

Vicomte de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 1802

There is nothing beautiful, pleasing, or grand in life, but that which is more or less mysterious. The most wonderful sentiments are those which produce impressions difficult to be explained. ...

We perceive at first glance, that, in regards to mysteries, the Christian religion has a great advantage over the religions of antiquity. The mysteries of the latter bore no relation to man, and afforded, at the utmost, but a subject of reflection to the philosopher or of song to the poet. Our mysteries, on the contrary, speak directly to the heart; they comprehend the secrets of our existence. The question here is not about a futile arrangement of numbers, but concerning the salvation and felicity of the human race. Is it possible for man, whom daily experience so fully convinces of his ignorance and frailty, to reject the mysteries of Jesus Christ? They are the mysteries of the unfortunate! ...

There is a God. The plants of the valley and the cedars of the mountain bless his name; the insect hums his praise; the elephant salutes him with the rising day; the bird glorifies him among the foliage; the lightning bespeaks his power, and the ocean declares his immensity. Man alone has said, "There is no God."
...

Not satisfied with enlarging the sphere of the passions in the drama and the epic poem, the Christian religion is itself a species of passion, which has its transports, its ardors, its sighs, its joys, its tears, its love of society and of solitude. This, as we know, is by the present age denominated *fanaticism*.