail ingrat et fastidieux d'un Traducteur, je me determinerai a donner les meilleurs ouvrages allemands, sur l'Histoire Naturelle, la Mineralogie, la Metallurgie et la Chymie. Tout le monde sait que l'Allemagne possede en ce genre des tresors qui ont ete jusqu'ici comme enfouis pour la France.

2. *Mineralogie ou Description generale du regne mineral* par J. G. Wallerius (Paris, Durand, 1753) followed by *Hydrologie* by the same author. Second edition, Paris, Herrissant, 1759. Originally in Swedish (Wallerius was a professor of chemistry in the University of Upsala). German translation by J. D. Denso, Professor of Chemistry, Stargard, Pomerania. Holbach's translation was made from the German edition which Wallerius considered preferable to the Swedish. He was assisted by Bernard de Jussieu and Rouelle, and the work was dedicated to a friend and co-worker in the natural sciences, Monsieur d'Arclais de Montamy.

3. *Introduction a la Mineralogie... oeuvre posthume de M. J. F. Henckel*, Paris, Cavalier, 1756, first published under title

Henckelius in Mineralogia redivivus, Dresden, 1747, by his pupil, M. Stephani, as an outline of his lectures. Holbach's translation made from a German edition, corrected, with notes on new discoveries added.

4. _Chimie metallurgique... par M. C. Gellert_. Paris, Briasson, 1758, translated earlier. Approbation May 1, 1753, Privilege Dec. 21, 1754. Originally a text written by Gellert for four artillery officers whom the King of Sardinia sent to Freyburg to learn mining-engineering.

5. _Traites de physique, d'histoire naturelle, de mineralogy et de metallurgie_. Paris, Herrissant, 1759, by J. G. Lehmann, three vols. I. L'Art des Mines, II. Traite de la formation des metaux, III. Essai d'une histoire naturelle des couches de la terre. In his preface to the third volume Holbach has some interesting remarks about the deluge, the irony of which seems to have escaped the royal censor, Millet, _Docteur en Theologie_.

"La description si precise et si detaillee que Moise fait du Deluge dans la Genese, ayant une autorite infaillible, puis qu'elle n'est autre que celle de Dieu meme, nous rend certains de la realite et de l'universalite de ce chatiment terrible. Il s'agit simplement d'examiner si les naturalistes, tels que Woodward, Schenchzer, Buttner et M. Lehmann lui-meme ne se sont points trompes, lorsqu'ils ont attribue a cet evenement seul la formation des couches de la terre et lorsqu'ils s'en sont servis pour expliquer l'etat actuel de notre globe. Il semble que rien ne doit nous empecher d'agiter cette question; l'Ecriture sainte se contente de nous apprendre la voie miraculeuse dont Dieu s'est servi pour punir les crimes du genre humain; elle ne dit rien qui puisse limiter les sentiments des naturalistes sur les autres effets physiques que le deluge a pu produire. C'est une matiere qu'elle paroît avoir abandonnee aux disputes des hommes." He then proceeds to question whether the deluge could have produced the results attributed to it and argues against catastrophism which, it must be remembered, was the received geological doctrine down to the days of Lyell. "Les causes les plus simples sont capables de produire au bout des siecles les effets les plus grands, surtout lorsqu'elles agissent incessamment; et nous voyons toutes ces causes reunies agir perpetuellement sous nos yeux. Concluons, donc, de tout ce qui precede, que le deluge, seul et les feux souterrains seuls ne suffisent point pour expliquer la formation des couches de la terre. On risquera toujours de se tromper, lorsque par l'envie de simplifier on voudra deriver tous les phenomenes de la nature d'une seule et unique cause."

6. _Pyritologie_ by J. F. Henkel, Paris, Herrissant, 1760, a large volume in quarto, translated by Holbach. It contains _Flora Saturnisans_ (translated by M. Charas and reviewed by M. Roux), Henkel's _Opuscules Mineralogiques_ and other treatises. Original editions: _Pyritologia_, Leipzig, 1725, 1754; _Flora Saturnisans_, Leipzig, 1721;

De Appropriatione Chymica, Dresden, 1727, and _De Lapidum origine_, Dresden, 1734, translated into German, with excellent notes, Dresden, 1744, by M. C. F. Zimmermann, a pupil of M. Henkel. Holbach's translations seem to have been well received because he writes in this preface: "Je m'estimerai heureux si mon travail peut contribuer a entretenir et augmenter le gout universel qu'on a concu pour le saine physique."

7. _Oeuvres metallurgiques_ de M. J. C. Orschall, Paris, Hardy, 1760. Orschall still accepted the old alchemist tradition but was sound in practice and was the best authority on copper. Holbach does not attempt to justify his physics which was that of the preceding century. Orschall was held in high esteem by Henckel and Stahl.

8. _Recueil des memoires des Academies d'Upsal et de Stockholm_, Paris, Didot, 1764. These records of experiments made in the Royal Laboratories of Sweden, founded in 1683 by Charles XI, had already been translated into German and English. Holbach's translation was made from the German and Latin. He promises further treatises on Agriculture, Natural History and Medicine.

9. _Traite du Soufre_ by G. E. Stahl, Paris, Didot, 1766. In speaking of Stahl's theories Holbach says: "Il ne faut pas croire que ces connaissances soient des verites steriles propres seulement a satisfaire une vaine curiosite, elles ont leur application aux travaux de la metallurgie qui leur doivent la perfection ou on les a portes depuis quelques temps." Holbach understood very clearly the utility of science in his scheme of increasing the store of human well-being, and would doubtless have translated other useful works had not other interests prevented. There is a MSS. note of his in the Bibliotheque Nationale to M. Malesherbes, then Administrateur de la Librairie Royale; suggesting other German treatises that might well be translated. (MSS. 22194).

HOLBACH TO MALESHERBES

Monsieur

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer ci-joint la liste des ouvrages dont M. Liege fils pourrait entreprendre la traduction. Je n'en connais actuellement point d'autres qui meritent l'attention du public. M. Macquer m'a ecrit une lettre qui a pour objet les memes choses dont vous m'avez fait l'honneur de me parler, et je lui fais la meme reponse.

J'ai l'honneur d'etre avec respect, Monsieur,

Votre tres obeissant serviteur
D'HOLBACH
a Paris ce 6 d'avril 1761

The list of books was as follows:

1. Johann Kunckel's *„Laboratorium Chymicum“*, 8vo.
2. Georg Ernest Stahl's *„Commentary on Becher's Metallurgy“*, 8vo.
3. *„Concordantia Chymica Becheri“*, 40vo, published by Stahl.
4. *„Cadmologia, or the Natural History of Cobalt“*, by J. G. Lehmann, Berlin, 1760, 4 deg..

After 1760 Holbach became interested in another line of intellectual activity, namely the writing and translation of anti-religious literature. His first book of this sort really appeared in 1761 although no copies bear this date. From 1767 on however he published a great many works of this character. It is convenient to deal first with his translations of English deistical writers. They are in chronological order.

1. *„Esprit du clerge, ou le Christianisme primitif venge des entreprises et des exces de nos Pretres modernes“*. Londres (Amsterdam), 1767. This book appeared in England in 1720 under the title of *„The Independent Whig“*; its author was Thomas Gordon (known through his Commentaries on Sallust and Tacitus) who wrote in collaboration with John Trenchard. The book was partially rewritten by Holbach and then touched up by Naigeon, who, according to a manuscript note by his brother, "atheised it as much as possible." It was sold with great secrecy and at a high price-- a reward which the colporters demanded for the risk they ran in peddling seditious literature. The book was a violent attack on the spirit of domination which characterized the Christian priesthood at that time.

2. *„De L'imposture sacerdotale, ou Recueil de Pieces sur le clerge“*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1767. Another edition 1772 under title *„De la Monstruosite pontificale“* etc.

Contains translations of various pamphlets including Davisson, *„A true picture of Popery“*; Brown, *„Popery a Craft“*, London 1735; Gordon, *„Apology for the danger of the church“*, 1719; Gordon, *„The Creed of an Independent Whig“*, 1720.

3. *„Examen des Propheties qui servent de fondement a la religion Chretienne“*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. Translation of Anthony Collins, *„A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion“*, London, 1724. Contains also *„The Scheme of literal Prophecy considered“*, 1727, also by Collins in answer to the works of Clarke, Sherlock, Chandler, Sykes, and especially to Whiston's *„Essay towards restoring the text of the Old Testament“*, one of the thirty-five works directed against Collins' original *„Discourse“*. Copies of this work have become very rare.

4. *„David, ou l'histoire de l'homme selon le coeur de Dieu“*.

Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. This work appeared in England in 1761 and is attributed to Peter Annet, also to John Noorthook. Some English eulogists of George II, Messrs. Chandler, Palmer and others, had likened their late King to David, "the man after God's own heart." The deists, struck by the absurdity of the comparison, proceeded to relate all the scandalous facts they could find recorded of David, and by clever distortions painted him as the most execrable of Kings, in a work entitled *David or the Man after God's Own Heart*, which formed the basis of Holbach's translation.

5. *Les pretres demasques ou des iniquites du clerge chretien*. Londres, 1768. Translation of four discourses published under the title *The Ax laid to the root of Christian Priestcraft by a layman*, London, T. Cooper, 1742. A rare volume.

6. *Lettres philosophiques...* Londres (Amsterdam, 1768). Translation of J. Toland's *Letters to Serena*, London, 1704. The book, which had become very rare in Holbach's time, had caused a great scandal at the time of its publication and was much sought after by collectors. It contains five letters, the first three of which are by Toland, the other two and the preface by Holbach and Naigeon. The matters treated are, the origin of prejudices, the dogma of the immortality of the soul, idolatry, superstition, the system of Spinoza and the origin of movement in matter.

Diderot said of these works, in writing to Mlle. Volland Nov. 22, 1768 (*Oeuvres*, Vol. XVIII, p. 308): "Il pleut des bombes dans la maison du Seigneur. Je tremble toujours que quelqu'un de ces temeraires artilleurs-la ne s'en trouve mal. Ce sont les *Lettres philosophiques* traduites, ou supposees traduites, de l'anglais de Toland; c'est *l'Examen des propheties*; c'est la *Vie de David ou de l'homme selon la coeur de Dieu*, ce sont mille diables dechaines.--Ah! Madame de Blacy, je crains bien que le Fils de l'Homme ne soit a la porte; que la venue d'Elie ne soit proche, et que nous ne touchions au regne de l'Anti-christ. Tous les jours, quand je me leve, je regarde par ma fenetre, si la grande prostituee de Babylone ne se promene point deja dans les rues avec sa grande coupe a la main et s'il ne se fait aucun des signes predits dans le firmament."

7. *De la Cruaute religieuse*, Londres (Amsterdam). *Considerations upon war, upon cruelty in general and religious cruelty in particular*, London, printed for Thomas Hope, 1761.

8. *Dissertation critique sur les tourmens de l'enfer* printed in an original work, *L'Enfer detruit*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1769. A translation of Whitefoot's *The Torments of Hell, the foundation and pillars thereof discover'd, search'd, shaken and remov'd*. London, 1658.

9. In the *_Recueil philosophique_* edited by Naigeon, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770.

I. Dissertation sur l'immortalite de l'ame. Translated from Hume.

II. Dissertation sur le suicide (Hume).

III. Extrait d'un livre Anglais qui a pour titre le Christianisme aussi ancien que le monde. (Tindal, *Christianity as old as Creation.*)

10. *_Esprit de Judaisme, ou Examen raisonne de la Loi de Moysse_*. Londres (Amsterdam), 1770 (1769), translated from Anthony Collins. With the exception of some of Holbach's own works this is one of the fiercest denunciations of Judaism and Christianity to be found in print. In fact, it is very much in the style of Holbach's anti-religious works and shows beyond a doubt that Holbach derived his inspiration from Collins and the more radical of the English school. The volume has become exceedingly rare.

After outlining the history of Judaism the book ends thus:

Ose, donc enfin, o Europe! secouer le joug insupportable des prejuges qui t'affligent. Laisse a des Hebreux stupides, a des frenetiques imbeciles, a des Asiatiques laches et degrades, ces superstitions aussi avilissantes qu'insensees: elles ne sont point faites pour les habitans de ton climat. Occupe-toi du soin de perfectionner tes gouvernemens, de corriger tes lois, de reformer tes abus, de regler tes moeurs, et ferme pour toujours les yeux a ces vraies chimeres, qui depuis tant de siecles n'ont servi qu'a retarder tes progres vers la science veritable et a t'ecarter de la route du bonheur.

11. *_Examen critique de la vie et des ouvrages de Saint Paul_*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770. A free translation of Peter Annet's *_History and character of St. Paul examined_*, written in answer to Lyttelton. New edition 1790 and translated back into English "from the French of Boulanger," London, R. Carlile, 1823. A rather unsympathetic account, but with flashes of real insight into "le systeme religieux des Chretiens dont S. Paul fut evidemment le veritable architecte." (Epitre dedicatoire.)

Annet said of Paul's type of man "l'enthousiaste s'enivre, pour l'ainsi dire, de son propre vin, il se persuade que la cause de ses passions est la cause de Dieu (p. 72), mais quelque violent qu'ait pu etre l'enthousiasme de S. Paul, il sentait tres bien que la doctrine qu'il prechait devait paraitre bizarre et insensee a des etres raisonnables" (p. 141).

12. *_De la nature humaine, ou Exposition des facultes, des actions et des passions de l'ame_*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1772. (Thomas Hobbes.) Reprinted in a French Edition of Hobbes' works by Holbach and Sorbiere, 1787. Appeared first in English in 1640, omitted in a Latin Edition of Hobbes printed in Amsterdam. In spite of its brevity, Holbach considered this one of Hobbes' most important and luminous works.

13. *_Discours sur les Miracles de Jesus Christ_* (Amsterdam, 1780?). Translated from Woolston, whom Holbach admired very much for his uncompromising attitude toward truth. He suffered fines and imprisonments, but would not give up the privilege of writing as he pleased. The present discourse was the cause of a quarrel with his friend Whiston. He died Jan. 27, 1733, "avec beaucoup de fermete... il se ferma les yeux et la bouche de ses propres mains, et rendit l'esprit." This work exists in a manuscript book of 187 pages, written very fine, in the Bibliotheque Nationale (Mss. francais 15224) and was current in France long before 1780. In fact it is mentioned by Grimm before 1770, but the dictionaries (Barber, Querard) generally date it from 1780.

Before turning to Holbach's original works mention should be made of a very interesting and extraordinary book that he brought to light, retouched, and later used as a kind of shield against the attacks of the parliaments upon his own works.

In 1766 he published a work entitled *_L'Antiquite devoilee par ses usages, ou Examen critique des principales Opinions, Ceremonies et Institutions religieuses et politiques des differens Peuples de la Terre_*. Par feu M. Boulanger, Amsterdam, 1766. This is a work based on an original manuscript by Boulanger, who died in 1759, preceded by an excellent letter on him by Diderot, published also in the *_Gazette Litteraire_*.

The use made by Holbach of Boulanger's name makes it necessary to consider for a moment this almost forgotten writer. Nicholas Antoine Boulanger was born in 1722. As a child he showed so little aptitude for study that later his teachers could scarcely believe that he had turned out to be a really learned man. As Diderot observes, "ces exemples d'enfans, rendus ineptes entre les mains des Pedans qui les abrutissent en depit de la nature la plus heureuse, ne sont pas rares, cependant ils surprennent toujours" (p. 1). Boulanger studied mathematics and architecture, became an engineer and was employed by the government as inspector of bridges and highways. He passed a busy life in exacting outdoor work but at the same time his active intellect played over a large range of human interests. He became especially concerned with historical origins and set himself to learn Latin and Greek that he might get at the sources. Not satisfied that he had come to the root of the matter he learned Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew and Chaldean. Diderot says "Il lisait et etudiait partout, je l'ai moi-meme rencontre sur les grandes routes avec un auteur rabinnique a la main." He made a *_mappemonde_* in which the globe is divided in two hemispheres, one occupied by the continents, the other by the oceans, and by a singular coincidence he found that the meridian of the continental hemisphere passed through Paris. Some such rearrangement of hemispheres is one of the commonplaces of modern geography. He furnished such articles as, *_Deluge, Corvee, Societe_* for the Encyclopedia and wrote several large and extremely learned books, among them *_Recherches sur l'origine du Despotisme oriental_* and *_Antiquite devoilee_*. He died from overwork at the age of thirty-seven.

Boulanger's ideas on philosophy, mythology, anthropology and history are of extraordinary interest today. Diderot relates his saying--"Que si la philosophie avait trouve tant d'obstacles parmi nous c'etait qu'on avait commence par ou il aurait fallu finir, par des maximes abstraites, des raisonnemens generaux, des reflexions subtiles qui ont revolte par leur etrangete et leur hardiesse et qu'on aurait admises sans peine si elles avaient ete precedees de l'histoire des faits." He carried over this inductive method into realm of history, which he thought had been approached from the wrong side, i.e., the metaphysical, "par consulter les lumieres de la raison" (p. 8). He continues, "j'ai pense qu'il devait y avoir quelques circonstances _particulieres_. Un fait et non une speculation metaphysique m'a toujours semble devoir etre et tribut naturel et necessaire de l'histoire." Curiously enough the central fact in history appeared to Boulanger to be the deluge, and on the basis of it he attempted to interpret the _Kulturgeschichte_ of humanity. It is a bit unfortunate that he took the deluge quite as literally as he did; his idea, however, is obviously the influence of environmental pressure on the changing beliefs and practices of mankind. Under the spell of this new point of view, he writes, "Ce qu'on appelle l'histoire n'en est que la partie la plus ingrate, la plus uniforme, la plus inutile, quoi qu'elle soit la plus connue. La veritable histoire est couverte par le voile des temps" (p. 7). Boulanger however was not to be daunted and on the firm foundation of the fact of some ancient and universal catastrophe, as recorded on the surface of the earth and in human mythology, he proceeds to inquire into the moral effects of the changes in the physical environment back to which if possible the history of antiquity must be traced. Man's defeat in his struggle with the elements made him religious, _hinc prima mali labes_. "Son premier pas fut un faux pas, sa premiere maxime fut une erreur" (p. 4 sq). But it was not his fault nor has time repaired the evil moral effects of that early catastrophe. "Les grandes revolutions physiques de notre globe sont les veritables epoques de l'histoire des nations " (p. 9). Hence have arisen the various psychological states through which mankind has passed. Contemporary savages are still in the primitive state--Boulanger properly emphasizes the relation of anthropology to history--"On apercoit qu'il y a une nouvelle maniere de voir et d'ecrire l'histoire des hommes" (p. 12) and with a vast store of anthropological and folklorist learning he writes it so that his assailant, Fabry d'Autrey, in his _Antiquite justifiee_ (Paris, 1766) is obliged to say with truth, "Ce n'est point ici un tissu de mensonges grossiers, de sophismes rebattus et bouffons, appliques d'un air meprisant aux objets les plus interessants pour l'humanite. C'est une enterprise serieuse et reflechie" (p. 11).

In 1767 Holbach published his first original work, a few copies of which had been printed in Nancy in 1761. This work was _Le Christianisme devoile ou Examen des principes et des effets de la religion Chretienne_. Par feu M. Boulanger. Londres (Amsterdam), 1767. There were several other editions the same year, one printed at John Wilkes' private press in Westminster. It was reprinted in later collections of Boulanger's works, and went through several English and Spanish editions. The form of the title and the attribution of the work to Boulanger were designed

to set persecution on the wrong track. There has been some discussion as to its authorship. Voltaire and Laharpe attributed it to Damilaville, at whose book shop it was said to have been sold, but M. Barbier has published detailed information given him by Naigeon to the effect that Holbach entrusted his manuscript to M. De Saint-Lambert, who had it printed by Leclerc at Nancy in 1761. Most of the copies that got to Paris at that time were bought by several officers of the King's regiment then in garrison at Nancy, among them M. de Villevielle, a friend of Voltaire and of Condorcet. Damilaville did not sell a single copy and even had a great deal of trouble to get one for Holbach who waited for it a long time. This circumstantial evidence is of greater value than the statement of Voltaire who was in the habit of attributing anonymous works to whomever he pleased. [39:2]

The edition of 1767 was printed in Amsterdam as were most of Holbach's works. We have the details of their publication from Naigeon _cadet_, a copyist, whose brother, J. A. Naigeon, was Holbach's literary factotum. In a manuscript note in his copy of the _Systeme de la Nature_ he tells how he copied nearly all Holbach's works, either at Paris or at Sedan, where he was stationed, and where his friend Blon, the postmaster, aided him, passing the manuscripts on to a Madame Loncin in Liege, who in turn was a correspondent of Marc-Michel Rey, the printer in Amsterdam. Sometimes they were sent directly by the diligence or through travellers. This account agrees perfectly with information given M. Barbier orally by Naigeon _aine_. After being printed in Holland the books were smuggled into France _sous le manteau_, as the expression is, and sold at absurd rates by colporters. [40:3]

Diderot writing to Falconet early in 1768 [40:4] says: "Il pleut des livres incroyables. C'est un feu roulant qui crible le sanctuaire de toutes parts... L'intolérance du gouvernement s'accroît de jour en jour. On dirait que c'est un projet formé d'éteindre ici les lettres, de ruiner le commerce de librairie et de nous réduire à la besace et à la stupidité... _Le Christianisme dévoilé_ s'est vendu jusqu'à quatre louis."

When caught the colporters were severely punished. Diderot gives the following instance in a letter to Mlle. Volland Oct. 8, 1768 (Avezac-Lavigne, _Diderot_, p. 161): "Un apprenti avait reçu, en paiement ou autrement, d'un colporteur appelé Lecuyer, deux exemplaires du _Christianisme dévoilé_ et il avait vendu un de ces exemplaires à son patron. Celui-ci le défère au lieutenant de police. Le colporteur, sa femme et l'apprenti sont arrêtés tous les trois; ils viennent d'être piloriés, fouettés et marqués, et l'apprenti condamné à neuf ans de galères, le colporteur à cinq ans, et la femme à l'hôpital pour toute sa vie."

There are two very interesting pieces of contemporary criticism of _Le Christianisme dévoilé_, one by Voltaire, the other by Grimm. Voltaire writes in a letter to Madame de Saint Julien December 15, 1766 (_Oeuvres_, XLIV, p. 534, ed. Garnier): "Vous m'apprenez que, dans votre société, on m'attribue _Le Christianisme dévoilé_ par feu M. Boulanger, mais je vous assure que les gens au

fait ne m'attribuent point du tout cet ouvrage. J'avoue avec vous qu'il y a de la clarté, de la chaleur, et quelque fois de l'éloquence; mais il est plein de répétitions, de négligences, de fautes contre la langue et je serais très-fâché de l'avoir fait, non seulement comme académicien, mais comme philosophe, et encore plus comme citoyen.

"Il est entièrement opposé à mes principes. Ce livre conduit à l'athéisme que je déteste. J'ai toujours regardé l'athéisme comme le plus grand égarement de la raison, parce qu'il est aussi ridicule de dire que l'arrangement du monde ne prouve pas un artisan suprême qu'il serait impertinent de dire qu'une horloge ne prouve pas un horloger.

"Je ne reproche pas moins ce livre comme citoyen; l'auteur paraît trop ennemi des puissances. Des hommes qui penseraient comme lui ne formeraient qu'une anarchie: et je vois trop, par l'exemple de Genève, combien l'anarchie est à craindre. Ma coutume est d'écrire sur la marge de mes livres ce que je pense d'eux, vous verrez, quand vous daignerez venir à Ferney, les marges de *Christianisme dévoilé* chargées de remarques qui montrent que l'auteur s'est trompé sur les faits les plus essentiels." These notes may be read in Voltaire's works (Vol. XXXI, p. 129, ed. Garnier) and the original copy of *Le Christianisme dévoilé* in which he wrote them is in the British Museum (c 28, k 3) where it is jealously guarded as one of the most precious autographs of the Patriarch of Ferney.

Grimm's notice is from the *Correspondance Littéraire* of August 15, 1763 (Vol. V, p. 367). "Il existe un livre intitulé *Le Christianisme dévoilé ou Examen des principes et des effets de la religion Chrétienne*, par feu M. Boulanger, volume in 8vo. On voit d'abord qu'on lui a donné ce titre pour en faire le pendant de *l'Antiquité dévoilée*; mais il ne faut pas beaucoup se connaître en manière pour sentir que ces deux ouvrages ne sont pas sortis de la même plume. On peut assurer avec la même certitude que celui dont nous parlons ne vient point de la fabrique de Ferney, parce que j'aimerais mieux croire que le patriarche eût pris la lune avec ses dents; cela serait moins impossible que de guetter sa manière et son allure si complètement qu'il n'en restât aucune trace quelconque. Par la même raison, je ne crois ce livre d'aucun de nos philosophes connus, parce que je n'y trouve la manière d'aucun de ceux qui ont écrit. D'où vient-il donc? Ma foi, je serais fâché de le savoir, et je crois que l'auteur aura sagement fait de ne mettre personne dans son secret. C'est le livre le plus hardi et le plus terrible qui ait jamais paru dans aucun lieu du monde. La préface consiste dans une lettre où l'auteur examine si la religion est réellement nécessaire ou seulement utile au maintien ou à la police des empires, et s'il convient de la respecter sous ce point de vue. Comme il établit la négative, il entreprend en conséquence de prouver, par son ouvrage, l'absurdité et l'incohérence du dogme Chrétien et de la mythologie qui en résulte, et l'influence de cette absurdité sur les têtes et sur les âmes. Dans la seconde partie, il examine la morale chrétienne, et il prétend prouver que dans ses principes généraux elle n'a aucun avantage sur toutes les morales du monde, parce que la justice et la bonté sont recommandées dans tous les catéchismes de l'univers, et que chez aucun peuple, quelque barbare

qu'il fut, on n'a jamais enseigné qu'il fallut être injuste et méchant. Quant à ce que la morale chrétienne a de particulier, l'auteur prétend démontrer qu'elle ne peut convenir qu'à des enthousiastes peu propres aux devoirs de la société, pour lesquels les hommes sont dans ce monde. Il entreprend de prouver, dans la troisième partie, que la religion chrétienne a eu les effets politiques les plus sinistres et les plus funestes, et que le genre humain lui doit tous les malheurs dont il a été accablé depuis quinze à dix-huit siècles, sans qu'on en puisse encore prévoir la fin.

Ce livre est écrit avec plus de véhémence que de véritable éloquence; il entraîne. Son style est chatié et correct, quoique un peu dur et sec; son ton est grave et soutenu. On n'y apprend rien de nouveau, et cependant il attache et intéresse. Malgré son incroyable témérité, on ne peut refuser à l'auteur la qualité d'homme de bien fortement épris du bonheur de sa race et de la prospérité des sociétés; mais je pense que ses bonnes intentions seraient une sauvegarde bien faible contre les mandements et les réquisitions." This is a clear and fair account of a book that is without doubt the severest criticism of the theory and practice of historical Christianity ever put in print.

The church very naturally did not let such a book pass unanswered. Abbe Bergier, a heavy person, triumphantly refuted Holbach in eight hundred pages in his *Apologia de la Religion Chrétienne contre l'Auteur du Christianisme dévoilé*, Paris, 1769, which finishes with the fatal prophecy, "Nous avons de surs garans de nos espérances: tant que le sang auguste de S. Louis sera sur le trône, il n'y a point de révolutions à craindre ni dans la Religion ni dans la politique". La religion Chrétienne fondée sur la parole de Dieu... triomphera des nouveaux Philosophes. Dieu qui veille sur son ouvrage n'a pas besoin de nos faibles mains pour le soutenir" (Psaume 32, vs. 10, 11).

2. There already existed in 1767 another work by Holbach entitled *Theologie portative ou Dictionnaire abrégé de la Religion Chrétienne*. Par Mr Abbe Bernier. Londres (Amsterdam), 1768 (1767). This book went through many editions and was augmented by subsequent authors and editors. Voltaire was already writing to d'Alembert about it August 14, 1767. [44:5]

In a letter to Damilaville, October 16, he writes (Vol. XIV, p. 406):

Depuis trois mois il y a une douzaine d'ouvrages d'une liberté extrême, imprimés en Hollande. *La Theologie portative* n'est nullement théologique: ce n'est qu'une plaisanterie continuelle par ordre alphabétique; mais il faut avouer qu'il y a des traits si comiques que plusieurs théologiens mêmes ne pourront s'empêcher d'en rire. Les jeunes gens et les femmes lisent cette folie avec avidité. Les éditions de tous les livres dans ce goût se multiplient.

And on February 8, 1768, he wrote:

On fait tous les jours des livres contre la religion, dont je voudrais

bien imiter le style pour la defendre. Y a-t-il de plus sale, que la plupart des traits qui se trouvent dans la *_Theologie portative_*? Y a-t-il rien de plus vigoureux, de plus profondement raisonne, d'ecrit avec une eloquence plus audacieuse et plus terrible, que le *_Militaire philosophe_*, ouvrage qui court toute l'Europe? [by Naigeon and Holbach] Lisez la *_Theologie portative_*, et vous ne pourrez vous empecher de rire, en condamnant la coupable hardiesse de l'auteur. Lisez *_l'Imposture sacerdotale_*--vous y verrez le style de Demosthene. Ces livres malheureusement inondent l'Europe; mais quelle est la cause de cette inondation? Il n'y en a point d'autre que les querelles theologiques qui ont revolte les laiques. *_Il s'est fait une revolution dans l'esprit humain que rien ne peut plus arreter: les persecutions ne pourraient qu'irriter le mal_*. [Footnote: the italics are mine.]

It is to be noted however that Voltaire's sentiments varied according to the point of view of the person to whom he was writing. In a letter to d'Alembert, May 24, 1769 (Vol. LXV, p. 453), he calls the *_Theologie portative_* "un ouvrage a mon gre, tres plaisant, auquel je n'ai assurement nulle part, ouvrage que je serais tres fache d'avoir fait, et que je voudrais bien avoir ete capable de faire." But in a letter to the Bishop of Annecy June, 1769, he writes (Vol. XXVIII, p. 73): "Vous lui [M. de Saint Florentin] imputez, a ce que je vois par vos lettres, des livres miserables, et jusqu'a *_la Theologie portative_*, ouvrage fait apparemment dans quelque cabaret; vous n'etes pas oblige d'avoir du gout, mais vous etes oblige d'etre juste" (Vol. XXVIII, p. 73). Diderot even said of the book: "C'est un assez bon nombre de bonnes plaisanteries noyees dans un beaucoup plus grand nombre de mauvaises" and this criticism is just. A few examples of the better jokes will suffice:

Adam: C'est le premier homme, Dieu en fait un grand nigaud, qui pour complaire a sa femme eut la betise de mordre dans une pomme que ses descendants n'ont point encore pu digerer.

Idees Innees: Notions inspirees des Pretres de si bonne heure, si souvent repetees, que devenu grand l'on croit les avoir eu toujours ou les avoir recus des le ventre de sa mere.

Jonas: La baleine fut a la fin obligee de le vomir tant un Prophete est un morceau difficile a digerer.

Magie: Il y en a de deux sortes, la blanche et la noire. La premiere est tres sainte et se pratique journallement dans l'eglise.

Protestants: Chretiens amphibies.

Vierge: C'est la mere du fils de Dieu et belle-mere de l'eglise.

Visions: Lanternes magiques que de tout temps le Pere Eternel s'est amuse a montrer aux Saintes et aux Prophetes.

3. Holbach furnished the last chapter of Naigeon's book *_Le Militaire*

philosophe, ou Difficulties sur la religion_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. Voltaire ascribed the work to St. Hyacinthe. Grimm recognized that the last chapter was by another hand and considered it the weakest part of the book. It attempts to demonstrate that all supernatural religions have been harmful to society and that the only useful religion is natural religion or morals. The book was refuted by Guidi, in a "_Lettre a M. le Chevalier de... [Barthe] entraine dans l'irreligion par un libelle intitule Le Militaire philosophe_" (1770, 12mo).

4. Holbach's next book was _La Contagion sacree ou l'Histoire naturelle de la Superstition_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. In his preface Holbach attributed the alleged English original of this work to John Trenchard but that was only a ruse to avoid persecution. The book is by Holbach. It has gone through many editions and been translated into English and Spanish. The first edition had an introduction by Naigeon. According to him manuscripts of this book became quite rare at one time and were supposed to have been lost. Later they became more common and this edition was corrected by collation with six others.

[PG transcriber's note: at this point there appears to be a break in the original text. A sentence introducing the fifth book in this list, "Letters to Eugenie", has evidently been lost.]

The letters were written in 1764, according to Lequinio (_Feuilles posthumes_), who had his information from Naigeon, to Marguerite, Marchioness de Vermandois in answer to a very touching and pitiful letter from that lady who was in great trouble over religion. Her young husband was a great friend of the Holbachs, but having had a strict Catholic bringing up she was shocked at their infidelity and warned by her confessor to keep away from them. "Yet in their home she saw all the domestic virtues exemplified and beheld that sweet and unchangeable affection for which the d'Holbachs were eminently distinguished among their acquaintances and which was remarkable for its striking contrast with the courtly and Christian habits of the day. Her natural good sense and love for her friends struggled with her monastic education and reverence for the priests. The conflict rendered her miserable and she returned to her country seat to brood over it. In this state of mind she at length wrote to the Baron and laid open her situation requesting him to comfort, console, and enlighten her." [47:7] His letters accomplished the desired effect and he later published them in the hope that they would do as much for others. They were carefully revised before they were sent to the press. All the purely personal passages were omitted and others added to hide the identity of the persons concerned. Letters of the sort to religious ladies were common at this time. Freret's were preventive, Holbach's curative, but appear to be rather strong dose for a _devote_. Other examples are Voltaire's _Epite a Uranie_ and Diderot's _Entretien d'un Philosophe avec la Marechale de..._.

6. In 1769 Holbach published two short treatises on the doctrine

of eternal punishment which claimed to be translations from English, but the originals are not to be found. The titles are *_De l'intolerance convaincue de crime et de folie_* as it is sometimes given, and--

7. *_L'Enfer detruit ou Examen raisonne du Dogme de l'Eternite des Peines_*. Londres, Amsterdam, 1769. This letter was translated into English under the title *_Hell Destroyed!_* "Now first translated from the French of d'Alembert without any mutilations," London 1823, which led Mr. J. Hibbert to say, "I know not why English publishers attribute this awfully sounding work to the cautious, not to say timid d'Alembert. It was followed by Whitefoot's *'_Torments of Hell,'_* now first translated from the French." [47:8]

Of Holbach's remaining works on religion two, *_Histoire critique de Jesus Christ_* and *_Tableau des Saints_*, date from 1770 when he began to publish his more philosophical works.

8. The *_Histoire critique de Jesus Christ ou Analyse raisonnee des Evangiles_* was published without name of place or date. It was preceded by Voltaire's *_Epitre a Uranie_*. It is an extremely careful but unsympathetic analysis of the Gospel accounts, emphasizing all the inconsistencies and interpreting them with a literalness that they can ill sustain. From this rationalistic view-point Holbach found the Gospels a tissue of absurdities and contradictions. His method, however, would not be followed by the critique of today.

9. The *_Tableau des Saints_* is a still more severe criticism of the heroes of Christendom. Holbach's proposition is "La raison ne connait qu'une mesure pour juger et les hommes et les choses, c'est l'utilite reelle et permanente, qui en resulte pour notre espece," (p. 111). Judged by this standard, the saints with their eyes fixed on another world have fallen far short. "Ils se flatterent de meriter le ciel en se rendant parfaitement inutile a la terre" (p. xviii). Holbach much prefers the heroes of classical antiquity. The book is violent but learned throughout, and deals not only with the Jewish patriarchs from Moses on but with the church fathers and Christian Princes down to the contemporary defenders of the faith. After a rather one-sided account of the most dreary characters and events in Christian history, Holbach concludes: "Tel fut, tel est, et tel sera toujours l'esprit du Christianisme: il est aise de sentir qu'il est incompatible avec les principes les plus evidens de la morale et de la saine politique" (p. 208).

10. In *_Recueil philosophique_*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770, edited by Naigeon. *Reflexions sur les craintes de la Mort. Probleme important--La Religion est-elle necessaire a la morale et utile a la Politique.* Par M. Mirabaud.

11. *_Essai sur les prejuges, ou De l'influence des opinions sur les moeurs et sur le bonheur des Hommes_*. Londres (Amsterdam), 1770, under name of Dumarsais. The book pretended to be an elaboration of Dumarsais' essay on the *_Philosophe_* published

in the *Nouvelles libertes de penser*, 1750.

The special interest connected with it was the refutation Frederick the Great published under the title *Examen de l'Essai sur les prejuges*, Londres, Nourse, 1770 (16 mo). The King of Prussia writing from the point of view of a practical, enlightened despot, took special exception to Holbach's remarks on government. "Il l'outrage avec autant de grossierete que d'indecence, il force le gouvernement de prendre fait et cause avec l'eglise pour s'opposer a l'ennemi commun. Mais, quand avec un acharnement violent et les traits de la plus acre satire, il calomnie son Roi et le gouvernement de son pays, on le prend pour un frenetique echappe de ses chaines, et livre aux transports les plus violens de sa rage. Quoi, Monsieur le philosophe, protecteur des moeurs et de la vertu, ignorez vous qu'un bon citoyen doit respecter la forme de gouvernement sous laquelle il vit, ignorez vous qu'il ne convient point a un particulier d'insulter les Puissances..." (p. 28).

"Non content d'insulter a toutes les tetes couronnees de l'Europe, notre philosophe s'amuse, en passant, a repandre du ridicule sur les ouvrages de Hugo Grotius. J'oserais croire qu'il n'en sera pas cru sur sa parole, et que le *Droit de la guerre et de la paix* ira plus loin a la posterite que *l'Essai sur les prejuges*" (p. 39).

Holbach in his anti-militaristic enthusiasm had used the words "bourreaux mercenaires"; "epithete elegante," continues Frederick, "dont il honore les guerriers. Mais souffrions nous qu'un cerveau brule insulte au plus noble emploi de la Societe?" (p.49). He goes on to defend war in good old-fashioned terms. "Vous declamez contre la guerre, elle est funeste en elle-meme; mais c'est un mal comme ces autres fleaux du ciel qu'il faut supposer necessaires dans l'arrangement de cet univers parce qu'ils arrivent periodiquement et qu'aucun siecle n'a pu jusqu'a present d'en avoir ete exempt. J'ai prouve que de tout temps l'erreur a domine dans ce monde; et comme une chose aussi constante peut etre envisagee comme une loi general de la nature, j'en conclus que ce qui a ete toujours sera toujours le meme" (p. 19).

Frederick sent his little refutation to Voltaire for his compliments which were forthcoming. A few days after Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert:

Le roi de Prusse vous a envoye, sans doute, son petit ecrit contre un livre imprime cette annee, intitule *Essai sur les prejuges*, ce roi a aussi les siens, qu'il faut lui pardonner; on n'est pas roi pour rien. Mais je voudrais savoir quel est l'auteur de cet *Essai* contre lequel sa majeste prussienne s'amuse a ecrire un peu durement. Serait-il de Diderot? serait-il de Damilaville? serait-il d'Helvetius? peut-etre ne le connaissez-vous point, je le crois imprime en Hollande (Vol. LXVI, p. 304).

D'Alembert answered:

Oui, le roi de Prusse m'a envoye son ecrit contre _l'Essai sur les prejuges_. Je ne suis point etonne que ce prince n'ait pas goute l'ouvrage; je l'ai lu depuis cette refutation et il m'a paru bien long, bien monotone et trop amer. Il me semble que ce qu'il y de bon dans ce livre aurait pu et du etre noye dans moins de pages et je vois que vous en avez porte a peu pres le meme jugement (Vol. LXVI, p. 324).

In spite of these unfavorable judgments the _Essai_ was reprinted as late as 1886 by the Bibliotheque Nationale in its _Collection des meilleurs auteurs anciens et modernes_, still attributed to Dumarsais with the account of his life by "le citoyen Daube" which graced the edition of the year I. (1792)

12. Early in 1770 appeared Holbach's most famous book, the _Systeme de la Nature_, the only book that is connected with his name in the minds of most historians and philosophers. It seems wiser, however, to deal with this work in a chapter apart and continue the account of his later publications.

13. The next of which was _Le bon-sens, ou idees naturelles opposees aux idees surnaturelles. Par l'Auteur du Systeme de la Nature_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1772. This work has gone through twenty-five editions or more and has been translated into English, German, Italian and Spanish. As early as 1791 it began to be published under the name of the cure Jean Meslier d'Etrepigny, made so famous by Voltaire's publication of what was supposed to be his last will and testament in which on his death bed he abjured and cursed Christianity. Some editions contain in the preface Letters by Voltaire and his sketch of Jean Meslier. The last reprint was by De Laurence, Scott & Co., Chicago, 1910. The book is nothing more or less than the _Systeme de la Nature_, in a greatly reduced and more readable form.

Voltaire, to whom it was attributed by some, said to d'Alembert, "Il y a plus que du bon sens dans ce livre, il est terrible. S'il sort de la boutique du _Systeme de la Nature_, l'auteur s'est bien perfectionne." D'Alembert answered: "Je pense comme vous sur le _Bon-sens_ qui me parait un bien plus terrible livre que le _Systeme de la Nature_." These remarks were inscribed by Thomas Jefferson on the title page of his copy of _Bon-sens_. The book has gone through several editions in the United States and was sold at a popular price. The German translation was published in Baltimore on the basis of a copy found in a second-hand book store in New Orleans. The most serious work written against it is a long and carefully written treatise against materialism by an Italian monk, Gardini, entitled _L'anima umana e sue proprieta dedotte da soli principi de ragione, dal P. lettore D. Antonmaria Gardini, monaco camaldalese, contro i materialisti e specialmente contro l'opera intitulata, le Bon-Sens, ou Idees Naturelles opposees aux idees Surnaturelles. In Padova MDCCLXXXI Nella stamperia del Seminario. Appresso Giovanni Manfre, Con Licenza de Superiori e Privilegio_ (8vo, p. xx + 284).

14. In 1773 Holbach published his *Recherches sur les Miracles*, a much more sober work than his previous writings on religion. In this book he raises the well known difficulties with belief in miracles and brings a great deal of real learning and logic to bear on the question. The entire work is in a reasonable and philosophic spirit. His conclusion is that "une vraie religion doit avoir au défaut de bonnes raisons, des preuves sensibles, capables de faire impression sur tout ceux qui la cherchent de bonne foi. Ce ne sont pas les miracles." The same year he published two serious but somewhat tiresome works on politics.

15. *La politique naturelle*.

16. *Systeme social* in which he attempts to reduce government to the naturalistic principles which were the basis of his entire philosophy. The first is also attributed to Malesherbes. There is a long and keen criticism of the *Systeme Social* by Mme. d'Épinay in a letter to Abbe Galiani Jan. 12, 1773 (Gal. *Corresp.*, Vol. II, p. 167).

But the most interesting reaction upon it was that of the Abbe Richard who criticized it from point of view of the divine right of kings in his long and tiresome work entitled *La Defense de la religion, de la morale, de la vertu, de la politique et de la societe, dans la refutation des ouvrages qui ont pour titre, l'un Systeme Social etc. Vautre La Politique Naturelle par le R. P. Ch. L. Richard, Professeur de Theologie*, etc., Paris, Moulard, 1775.

In a preface of forty-seven pages the fears of the conservative old Abbe are well expressed. The aim of these modern philosophers who are poisoning public opinion by their writings is to "demolir avec l'antique edifice de la religion chretienne, celui des moeurs, de la vertu, de la saine politique etc. rompre tous les canaux de communication entre la terre et le ciel, bannir, exterminer du monde le Dieu qui le tira du neant, y introduire l'impiete la plus complete, la licence la plus consommee, l'anarchie la plus entiere, la confusion la plus horrible."

17. Holbach's next work, *Ethocratie ou Gouvernement fonde sur la Morale*, Amsterdam, Rey, 1776, is interesting mainly for its unfortunate dedication and peroration, inscribed to Louis XVI, who was hailed therein as a long expected Messiah.

18. Holbach's last works dealt exclusively with morals. They are *La morale universelle ou les devoirs de l'homme fondees sur la nature*, Amsterdam, 1771, and

19. A posthumous work, *Elements de la Morale universelle, ou catechisme de la nature*, Paris, 1790. This is a beautiful little book. It is simple and clear to the last degree. There have been several translations in Spanish for the purposes of elementary education in morals in the public schools. It was

composed in 1765. Holbach's attitude towards morals is indicated by his *_Avertissement_*--"La morale est une science dont les principes sont susceptibles d'une demonstration aussi claire et aussi rigoureuse que ceux du calcul et de la geometrie."

CHAPTER III. THE SYSTEME DE LA NATURE.

Early in 1770 appeared the famous *_Systeme de la Nature, ou Des Loix du Monde Physique et du Monde Morale, Par M. Mirabaud, Secretaire Perpetuel et l'un des Quarante de l'Academie Francaise_*, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770. This work has gone through over thirty editions in France, Spain, Germany, England and the United States. No book of a philosophic or scientific character has ever caused such a sensation at the time of its publication, excepting perhaps Darwin's *_Origin of Species_*, the thesis of which is more than hinted at by Holbach. There were several editions in 1770. A very few copies contain a *_Discours preliminaire de l'Auteur_* of sixteen pages which Naigeon had printed separately in London. The *_Abrege du Code de la Nature_*, which ends the book was also published separately and is sometimes attributed to Diderot, 8vo, 16 pp. [54:1]

There is also a book entitled *_Le vrai sens du Systeme de la Nature_*, 1774, attributed to Helvetius, a very clear, concise epitome largely in Holbach's own short and telling sentences, and much more effective than the original because of its brevity. Holbach himself reproduced the *_Systeme de la Nature_* in a shortened form in *_Bon-sens_*, 1772, and Payrard plagiarized it freely in *_De la Nature et de ses Loix_*, Paris, 1773. The book has been attributed to Diderot, Helvetius, Robinet, Damilaville and others. Naigeon is certain that it is entirely by Holbach, although it is generally held that Diderot had a hand in it. It was published under the name of Mirabaud to obviate persecution. The manuscript, it was alleged, had been found among his papers as a sort of "testament" or philosophical legacy to posterity. This work may be called the bible of scientific materialism and dogmatic atheism. Nothing before or since has ever approached it in its open and unequivocal insistence on points of view commonly held, if at all, with reluctance and reserve. It is impossible in a study of this length to deal fully with the attacks and refutations that were published immediately. We may mention first the condemnation of the book by the *_Parlement de Paris_*, August 18, 1770, to be burned by the public hangman along with Voltaire's *_Dieu et les Hommes_*, and Holbach's *_Discours sur les Miracles_*, *_La Contagion sacree_* and *_le Christianisme devoile_*, which had already been condemned on September 24, 1769. [55:2]

The *_Requisitoire_* of Seguier, *_avocat general_*, on the occasion of the condemnation of the *_Systeme de la Nature_* was so weak and ridiculous that the *_Parlement de Paris_* refused to sanction its publication, and it was printed by the express order of the King.

As Grimm observed, it seemed designed solely to acquaint the ignorant with this dangerous work, without opposing any of its propositions. One would look in vain for a better example of the conservatism of the legal profession. [55:3]

Le poison des nouveutes profanes ne peut corrompre la sainte gravite des moeurs qui caracterise les vrais Magistrats: tout peut changer autour d'eux, _ils restent immuables avec la loi_ (page 496).

N'est-ce pas ce fatal abus de la liberte de penser, qui a enfante cette multitude de sectes, d'opinions, de partis, et cet esprit d'independance dont d'autres nations ont eprouve les sinstres revolutions. Le meme abus produira en France des effets peut-etre plus funestes. La liberte indefinie trouveroit, dans la caractere de la nation, dans son activite, dans son amour pour la nouveaute, un moyen de plus pour preparer les plus affreuses revolutions (p. 498).

The most interesting private attacks on the *Systeme de la Nature* came from two somewhat unexpected quarters, from Ferney and Sans Souci. Voltaire, as usual, was not wholly consistent in his opinions of it, as is revealed in his countless letters on the subject. Grimm attributed his hostility to jealousy, and the fear that the *Systeme de la Nature* might "renverse le rituel de Ferney et que le patriarcat ne s'en aille au diable avec lui." [56:4]

George Leroy went so far as to write a book entitled *Reflexions sur la jalousie, pour servir de commentaire aux derniers ouvrages de M. de Voltaire*, 1772. Frederick II naturally felt bound to defend the kings who, as Voltaire said, were no better treated than God in the *Systeme de la Nature*. [56:5]

Voltaire's correspondence during this period is so interesting that it seems worth while to quote at length, especially from his letters to Fredrick the Great. In May 1770, shortly after the publication of the *Systeme de la Nature* Voltaire wrote to M. Vernes: [56:6]

"On a tant dit de sottises sur la nature que je ne lis plus aucun de ces livres la." But by July he had read it and wrote to Grimm: [56:7]

"Si l'ouvrage eut ete plus serre il aurait fait un effet terrible, mais tel qu'il est il en a fait beaucoup. Il est bien plus eloquent que Spinoza... J'ai une grande curiosite de savoir ce qu'on en pense a Paris." In writing to d'Alembert about this time he seemed to have a fairly favorable impression of the book. "Il m'a paru qu'il y avait des longueurs, des repetitions et quelques inconsequences, mais il y a trop de bon pour qu'on n'eclate avec fureur contre ce livre. Si on garde le silence, ce sera une preuve du prodigieux progres que la tolerance fait tous les jours." [57:8] But there was little likelihood

that philosophers or theologians would keep silent about this scandalous book. Before the end of the month Voltaire was writing to d'Alembert about his own and the king of Prussia's refutations of it, and the same day wrote to Frederick: "Il me semble que vos remarques doivent etre imprimees; ce sont des lecons pour le genre humain. Vous soutenez d'un bras la cause de Dieu et vous ecrasez de l'autre la superstition." [57:9] Later Voltaire confessed to Frederick that he also had undertaken to

rebuke the author of the *Systeme de la Nature*. "Ainsi Dieu a pour lui les deux hommes les moins superstitieux de l'Europe, ce que devrait lui plaire beaucoup" (p. 390).

Frederick, however, hesitated to make his refutation public, and wrote to Voltaire: "Lorsque j'eus acheve mon ouvrage contre l'atheisme, je crus ma refutation tres orthodoxe, je la relus, et je la trouvai bien eloignee de l'etre. Il y a des endroits qui ne saurait paraitre sans effaroucher les timides et scandaliser les devots. Un petit mot qui m'est echappe sur l'eternite du monde me ferait lapider dans votre patrie, si j'y etais ne particulier, et que je l'eusse fait imprimer. Je sens que je n'ai point du tout ni l'ame ni le style theologique." [57:10] Voltaire, in his "petite drolerie en faveur de la Divinite" (as he called his work) and in his letters, could not find terms harsh enough in which to condemn the *_Systeme de la Nature_*. He called it "un chaos, un grand mal moral, un ouvrage de tenebres, un peche contre la nature, un systeme de la folie et de l'ignorance," and wrote to Delisle de Sales: "Je ne vois pas que rien ait plus avili notre siecle que cette enorme sottise." [58:11] Voltaire seemed to grow more bitter about Holbach's book as time went on. His letters and various works abound in references to it, and it is difficult to determine his motives. He was accused, as has been suggested, by Holbach's circle "de caresser les gens en place, et d'abandonner ceux qui n'y sont plus." [58:12] M. Avenel believed that he suspected Holbach himself of making these accusations. Voltaire's letter to the Duc de Richelieu, Nov. 1, 1770, [58:13] seems to give them foundation.

A very different reaction was that of Goethe and his university circle at Strasburg to whom the *_Systeme de la Nature_* appeared a harmless and uninteresting book, "grau," "cimmerisch," "totenhaft," "die echte Quintessenz der Greisenheit." To these fervent young men in the youthful flush of romanticism, its sad, atheistic twilight seemed to cast a veil over the beauty of the earth and rob the heaven of stars; and they lightheadedly discredited both Holbach and Voltaire in favor of Shakespeare and the English romantic school. One would look far for a better instance of the romantic reaction which set in so soon and so obscured the clarity of the issues at stake in the eighteenth century thought. [58:14]

The leading refutations directed explicitly against the *_Systeme de la Nature_* are:

1. 1770, Rive, Abbe J. J., *Lettres philosophiques contre le _Systeme de la Nature_*. (Portefeuille hebdomadaire de Bruxelles.)
2. Frederick II, *_Examen critique du livre intitule, _Systeme de la Nature_*. (Political Miscellanies, p. 175.)
3. Voltaire, Dieu, Reponse de M. de Voltaire au *_Systeme de la Nature_*. Au chateau de Ferney, 1770, 8 vo, pp. 34.
4. 1771, Bergier, Abbe N. F., *Examen du materialisme, ou*

Refutation du *_Systeme de la Nature_*. Paris, Humbolt, 1771,
2 vols., 12mo.

5. Camuset, Abbe J. N., *Principes contre l'incredulite*, a
l'occasion du *_Systeme de la Nature_*. Paris, Pillot, 1771,
12mo, pp. viii + 335.

6. Castillon, J. de (Salverini di Castiglione), *Observations sur
le livre intitule, _Systeme de la Nature_*. Berlin, Decker, 1771,
8vo. (40 sols broche.)

7. Rochford, Dubois de, *Pensees diverses contre le systeme des
materialistes*, a l'occasion d'un ecrit intitule; *_Systeme de la
Nature_*. Paris, Lambert, 1771, 12mo.

8. 1773, *L'Impie demasque, ou remontrance aux ecrivains incredules*.
Londres, Heydinger, 1773

9. Holland, J. H., *Reflexions philosophiques sur le _Systeme de
la Nature_*. Paris, 1773, 2 vols., 8vo.

10. 1776, Buzoniere, Nouel de, *Observations sur un ouvrage intitule
le _Systeme de la Nature_*. Paris, Debure, pere, 1776, 8vo, pp. 126.
(Prix 1 livre, 16 sols broche.)

11. 1780, Fangouse, Abbe, *La religion prouee aux incredules, avec
une lettre a l'auteur du _Systeme de la Nature_ par un homme du monde*.
Paris, Debure l'aine, 12mo, p. 150. Same under title *Reflexions
importantes sur la religion, etc.*, 1785.

12. 1788, Paulian, A. J., *Le veritable systeme de la nature, etc.*,
Avignon, Niel, 2 vols., 12mo.

13. 1803, Mangold, F. X. von, *Unumstossliche Widerlegung des
Materialismus gegen den Verfasser des _Systems der Natur_*.
Augsburg, 1803.

Of these and other refutations of materialism such as Saint-Martin's
Des erreurs et de la verite, Dupont de Nemours' *_Philosophie de
l'univers_*, Delisles de Sales' *_Philosophie de la nature_*, etc.,
which are not directed explicitly against the *_Systeme de la Nature_*,
the works of Voltaire and Frederick the Great are the most interesting
but by no means the most serious or convincing. Morley finds Voltaire
very weak and much beside the point, especially in his discussion of
order and disorder in nature which Holbach had denied. Voltaire's
argument is that there must be an intelligent motor or cause behind
nature (p. 7). This is God (p. 8). He admits at the outset that all
systems are mere dreams but he continues to insist with a dogmatism
equal to Holbach's on the validity of his dream. He repeatedly asserts
without foundation that Holbach's system is based on the false experiment
of Needham (pp. 5, 6), and even goes so far as to ridicule the
evolutionary hypothesis altogether (p. 6). He speaks of the necessity

of a belief in God, by a kind of natural logic. God and matter exist in the nature of things, "Tout nous annonce un Etre supreme, rien ne nous dit ce qu'il est." God himself seems to be a kind of fatalistic necessity. "C'est ce que vous appellerez Nature et c'est ce que j'appelle Dieu." At the end he shifts the argument from the base of necessity to that of utility. Which is the more consoling doctrine? If the idea of God has prevented ten crimes I hold that the entire world should embrace it (p. 27). As Morley has said, such arguments could scarcely have convinced Voltaire himself.

Frederick was surprised that Voltaire and D'Alembert had found anything good in the book. His refutation was more methodical than that of Voltaire, who called it a "homage to the Divinity" but wrote to D'Alembert that it was written in the style of a notary. Two other refutations emanating from the Academy of Berlin were those of Castillon and Holland. The first of these is a very heavy and learned work, formidable and forbidding in its logic. Castillon reduces Holbach's propositions to three. The self-existence of matter, the essential relation of movement to it, and the possibility of deriving everything from it or some mode of it. Castillon concludes after five hundred pages of reasoning that matter is contingent, movement not inherent in it, and that purely spiritual beings exist in independence of it. Hence the *Systeme de la Nature* is a "long and wicked error." Holland's is a still more serious work, which the Sorbonne recommended strongly as an antidote against Holbach's *Systeme*, which it qualified as "une malheureuse production que notre siecle doit rougir d'avoir enfantee." But when it was discovered that Holland was a Protestant his work was condemned forthwith, Jan. 17, 1773.

Bergier's refutation is interesting as an attack from a churchman of extraordinary keenness and insight into the progress of the new philosophy. In the *Systeme de la Nature* he recognized the hand of the author of *La Contagion sacree* and the *Essai sur les prejuges* and dealt with it as he did the *Christianisme devoile*. Buzoniere, Rochfort and Fangouse are milder and more naive in their demonstrations and their works are of no weight or interest. *L'Impie demasque* is a brutal work which qualifies Holbach as a "vile apostle of vice and crime," and the *Systeme de la Nature* as the most impudent treatise on atheism that has yet dishonored the globe--one which covers the century with shame and will be the scandal of future generations.

The work of Paulian is of a different sort. Coming comparatively late, it attempted to review the hostile opinions of many years and then mass them in an overwhelming final attack on the *Systeme de la Nature*. To this end Paulian rewrites the entire book chapter by chapter, giving the "true version." He then reviews Holland's outline and Bergier's comments, together with seven articles directed explicitly against the *Systeme de la Nature* in such works as the *Lettres Helviennes*, of Abbe Barruel, *Dict. des Philosophes*, *Dict. anti-philosophe*, his own *Dict. theologique*, etc., besides many other writings against the new philosophy in general. He then reviews articles by members of the philosophic school against materialism and then goes back to Holbach's sources, Diderot, Bayle, Spinoza, Lucretius, Epicurus, etc. The work is not scholarly but comprehensive and evidently discouraged further formal

refutations.

The *Systeme de la Nature* had many critics in the stormy days that followed 1789. Delisle de Sales found it a monstrosity--a *fratras*; La Harpe called it an infamous book, "un amas de betises qu'on ose appeler philosophie, inconcevables inepties, un immense echafaudage de mensonge et d'invective"; M. Villemain is much more calm and fair; Lord Brougham, like Damiron, Buzonniere, and many others, found it seductive but full of false reasoning; Lerminier was so severe that St.-Beuve was moved to defend Holbach against him. Samuel Wilkinson, the English translator of 1820, is one of the few whose criticism is at all favorable. Holbach has always appealed to a certain type of radical mind and his translators and editors have generally been men who were often over-enthusiastic. For example, Mr. Wilkinson says of the *Systeme de la Nature*, [64:15] "No work, ancient or modern, has surpassed it in the eloquence and sublimity of its language or in the facility with which it treats the most abstruse and difficult subjects. It is without exception the boldest effort the human mind has yet produced in the investigation of Morals and Theology. The republic of letters has never produced another author whose pen was so well calculated to emancipate mankind from all those trammels with which the nurse, the school master, and the priest have successively locked up their noblest faculties, before they were capable of reasoning and judging for themselves."

It seems unnecessary to analyze the *Systeme de la Nature*. This has been done by Damiron, Soury, Fabre, Lange, Morley, the historians of philosophy, and encyclopaedists; and the book itself is easily available in the larger libraries. The substance of Holbach's philosophy is susceptible of clearer treatment apart from it or any one of his books, although it permeates all of them.

M. Jules Soury has said, in describing a certain type of mind: "Il est d'heureux esprits, des ames fortes et saines, que n'effraie point le silence eternel des espaces infinis ou s'aneantissait la raison de Pascal. Naives et robustes natures, males et vigoureux penseurs, qui gardent toute la vie quelque chose des dons charmants de la jeunesse et de l'enfance meme, une foi vive dans le temoinage immediat de nos sens et de notre conscience, une humeur alerte, toute de joyeuse ardeur, et comme une intrepidite d'esprit que rien n'arrete. Pour eux tout est clair et uni; ou a peu pres, et la ou ils soupconnent quelque bas-bond insondable, ils se detournent et poursuivent fierement leur chemin. Comme cet Epicurien dont parle Ciceron au commencement du *De natura deorum*, ils ont toujours l'air de sortir de l'assemblee des dieux et de descendre des intermondes d'Epicure."

Such was Holbach. His philosophy is based on the child-like assumption that things are as they seem, provided they are observed with sufficient care by a sufficient number of people. This brings us at once to the very heart of Holbach's method which was experimental and inductive to the last degree. Holbach was nourished on what might be called scientific rather than philosophical traditions. As M. Tourneux has pointed out, he had been a serious student of the natural sciences,

especially those connected with the constitution of the earth. These studies led him to see the disparity between certain accepted and traditional cosmologies and a scientific interpretation of the terrestrial globe and the forms of life which flourish upon it. Finding the supposed sacred and infallible records untrustworthy in one regard, he began to question their veracity at other points. Being of a critical frame of mind, he took the records rather more literally than a sympathetic, allegorical apologist would have done, although it cannot be said that he used much historical insight. After having studied the sacred texts for purposes of writing or having translated other men's studies on Moses, David, the Prophets, Jesus, Paul, the Christian theologians and saints, miracles, etc., he concluded that these accounts were untrustworthy and mendacious. He knew ancient and modern philosophy and found in the greater part of it an unwarranted romantic or theological trend which his scientific training had caused him to suspect. It must be admitted that however false or illogical Holbach's conclusions may be considered, he was by no means ignorant of the subjects he chose to treat, as some of his detractors would have one believe. His theory of knowledge was that of Locke and Condillac, and on this foundation he built up his system of scientific naturalism and dogmatic atheism.

His initial assumption is, as has been suggested, that experience (application *reiteree des sens*) and reason are trustworthy guides to knowledge. By them we become conscious of an external objective world, of which sentient beings themselves are a part, from which they receive impressions through their sense organs. These myriad impressions when compared and reflected upon form reasoned knowledge or truth, provided they are substantiated by repeated experiences carefully made. That is, an idea is said to be true when it conforms perfectly with the actual external object. This is possible unless one's senses are defective, or one's judgment vitiated by emotion and passion.

Holbach's contention is that if one applies experience and reason to the external universe, or nature, "*ce vaste assemblage de tout ce qui existe*"; it reveals a single objective reality, i. e., matter, which is in itself essentially active or in a state of motion.

From matter in motion are derived all the phenomena that strike our senses. All is matter or a function of it. Matter, then, is not an effect, but a cause. It is not caused; it is from eternity and of necessity. The cardinal point in Holbach's philosophy is an inexorable materialistic necessity. Nothing, then, is exempt from the laws of physics and chemistry. Inorganic substance and organic life fall into the same category. Man himself with all his differentiated faculties is but a function of matter and motion in extraordinary complex and involved relations. Man's imputation to himself of free will and unending consciousness apart from his machine is an idle tale built on his desires, not on his experiences nor his knowledge of nature. This imputation of a will or soul to nature, independent of it or in any sense above it, is a still more idle one derived from his renunciation of the witness of his senses and his following after the phantoms of

his imagination. It is ignorance or disregard of nature then that has given rise to supernatural ideas that have "no correspondence with true sight," or, as Holbach expressed it, have no counterpart in the external object. In other words, theology, or poetry about God, as Petrarch said, is ignorance of natural causes reduced to a system.

Man is a purely natural or physical being, like a tree or a stone. His so-called spiritual nature (*l'homme moral*) is merely a phase of his physical nature considered under a special aspect. He is all matter in motion, and when that ceases to function in a particular way, called life, he ceases to be as a conscious entity. He is so organized, however that his chief desires are to survive and render his existence happy. By happiness Holbach means the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. In all his activity, then, man will seek pleasure and avoid pain. The chief cause of man's misery or lack of well being is his ignorance of the powers and possibilities of his own nature and the Universal Nature. All he needs is to ascertain his place in nature and adjust himself to it. From the beginning of his career he has been the dupe of false ideas, especially those connected with supernatural powers, on whom he supposed he was dependent. But, if ignorance of nature gave birth to the Gods, knowledge of nature is calculated to destroy them and the evils resulting from them, the introduction of theistic ideas into politics and morals. In a word, the truth, that is, correct ideas of nature is the one thing needful to the happiness and well-being of man.

The application of these principles to the given situation in France in 1770 would obviously have produced unwelcome results. Holbach's theory was that religion was worse than useless in that it had inculcated false and pernicious ideas in politics and morals. He would do away completely with it in the interest of putting these sciences on a natural basis. This basis is self-interest, or man's inevitable inclination toward survival and the highest degree of well-being, "*L'objet de la morale est de faire connaitre aux hommes que leur plus grand interet exige qu'ils pratiquent la vertu; le but du gouvernement doit etre de la leur faire pratiquer.*"

Government then assumes the functions of moral restraint formally delegated to religion; and punishments render virtue attractive and vice repugnant. Holbach's theory of social organization is practically that of Aristotle. Men combine in order to increase the store of individual well-being, to live the good life. If those to whom society has delegated sovereignty abuse their power, society has the right to take it from them. Sovereignty is merely an agent for the diffusion of truth and the maintenance of virtue, which are the prerequisites of social and individual well-being. The technique of progress is enlightenment and good laws.

Nothing could be clearer or simpler than Holbach's system. As Diderot so truly said, he will not be quoted on both sides of any question. His uncompromising atheism is the very heart and core of his system and clarifies the whole situation. All supernatural ideas are to be abandoned. Experience and reason are once for all

made supreme, and henceforth refuse to share their throne or abdicate in favor of faith. Holbach's aim was as he said to bring man back to nature and render reason dear to him. "Il est tempts que cette raison injustement degradee quitte un ton pusillamine qui la rendront complice du mensonge et du delire."

If reason is to rule, the usurper, religion, must be ejected; hence atheism was fundamental to his entire system. He did not suppose by any means that it would become a popular faith, because it presupposed too much learning and reflection, but it seemed to him the necessary weapon of a reforming party at that time. He defines an atheist as follows: "C'est un homme, qui detruit des chimeres nuisibles au genre humain, pour ramener les hommes a la nature, a l'experience, a la raison. C'est un penseur qui, ayant medite la matiere, ses proprietes et ses facons d'agir, n'a pas besoin, pour expliquer les phenomenes de l'univers et les operations de la nature, d'imaginer des puissances ideales, des intelligences imaginaires, des etres de raison; qui loin de faire mieux connaitre cette nature, ne font que la rendre capricieuse, inexplicable, et meconnaissable, inutile au bonheur des hommes."

APPENDIX

HOLBACH'S CORRESPONDENCE

The following letters of Holbach are extant:

Holbach to Hume, Aug. 23, 1763.

Holbach to Hume, Mar. 16, 1766.

Holbach to Hume, July 7, 1766.

Holbach to Hume, Aug. 18, 1766.

Holbach to Hume, Sept. 7, 1766.

These were printed in Hume's *Private Correspondence*, London, 1820, pp. 252-263, and deal largely with Hume's quarrel with Rousseau.

Holbach to Garrick, June 16, 1765.

Holbach to Garrick, Feb. 9, 1766.

These two letters are in manuscript in Lansdowne House, Coll. Forster, and were published by F. A. Hedgcock, *David Garrick et ses amis francais*. Paris, 1911, pp. 251-253.

Holbach to Wilkes, Aug., 1746, 9 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30867, p. 14).

Holbach to Wilkes, Dec. 10, 1746 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30867, p. 18).

Holbach to Wilkes, May 22, 1766 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 39)

Holbach to Wilkes, Nov. 9, 1766 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 81).

Holbach to Wilkes, Dec. 10, 1767 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 173).

Holbach to Wilkes, July 17, 1768 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30870, p. 59).

Holbach to Wilkes, Mar. 19, 1770 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30871, p. 16).
Holbach to Wilkes, April 27, 1775, 9 (Wilkes, *Correspondence*,
London, 1804, Vol. IV, p. 176).

The first seven of these letters are published for the first time
in the present volume, pp. 6-11 and pp. 75-80.

Holbach to Galiani, Aug. 11, 1769 (*Critica*, Vol. I, pp. 488 sq.).

Galiani to Holbach, April 7, 1770 (Galiani, *Correspondence*, Paris,
1890, Vol. I, p. 92).

Galiani to Holbach, July 21, 1770 (Galiani, *Correspondence*, Paris,
1890, Vol. I, p. 199).

Holbach to Galiani, Aug. 25, 1770 (*Critica*, Vol. I, p. 489).

There are references to other letters in *Critica* which I have not
been able to find.

Holbach to Beccaria, Mar. 15, 1767, published by M. Landry
Beccaria, Scritte e lettere inediti, 1910, p. 146.

Holbach to Malesherbes, April 6, 1761 (hitherto unpublished). See
present volume, p. 30.

HOLBACH TO HUME

(Hume, *Private Correspondence*, London, 1820, pp. 252-263)
PARIS, the 23rd. of August, 1763

_Sir,--

I have received with the deepest sense of gratitude your very kind
and obliging letter of the 8th. inst: favors of great men ought to
give pride to those that have at least the merit of setting the value
that is due upon them. This is my case with you, sir; the reading
of your valuable works has not only inspired me with the strongest
admiration for your genius and amiable parts, but gave me the highest
idea of your person and the strongest desire of getting acquainted
with one of the greatest philosophers of my age, and of the best friend
to mankind. These sentiments have emboldened me to send formally,
though unknown to you, the work you are mentioning to me. I thought
you were the best to judge of such a performance, and I took only
the liberty of giving a hint of my desires, in case it should meet
with your approbation, nor was I surprized, or presumed to be
displeased, at seeing my wishes disappointed. The reasons appeared
very obvious to me; not withstanding the British liberty, I conceived
there were limits even to it. However, my late friend's book has
appeared since and there is even an edition of it lately done in
England: I believe it will be relished by the friends of truth,
who like to see vulgar errors struck at the root. This has been
your continued task, sir; and you deserve for it the praises of all

sincere wellwishers of humanity: give me leave to rank myself among them, and express to you, by this opportunity you have been so kind as to give me, the fervent desire we have to see you in this country. Messrs. Stuart, Dempster, Fordyce, who are so good as to favor me with their company, have given me some hopes of seeing you in this metropolis, where you have so many admirers as readers, and as many sincere friends as there are disciples of philosophy. I don't doubt but my good friend M. Helvetius will join in our wishes, and prevail upon you to come over. I assure you, sir, you won't perceive much the change of the country, for all countries are alike for people that have the same minds.

I am, with the greatest veneration and esteem, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.

D'HOLBACH.

Rue Royale, butte St. Roch, a Paris.

HOLBACH To GARRICK

(Coll. Forster, Vol. XXI; pub., Hedgcock, p. 253)

PARIS, Feb ye 9th, 1766.

I received, my very Dear Sir, with a great deal of pleasure, your agreeable letter of ye 24th of January, but was very sorry to hear that you are inlisted in the numerous troupe of gouty people. Tho' I have myself the honour of being of that tribe I dont desire my friends should enter into the same corporation. I am particularly griev'd to see you among the invalids for you have, more than any other, occasion for the free use of your limbs. However, don't be cross and peevish for that would be only increasing you distemper; and I charge you especially of not scolding that admirable lady Mrs Garrick, whose sweetness of temper and care must be a great comfort in your circumstances. I beg leave to present her with my respects and ye compliments of my wife, that has enjoyed but an indifferent state of health, owing to the severity of the winter. Mr and Made Helvetius desire you both their best wishes and so do all your friends, for whom I can answer that every one of them keeps a kind remembrance of your valuable persons. Dr. Gem thinks you'll do very well to go to Bath, but his opinion is that a thin diet would be more serviceable to you than anything else; believe he is in the right. Abbe Morellet pays many thanks for the answers to his queries, but complains of their shortness and laconism; however it is not your fault. He is glad to hear you have receiv'd his translation of Beccaria's book, Des delits et des peines and the compliments of our friend Dr Gatti to whom I gave your direction before he went to London. Our friend Suard has entered his neck into the matrimonial halter; we are all of us very sorry for it for we know that nothing combin'd with love, will at last make nothing at all.

I was not much surpris'd at the particulars you are pleas'd to mention about Rousseau. According to the thorough knowledge I have had of him I look on that man as a mere philosophical quack, full of affectation, of pride, of oddities and even villainies; the work he

is going to publish justifies the last imputation. Is his memory so short as to forget that Mr Grimm, for those 9 years past, has taken care of the mother of his wench or _gouvernante_ whom he left to starve here after having debauch'd her daughter and having got her 3 or 4 times with child. That great philosopher should remember that Mr. Grimm has in his hands letters under his own hand-writing that prove him the most ungrateful dogg in the world. During his last stay in Paris he made some attempts to see Mr Diderot, and being refused that favor, he pretended that Diderot endeavoured to see him, but that himself had refused peremptorily to comply with his request. I hope these particulars will suffice to let you know what you are to think of that illustrious man. I send you here a copy of a letter supposed to come from the King of Prussia, but done by Mr Horace Walpole, whereby you'll see that gentleman has found out his true character. But enough of that rascal who deserves not to be in Mr Hume's company but rather among the bears, if there are any in the mountains of Wales.

I am surprized you have not receiv'd yet the _Encyclopedie_, for a great number of copies have been sent over already to England unless you have left your subscription here, where hitherto not one copy has been delivered for prudent reasons.

We have had in the French Comedy a new play called _Le Philosophie sans le savoir_ done and acted in a new stile, quite natural and moving: it has a prodigious success and deserves it extremely well. Marmontel will give us very soon upon the Italian stage his comical opera of _La Bergere des Alpes_. I hope it will prove very agreeable to the Publick, having been very much delighted by the rehearsal of it; the music was done by Mr Cohaut who teaches my wife to play on the luth. We expect a tragedy of the Dutch Barnvelt.

Mr Wilkes is still in this town, where he intends to stay until you give him leave to return to his native country. We have had the pleasure of seeing Mr Chanquion, your friend, who seems to be a very discerning gentleman and to whom in favor of your friendship I have shown all the politeness I could. I hear that Sr James Macdonald has been ill at Parma, but is now recovered and in Rome. Abbe Galliani is still at Naples and stands a fair chance of being employ'd in the ministry there.

Adieu, very dear Sir and remember your affectionate friend
D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 39)

PARIS the 22d Of May (1766)

My dear Sir

I am extremely glad to know your lucky passage and happy arrival in your native country. I hope you know too well the sincere

dispositions of my heart as to doubt of the friendship I have vowed to you for life; it has been of too long a duration to be shaken by any circumstances, and especially by those that do honor to you. I shall be very happy if your affairs (that seem to be in a fair way) permit you to drop over very soon to spend some time in this place along with Miss Wilkes to whom Made D'Holbach and I pay our best compliments. I can easily paint to my imagination the pleasure you both felt at your first meeting; everybody that has any sensibility must be acquainted with the grateful pangs in those moving circumstances.

Your case with the hawker at your entry in London is very odd and whimsical you did extremely well to humour the man in his opinion about Mr. Wilkes. I dare say if you had done otherwise his fist would have convinc'd you of the goodness of your cause, and then it would have been impossible for you to pass for a dead man any longer; which however, I think was very necessary for you in the beginning. I expect with great eagerness the settlement of your affairs with the ministry to your own satisfaction; be persuaded, Dear Sir, that nobody interests himself in your happiness than myself, and nothing will conduce more to it than your steady attachment to the principles of honor and patriotism.

If you don't find a way of disposing of the little packet, you need not take much trouble about it, and you may bring it back along with you, when you come to this place, as to the kind offers you are so good as to make me about commissions, experience has taught me that it is unsafe to trust you with them, so I beg leave with gratitude to decline your proposals as that point.

All our common friends and acquaintances desire their best compliments to you, and believe me, my dear Sir.

Your affectionate oblig'd humble servant
D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES
(Brit. Mus. Mss., VOL 30869, p. 81)
PARIS 9ber 10th 1766

My very Dear Sir

I receiv'd with the greatest pleasure the news of your lucky arrival in Engelland. You know the sentiments of my heart, and are undoubtedly convinc'd how much I wish for the good success of all your enterprises tho I am to be a great looser by it. I rejoice very heartily at the fine prospect you have now in view and don't doubt but the persons you mention will succeed if they are in good earnest: which is allways a little doubtful in people of that Kidney.

We have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Wilkes three or four times since your departure, she is extreamly well and longs for the return of her

friend Mlle Helvetius the 20th of this month.

Rousseau will very likely hate the English very cordially for making him pay so dear for his books, it is however a sign that he told us a lye when he pretended in his writings to have no books at all, as to his guitar he should buy a new one to tune his heart a little better than he did before.

We have no news here, except the Election of Mr Thomas as a member of the french academy. Marquis Beccaria is going to leave us very soon being obliged to return to Milan: Count Veri will at the same time set out for England.

I'll be oblig'd to you for a copy or two of the book printed in holland you mentioned in your letter you may send it by some private opportunity to Miss Wilkes, with, proper directions. A gentleman of our Society should be glad to get 2 copies of Baskervilles' virgil _in octavo_.

Tho Mr Davenport and Rousseau seem to be pleased very much with one another, I suppose they may very soon be tired of their squabbling, and the latter like the apostles will shake of against the barbarous Britons the dust of his feet.

Receive the hearty compliments of my wife and all our friends. You know the true sentiments of my heart for you,

Dear Sir. I am with great sincerity
your most obedient humble Servant
D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 173)

Dear Sir

I receiv'd with a great deal of pleasure your friendly letter from Ostende of the 26th. nov. I was extreamly glad to hear your happy arrival at that place, and do not doubt but you met with a lucky passage to Dover the following day, we are now enjoying the conversation of your British friends about elections; that will not be tedious for you if, according to your hopes, you should succeed in your projects.

I see by your letter that instead of coming back directly by Calais you intend to travel with Miss Wilkes through Antwerp and the Low countries, which I should think not very advisable in this rigorous season of the year, for generally at that time the waters are lock'd up by the frost and travelling is bad et tedious and may be would prove hurtful to your tender fellow traveler to whom my wife and I desire our best compliments. Such a scheme will be more advantageous for you both and more conformable to the wishes of your friends in this place.

I hope your arrival in London will contribute to reconcile abbe

Galliani to that place, where he complains of having not heard of the sun since he set his foot on British shore, however he may comfort himself for we have had very little of it in this country. The Abbe must be overjoy'd at the news of the Jesuits being expell'd from his Native country for now he may say _Gens inimica mihi Tyrrenum navigat aquor_. We have no material news in this country, except that the queen continues to be in a very bad state of health.

If there is some good new romance I'll be oblig'd to bring it over along with you as, well as a couple of french books call'd _Militaire philosophe_ and _Theologie portative_ in case you may easily find them in London, for we cannot get them here. I am told the works of one Morgan have been esteem'd in your country but I don't know the titles of them, if you should know them and meet with them with facility, I should be very much oblig'd to you provided you make me pay a little more than you have done hitherto for your commissions.

All our common friends beg their compliments and I wish for your speedy return, and I am Sincerely

Dear Sir

Your faithful affectionate humble servant

D'HOLBACH

PARIS the 10th of decemb. 1767

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30870, p. 59)

GRANDVAL, 17th of July 1768

Dear Sir

I receiv'd with a great deal of pleasure your very agreeable letter of the 28th of last month. I am extreamly glad that your generous soul is very far from sinking under the weight of these Misfortunes, and to see that you don't give up the hopes of carrying triumphantly your point notwithstanding the discouragements you have met with lately.

I need not tell you how much your friends in Paris and I in particular interest ourselves in all the events that may befall you. Our old friendship ought to be a sure pledge of my sincere sentiments for you, and of my best wishes for your good success in all your undertakings.

I believe you can do no better but to keep strictly to the rules you have laid down for your conduct, and I don't doubt but you'll find it will answer the best to your purpose.

I am very much oblig'd to you, Dear Sir, for the kind offers you make in your friendly letter. I have desir'd already Mr Suard to bring over a few books lately published in your metropolis. I am very glad to hear that Gentleman is pleas'd with his journey.

There's no possibility of getting for you a compleat sett of Callots engravings. Such a collection must be the business of many years; it is to be found only after the decease of some curious men who have taken

a great deal of trouble to collect them. I found indeed in two shops 8 or 10 of them, but the proofs (les epreuves) were very indifferent and they wanted to sell them excessively dear; in general 200 guineas would procure a collection very far from being compleat.

My wife and all our common acquaintance desire their best compliments to you and to Miss Wilkes and you know the sentiments wherewith I am for ever

Dear Sir

your affectionate friend and
very humble servant

D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30871, p. 16)

PARIS the 19th of March 1770

Dear Sir

I receiv'd with a due sense of gratitude the favour of your last letter, and was overjoy'd to hear from yourself that your long confinement has not been able hitherto to obstruct the lively flow of your spirits. A little more patience and you'll reach the end of all your misfortunes, that have been faithfully partaken by your friends in England and abroad, for my own part I wish most sincerely that everything for the future may turn to your profit and welfare, without hurting that of your country, to whom, as a lover of mankind, I am a well wisher.

My wife desires her best compliments to you and your beloved Daughter, whom we both expect to see again with a great deal of pleasure in this country next month. Notwithstanding our bad circumstances we are making very great preparations for the Wedding of the Dauphin, and our metropolis begins already to be filled with foreigners that flock hither from all parts of the world. Our friend Mr D'Alainville is to set out at the end of April to fetch the Archdutchess at Strasbourg and bring mask (ed) (?) her different stages on the road to Versailles.

We have no news in the literary world except that Voltaire is become lately _le pere temporal_, that is to say the benefactor of the _Capucins du pays de Gex_ where he lives, a title of which all his pranks seemd to exclude him, but grace you know, is omnipotent, and monks are not over nice when there is something to be got by their condescension.

If the hurry of affairs whould leave you any moments to read curious books I would advise you to peruse two very strange works lately publish'd viz _Recherches philosophiques sur les americains_, le _Systeme de la Nature_ par Mirabaud. I suppose you'll find them cheaper and more easily in London than at Paris.

All your late acquaintances in this Town desire me to present you with their sincere compliments and best wishes; as to mine you know that they have no other object but your Welfare.

I am, Dear Sir, for ever
your most affectionate friend
and humble servant
D'HOLBACH

P. S. I'll be very much oblig'd to you for sending over to me in
2 vol. small octavo.

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Wilkes, Correspondence, London, 1805, Vol. 4, p. 176)
PARIS, April 27; 1775

"_My Lord_,

"I received with the utmost gratitude your lordship's friendly letter of the 28th of March. (1775?) I should have done myself the honor of answering sooner to your kind propositions, if I had not been prevented by some gouty infirmities that have assailed in the beginning of this spring. I esteem myself very happy to find that the hurry of business, and your exaltation to the rank of chief-magistrate, could not make you forget your friendship to me; though my present circumstances do not permit me to make use of your friendly invitation, be persuaded my very dear lord that Madame D'Holbach and myself shall forever keep these signs of your kindness, in very grateful remembrance.

We both desire our best compliments to your very amiable lady-mayoress: who acted so well her part lately in the Egyptian hall, to the satisfaction of that prodigious crowd you have been entertaining there. All members of our society that have had the happiness of being acquainted with you, desire to be kindly remembered; and a continuation of your valuable friendship shall for ever be the utmost ambition
my lord
of your most sincerely devoted
D'HOLBACH"

GALIANI To HOLBACH

(Galiani, Corresp., Vol. I, p. 199)
NAPLES, le 21 juillet, 1770

Bonjour, mon cher Baron,"

J'ai vu le _Systeme de la Nature_. C'est la ligne ou finit la

tristesse de la morne et seche verite, au-dela commence la gaiete du roman. Il n'y a rien de mieux que de se persuader que les des sont pipes: cette idee en enfante milles autres, et un nouveau monde se regenere. Le M. Mirabaud est un vrai abbe Terray de la metaphysique. Il fait des reductions, des suspensions, et cause la banqueroute du savoir, du plaisir et de l'esprit humain. Mais vous allez me dire qu'aussi il y avait trop de nonvaleurs: on etait trop endette, il courait trop de papiers non reels sur la place. C'est vrai aussi, et voila pourquoi la crise est arrivee.

Adieu, mon cher baron. Ecrivez-moi de longues lettres, pour que le plaisir en soit plus grand. Embrassez moi longuement la baronne, et soyez longue dans tout que vous faites, dans tout ce que vous patientez, dans tout ce que vous esperer. La longanimite est une belle vertu; c'est elle qui me fait esperer de revoir Paris.

Adieu.

HOLBACH To GALIANI

(Critica, Vol. I, 1903, p. 489)

GRANDVAL, le 25 d'aout 1770

Bonjour, mon tres delicieux abbe,

J'ai bien recu votre tres-precieuse lettre du 21 de juillet qui m'accuse la reception de celle que je vous avais ecrite le 3 de juin. Je vois que celle-ci a ete longtemps en route, attendu que M. Torcia a qui M. Diderot s'etait charge de la remettre, a encore trainasse quelque temps a Paris, suivant la louable coutume des voyageurs qui nous quittent toujours avec peine.

Je suis bien aise que vous ayez lu le livre de Mirabaud qui fait un bruit affreux dans ce pays. L'abbe Bergier l'a deja refute tres-longuement et sa reponse paraitra cet hiver. La Sorbonne est, dit-on, occupee a detruire ce maudit _Systeme_ qui lui parait au moins heretique. Voltaire lui-meme se prepare a le pulveriser; en attendant nos seigneurs du Parlement y viennent d'y repondre par des fagots, ainsi qu'a quelque autres ouvrages de meme trempé. Ce qu'il y a de facheux c'est que l'ouvrage de V. qui a pour titre _Dieu et les hommes_ a ete enveloppe dans la meme condamnation, ce qui doit deplaire souverainement a l'auteur. Je me rappelle a cette occasion ce que M. Hume dit d'un catholique que Henri VIII fit conduire au bucher avec quelques heretiques, et dont le seul chagrin etait d'etre brule en si mauvaise compagnie. Nonobstant toutes ces refutations, il parait tous les jours quelques nouveaux ouvrages impies, au point que je suis tres surpris que la recolte ait ete si bonne dans le royaume. En dernier lieu on vient de publier un ouvrage sous le titre de _Droit des souverains sur les biens du

clerge_, qui, sans contenir des impietes n'en est pas moins deplaisant pour cela: Il va droit a la cuisine, et veut que pour liquider la dette nationale on vende tous les biens ecclesiastiques et que l'on met nos pontifes a la pension. Vous sentez qu'une proposition si mal sonnante n'a pu manquer de mettre le ciel en courroux; sa colere s'est decharge sur cinq ou six libraires et colporteurs qui ont ete mis en prison.

[ENDNOTES]

[1:1] Diderot, *_Oeuvres_*, ed. Assezat et Tourneaux, Vol. XX, p. 28.

[2:2] Grimm, *_Corr. Lit._*, Vol. XV, p. 421.

[3:3] Diderot, *_Oeuvres_*, Vol. XX, p. 95.

[3:4] Among the most important are Damiron J. P., *_Memoires pour servir a l'histoire de la philosophie au dix-huitieme siecle_* (Paris, 1858, 3 vols., 8vo); Lange, *_Geschichte des Materialismus_* (Eng. tr., Boston, 1877); Morley, *_Diderot and the Encyclopedists_* (N. Y., 1891, 2 vols., 12mo); Plekhanow, G., *_Beitraege zur Geschichte des Materialismus_* (Stuttgart, 1896); Hancock, A. E., *_The French Revolution and the English Poets_* (N. Y., 1899); Tallentyre, *_The Friends of Voltaire_* (London, 1906); Fabre, *_Les Peres de la Revolution_* (Paris, 1910), etc.

[5:5] Confessions, *_Oeuvres_*, Vol. XXIV, p. 338.

[5:6] Bib. Nat. mss. *_Pieces originales_*, 1529, d'Holbach, 34, 861.

[6:7] Carlyle, Rev. Dr. A., *_Autobiography_*, ed. Burton, Boston, 1861, p. 137 sq. for Holbach's English friends mentioned in his letters to Wilkes.

[12:9] See Chap. II and Bibliography, Pt. I, for these and his other works.

[12:10] Grimm *_Cor. Lit._*, Vol. II, p. 283.

[12:11] *_Gazette de France_*, Aug. 10, 1754.

[12:12] Jal, *_Dict. Critique_*, p. 685.

[13:13] His career is somewhat doubtful. He travelled in Italy in 1779 and Abbe Galiani, an old friend of Holbach's, got a very agreeable impression of him. John Wilkes, in a letter to his daughter in 1781, seems to imply that he had not turned out very well, and hopes that the baron's second son will make good the deficiencies of the first. In 1806 he published a translation of Weiland's *_Oberon_* or *_Huon de Bordeaux_* which went thru another edition in 1825, but those are the only details that have come to light.

[13:14] Diderot, in writing to Mlle Volland Sep. 17, 1760 says: "On nourrit, a Chenvieres, les deux filles de Madame d'Holbach. L'ainee est belle comme un cherubin; c'est un visage rond, de grands yeux bleus, des levres fines, une bouche riante, la peau la plus blanche et la plus animee, des cheveux chatains qui ceignent un tres joli front. La cadette est un peloton d'embonpoint ou l'on ne distingue encore que du blanc et du vermillon."

[13:15] Gazette de France, June 1, 1781.

[14:16] Holbach's intendant was [a] Jew, Berlise. After his death several of his old servants Vincent, David, and Plocque, contested Holbach's will, in which they thought they were legatees. The case was in the courts for several years and was finally decided against them. Douarche, *_Les tribunaux civil de Paris pendant la revolution_*, Paris, 1905, Vol. I., pp. 141, 261, 325, 689.

[14:17] Avezac-Lavigne, *_Diderot_*, p. 5.

[15:18] *_Critica_*, Vol. I, p. 48, note.

[15:19] He met Voltaire in Paris in 1778, however, and Naigeon relates that Voltaire greeted him very cordially and said that he had long desired to make his acquaintance.

[15:20] Collignon, *_Diderot_*, p. 1.

[16:21] Avezac-Lavigne, *_Diderot_*, p. 75, note.

[16:22] Romilly, *_Memoirs_*, Vol. I, p. 179.

[16:23] Diderot, *_Oeuvres_*, Vol. I, p. lxvi, note.

[17:24] Journal de Paris, Dec. 2, 1789.

[17:25] See appendix, p. 73, p. 77.

[18:26] See appendix, p. 71.

[19:27] See appendix, p. 72.

[19:28] See p. 6 sq. and appendix pp. 75 sq.

[39:2] Barbier, *_Dict._*, Vol. I, p. 175 sq.

[40:3] Barbier, Vol. I, p. xxxiii, note.

[40:4] *_Oeuvres_*, Vol. XVIII, p. 265.

[44:5] *_Oeuvres_*, Vol. XIV, p. 352.

[47:7] Middleton's translation, preface.

[47:8] Cf. p. 94. [Bibliography Part I]

[54:1] Morley, *_Diderot_*, Vol. II, p. 155.

[55:2] Later *_Bon-sens_* and *_Theologie portative_* were doomed to the flames by the condemnations of Jan. 10, 1774, and February 16, 1776.

[55:3] *_Systeme de la Nature_*, ed. 1771, Vol. II, p. 496.

[56:4] Grimm, *_Cor. Lit._*, Vol. IX, p. 167.

[56:5] Voltaire, *_Oeuvres_*, ed. Beuchot, Vol. LXVI, p. 404. Subsequent references to Voltaire are from this edition.

[56:6] Vol. LXVII, p. 265.

[56:7] Grimm, *_Cor. Lit._*, Vol. IX, p. 90.

[57:8] Vol. LXVI, p. 432.

[57:9] Vol. LXVI, p. 563.

[57:10] Vol. LXVI, p. 386.

[58:11] Vol. LXVI, p. 394.

[58:12] Vol. XXVIII, p. 493.

[58:13] Vol. LXVI, p. 469.

[58:14] Goethe, *_Wahrheit und Dichtung_*, 11th Book, Goethe's *_Werke_*, Stuttgart, Vol. 19, p. 55.

Auf philosophische Weise erleuchtet und gefoedert zu werden, hatten wir keinen Trieb noch Hang: ueber religioese Gegenstaende glaubten wir uns selbst aufgeklaert zu haben, und so war der heftige Streit franzoesischer Philosophen mit dem Pfafftum uns ziemlich gleichgueltig. Verbotene, zurn Feuer verdaminte Buecher, welche damals grossen Laermen machten, uebten keine Wirkung auf uns. Ich gedenke statt aller des *_Systeme de la Nature_*, das wir aus Neugier in die Hand nahmen. Wir begriffen nicht, wie ein solches Buch gefaehrlich sein koennte. Es kam uns so grau, so cimmericisch, so totenhaft vor, das wir Muehe hatten, seine Gegenwart auszuhalten, dass wir davor wie vor einern Gespenste schauderten. Der Verfasser glaubt sein Buch ganz eigens zu empfehlen, wenn er in der Vorrede versichert, dass er, als ein abgelebter Greis, soeben in die Grube stiegend, der Mit- und Nachwelt die Wahrheit verkuenden wolle. Wir lachten ihn aus: denn wir glaubten bemerkt zu haben, dass von alten Leuten eigentlich an der Welt nichts geschaetzt werde, was lebenswuerdig und gut an ihr ist. "Alte Kirchen haben dunkle Glaeser" "Wie Kirschen und Beeren schmecken, muss mann Kinder und Sperlinge fragen"--dies waren unsere Lust und Leibworte: und so schien uns jenes Buch, als die rechte Quintessenz der Greisenheit, unschmachhaft, ja

abgeschmacket Alles sollte notwendig sein und deswegen kein Gott.
"Koennte es denn aber nicht auch notwendig einen Gott geben?" fragten wir. Dabei gestanden wir freilich, das wir uns den Notwendigkeiten der Tage und Naechte, der Jahreszeiten, der klimatischen Einflusse, der physischen und animalischen Zustaende nicht wohl entziehen koennten: doch fuehlten wir etwas in uns, das als vollkommene Willkuer erschien, und wieder etwas, das sich mit dieser Willkuer ins Gleichgewicht zu setzen suchte. Die Hoffnung, immer vernuenftiger zu werden, uns von den aussern Dingen, ja von uns selbst immer unabhaengiger zu machen, konnten wir nicht aufgeben. Das Wort Freiheit klingt so schon, dass mann es nicht entbehren koennte und wenn es einen Irrtum bezeichnete.

Keiner von uns hatte das Buch hinausgelesen; denn wir fanden uns in der Erwartung getauescht, in der wir es auf geschlagen hatten. _System der Natur_ ward angekuendigt und wir hofften also wirklich etwas von der Natur, unsere Abgoetten, zu erfahren. Physik und Chemie, Himmels- und Erdbeschreibung, Naturgeschichte und Anatomie und so manches andere hatte nun zeit Jahren und bis auf den letzten Tag uns immer auf die geschmuechte grosse Welt hingeweisen, und wir hatten gern von Sonnen und Sternen, von Planeten und Monden, von Bergen, Thaelern, Fluessen und Meeren und von allem, was dann lebt und webt, das Naehere sowie das Allgemeinere erfahren. Das hierbei wohl manches vorkommen muesste, was dem gemeinen Menschen als schaedlich, der Geistlichkeit als gefaehrlich, dem Staat als unzuessaessig erschienen moechte, daran hatten wir keinen Zweifel, und wir hofften, dieses Buechlein sollte nicht unwuerdig die Feuerprobe bestauden haben. Allein wie hohl und leer ward uns in deiser tristen Atheistischen Halbnacht zu Mute, in welcher die Erde mit allen ihren Gebilden, der Himmel mit allen seinen Gestirnen verschwand! Eine Materie sollte sein von Ewigkeit und von Ewigkeit her bewegt, und sollte nun mit dieser Bewegung rechts und links und nach allen Seiten ohne weiteres die unendlichen Phaenomene des Daseins hervorbringen. Dies alles waeren wir sogar zufrieden gewesen, wenn der Verfasser wirklich aus seiner bewegten Materie die Welt vor unsern Augen aufgebaut haette. Aber er mochte von der Natur so wenig wissen als wir; denn indem er einige allgemeine Begriffe hingepfahlte, verlaesst er sie sogleich, um dasjenige, was hoeher als die Natur oder als hoehere Natur in der Natur erscheint, zur materiellen schweren, zwar bewegten, aber doch richtungs- und gestaltlosen Natur zu verwandeln, und glaubt dadurch recht viel gewonnen zu haben. Wenn uns jedoch dieses Buch einigen Schaden gebracht hat, so war es der, das wir allen Philosophie, besonderers aber der Metaphysick recht herzlich gram wurden, und bleiben, dagegen aber auf lebendige Wissen, Erfahren, Thun und Dichten uns nur desto lebhafter und leidenschaftlicher hinwarfen.

[64:15] Vol. II, p. 261, ed. 1820.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B. N., Bibliotheque Nationale.
B. M., British Museum.
L. C., Library of Congress.
C. U., Columbia University.
H. U., Harvard University.
U. T. S., Union Theological Seminary.
G. T. S., General Theological Seminary.
A. T. S., Andover Theological Seminary.
N. Y., New York Public Library.
B. P., Boston Public Library.

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Quatrieme Lettre. A un Gentilhomme Hollandois pour lui prouver que le systeme de Spinoza est depourvu de fondements et peche dans ses principes. (pp. 154-186.)

Cinquieme Lettre. Dans laquelle on prouve que le mouvement est essentiel a la Matiere; en reponse a quelques remarques qui ont ete faites a l'Auteur au sujet de sa refutation du Systeme de Spinoza.

Nunc quae mobilitas fit reddita Materiae Corporibus paucis

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Audite hoc Sacerdotes, et attendite Domus Israel, et Domus Regis auscultate; quia vobis Judicium est, quoniam Laqueus facti estis Speculationi et rete expansum super Thabor. Osee, Chap. V, Vers. I. Londres (Amsterdam), MDCCLXVIII (1767), (12mo, pp. 243).

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William Street, 1833. (12vo, pp. 236.)

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M.D. Boston, Josiah P. Mendum, 1857.

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B. M. 4017 aa 25.

U. T. S. H 723.

--Ibid. Amsterdam, 1775, 12vo.

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Ouvrage traduit de l'Anglois, Londres, MDCCLXIX. (12vo, pp. 174.)

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De l'Intolerance dans la Religion (d'Holbach), p. 88.

Enfer detruit ou Examen Raisonne du Dogme de l'Eternite des peines. Ouvrages, tr. de L'Anglois a Londres, MDCCLXIX, p. 1.

Dissertation critique sur les tourmens de l'enfer. Traduit de L'Anglois, p. 96 (by Whitefoot).

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--Ibid. Hell destroyed! Now first translated from the French of d'Alembert without any mutilations. London. Printed and published by J. W. Trust, 126 Newgate St., 1823. (8vo, pp. 47.)
(Followed by Whitefoot's Torments of Hell, "now first translated from the French," to p. 83.)

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Atque utinam nunquam Judaea sub acta fuisset Pompeii bellis, imperioque Titi.

Latus excisae pestes contagie serpunt, Victoresques suos natio victa premit. Rutilius, Itinerar. Lia I, vs. 394, Londres, MDCCLXX. (12mo, pp. xxii + 201.)

B. N., D2 5191.

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Londres, 1770 (8vo), (by Peter Annet).

B. N. 3ex. [D2 5349 (2) 8367 et H. 7551].

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Pudet me humani generis, cuius mentis et aures talia ferre potuerunt. S. Augustin. (No date [Amsterdam, 1770?], 16mo, pp. viii + xxxii + 298.)

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--Ecce Homo! or a critical enquiry into the history of Jesus Christ, being a Rational Analysis of the Gospels. (2d ed.) London, 1813. Printed, published and sold by D. I. Easton.

G. T. S. 232 G. H. 69.

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v. 5. Londres, en la imprenta de Davidson, 1822. (2 vols., 12mo, pp. xiii + 200 + 280.)

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Hoc admonere simplices etiam potest,
Opinione alterius ne quid ponderent;
Ambitio namque diffidens mortalium
Aut gratiae subscribunt, aut odio suo;
Erit ille nottis, quem per te cognoveris.
Phaed., Lib. III, Fab. 10.

A Londres, MDCCLXX. (2 Vols., 12mo, pp. xxviii + 280 + 286.)

B. N., H 7,552.

B. M. 4,824 a a a a 27.

1770. Recueil philosophique, ou Melange de Pieces sur la Religion et la Morale. Par differents Auteurs (ed. Naigeon).

Ovando enim ista observans quieto et libero animo esse poteris,
ut ad vem gerendam non Superstionem habeas, sed Rationem ducem.

--Cicero, de Divinat., Lib. 2. Londres, MDCCLXX. (2 vols., 12mo.)

B. N., D2 5309.

Vol. I, p. 129 (VI), Reflexions sur les Craintes de la Mort.

Vol. II, p. 34 (IX), Dissertation sur l'Immortalite de l'ame.

Traduite de l'Anglais.

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Vol. II, p. 125 (XIII). Extrait d'un Ecrit Anglais qui a pour titre _le christianisme aussi ancien que le monde_.

1770. Essai sur les prejuges, ou, De l'influence des opinions sur les moeurs et sur le bonheur des hommes. Ouvrage contenant l'apologie de la philosophie par Mr. D. M.

Assidue quotidiana et consuetudine oculorum assuescunt animi,
neque admirantur, neque requerunt rationes earum rerum quas vident.

--Cicero de Nat. Deorum, Lib. II. Londres, MDCCLXX. (8vo, pp. 394.)

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En Paris. Hallase en la casa de Rosa, Librero. Gran pacio del
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B. N., R 34,366.

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Precede d'un Discours preliminaire et d'un Precis historique de
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reserves (25 centimes).
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Monde Moral. Par M. Mirabaud, Secretaire Perpetuel et l'un
des Quarante de l'Academie Francaise.

Natura rerum vis atque majestas in omnibus momentis fide
caret, si quis mode partes ejus, ac non totam complectatur
animo.--Plin. Hist., Lib. VII. Londres, MDCCLXX.
(2 vols., 8vo, pp. 370 + 412.)
B. M. 4017 f 32
U. T. S. 321 H 7235.

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l'Editeur. Preface de l'Auteur, etc.

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2. Dieu et les hommes.
3. Discours sur les Miracles.
4. Examen des Apologistes.
5. Examen impartial des principales religions du Monde.
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Detexit quo doloso vaticinandi furore Sacerdotes
mysteria, illis saepe ignota, audacter publicant.

--Petronii Satyricon.

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Par Thomas Hobbes; Ouvrage traduit de l'Anglois.
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Discenda virtus est, ars est bonum fieri; erras si existimas

vitia nobiscum nasci; supervenerunt in gesta sunt. --Seneca, Epis. 124.

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Fallitur hora legendi).

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Constituit bonos mores civitati princips. --Seneca, de Clementia, Lib. I.

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Natura duce utendum est: hanc ratio observe, hanc

consultit, idem est ergo beate vivere et secundum naturam. --Seneca

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Numquam aliud natura aliud sapientia dicit.--Juvenal.

A Paris. Chez G. de Bure. Rue Serpente, No. 6, MDCCXC.

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