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RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Illustrated from writers of the period

BY

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PREFACE

The importance of the eighteenth century in the history of thought is to-day widely recognised. This book is designed to illustrate changes and developments in thought concerning religion which the century witnessed, and the method has been to select passages from representative writers of the period, and to arrange them in sections which will afford a view of the chief issues which became prominent. The principles underlying the arrangement are expounded in the general Introduction, while the special introductions prefixed to the several extracts give a brief biography of each writer and indicate his place in the life and thought of the age. The period lends itself to this treatment, for its importance lies in the nature of the problems which were then definitely raised for the first time, even more than in the individual greatness of its writers. For this reason many of the lesser writers, even when they are in themselves undistinguished, are yet important as representing the tendencies of the time, and therefore, although the greater names are naturally the most prominent in the selection, we have not restricted ourselves to writers of the first rank. The philosophical classics are readily accessible in modern reprints and critical editions, but other books here included have never been reprinted and cannot be easily obtained.

Some obvious omissions have been made deliberately. Since the book is intended primarily to deal with the movement of thought in England, many continental writers, whom the reader might otherwise expect to find in a collection of this kind, have been left out. Again, although Waterland's classical treatise on the Eucharist falls within the period, sacramental doctrine has been excluded, since a specialised topic like this could not have been adequately illustrated within the limits of the volume. The same may be said of the

Arian controversy on the Person of Christ, which was so prominent in the first quarter of the century. The Moral Philosophers also, with the exception of Butler who is included on other grounds, find no place.

An entirely consistent policy in the choice of editions from which to reprint would have involved more bibliographical detail than was appropriate to the purpose of the book; but, in the case of most of the writers, contemporary editions, and not modern reprints, have been followed. The Index of Authors and Passages provides a complete list of the writings from which passages have been selected.

In the passages from Kant, we have made use of the translations in T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other works on the Theory of Ethics*, Third Edition (Longmans, Green and Co., 1883) and J. H. Bernard, *Kant's Critique of Judgement*, Second Edition (Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1931); for permission to do so we are indebted to Miss Abbott, and to Messrs Macmillan.

We have to thank Mrs J. M. Creed for help in translating from the French as well as in the correction of proofs throughout the book.

J.M.C.
J.S.B.S.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE
May 1934

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INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century is often spoken of as "the Age of Reason". The term describes well the manner in which representative men of the century thought of their own epoch. It seemed that the heavy weight of authority and tradition was being lifted, and that mankind was now free to guide its own course by the eternal principles of Reason. Politically, intellectually, and religiously the eighteenth century may be said to be the inversion of the Middle Age. The political conflicts of the Middle Age had been waged within the framework of a theocratic society. Imperialist and Papalist alike had contended with varying doctrines of Divine Right as their controversial weapons. The question was how the respective rights of Pope and Emperor were to be reconciled within the *Respublica Christiana*. For both sides the *Civitas Dei* was a given fact, assumed to be the divine and all-embracing society of mankind. The philosophy of the Middle Age was a hardy growth, but for the representative thinkers it led up to and was controlled by the higher principles of revealed theology. Ethically the standards of the Middle Age were dominated by the ascetic ideal. Man was a fallen creature, born in sin, calling out for the aids of supernatural grace. Though a relative goodness was not denied to the natural virtues of the world, the religious life *par excellence* was the life of austerity and renunciation. In all these respects the eighteenth century reversed the principles and standards of the Middle Age. The State revenged itself for its age-long subjection to the Church, and in Protestant and Catholic lands alike the civil ruler tended to direct the Church as a department of State. Natural Religion now took precedence and Revelation became a questionable adjunct. The ethical ideal of asceticism fell into

disrepute; the doctrine of original sin was more or less forgotten, and the religious life tended to be identified with the practice of the virtues.

This inversion had been long maturing. Although the mediaeval setting of life may in many respects be said to have endured until the end of the seventeenth century, the presuppositions on which it rested had been undermined. The Renaissance with its awakening interest in the old pagan culture which lay below the structure of mediaeval Christendom first challenged the supremacy of the ascetic ideal. The Reformation in the name of God and faith shook the fabric of the entire Latin Church and robbed it of the allegiance of the greater part of northern Europe. Although the Reformation failed to carry through a systematic reconstruction of theology, its principle of Justification by Faith and the emphasis which it laid upon the individual conscience opened the way for further developments, and prepared the Protestant world to receive the seeds of a theological rationalism which in aim and temper was far removed from the original message of the Reformation. Cartesianism by its method of systematic doubt and its reconstruction of philosophical thought on the basis of the self-consciousness of the individual powerfully, if somewhat indirectly, reinforced the revolt against the mediaeval scheme. Lastly the immense development of physical science, beginning with the revolutionary doctrines of Copernicus and Galileo and culminating in the Newtonian Physics, encouraged men to think of the universe as a mechanical system, governed in its whole extent by fixed and ascertainable laws.

A strong belief in the capacity of human faculties to understand and master the world was the outcome of these different forces. Supernatural sanctions faded, and the authority of tradition was set aside. Thus the beginning of the eighteenth century may be said to mark the rise of a new type of

civilisation in which autonomous reason claims the supreme power and dispossesses the older conceptions of Divine Right.

But the eighteenth century was more closely bound to history than its leaders supposed. The mediaeval scheme was inverted rather than superseded. The truths of Reason, thought to be eternal and self-evident, were themselves a part of the legacy of history, and as the century wore on they too were found to call for justification and defence. Especially in the field of religion did the inadequacies of rational thought become apparent. However necessary it was—and to us the necessity is plain—that the supremacy of "Revelation" as traditionally conceived should be displaced, the new mode of thought had to learn that within the sphere of "Revelation" were included principles of religion which the rational theology was unable to replace from its own resources. Thus in the later decades of the century we find the beginnings of a revolt against the reign of Reason, as Reason had been understood by an earlier generation—a revolt which pointed the way to the very different religious philosophy of the succeeding century.

The passages selected from the theological literature of the eighteenth century have been arranged in six sections under the following titles:

1. Natural Religion and Revelation.
2. The Credentials of Revelation.
3. The Grounds and Sufficiency of Natural Religion Considered.
4. The Passing of the Age of Reason.
5. The Study of the Bible.
6. The Church in its Relation to the State.

The first four sections are roughly chronological in that the general tendencies which they illustrate became prominent

more or less in the order in which they are presented. But in the earlier sections the story is carried through to the end of the century, and all the sections overlap. Within the sections chronological order is usually, though not invariably, observed.

The section entitled "Natural Religion and Revelation" introduces the main theme of theological thought in the eighteenth century and at the same time illustrates the form the chief problems assumed at the opening of the Age of Enlightenment.

The thought of Christendom had long been familiar with the idea that human reason, unaided by Revelation, was capable of attaining to certain fundamental religious truths, including the existence of God, His relation to the world as its Creator, and His moral government of man. But the Christian religion itself was a "revealed" religion, transcending in its content the capacity of natural reason and sharply distinguished from these truths of reason in the manner of its communication and of its reception; albeit in the system of St Thomas Aquinas—widely influential in the seventeenth century—the truths of reason and the truths of Revelation, such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Sacraments, were held to be in ultimate harmony. "All points of Christian doctrine", wrote Richard Hooker, "are either demonstrable conclusions or demonstrative principles. Conclusions have strong and invincible proofs as well in the school of Jesus Christ as elsewhere. And principles be grounds which require no proof in any kind of science, because it sufficeth if either their certainty be evident in itself, or evident by the light of some higher knowledge, and in itself such as no man's knowledge is ever able to overthrow. Now the principles whereupon we do build our souls have their evidence where they had their original, and as received from thence we adore them, we hold them in reverent admiration,

we neither argue nor dispute about them, we give unto them that assent which the oracles of God require."[1] Here we have the generally received notion of the two distinct spheres of theology: (1) those truths which can either "be discovered by sense" or "concluded by mere natural principles", and (2) the "principles of revealed truth" apprehended by faith. Christians of all Confessions could have agreed that "the oracles of God" were to be "adored" without argument or disputation. None the less it was precisely in the application and interpretation of these revealed principles that the controversies of the Reformation era might be said to have been concentrated. It was an easy movement of thought to fall back upon the conclusions of Reason and to attempt to bring "the oracles of God" wholly within the sphere of Reason, or even to dispense with Revelation altogether.

A step in this direction was taken by Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), "the Father of Deism".[2] Lord Herbert did not deny the possibility of Revelation—indeed he believed that he himself had received divine guidance to publish his work *De Veritate*, but he urged the uncertainty which must attach to any revelation received by tradition, and the interested motives of priests in maintaining such a revelation, and he found the essentials of religion to consist in certain primary ideas (*notitiae communes*) which, in spite of the machinations of priestcraft, have been present at all times in the mind of man. The primary ideas which he acknowledged were five in number:

(1) that there is some supreme deity;
(2) that this supreme deity ought to be worshipped;
(3) that virtue conjoined with piety is, and ever was, the chief part of divine worship;

[1] *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk v, ch. lxiii.
[2] He was an elder brother of George Herbert, the Anglican poet.

(4) that men have ever had an abhorrence of crime, and have always known that all vices and crimes should be expiated by repentance;

(5) that after this life there are rewards and punishments.[1]

Lord Herbert was before his time. His views on religion encountered considerable hostility and he left no direct successors. But more than a generation after his death one of the early free-thinking controversialists, Charles Blount (1654–1693), avowed himself his follower and in his own works borrowed extensively from Herbert's writings.

The tendency to find Natural Religion all-sufficient was inevitably regarded by the Christian Churches as a challenge to the Christian Faith, and it became necessary to defend what had previously been more or less taken for granted. But, although the Christian apologists did not accept the deistic conclusion, they were for the most part so far carried away by the spirit of the time that they, no less than the Deists, admitted and even courted the appeal to Reason. The old orthodoxy was not only attacked from without, it was profoundly modified from within. In England in the third quarter of the seventeenth century that singularly interesting and attractive group, the Cambridge Platonists, had helped to prepare the way for the Age of Reason. In their teaching, the boundaries between rational and revealed theology were ignored. The light of Reason was to flood the whole sphere of religious faith. The rational and the spiritual to them were one: "Sir", wrote Benjamin Whichcote to Anthony Tuckney in 1651, "I oppose not rational to spiritual; for spiritual is

[1] See *De Veritate, prout distinguitur a Revelatione, a Verisimili, a Possibili, et a Falso* (first published in Paris in 1624).

For a somewhat similar catalogue of religious principles, see Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Cap. xiv, quoted below, p. 217.

most rational."[1] By this exaltation of the Reason they anticipated the coming age. But the complexion of the eighteenth century was not theirs; for, whereas to the divines of the later period the appeal to reason meant the appeal to the common human understanding, the Platonist Reason had a wider range and included powers of spiritual perception which the characteristic thought of the eighteenth century failed to appreciate or feared to acknowledge. It was this element in the thought of the Cambridge Platonists which led to a revival of interest in their writings when the eighteenth century was passed.

The extracts contained in this section illustrate mainly deistic and free-thinking notions which became current in England from the time of the Revolution onward. The fact of Revelation was not in general denied, though its purpose and importance were variously estimated. Controversy turned principally upon the evidences for it and upon the question whether it added anything to the truths of Natural Religion or merely confirmed them and made them plain to the ignorant. But the contention that all religious truth was subject ultimately to the test of Reason affected the basis of authority in religion and the method of theological thought irrevocably. In this respect, the Deistic controversy of the early years of the century marks the beginning of the modern period in theology. This contention came to be admitted, at least implicitly, by most theological writers, whether orthodox or not; but it was brought into prominence by the deistic and free-thinking writers who first raised the issue explicitly. Yet, though in this respect important, the theology of these writers on its positive side was limited and insufficient. Their lack of historical knowledge and sympathy, which led them to

[1] *Moral and Religious Aphorisms collected from the Manuscript Papers of the Reverend and Learned Doctor Whichcote*, 2nd ed. with additions by Samuel Salter, London 1753, p. 108.

regard their own Rational Theology as also the original and universal theology of mankind, made it in fact temporary and local. In dispensing with Revelation, or regarding it as merely a republication of this Natural Religion, they were in effect narrowing the content of religion, instead of, as they supposed, rejecting the merely "mysterious" and insecure. Their narrow use of reason, and their view of the world as the smoothly running handiwork of God, involved an optimism too shallow to reckon adequately with evil and suffering. Though, therefore, the critics of Revelation had raised important questions which could not afterwards be silenced, the fuller understanding of Christianity was with their opponents. It lay with the future to recognise their problems whilst, if possible, escaping these limitations.

The section entitled "The Credentials of Revelation" illustrates the more special problems which, in view of the general presuppositions of eighteenth-century thought, inevitably came to occupy the focus of attention. Revelation was conceived as a special disclosure by God of truths which man could not discover unaided. Its divine origin was attested by the manner of its communication and by the signs which had accompanied it. Once the authority of Revealed Religion had been challenged and it had come to be admitted that its defence must be by appeal to reason, the question of these evidences of Christianity became crucial.

Locke based all knowledge upon sensation and reflection upon sensation. He accepted Revelation because he was satisfied that man had reasonable guarantees of its truth in the sensible signs and testimonies recorded to have accompanied it. If a man were willing to accept revelations without such external evidences, he would, in Locke's opinion, be left a prey to subjective impressions without any criterion to distinguish between revelation and hallucination.

In this appeal to the evidence of prophecy and miracle,

Locke was but following the accepted lines of the traditional theology of Christendom. The Apostles and evangelists of the first age, all of whom began with the background of the Old Testament and the Jewish Church, looked to the Scriptures of the Old Covenant to authenticate and confirm their belief that Jesus was the Christ of God. Throughout the Christian centuries, Christians had argued with Jews on the basis of a common recognition of Old Testament Prophecy. The argument from prophecy had been used not less frequently and with far greater success in appealing to the Gentile world. The writings of the Christian apologists of the second and third centuries shew that the Old Testament was a powerful weapon in the Christian armoury; the testimony of prophets "which have been since the world began", embodied in the ancient, world-embracing, Scriptures of the Jewish Church, gave to the new religion the kind of authentication which men were widely predisposed to accept. Appeal to the miracles of Scripture was equally a commonplace of Christian apologetic. The preaching was "in demonstration", not only "of the spirit", but also "of power" (I Cor. ii. 4)[1]—a text which Origen already interpreted of the twofold evidence of prophecy and miracle (*c. Cels.* I, ii). The Resurrection of Jesus Christ naturally held the place of pre-eminence among the miracles. It is, however, relevant to notice that in the early centuries the appeal to miracles was addressed to a world which was very generally prepared to assume the invisible operations of a supersensible order. When, for example, Athanasius appeals to the Resurrection of Christ in controversy with Pagans, he does not establish its reality by detailed verification of the evidence of the New Testament, but chiefly by the present evidence of Christ's might in freeing men from the fear of death, and in overthrowing the powers of demons who had lurked behind idols and altars. Such

[1] Hence the title of Lessing's famous Tract. See below, pp. 172 ff.

victories, he argues, could have been won only by a living Christ (*De Incarn.* cap. xxxii).

Thus Locke's appeal to the external evidences was in itself simply a continuation of a long-established theological tradition. At the same time Locke was using it in a different context from that in which it had first made good its claims, and for a somewhat different purpose. The change in emphasis is important. In the formative period of Christian theology in the ancient Church, prophecy and miracle established the actual revelation of the one true God in history over against the rival powers of other and false religions. But in the Europe of Locke's day the rivals of Christianity had long disappeared, and the question had actually been suggested whether Revelation was not a dangerous superfluity. After the middle of the seventeenth century the naïve and instinctive belief in the supernatural was fading. All parties tended to accept a common appeal to reason and evidence, and Revelation in large measure forfeited its natural prescriptive claim upon men's allegiance. Locke was innocently willing to allow the case for Revelation to rest upon the external guarantees. In view of the immense issues which were thus involved, it was inevitable that these guarantees should be subjected to close scrutiny. This explains the preoccupation of eighteenth-century theology with the question of evidences. In the early years of the century theologians like Samuel Clarke still rehearse the traditional evidences of Revelation as though they carried a natural claim upon men's assent. But, after the controversies on prophecy and miracle which were raised by Collins and Woolston in George I's reign, such confidence was no longer possible. It became necessary to vindicate the truth of prophecy and miracle under cross-examination, so that theology, while it tended to interest itself less in the content of Revelation, was increasingly concerned to establish the

adequacy of its credentials. This type of theology may be said to have reached its final form in the work of William Paley, who is therefore included in this and the previous section, though in point of date he belongs to a later period. Since the evidence for miracles of the past rested necessarily upon testimony, their defence turned largely upon the degree of confidence which could be placed in those who had reported them; and the generally unhistorical outlook, which prevented full appreciation of the great difference between the present and the past in their attitudes towards the supernatural, inclined them to regard their task as confined to establishing the veracity of the witnesses. In Sherlock's famous *Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*,[1] the main task of the defence is to secure a verdict of acquittal for the Apostles on the charge of imposture. The choice seemed to lie between the truth of the reports and the fraud of those who had made them. Here again Paley provided the final statement; after his defence, the charge of fraud was not again revived.

The section entitled "The Grounds and Sufficiency of Natural Religion Considered" illustrates wider and deeper reflection upon the problems which underlay the Deistic controversy, and includes passages from three of the greatest philosophical thinkers of the century, Berkeley, Butler, and Hume.

These writers are less exclusively occupied with the problem of Revelation and the particular evidences of Christianity. At the same time they are more deeply concerned with the foundations of Natural Religion itself. Their main problem is the grounds and sufficiency of religious belief as a whole. Thus, while the necessity of appeal to reason and experience is universally recognised, the way is opened to a theology less negative than that of the free-thinkers who had upheld the cause of plainness and reason in religion. The three writers

[1] See below, pp. 67 ff.

mentioned, though they differed from each other in temperament and in their conclusions, are alike typical of the eighteenth century in that they were interested in the reasons for religious belief rather than in the system of Christian dogma as such. English theology since the Reformation has tended to turn, either to the ancient Fathers of the early Christian centuries, an interest closely associated with classical education, or to general philosophical thought. Both interests have been combined in the Platonic tradition, throughout important in English theology; but this tradition, prominent in the seventeenth and again in the nineteenth century, exercised less influence in the eighteenth, though Berkeley, especially in his later phase, was an important exception. The Scholastic theology of the later Middle Age was largely neglected after the early seventeenth century, and the Protestant dogmatic theology of the Reformation and the period which succeeded it never took root in England, at least not within the Church of England. Though there were exceptions, such as Waterland, the great theological writers of the eighteenth century were not deeply interested in patristic learning, as the divines of the seventeenth century had been; and the strong individualism of the age—one of its most characteristic features—led to the neglect of the idea of the Church as a theological conception. The century was more impressed by the value of the present and by its own enlightenment than by its debt to the past. In consequence, the rational grounds of individual belief were the main subject of discussion.

The arguments employed, however, became less rationalistic and more empirical as the age of the Deists passed. The appeal was to inference from observation of the world and nature rather than to necessary ideas of reason. One of the dominating influences of the whole century was Newton and the laws of nature. The world was orderly, subject to law, its

parts adapted to each other. Through it might be discerned the mind of its Creator, the Author of Man and Nature; and the more perfect His handiwork was found to be, the less was it necessary to suppose that He now intervened directly within its process. God was conceived as transcendent and personal, and the chief part of religion lay in obedience to His commands. His will had been once for all made known through the Christian Revelation, which set forth the scheme of man's salvation, and was authenticated by signs wrought for that express purpose; but the eighteenth century suspected and disliked any present manifestation of "enthusiasm", regarding it with Dr Johnson as "a vain belief of private revelation". But fundamental to the whole scheme was the evidence for God's existence and the truths of Natural Religion; and the main argument was the argument from design.

George Berkeley is one of the chief figures in English philosophy, and as a writer he illustrates the gift English thinkers have shewn of uniting philosophical argument with distinction of literary style. Though much of his writing was directly concerned with current ideas and movements, philosophical, religious, and political, he does not fall easily into any of the party divisions of the time. His influence has been felt in the development of philosophical idealism rather than in the sphere of theology. But Berkeley himself regarded his idealistic principle, first brilliantly expounded at the age of twenty-five, as far more than a theory of knowledge; it implied belief in God and a spiritual interpretation of all reality, and it was to deal the death-blow to materialism. Yet, even in *Alciphron*, directed against Deists and free-thinkers like Collins and Mandeville and concluding with a defence of Christianity, he is less concerned with the special doctrines of Revealed Religion than with attacking the scepticism and licence of the age.

William Law, the Non-Juror, is represented in this section only by a passage from his reply to Matthew Tindal, and therefore as a figure in the deistic controversy. But, as a student of mysticism and as the author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, he is important also as a writer on Christian devotion and the practice of the Christian life. By far the greatest reply to Deism was Joseph Butler's *Analogy*, published in 1736. It marks the end of the controversy, which from about that date ceased to occupy the centre of theological interest. But the book is much more than a reply to particular criticisms or a defence of orthodoxy. It is a comprehensive argument for theism and for the moral purpose of the world, written with singular fairness and balance. Butler claims no more for any one argument than it can fairly be made to support, and relies upon the cumulative effect of his whole survey. Like his special opponents, he takes the existence of an intelligent Author of Nature as proved, and his account of the Christian scheme moves on familiar lines. But in other respects his thought is in marked contrast with theirs. Though he appeals to the evidence of prophecy and miracle in the manner common to all orthodox writers of the age, his real defence of Revealed Religion rests upon the contention that it may reasonably be believed upon a complete survey of experience. He does not claim that his conclusions are rigidly demonstrated; probability is the guide of life, and the world a scheme or constitution imperfectly comprehended. In this he illustrates the movement away from the older rationalism towards a more empirical method. Yet probability for him is no mere weighing of chances. He has a profound sense of man's moral nature and of the moral issues implicit in the conclusions of his argument. The evidence leads him, not merely to belief in God's existence, but to belief in the moral purpose of His creation and the consequent duty of man. In this, he stands above most of the

writers of his age; but he is also typical; for the eighteenth century in England is the age of moral philosophy as well as that of natural theology. Had Butler devoted himself to the theoretical exposition of the principles underlying his sermons, the purpose of which was mainly practical, he might well have made a contribution to ethical theory unequalled, unless by Kant, in modern times.

The writings of David Hume were mainly philosophical, literary, and historical. Like Berkeley, he was one of the great writers of English prose as well as one of the great thinkers of the century. In his examination of the foundations of belief and of what were assumed to be the necessary principles of reason, he carried to their conclusions the principles advanced by Locke and developed by Berkeley, and shewed the thoroughgoing scepticism to which they must lead. His criticism, therefore, appeared to endanger Natural no less than Revealed Religion, and the many answers it called forth shew him as one of the most powerful influences of the latter part of the century. Of Hume's theological writings, the most important was the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, published posthumously in 1779. The traditional arguments for the existence of God are subjected to brilliant criticism, which gives Hume's style and fertility of imagination full play. The *a priori* arguments are dismissed very quickly, though the later criticisms of Kant are anticipated in a remarkable degree. It is typical of the trend of thought that the issue turns upon the argument from design. None of the speakers in the *Dialogues* ultimately denies the strength of the evidence for purpose behind the world. The serious discussion begins with the evidence for a moral purpose. The debate is inconclusive, though on the whole the conclusion is negative. But Hume's influence was not merely negative; theology was driven to seek a deeper basis for religious faith than the arguments which had been used to

prove its truth; and this could be found only in a fuller, less abstract, experience, and in a revival of religion itself.

The section entitled "The Passing of the Age of Reason" illustrates the influence of new forces and the transition to another epoch. With the exception of John Wesley, the writers represented are no longer English: Rousseau writes in French, Lessing and Kant are Germans. During the second half of the eighteenth century, England no longer maintained the position in theological thought she had held during the earlier half of the century. William Paley, the most conspicuous theological writer in England during the later period, hardly marked a new advance. Leadership passed to the Continent. The new forces which culminated in the Romantic Age found full expression in English literature at the opening of the new century; but they exercised little influence upon English theology or philosophy until a later date. Through the period of the French Revolution and the reaction which succeeded it, English thought became more isolated. In Scotland, the "Common Sense" school of philosophers was mainly occupied with criticism of Hume's philosophy and the re-examination of the presuppositions from which his sceptical doctrines followed. In England, the most notable development was the rise of Utilitarianism or Philosophical Radicalism, of which the leader was Jeremy Bentham. Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, published in 1789, with its "principle of utility" and calculus of pleasure and pain, was the most important statement of the psychological and ethical doctrines upon which the school based its programme of legal and political reform. But the positive influence of this school of thought was in the fields of law, politics, and economics. Though the principle of utility had also been adopted by Paley in *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, published in 1785, the Philosophical Radicals were on the

whole anti-clerical, and in this respect mark the division between theological thought and political radicalism which in the year of the publication of Bentham's work found expression in the French Revolution. Yet this school at the same time illustrates the relative isolation of England from the revolutionary principles of the Continent. The Utilitarians were not revolutionaries. The principle of equality, made popular by Rousseau, is to be found rather in the political doctrines of Richard Price, a Unitarian Minister. As the author of *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*, published in 1757, Price is at the same time one of the principal representatives in English thought of rational ethics, inheriting from Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist, and Samuel Clarke.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, the apostle of feeling, was in revolt against the formalism of eighteenth-century society and against the increasing materialism of the French philosophical movement. The revolt was expressed in his gospel of the return to nature and in his sympathy with the common man. But the underlying motive was less, perhaps, a real belief in the perfection of the primitive than a sense of something more profound in human nature, of a deeper need in the heart of rich and poor alike, than could be satisfied by the intellectual achievements of the philosophers or the brilliance and culture of aristocratic society. In this he pointed forward to a new age. Yet he remained in revolt; when, as in the *Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard*, he discussed the problems of theology, what was new was not the doctrines he had to offer—these remained the old truths of Natural Religion accepted with a thinly disguised scepticism —but the sentiment in which they were clothed.

In France, Rousseau's ideas were developed in the cause of revolution. In England, the growing consciousness of the inequality of wealth and the needs of a new industrial popula-

tion sought relief in a different direction, religious rather than political. The Methodist Revival, which eventually profoundly affected the Church of England though it found its most characteristic expression in distinct societies, shared the individualism of the eighteenth century. But it was in strong conflict with the prevailing tone of the age. In it may be seen the manifestation of a new sense of the need of conversion and of the grace of God, through which, rather than through the enlightenment of the understanding, man must find his salvation. The appeal was to the heart and emotions, instead of to the reason. Here, too, was the consciousness of something deeper and more elemental in human nature, a common humanity which set man level with man whatever his culture or circumstances might be.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was one of the most typical and outstanding figures of the latter half of the eighteenth century. He belongs particularly to the history of German literature, but he was a man of many interests, with a passion for enquiry and the search for truth, and both by upbringing and natural inclination he was destined to play a conspicuous part in theological discussion and controversy. He represents, better perhaps than any other man, the transition from the unhistorical rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment to a sense of history and the idea of development. Critical interest in the Scriptures was aroused; it became less easy to find in the writings of a past age the doctrines they had universally been held to contain; and the problem of the relation of eternal truth to passing event acquired a new meaning and urgency. The idea of Revelation itself was profoundly affected; for it was difficult to accept as final and infallible a revelation made through the contingent events of history. Yet even Lessing's view of Revelation as the education of the human race remained so far limited by the presuppositions of Rationalism that he could represent the process merely as

one by which man was taught more quickly and easily those truths which, left to himself, he could have educed by his own reason. The process was a course of instruction in truths not otherwise essentially connected with it.

This section is concluded by passages from Immanuel Kant. He is the latest writer represented, and it was from him that the great thinkers of the Romantic Age took their departure. Thus, whilst he stands as the last and greatest representative of one age, he stands also as the first of the age which succeeded it. Kant was not in revolt against the age in which he lived; he may rather be said to have transformed it from within by the profundity with which he dealt with its own problems. Two things, he wrote in a famous passage, fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the star-filled heavens above and the moral law within.[1] In them Kant, the astronomer and the moralist, found the governing ideas of his philosophy. As he wrote elsewhere, "Newton was the first to see order and regularity where before him were to be found disorder and ill-assorted multiplicity, since when the comets run in geometrical courses; Rousseau was the first to discover beneath the multiplicity of human forms and fashions the deep hidden nature of man and the veiled law by which, through the observances of it, Providence will be justified".[2] Kant's problem was to justify and relate these two realms of experience: knowledge of the natural world as everywhere subject to law—the realm of nature; and consciousness of moral freedom and obligation—the realm of ends. This was the problem the eighteenth century itself had bequeathed to him, dominated as it had been by the influence of Newton and the laws of nature, yet persuaded also of the duty of each man to be guided by

[1] *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Beschluss (see below, p. 185).

[2] A note inserted by Kant in his copy of his work *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, 1764.

his own reason. In solving his problem, Kant was also opening the way for the thought of the century which was to follow.

Kant's method was to enquire into the conditions of the possibility of these realms of experience and to shew that they were the conditions of the possibility of experience itself. Thereby he sought at once to explain and to justify the claims of scientific knowledge and the consciousness of moral freedom, and to shew that they were not in conflict. Therein lay the task and the achievement of the Critical Philosophy.

The extent to which Kant remained limited by the presuppositions of the Age of Reason is clearly seen in his conception of the principles and methods of scientific knowledge. He believed that these were finally and adequately contained in the Newtonian physics, and that consequently the claim to possess scientific knowledge was the claim to know that nature was a mechanical system. He never doubted that there was such knowledge. But he had been awakened to the problems it involved by the criticism of Hume. Hume had contended that there was no basis in reason for belief in the uniformity of nature, and in particular that the supposed necessary principle of cause and effect, by which it was certain that every event was the necessary effect of a concurrent or preceding event and in its turn the cause of another event, was merely psychologically inevitable association between ideas, due to the constant conjunction of like ideas in the past. Kant agreed with Hume in thinking that no necessary principle of reason could be derived merely from empirical observation of nature; that could at most establish its probability, never its universality and necessity. But he differed radically from Hume in thinking that there were such necessary principles, and that they were involved in the scientific knowledge man actually possessed. He had, there-

fore, to find the conditions of the possibility of this knowledge. These principles—the "categories of the understanding"—he argued, were not derived from observation of nature; they were supplied by the knowing mind itself, in such a way that what was given in sensation, to become an object of knowledge at all, must be thought or united under these principles. It was therefore certain that every object of knowledge, hence the whole realm of nature, must exhibit them—must, as he thought, be a system of mechanical necessity. Thus Kant reversed the order of dependence of mind and things. This was his "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy; just as Copernicus had accounted for the movements of the heavenly bodies by referring them to the point of view of the observer, so Kant justified scientific knowledge by referring the principles it involved to the knowing mind.

But, in justifying such knowledge, Kant was also limiting its scope. What was so known was for that reason *phenomenal* only; things in themselves could never be known, since they must as such be beyond possible experience. Knowledge of the supersensible and unconditioned—the realm with which metaphysics and natural theology professed to deal—was impossible; the Ideas which Reason supplied to round off or render coherent the realm of the conditioned were "regulative" only, not "constitutive" like the categories of the Understanding.

Thus by *restricting* knowledge, in the strict but narrow meaning he gave it, Kant intended to *validate* it and render it secure against sceptical attack. But his restriction of knowledge to the *phenomenal* world does not reveal the real intention of his thought. His deepest intention is to be found elsewhere—in his extension of human insight to a realm beyond the range of scientific knowledge, to the realm revealed through moral experience. "I have therefore found it necessary", he wrote, "to deny *knowledge*, in order to leave

room for *faith*."[1] To Kant consciousness of moral obligation, of the absolute demands which duty laid upon man unconditionally, was no less certain, and ultimately it was far more important, even than scientific knowledge of the world of nature. The star-filled heavens, with their regular motions and universal laws, filled him indeed with wonder; but it was to the moral law within that he was sure man owed his deepest reverence and through it that he gained his furthest insight into the real world, the realm of ends, to which he ultimately belonged. Kant set himself to discover the conditions of the possibility of this experience also. He found that they could lie only in man as a *noumenal* being. Moral obligation directly involved freedom, and the only conditions under which the fulfilment of the full demands of duty could be conceived as possible were the existence of God and Immortality. Thus man as a *noumenal* being was free, even though all his actions, as objects of knowledge, were subject to the necessity which ruled in the natural world to which they belonged. There was here no inconsistency, because man's freedom belonged to the *noumenal* world, while the necessity of his actions as objects of knowledge belonged to the world which, though not illusory, was yet *phenomenal*. Ultimately, therefore, the realm of nature was subordinated to the realm of ends, the necessary to the purposive.

Kant's limitations, as still a thinker of the Age of Enlightenment, are again apparent in the theology he thus developed upon a moral basis. The "Postulates of Practical Reason", God, Freedom, and Immortality, are the three chief ideas of the Natural Theology he inherited, and he expounded them often in the tone and with the terminology of the period to which they belonged. Similarly, his individualism and his fear of any enthusiasm which might endanger the strictest following of duty for its own sake left him little

[1] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B xxx.

sympathy or understanding for other sides of religion than that of the fulfilment of the demands of duty as the will of God. He still denied the status of knowledge to that "moral faith" by which the good man must ever believe in God, Freedom, and Immortality. Man cannot *know* that they are real; but, since they are the only conceivable conditions of the possibility of what he is *morally obliged* to do, he must ever firmly *believe* them, but on *moral grounds* alone. Likewise he denied the status of knowledge to the teleological interpretation of living organisms, of which he gave so original and fruitful an account.[1] Yet here too he insisted that, though it could not be *known* that the teleological interpretation was the only one possible, it was nevertheless necessary for us if we would render comprehensible to ourselves the facts of the organic world. "It is indeed quite certain that we cannot adequately cognise, much less explain, organised beings and their internal possibility, according to mere mechanical principles of nature; and we can say boldly it is alike certain that it is absurd for men to make any such attempt or to hope that another *Newton* will arise in the future, who shall make comprehensible by us the production of a blade of grass according to natural laws which no design has ordered."[2] Thus the mechanical, here also, was ultimately subordinated to the teleological principle.

It was the idealistic implications of Kant's thought, the supremacy of mind or spirit, that the great thinkers of the Romantic Age, further assisted by his discussion of organic life, developed for their own purposes. Reason acquired again a wider meaning, and the individualism of the Age of Reason gave place to the sense of the unity of all things. But the prominence of the idea of value, which throughout the nineteenth century held so large a place both in philosophy

[1] In the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Zweiter Teil.
[2] *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 75.

and in theology, was a consequence of Kant's insistence that man finds his freedom and gains his deepest insight into reality through his experience of moral worth.

The section entitled "The Study of the Bible" illustrates the development of one important branch of Biblical study during the eighteenth century. For the greater part of our period Biblical studies were relatively quiescent. The last three decades of the seventeenth century had seen some remarkable attempts at Biblical criticism which anticipated the more thorough and systematic work which was to be carried through in the nineteenth century. The old scholastic divinity, whether Catholic or Protestant, was based upon a dogmatic conception of Holy Writ as in principle an inspired and inerrant revelation. As the vitality of the old theology ebbed, thinkers became conscious of the need to assert the claim of philosophy to abandon the service of "the Queen of the Sciences" and to reign in her own house. To carry through such a revolution, it was necessary to subject the claims traditionally advanced for the Bible to a drastic criticism. Spinoza is the first thinker of note to attempt such a task. Whereas his predecessor Descartes had studiously avoided the conflict with traditional theology which was implicit in his method, Spinoza, with the deliberate intention of separating theology and philosophy, outlines a scheme of historical enquiry into the Bible which he believed would issue in a distinction between the fundamental religious principles which the Bible had to teach mankind, and the varied opinions embodied therein on a variety of topics, where knowledge could be won only by philosophical enquiry. Spinoza was before his time. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was widely read and helped to relax the hold of the old orthodoxy, but neither his speculative philosophy nor his attempts at Biblical criticism commended themselves to the mind of the eighteenth century. Only as the century moved to its close,

do we find representative thinkers—we may mention Lessing and Herder—who appropriate and develop Spinoza's thought.

The works of the French Oratorian Richard Simon at the close of the seventeenth century may be said to have initiated the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament, as well as the historical study of the New Testament and of its interpretation. But neither Catholic nor Protestant was yet ready to assimilate this revolutionary science. Simon was repudiated by his Order and condemned by the Church. The Protestant scholar Jean Le Clerc wrote a discriminating and critical survey of Simon's work and propounded further conjectures of his own. But partly because the new theories were in themselves insufficiently established, and still more because tradition in both Communions weighed heavily on the other side, this promising start was not followed up. On important points, *e.g.* the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Le Clerc himself reverted to the traditional view.

Another approach to the Old Testament which has been followed with notable success in recent times, was first opened about the same time by Dr John Spencer (1630–1693), Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Dean of Ely, who in his *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus et earum causis* (Cambridge, 1685, revised by Chappelow, Cambridge, 1727) laid a foundation for the comparative study of ancient Hebrew and other primitive religions. But Dr Spencer found no worthy successor before the nineteenth century.

A full account of Biblical scholarship during the eighteenth century would have to record much progress in the textual criticism of both Old and New Testament. Again Wettstein's monumental work on the New Testament illustrating New Testament thought and language from ancient sources both Classical and Jewish[1] has afforded a quarry from which

[1] *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, first published after long obstruction in 1751 at Amsterdam.

expositors and students have extracted materials from that time to the present. But these achievements, important as they have proved to be, did not effect any general change in the treatment of the Bible. The eighteenth century may be regarded as an interim. The old dogmatic exposition was exhausted. Yet the Scriptures remained the formal authority of the Churches, and no far-reaching modification of the traditional views as to their origin and character had succeeded in establishing itself. Rationalising theologians and pietists alike sought to justify their own theology from the sacred text, assuming it to be the inerrant fount of divine Revelation.

But as the century drew to its close, we can trace the discovery of new methods, literary and historical, which point the way to the great achievements of the nineteenth century. Especially was this so in Germany. Lessing, who challenged the central citadel of the old Protestant dogma, at the same time opened the road to a new valuation of the Gospels, and stated, though he did not solve, "the synoptic problem". About the same date a young scholar, Eichhorn, took up the literary analysis of the Pentateuch, which had already been successfully essayed by Astruc in the middle of the century, when, however, it had attracted comparatively little attention; and Herder, possessed by the Romantic conception of the organic development of mankind in history, discerned in Hebrew poetry the true type of primitive inspiration.

It has been found necessary to restrict the extracts to a single branch of Biblical scholarship—the literary and critical study of the Old Testament. This is the field in which modern study of the Bible has effected its most revolutionary achievements, entirely changing the position of the Bible in men's picture of the story of mankind. In the eighteenth century the extent of the change which was at hand was not suspected. The historical horizons since disclosed by archaeological dis-

covery were as yet unrevealed, and the discrepancies between Genesis and the natural sciences had not been decisively felt. But in the closing decades of the century scholars and critics were resuming the work which a few leading spirits had inaugurated a century before, and were again feeling their way to a revaluation of the Biblical texts and thereby to a reinterpretation of the historical origins of the Christian Religion.

The last section of extracts collects representative utterances on the Church in its relation with the State in England. Throughout our period theory and practice alike were determined by the Revolution settlement of 1689. With the formal adoption of the principle of Toleration the attempt to impose national uniformity in religion—an aim presupposed in common by all the great parties in the Long Parliament—passed away. The nation emerged from the period of confessional strife, and political issues were more clearly distinguished from ecclesiastical differences. The practice of the Roman Catholic religion indeed continued to be proscribed by law until late in the century, and the fierce riots which broke out after the repeal of the Penal Laws in 1778 shew the intensity of popular feeling against the Roman Church. But the exception of the Roman Catholic faith from the general rule of Toleration was usually defended on grounds of political allegiance not of theological error.

Apart from the grant of Toleration to Dissenters the position and status of the Church of England were left intact by the Revolution settlement. The breach between James II and the Church had been a primary cause of his overthrow, and the Revolution was accepted not least because it secured the Church against the threat of Romanism. Most Dissenters considered that Toleration met their chief grievance. This granted, they were on the whole not indisposed to acquiesce in the position of the Established Church, provided that the

encroachments of High Church Tories were held in check. The Established Church with a Protestant Prince as its Supreme Governor was after all a powerful bulwark against the common enemy of the Reformed Churches.

But it was long before the inheritance of the seventeenth century was liquidated. The Church of England had been closely identified with the fortunes of the House of Stuart, and the transference of the Crown to William of Orange and Mary was only effected at the cost of a schism of Non-jurors, which, if it was but slenderly supported in the country as a whole, drew off a large number of the most distinguished of the clergy. This fissure between the Crown and an important section of the clergy encouraged the growth of theories of an ecclesiastical jurisdiction distinct from and independent of the Royal Supremacy. In the writings of a Non-juror such as Charles Leslie the Royal authority in the Church is treated as a usurpation of the rights of the divinely constituted episcopal ministry.

The blended fear of sacerdotal tyranny and Stuart autocracy lies behind Bishop Hoadly's famous sermon, preached before George I, which provoked the Bangorian controversy, and led to the suppression of Convocation for more than a century. Hoadly denied that there is any present power entitled to exercise the authority of Christ in his Church. If the existence of such a power is allowed, inevitably it encroaches upon and in effect supersedes the kingship of Christ. To many of his critics Hoadly seemed to deny not merely, as he himself afterwards explained, an "absolute" authority, but authority of any kind to the visible Church. The clergy were alarmed and indignant, but it was Convocation not Hoadly that was silenced.

Hoadly's somewhat clumsy attack upon clerical claims was the counterpart of his positive doctrine, in which he echoes the prevailing ideas of his time: that religion is in its essence

a matter of conduct; that the religious relationship lies between God and the individual; and that sincerity is the supreme virtue which justifies in God's sight. The sturdy individualism of the eighteenth century conflicted with the hierarchical conception of the Church, nor did it leave much room for the thought of the Church as the Fellowship of believers. Faith was generally understood in terms of intellectual conviction. The Church was an organisation for teaching "religious knowledge". Those who were unable to acquiesce in the forms of worship and doctrine established in the national Church were at liberty to form voluntary associations of their own.

Warburton's *Alliance between Church and State* is an elaborate rationalisation of the existing state of things. Church and State, he argues, are two distinct bodies, albeit consisting of the same persons. These two bodies for their mutual benefit have entered into—or must be thought of as having entered into—a state of alliance. The interest of the State is utility, the interest of the Church is truth. The Church covenants to serve the State, and the State to protect the Church.

Warburton's abstract theory of a hypothetical alliance, which admittedly did not allow of historical verification, between two bodies which, though distinct, were or might be composed of the same persons, was of a piece with the theories of a contractual origin of the State which prevailed among political theorists in the early eighteenth century. It is symptomatic of a general change in thought that representative writers of the second half of the century adopt a more realistic attitude. Paley justifies the Establishment on strictly utilitarian grounds. No particular Church constitution can claim to be of divine institution. The Christian religion in its essence relates to the individual conscience. Toleration is to be applied with the least possible admixture of a test. The Church is a means of inculcating religious truth.

The eighteenth century closed with the storms of the French Revolution. The ideas of a radical breach with the past and the regeneration of human society on the principle of equality found warm advocates in Britain, especially among the more rationalistic of the Dissenters. These launched an attack upon the traditional strongholds of privilege, and not least upon the Established Church. At the same time the Revolution called out a fresh and vigorous assertion of the opposed ideas of historic continuity and growth alike in Church and State. Edmund Burke, the champion of the oppressed, the friend of liberty, the staunch defender of the American revolt, was stirred by this portentous manifestation of the Revolutionary spirit to denounce a programme, which seemed to deny the very foundations of his religious and political faith. In spite of the change of tone between the earlier and the later utterances of Burke, there is a fundamental identity of doctrine. In all that he said and did Burke was imbued with the instinct of religious reverence and awe. Human society for him reposes upon the sense of the divine power and providence in history. The Church is an integral element in the whole inheritance from the past, the consecration of the nation's life and the chief witness to the world unseen in the process of the nation's history. This attitude towards the Church as involved in the organic history of human society was one which was destined to evolve and fructify in the succeeding century. It is balanced by the Unitarian Dr Priestley's sharp protest, which was likewise prophetic. In the Establishment Priestley sees the degeneration of the Church and the corruption of the State. There was a time when the Church owed no favours to the State, and Church and State should now return to their primitive separation.

I

NATURAL RELIGION AND REVELATION

1. THE CERTAINTY OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

John Locke

JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704), the philosopher of the English Revolution, and "on the whole the most important figure in English philosophy" (Sorley), was the son of a Somerset lawyer who had served for a period as Captain in a Parliamentary regiment of horse. He was educated at Westminster School, and Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1656. Like others of his generation who started from a Puritan background, Locke was repelled by the dogmatism of the ruling powers under the Commonwealth, and was ready to welcome the restoration of the Monarchy, to which he looked for a return to political and religious liberty. A generation was to pass before his hopes were realized. While at Oxford Locke devoted much time to the study of medicine, and in 1666 his advice and help as a physician were called upon by Lord Ashley. A close friendship sprang up between the two men, and Locke took up his abode in Ashley's London house, concerning himself closely in his patron's affairs, both public and private. When in 1672 Ashley, now Earl of Shaftesbury, became Lord Chancellor, Locke served as his secretary for Church patronage. In 1675 Locke visited Montpellier on grounds of health and continued to live in France till 1679 when he returned to England to give further help to Shaftesbury, now President of the Privy Council. Though he was not implicated in the violent intrigues which closed Shaftesbury's career, Locke became an object of suspicion to the authorities, and in 1683 left the country, settling shortly after in Holland. Here he remained until the Revolution. While in Holland he became closely acquainted with Limborch, the Remonstrant Divine, and also with Le Clerc. He also became known to William of Orange and Mary, and returned with Mary to England in February 1689. From now onwards Locke became famous as a writer, and a number of works, many of which had been long in preparation, were given to the world in rapid succession. In 1691 he settled at Oates in Essex with an old friend Lady Masham, daughter of Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist, and her husband Sir Francis Masham. Here he lived till his death (1704).

The works which call for mention here are:

(1) The *Epistula de Tolerantia.* The letter on Toleration had been addressed to Limborch in 1685, being based upon an earlier unpublished work, written in 1667. It was published in Latin in Holland in 1689, and in the same year appeared in English, French and Dutch translations. This work, together with three subsequent Letters written in answer to criticism, remained the classical statement of the Whig doctrine of Toleration and of the voluntary principle in Church association. We quote from the first Letter in a later place (see pp. 237 ff.).

(2) *An Essay concerning Humane Understanding* (1690), Locke's greatest work. The *Essay* was the fruit of enquiries and reflections pursued during the preceding twenty years as to the capacities of the human mind, and as to what objects "our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with".

(3) *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). Here Locke states his position as a Christian believer. The theme of the book is the great topic of post-Reformation theology—Justification by Faith. But Locke sweeps aside the niceties of scholastic Divinity, and interrogates the Bible direct, as in his philosophy he had interrogated the *data* of perception. With Chillingworth, Locke would say that "The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants". Faith is conceived almost exclusively as intellectual conviction: saving Faith is the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, which conviction is to be accompanied by sincere obedience to the Messiah's precepts.

Through all the period with which we are here concerned these works of Locke maintained their position as standard authorities. As a thinker, Locke inaugurates the empirical philosophy which remained the most influential tendency in English thought, until Kantian influences gave a fresh orientation. Breaking with the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas, he holds that all knowledge (except of the existence of the self) is based upon sensation, or reflection upon sensation. By this teaching Locke appeared to break down the last stronghold of inherited prejudice, and traditional authority, and to make an open way for the human mind to learn all that lay within its power. Thus he became the philosopher *par excellence* of the eighteenth century, not only in his own country, but also on the continent of Europe and particularly in France. Some of his disciples, both English and French, applied his principles in ways which the cautious Locke would have disapproved. But Locke's testimony remained. It was of moment for the religious history of England that though Locke made short work of traditional methods in theology, he believed himself to be justified in standing by the Christian revelation embodied in the Scriptures.

Though GOD has given us no innate *Ideas* of himself; though he has stamped no original Characters on our Minds, wherein we may read his Being: yet having furnished us with those Faculties, our Minds are endowed with, he hath not left him-

self without witness: since we have Sense, Perception, and Reason, and cannot want a clear proof of him, as long as we carry our selves about us. Nor can we justly complain of our Ignorance in this great Point, since he has so plentifully provided us with the means to discover, and know him, so far as is necessary to the end of our Being, and the great concernment of our Happiness. But though this be the most obvious Truth that Reason discovers; and though its Evidence be (if I mistake not) equal to mathematical Certainty: yet it requires Thought and Attention; and the Mind must apply it self to a regular deduction of it from some part of our intuitive Knowledge, or else we shall be as uncertain, and ignorant of this, as of other Propositions, which are in themselves capable of clear Demonstration. To shew therefore, that we are capable of *knowing*, i.e. *being certain that there is a* GOD, and how we may come by this certainty, I think we need go no farther than our selves, and that undoubted Knowledge we have of our own Existence.

I think it is beyond Question, that *Man has a clear Perception of his own Being*; he knows certainly, that he exists, and that he is something. He that can doubt, whether he be any thing, or no, I speak not to, no more than I would argue with pure nothing, or endeavour to convince Non-entity, that it were something. If any one pretends to be so sceptical, as to deny his own Existence, (for really to doubt of it, is manifestly impossible,) let him for me enjoy his beloved Happiness of being nothing, until Hunger, or some other Pain convince him of the contrary. This then, I think, I may take for a Truth, which every ones certain Knowledge assures him of, beyond the liberty of doubting, *viz.* that he is something that actually exists.

In the next place, Man knows by an intuitive Certainty, that bare *nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles.* If a Man knows not that Non-entity, or the Absence of all Being cannot be equal to two right Angles, it is impossible he should know any demonstration in *Euclid.*

If therefore we know there is some real Being, and that Non-entity cannot produce any real Being, it is an evident demonstration, that from Eternity there has been something; Since what was not from Eternity, had a Beginning; and what had a Beginning, must be produced by something else.

Next, it is evident, that what had its Being and Beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too. All the Powers it has, must be owing to, and received from the same Source. This eternal Source then of all being must also be the Source and Original of all Power; and so *this eternal Being must be also the most powerful.*

Again, a Man finds in himself *Perception*, and *Knowledge*. We have then got one step farther; and we are certain now, that there is not only some Being, but some knowing intelligent Being in the World.

There was a time then, when there was no knowing Being, and when Knowledge began to be; or else, there has been also *a knowing Being from Eternity*. If it be said, there was a time when no Being had any Knowledge, when that eternal Being was void of all Understanding. I reply, that then it was impossible there should ever have been any Knowledge. It being as impossible, that Things wholly void of Knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any Perception, should produce a knowing Being, as it is impossible, that a Triangle should make it self three Angles bigger than two right ones. For it is as repugnant to the *Idea* of senseless Matter, that it should put into it self Sense, Perception, and Knowledge, as it is repugnant to the *Idea* of a Triangle, that it should put into it self greater Angles than two right ones.

Thus from the Consideration of our selves, and what we infallibly find in our own Constitutions, our Reason leads us to the Knowledge of this certain and evident Truth, That *there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being*; which whether any one will please to call *God*, it matters not. The thing is evident, and from this Idea duly considered, will

easily be deduced all those other Attributes, which we ought to ascribe to this eternal Being. If nevertheless any one should be found so senselessly arrogant, as to suppose Man alone knowing and wise, but yet the product of mere ignorance and chance; and that all the rest of the Universe acted only by that blind hap-hazard: I shall leave with him that very Rational and Emphatical rebuke of *Tully* l. 2. *de leg.* to be considered at his leisure. "What can be more sillily arrogant and misbecoming, than for a Man to think that he has a Mind and Understanding in him, but yet in all the Universe beside, there is no such thing? Or that those things, which with the utmost stretch of his Reason he can scarce comprehend, should be moved and managed without any Reason at all?"

From what has been said, it is plain to me, we have a more certain knowledge of the Existence of a GOD, than of any thing our Senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay, I presume I may say, that we more certainly know that there is a GOD, than that there is any thing else without us. When I say we *know*, I mean there is such a Knowledge within our reach, which we cannot miss, if we will but apply our Minds to that, as we do to several other Enquiries.

An Essay concerning Humane Understanding, Book IV, ch. X, "Of our Knowledge of the Existence of a God".

2. THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

John Locke

[*See note on* pp. 1 f.]

THE FAITH, AND THE OBEDIENCE WHICH GOD REQUIRES

This is the Law of that Kingdom, as well as of all Mankind; And that Law by which all Men shall be judged at the last day. Only those who have believed *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, and have taken him to be their King, with a sincere Endeavour after Righteousness, in obeying his Law, shall have their past sins not imputed to them; And shall have that Faith taken

instead of Obedience; Where Frailty and Weakness made them transgress, and sin prevailed after Conversion in those who hunger and thirst after Righteousness (or perfect Obedience) and do not allow themselves in Acts of Disobedience and Rebellion, against the Laws of that Kingdom they are entred into.

He did not expect, 'tis true, a Perfect Obedience void of all slips and falls: He knew our Make, and the weakness of our Constitutions too well, and was sent with a Supply for that Defect. Besides, perfect Obedience was the Righteousness of the Law of Works; and then the Reward would be of Debt, and not of Grace; And to such there was no need of Faith to be imputed to them for Righteousness. They stood upon their own legs, were Just already, and needed no allowance to be made them for believing Jesus to be the *Messiah*, taking him for their King, and becoming his Subjects. But whether Christ does not require Obedience, sincere Obedience is evident from the Laws he himself pronounces (unless he can be supposed to give and inculcate Laws only to have them disobeyed) and from the Sentence he will pass when he comes to Judge.

The Faith required was, to believe *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, the Anointed; who had been promised by God to the World.

The Fundamental articles of Faith discovered in the Gospels and the Acts better than in the Epistles

The Epistles therefore being all written to those who were already Believers and Christians, the occasion and end of writing them, could not be to Instruct them in that which was necessary to make them Christians. This 'tis plain they knew and believed already; or else they could not have been Christians and Believers. And they were writ upon Particular Occasions; and without those Occasions had not been writ; and so cannot be thought necessary to Salvation: Though they resolving doubts, and reforming mistakes, are of great Advantage to our Knowledge and Practice. I do not deny,

but the great Doctrines of the Christian Faith are dropt here and there, and scattered up and down in most of them. But 'tis not in the Epistles we are to learn what are the Fundamental Articles of Faith, where they are promiscuously, and without distinction mixed with other Truths in Discourses that were (though for Edification indeed, yet) only occasional. We shall find and discern those great and necessary Points best in the Preaching of our Saviour and the Apostles, to those who were yet strangers, and ignorant of the Faith, to bring them in, and convert them to it. And what that was, we have seen already out of the History of the Evangelists, and the *Acts*; where they are plainly laid down, so that no body can mistake them.

CHRISTIANITY SUITED TO PLAIN MEN

Though all divine Revelation requires the obedience of Faith; yet every truth of inspired Scriptures is not one of those, that by the Law of Faith is required to be explicitly believed to Justification. What those are, we have seen by what our Saviour and his Apostles proposed to, and required in those whom they Converted to the Faith. Those are fundamentals; which 'tis not enough not to disbelieve: Every one is required actually to assent to them. But any other Proposition contained in the Scripture, which God has not thus made a necessary part of the Law of Faith, (without an actual assent to which he will not allow any one to be a Believer) a Man may be ignorant of, without hazarding his Salvation by a defect in his Faith. He believes all that God has made necessary for him to believe, and assent to: And as for the rest of Divine Truths, there is nothing more required of him, but that he receive all the parts of Divine Revelation, with a docility and disposition prepared to imbrace, and assent to all Truths coming from God; And submit his mind to whatsoever shall appear to him to bear that Character. Where he, upon fair endeavours, understands it not; How can he avoid being ignorant? And where he cannot put several Texts, and

make them consist together; What Remedy? He must either interpret one by the other, or suspend his Opinion. He that thinks that more is, or can be required, of poor frail Man in matters of Faith, will do well to consider what absurdities he will run into. God out of the infiniteness of his Mercy, has dealt with Man as a compassionate and tender Father. He gave him Reason, and with it a Law: That could not be otherwise than what Reason should dictate; Unless we should think, that a reasonable Creature, should have an unreasonable Law. But considering the frailty of Man, apt to run into corruption and misery, he promised a Deliverer, whom in his good time he sent; And then declared to all Mankind, that whoever believe him to be the Saviour promised, and take him now raised from the dead, and constituted the Lord and Judge of all Men, to be their King and Ruler, should be saved. This is a plain intelligible Proposition; And the all-merciful God seems herein to have consulted the poor of this World and the bulk of Mankind. These are Articles that the labouring and illiterate Man may comprehend. This is a Religion suited to vulgar Capacities; And the state of Mankind in this World, destined to labour and travel. The Writers and Wranglers in Religion fill it with niceties, and dress it up with notions; which they make necessary and fundamental parts of it; As if there were no way into the Church, but through the Academy or Lyceum. The bulk of Mankind have not leisure for Learning and Logick, and superfine distinctions of the Schools. Where the hand is used to the Plough, and the Spade, the head is seldom elevated to sublime Notions, or exercised in mysterious reasonings. 'Tis well if Men of that rank (to say nothing of the other Sex) can comprehend plain propositions, and a short reasoning about things familiar to their Minds, and nearly allied to their daily experience. Go beyond this, and you amaze the greatest part of Mankind: And may as well talk *Arabick* to a poor day Labourer, as the Notions and Language that the Books and Disputes of Religion are filled with; and as soon you will be

understood. The Dissenting Congregations are supposed by their Teachers to be more accurately instructed in matters of Faith, and better to understand the Christian Religion, than the vulgar Conformists, who are charged with great ignorance; How truly I will not here determine. But I ask them to tell me seriously, whether half their People have leisure to study? Nay, Whether one in ten of those who come to their Meetings in the Country, if they had time to study them, do or can understand, the Controversies at this time so warmly managed amongst them, about Justification, the subject of this present Treatise. I have talked with some of their Teachers, who confess themselves not to understand the difference in debate between them. And yet the points they stand on, are reckoned of so great weight, so material, so fundamental in Religion, that they divide Communion and separate upon them. Had God intended that none but the Learned Scribe, the disputer or wise of this World, should be Christians, or be Saved, thus Religion should have been prepared for them; filled with speculations and niceties, obscure terms, and abstract notions. But Men of that expectation, Men furnished with such acquisitions, the Apostle tells us, I *Cor.* I, are rather shut out from the simplicity of the Gospel; to make way for those poor, ignorant, illiterate, Who heard and believed promises of a Deliverer; and believed Jesus to be him; Who could conceive a Man dead and made alive again, and believe that he should at the end of the World, come again, and pass Sentence on all Men, according to their deeds. That the poor had the Gospel Preached to them; Christ makes a mark as well as business of his Mission. *Mat.* XI. 5. And if the poor had the Gospel Preached to them, it was, without doubt, such a Gospel, as the poor could understand, plain and intelligible: And so it was, as we have seen, in the Preachings of Christ and his Apostles.

The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures.

3. OF ENTHUSIASM

John Locke

[*See note on* pp. 1 f.]

The following chapter, *Of Enthusiasm*, was first added to the *Essay concerning Humane Understanding* in the fourth edition (1700).

He that would seriously set upon the search of Truth, ought in the first Place to prepare his Mind with a Love of it. For he that Loves it not, will not take much Pains to get it; nor be much concerned when he misses it. There is no Body in the Commonwealth of Learning, who does not profess himself a lover of Truth: and there is not a rational Creature that would not take it amiss to be thought otherwise of. And yet for all this one may truly say, there are very few lovers of Truth for Truths sake, even amongst those, who perswade themselves that they are so. How a Man may know whether he be so in earnest is worth enquiry: And I think there is this one unerring mark of it, *viz.* The not entertaining any Proposition with greater assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this measure of Assent, 'tis plain receives not Truth in the Love of it; loves not Truth for Truths sake, but for some other bye end. For the evidence that any Proposition is true (except such as are self-evident) lying only in the Proofs a Man has of it, whatsoever degrees of Assent he affords it beyond the degrees of that Evidence, 'tis plain all that surplusage of assurance is owing to some other Affection, and not to the Love of Truth: It being as impossible, that the Love of Truth should carry my Assent above the Evidence, that there is to me, that it is true, As that the Love of Truth should make me assent to any Proposition, for the sake of that Evidence, which it has not, that it is true: which is in effect to Love it as a Truth, because it is possible or probable that it may not be true. In any Truth that gets not

possession of our Minds by the irresistible Light of Self-evidence, or by the force of Demonstration, the Arguments that gain it Assent, are the vouchers and gage of its Probability to us; and we can receive it for no other than such as they deliver it to our Understandings. Whatsoever Credit or Authority we give to any Proposition more than it receives from the Principles and Proofs it supports it self upon, is owing to our Inclinations that way, and is so far a Derogation from the Love of Truth as such: which as it can receive no Evidence from our Passions or Interests, so it should receive no Tincture from them.

The assuming an Authority of Dictating to others, and a forwardness to prescribe to their Opinions, is a constant concomitant of this bias and corruption of our Judgments. For how almost can it be otherwise, but that he should be ready to impose on others Belief, who has already imposed on his own? Who can reasonably expect Arguments and Conviction from him, in dealing with others, whose Understanding is not accustomed to them in his dealing with himself? Who does Violence to his own Faculties, Tyrannizes over his own Mind, and usurps the Prerogative that belongs to Truth alone, which is to command Assent by only its own Authority, *i.e.* by and in proportion to that Evidence which it carries with it.

Upon this occasion I shall take the Liberty to consider a third Ground of Assent, which with some Men has the same Authority, and is as confidently relied on as either *Faith* or *Reason*, I mean *Enthusiasm*. Which laying by Reason would set up Revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both Reason and Revelation, and substitutes in the room of it, the ungrounded Fancies of a Man's own Brain, and assumes them for a Foundation both of Opinion and Conduct.

Reason is natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge communicates to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural Faculties: *Revelation* is natural Reason enlarged by a new set of Discoveries communicated by GOD

immediately, which Reason vouches the Truth of, by the Testimony and Proofs it gives, that they come from GOD. So that he that takes away *Reason*, to make way for *Revelation*, puts out the Light of both, and does much what the same, as if he should perswade a Man to put out his Eyes the better to receive the remote Light of an invisible Star by a Telescope.

Immediate *Revelation* being a much easier way for Men to establish their Opinions, and regulate their Conduct, than the tedious and not always successful Labour of strict Reasoning, it is no wonder, that some have been very apt to pretend to Revelation, and to perswade themselves, that they are under the peculiar guidance of Heaven in their Actions and Opinions, especially in those of them, which they cannot account for by the ordinary Methods of Knowledge, and Principles of Reason. Hence we see, that in all Ages, Men, in whom Melancholy has mixed with Devotion, or whose conceit of themselves has raised them into an Opinion of a greater familiarity with GOD, and a nearer admittance to his Favour than is afforded to others, have often flatter'd themselves with a perswasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications from the divine Spirit. GOD I own cannot be denied to be able to enlighten the Understanding by a Ray darted into the Mind immediately from the Fountain of Light: This they understand he has promised to do, and who then has so good a title to expect it, as those who are his peculiar People, chosen by him and depending on him?

Their Minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless Opinion comes to settle it self strongly upon their Fancies, is an Illumination from the Spirit of GOD, and presently of divine Authority: And whatsoever odd Action they find in themselves a strong Inclination to do, that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from Heaven, and must be obeyed; 'tis a Commission from above, and they cannot err in executing it.

This I take to be properly Enthusiasm, which though

founded neither on Reason, nor Divine Revelation, but rising from the Conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain, works yet, where it once gets footing, more powerfully on the Perswasions and Actions of Men, than either of those two, or both together: Men being most forwardly obedient to the impulses they receive from themselves; And the whole Man is sure to act most vigorously, where the whole Man is carried by a natural Motion. For strong conceit like a new Principle carries all easily with it, when got above common Sense, and freed from all restraint of Reason, and check of Reflection, it is heightened into a Divine Authority, in concurrence with our own Temper and Inclination.

Though the odd Opinions and extravagant Actions, *Enthusiasm* has run Men into, were enough to warn them against this wrong Principle so apt to misguide them both in their Belief and Conduct: yet the Love of something extraordinary, the Ease and Glory it is to be inspired and be above the common and natural ways of Knowledge so flatters many Men's Laziness, Ignorance and Vanity, that when once they are got into this way of immediate *Revelation*, of Illumination without search, and of certainty without Proof, and without Examination, 'tis a hard matter to get them out of it. Reason is lost upon them, they are above it: they see the Light infused into their Understandings, and cannot be mistaken; 'tis clear and visible there; like the Light of bright Sunshine, shews it self, and needs no other Proof, but its own Evidence: they feel the Hand of GOD moving them within, and the impulses of the Spirit, and cannot be mistaken in what they feel. Thus they support themselves, and are sure Reason hath nothing to do with what they see and feel in themselves: what they have a sensible Experience of admits no doubt, needs no probation. Would he not be ridiculous who should require to have it proved to him, that the Light shines, and that he sees it? It is its own Proof, and can have no other. When the Spirit brings Light into our Minds, it dispels Darkness. We see it, as we do that of the Sun at Noon, and need not the

twilight of Reason to shew it us. This Light from Heaven is strong, clear, and pure, carries its own Demonstration with it, and we may as rationally take a Glow-worme to assist us to discover the Sun, as to examine the celestial Ray by our dim Candle, Reason.

This is the way of talking of these Men: they are sure, because they are sure: and their Perswasions are right, only because they are strong in them. For, when what they say is strip'd of the Metaphor of seeing and feeling, this is all it amounts to: and yet these Similes so impose on them, that they serve them for certainty in themselves, and demonstration to others.

* * * *

He therefore that will not give himself up to all the Extravagancies of Delusion and Error must bring this Guide of his *Light within* to the Tryal. God when he makes the Prophet does not unmake the Man. He leaves all his Faculties in their natural State, to enable him to judge of his Inspirations, whether they be of divine Original or no. When he illuminates the Mind with supernatural Light, he does not extinguish that which is natural. If he would have us assent to the Truth of any Proposition, he either evidences that Truth by the usual Methods of natural Reason, or else makes it known to be a Truth, which he would have us assent to, by his Authority, and convinces us that it is from him, by some Marks which Reason cannot be mistaken in. *Reason* must be our last Judge and Guide in every Thing. I do not mean, that we must consult Reason, and examine whether a Proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural Principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it: But consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a *Revelation* from God or no: And if *Reason* finds it to be revealed from GOD, *Reason* then declares for it, as much as for any other Truth, and makes it one of her Dictates. Every Conceit that throughly warms our Fancies must pass for an Inspiration, if there be nothing but the Strength of our Perswasions, whereby to judge of our

Perswasions: If *Reason* must not examine their Truth by something extrinsical to the Perswasions themselves; Inspirations and Delusions, Truth and Falshood will have the same Measure, and will not be possible to be distinguished.

If this internal Light, or any Proposition which under that Title we take for inspired, be conformable to the Principles of Reason or to the Word of GOD, which is attested Revelation, *Reason* warrants it, and we may safely receive it for true, and be guided by it in our Belief and Actions: If it receive no Testimony nor Evidence from either of these Rules, we cannot take it for a *Revelation*, or so much as for true, till we have some other Mark that it is a *Revelation*, besides our believing that it is so. Thus we see the holy Men of GOD, who had *Revelations* from GOD, had something else besides that internal Light of assurance in their own Minds, to testify to them, that it was from GOD. They were not left to their own Perswasions alone, that those Perswasions were from GOD; But had outward Signs to convince them of the Author of those Revelations. And when they were to convince others, they had a Power given them to justify the Truth of their Commission from Heaven; and by visible Signs to assert the divine Authority of the Message they were sent with. *Moses* saw the Bush burn without being consumed, and heard a Voice out of it. This was something besides finding an impulse upon his Mind to go to *Pharaoh*, that he might bring his Brethren out of *Egypt*: and yet he thought not this enough to authorise him to go with that Message, till GOD by another Miracle, of his Rod turned into a Serpent, had assured him of a Power to testify his Mission by the same Miracle repeated before them, whom he was sent to. *Gideon* was sent by an Angel to deliver *Israel* from the *Mideanites*, and yet he desired a Sign to convince him, that this Commission was from GOD. These and several the like Instances to be found among the Prophets of old, are enough to shew, that they thought not an inward seeing or perswasion of their own Minds without any other Proof a sufficient Evidence, that it was from GOD, though the

Scripture does not every where mention their demanding or having such Proofs.

In what I have said I am far from denying, that GOD can, or doth sometimes enlighten Mens Minds in the apprehending of certain Truths, or excite them to Good Actions by the immediate influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit, without any extraordinary Signs accompanying it. But in such Cases too we have Reason and the Scriptures, unerring Rules to know whether it be from GOD or no. Where the Truth imbraced is consonant to the *Revelation* in the written word of GOD; or the Action conformable to the dictates of right *Reason* or Holy Writ, we may be assured that we run no risque in entertaining it as such, because though perhaps it be not an immediate Revelation from GOD, extraordinarily operating on our Minds, yet we are sure it is warranted by that Revelation which he has given us of Truth. But it is not the strength of our private perswasion within our selves, that can warrant it to be a Light or Motion from Heaven: Nothing can do that but the written Word of GOD without us, or that Standard of Reason which is common to us with all Men. Where Reason or Scripture is express for any Opinion or Action, we may receive it as of divine Authority: But 'tis not the strength of our own Perswasions which can by it self give it that Stamp. The bent of our own Minds may favour it as much as we please; That may shew it to be a Fondling of our own, but will by no means prove it to be an Offspring of Heaven, and of divine Original.

An Essay concerning Humane Understanding, Book IV, ch. xix.

4. CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS

John Toland

JOHN TOLAND (1670–1722) was born near Londonderry. He was a graduate of Edinburgh, and studied at Leyden and at Oxford where he wrote his first and most famous book, *Christianity not Mysterious* (published 1696). Throughout an adventurous life he was actively engaged in theological and political controversy.

In *Christianity not Mysterious* Toland adopts a philosophical position very similar to that of Locke's *Essay*, but, unlike Locke, he will not allow for the revelation of truths which, in themselves, are beyond the compass of reason. At the time he wrote the book he considered himself a member of the Church of England, and he makes no direct attack on the orthodox creed, but he argues that the original simplicity of the Gospel had been transformed under pagan influences into a system of "mysteries".

THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL NOT CONTRARY TO REASON

After having said so much of *Reason*, I need not operosely shew what it is to be contrary to it; for I take it to be very intelligible from the precedent Section, that *what is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct Idea's, or to our common Notions, is contrary to Reason*: I go on therefore to prove, that *the Doctrines of the Gospel*, if it be the Word of God, *cannot be so*. But if it be objected, that very few maintain they are: I reply, that no *Christian* I know of now (for we shall not disturb the Ashes of the Dead) expressly says *Reason* and the *Gospel* are contrary to one another. But, which returns to the same, very many affirm, that though the Doctrines of the latter cannot in themselves be contradictory to the Principles of the former, as proceeding both from God; yet, that according to our Conceptions of them, *they may seem directly to clash*: And that though we cannot reconcile them by reason of our corrupt and limited Understandings; yet that from the Authority of *Divine Revelation*, we are bound to believe and acquiesce in them; or, as the *Fathers* taught 'em to speak, *to adore what we cannot comprehend.*

This famous and admirable Doctrine is the undoubted Source of all the *Absurdities* that ever were seriously vented among *Christians*. Without the Pretence of it, we should never hear of the *Transubstantiation*, and other ridiculous Fables of the Church of *Rome*; nor of any of the *Eastern Ordures*, almost all receiv'd into this *Western Sink*: Nor should we be ever banter'd with the *Lutheran Impanation*, or the *Ubiquity* it has produc'd, as one Monster ordinarily begets another. And tho the *Socinians* disown this Practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their Notions of a *dignifi'd and Creature-*

God capable of Divine Worship, appear more reasonable than the Extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the *Trinity*.

In short, this Doctrine is the known Refuge of some Men, when they are at a loss in explaining any Passage of the Word of God. Lest they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or the Nature of the Thing, which is indeed the Effect of Inaccurate Reasoning, Unskilfulness in the Tongues, or Ignorance of History. But more commonly it is the Consequence of *early Impressions*, which they dare seldom afterwards correct by more free and riper Thoughts: So *desiring to be Teachers of the Law, and understanding neither what they say, nor those things which they affirm*, I. Tim. 1. 7, they obtrude upon us *for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, Mat. 15. 9. And truly well they may; for if we once admit this Principle, I know not what we can deny that is told us in the Name of the Lord. This Doctrine, I must remark it too, does highly concern us of the *Laity*; for however it came to be first establish'd, the *Clergy* (always excepting such as deserve it) have not been since wanting to themselves, but improv'd it so far as not only to make the plainest, but the most trifling things in the World *mysterious*, that we might constantly depend upon them for the Explication. And, nevertheless they must not, if they could, explain them to us without ruining their own Design, let them never so fairly pretend it.

Faith and Knowledge

But 'tis affirmed, that God *has a Right to require the Assent of his Creatures to what they cannot comprehend*; and, questionless, he may command whatever is just and reasonable, for to act Tyrannically do's only become the *Devil*. But I demand to what end should God require us to believe what we cannot understand? To exercise, some say, our Diligence. But this at first sight looks ridiculous, as if the plain Duties of the

Gospel and our necessary Occupations were not sufficient to employ all our time. But how exercise our Diligence? Is it possible for us to understand those *Mysteries* at last, or not? If it be, then all I contend for is gain'd; for I never pretended that the *Gospel* could be understood without due Pains and Application, no more than any other Book. But if it be impossible after all to understand them, this is such a piece of Folly and Impertinence as no sober Man would be guilty of, to puzzle Peoples Heads with what they could never conceive, to exhort to and command the Study of them; and all this to keep 'em from Idleness, when they can scarce find leisure enough for what is on all hands granted to be intelligible.

Others say that God has enjoin'd the Belief of *Mysteries* to make us more humble. But how? By letting us see the small extent of our Knowledg. But this extraordinary Method is quite needless, for Experience acquaints us with that every day; and I have spent a whole Chapter in the second Section of this Book, to prove that we have not an adequate Idea of all the Properties, and no Idea of the real Essence of any Substance in the World. It had been a much better Answer, that God would thus abridg our Speculations, to gain us the more time for the practice of what we understand. But many *cover a Multitude of Sins* by their Noise and Heat on the behalf of such foolish and unprofitable Speculations.

From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicate Assent to any thing above Reason, that this Notion directly contradicts the Ends of Religion, the Nature of Man, and the Goodness and Wisdom of God. But at this rate, some will be apt to say, *Faith* is no longer *Faith* but *Knowledg*. I answer, that if *Knowledg* be taken for a present and immediate View of things, I have no where affirm'd any thing like it, but the contrary in many Places. But if by *Knowledg* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledg*: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the *Gospel*. *We know*,

i.e. we believe, *that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World*, Joh. 4. 42. *I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself*, Rom. 14. 14. *You know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord*, I Cor. 15. 58.

Others will say that this Notion of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useless. But, pray, how so? for the Question is not, whether we could discover all the Objects of our *Faith* by Ratiocination: I have prov'd on the contrary, that no Matter of Fact can be known without *Revelation*. But I assert, that what is once reveal'd we must as well understand as any other Matter in the World, *Revelation* being only of use to enform us, whilst the Evidence of its Subject perswades us. Then, reply they, *Reason* is of more Dignity than *Revelation*. I answer, Just as much as a *Greek Grammar* is superior to the *New Testament*; for we make use of *Grammar* to understand the Language, and of *Reason* to comprehend the Sense of that Book. But, in a word, I see no need of Comparisons in this Case, for *Reason* is not less from God than *Revelation*; 'tis the Candle, the Guide the Judg he has lodg'd within every Man that cometh into this World.

Lastly, It may be objected, that the Poor and Illiterate cannot have such a *Faith* as I maintain. Truly if this can be made out, it may pass for a greater *Mystery* than any System of *Divinity* in *Christendom* can afford: for what can seem more strange and wonderful, than that the common People will sooner believe what is unintelligible, incomprehensible, and above their Reasons, than what is easy, plain, and suted to their Capacities? But the Vulgar are more oblig'd to *Christ*, who had a better Opinion of them than these Men; for he preach'd his *Gospel* to them in a special manner; and they, on the other hand, *heard him gladly*, Mark, 12. 37; because, no doubt, they understood his Instructions better than the *mysterious* Lectures of their *Priests* and *Scribes*. The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not. It is to them the Language of the Beast, and

is inconsistent with their Condition in this World, when their very Teachers must serve above an Apprenticeship to master it, before they begin the Study of the *Bible*. How slowly must the *Gospel* have mov'd at the Beginning, if such as were call'd to preach it had been oblig'd to qualify themselves after this manner! And no wonder that it has such little Effects now upon Mens Lives, after it is so miserably deform'd and almost ruin'd by those unintelligible and extravagant Terms, Notions, and Rites of *Pagan* or *Jewish* Original.

How Mysteries were brought into Christianity

The End of the LAW being Righteousness, Rom. 10. 4, *JESUS CHRIST came not to destroy, but to fulfil it*, Mat. 5. 17: for he fully and clearly preach'd the purest Morals, he taught that reasonable Worship, and those just Conceptions of Heaven and Heavenly Things, which were more obscurely signifi'd or design'd by the Legal Observations. So having stripp'd the Truth of all those external Types and Ceremonies which made it difficult before, he rendred it easy and obvious to the meanest Capacities. His Disciples and Followers kept to this Simplicity for some considerable time, tho very early divers Abuses began to get footing amongst them. The converted *Jews*, who continu'd mighty fond of their *Levitical* Rites and Feasts, would willingly retain them and be Christians too. Thus what at the Beginning was but only tolerated in weaker Brethren, became afterwards a part of *Christianity* it self, under the Pretence of *Apostolick* Prescription or Tradition.

But this was nothing compar'd to the Injury done to Religion by the *Gentiles*; who, as they were proselyted in greater Numbers than the *Jews*, so the Abuses they introduc'd were of more dangerous and universal Influence. They were not a little scandaliz'd at the plain Dress of the *Gospel*, with the wonderful Facility of the Doctrines it contain'd, having been accustom'd all their Lives to the pompous Worship and secret *Mysteries* of Deities without Number. The *Christians* on the

other hand were careful to remove all Obstacles lying in the way of the *Gentiles*. They thought the most effectual way of gaining them over to their side was by compounding the Matter, which led them to unwarrantable Compliances, till at length they likewise set up for *Mysteries*. Yet not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the *Gospel*, excepting *Baptism* and the *Supper*, they strangely disguiz'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan Mystick Rites: They administred them with the strictest Secrecy; and, to be inferiour to their Adversaries in no Circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepar'd or *initiated*. And to inspire their *Catechumens* with most ardent Desires of Participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hid were *tremendous and unutterable Mysteries*.

Thus lest *Simplicity*, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, *Christianity* was put upon an equal Level with the *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, or the *Orgies of Bacchus*. Foolish and mistaken Care! as if the most impious Superstitions could be sanctifi'd by the Name of *Christ*. But such is always the Fruit of prudential and condescending Terms of Conversion in Religion, whereby the Number and not the Sincerity of Professors is mainly intended.

Christianity not Mysterious, Section II, Introd. and ch. 1; Section III, chs. 4 and 6.

5. NATURAL RELIGION WITHOUT REVELATION

Charles Blount

The Oracles of Reason is the title of a little volume of papers said to be by Charles Blount (the disciple of Lord Herbert of Cherbury), Charles Gildon and others, which first appeared in 1693. In that year Blount committed suicide, and two years later the book was republished with a defence of suicide by Charles Gildon. Like other early Deistic publications, it is a small and slight volume, but it attracted widespread attention, and called forth an answer from Charles Leslie, the Non-Juror (see below, pp. 51 ff.). Gildon professed himself converted by Leslie's argument.

The book is also dealt with by Dr Clarke in the Boyle Lectures of 1705, p. 29 below.

The statement of the Deistic position which is here given follows closely on the lines of Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

Natural Religion is the Belief we have of an eternal intellectual Being, and of the Duty which we owe him, manifested to us by our Reason, without Revelation or positive Law: The chief Heads whereof seem contain'd in these few Particulars.

1. That there is one infinite eternal God, Creator of all Things.
2. That he governs the World by Providence.
3. That 'tis our Duty to worship and obey him as our Creator and Governor.
4. That our Worship consists in Prayer to him, and Praise of him.
5. That our Obedience consists in the Rules of Right Reason, the Practice whereof is Moral Virtue:
6. That we are to expect Rewards and Punishments hereafter, according to our Actions in this Life; which includes the Soul's Immortality, and is proved by our admitting Providence.

Seventhly, That when we err from the Rules of our Duty, we ought to Repent, and trust in God's mercy for Pardon.

That Rule which is necessary to our future Happiness, ought to be generally made known to all men.

But no Rule of Revealed Religion was, or ever could be made known to all men.

Therefore no Revealed Religion is necessary to future Happiness.

The Major is thus prov'd:

Our Future Happiness depends upon our obeying, or endeavouring to fulfil the known Will of God.

But that Rule which is not generally known, cannot be generally obey'd.

Therefore that Rule which is not generally known, cannot be the Rule of our Happiness.

Now the Minor of the first Syllogism is matter of Fact, uncontrovertible, that no Religion supernatural has been conveyed to all the World; witness the large Continent of *America*, not discover'd till within this two Hundred Years; where if there were any Revealed Religion, at least it was not the *Christian*.

And if it be objected to the whole, That the ways of God's dealing with the Heathen as to Eternal Mercy, are unknown to any; and that he will Judge them by the Law of Nature, or (in other terms) the Rules of Natural Religion or Morality. We urge again, that either those Laws of Natural Religion are sufficient, if kept, to Happiness; or they who could know no more, are out of a possibility of a future state of Blessedness: because they could not comply with Laws they know not: And in saying this, they deny God's Infinite Goodness, which provides for all his Creatures the means of attaining that Happiness, whereof their Natures are capable. Again, if they urge, that Natural Religion is sufficient, but not possible to be lived up to. The same answer falls more heavy upon them; That then there is no visible means left for the greater part of Mankind to be happy: And to do our duty according to what we are able, is but a cold comfort, if we have no Assurance or Hope at least in the means we have laid before us.

The Oracles of Reason, from no. 14 (a supposed letter from A. W. to Charles Blount, Esq.) "Of Natural Religion as opposed to Divine Revelation".

6. WHY THE TRUE DEIST SHOULD NOT REJECT CHRISTIANITY

Samuel Clarke

Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) was the leading Low Church Divine in the reigns of Queen Anne and George I, and after the death of Locke (1704) the most prominent English philosopher. He first made his mark at Cambridge (where he graduated B.A. from Caius in 1695) by a Latin translation of the Cartesian Rohault's *Physics*, to which he appended

notes introducing the doctrines of his master Newton (1697). In 1698 he was appointed Chaplain to the learned John Moore, then Bishop of Norwich. His two series of Boyle Lectures (1704 and 1705), from the latter of which the following extracts are taken, brought him fame, and after holding other livings, he was appointed in 1709 to St James's, Westminster. His *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) was considered to be Arian in tendency and called forth complaints in the Lower House of Convocation. It was answered by Waterland and others. Clarke's works were collected and edited by his friend and admirer Bishop Hoadly.

The *Heathen Philosophers*, those few of them, who taught and lived up to the Obligations of natural Religion, had indeed a consistent Scheme of Deism, so far as it went; and they were very Brave and Wise Men, if any of them could keep steddy and firm to it. But the Case is not so *Now*. The same Scheme of Deism is not any longer consistent with its own Principles, if it does not *Now* lead Men to embrace and *believe Revelation*, as it *Then* taught them to *hope* for it. *Deists*, in our Days, who obstinately reject Revelation when offered to them, are not such Men as *Socrates* and *Tully* were; but, under pretense of Deism, 'tis plain they are generally Ridiculers of all that is truly excellent even in natural Religion it self. Could we see a Deist, whose Mind was heartily possest with worthy and just apprehensions of all the Attributes of God, and a deep Sense of his Duty towards that Supreme Author and Preserver of his Being; Could we see a Deist, who lived in an exact performance of all the Duties of natural Religion; and by the practise of Righteousness, Justice, Equity, Sobriety and Temperance, expressed in his Actions, as well as Words, a firm belief and expectation of a future State of Rewards and Punishments: In a word, Could we see a Deist, who with reverence and modesty, with sincerity and impartiality, with true and hearty desire of finding out and submitting to Reason and Truth, would inquire into the Foundations of our belief, and examine throughly the pretensions which pure and uncorrupt Christianity has to be received as a Divine Revelation; I think we could not doubt to affirm of such a Person, as our Saviour did of the young Man in the

Gospel, that he was *not far from the Kingdom of God*; and that, being *willing to do his Will, he should know of the Doctrine, whether it was of God.* But, as I have said, there is great reason to doubt, there are no such Deists as these, among the Infidels of our Days. This indeed is what they sometimes pretend, and seem to desire should be thought to be their Case: But alas, their trivial and vain Cavils; their mocking and ridiculing, without and before examination; their directing the whole stress of their Objections, against particular Customs, or particular and perhaps uncertain Opinions, or explications of Opinions, without at all considering the main Body of Religion; their loose, vain, and frothy Discourses; and above all, their vitious and immoral Lives; show plainly and undeniably, that they are not really *Deists*, but mere *Atheists*; and consequently not capable to judge of the Truth of Christianity. If they were truly and in earnest such *Deists* as they pretend and would sometimes be thought to be; those Principles (as has been already shown in part, and will more fully appear in the following Discourse;) would unavoidably lead them to *Christianity*; But being such as they really are, they cannot possibly avoid recurring to downright *Atheism.*

The Sum is this: There is now no such Thing as a consistent Scheme of Deism. That which alone was once such, namely the Scheme of the best *Heathen Philosophers*, ceases *now* to be so, after the appearance of Revelation; Because (as I have already shown, and shall more largely prove in the sequel of this Discourse,) it directly conducts Men to the belief of *Christianity.* All other Pretences to *Deism*, may by unavoidable consequence be forc'd to terminate in absolute Atheism. He that cannot prevail with himself to obey the *Christian Doctrine*, and embrace Those hopes of *life and immortality*, which our Saviour has *brought to light through the* Gospel; cannot Now be imagined to maintain with any firmness, steddiness and certainty, the belief of the *immortality of the Soul*, and a *future State of Rewards and Punishments* after death; Because all the main difficulties and objections, lie

equally against both. For the same Reason, he who disbelieves the immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments; cannot defend to any effectual purpose, or enforce with any sufficient strength, the *obligations of Morality and natural Religion*; notwithstanding that they are indeed incumbent upon Men, from the very nature and reason of the things themselves. Then he who gives up the obligations of Morality and natural Religion, cannot possibly have any just and worthy notion of the *moral Attributes* of God, or any true sense of the nature and *necessary differences* of things; And he that once goes thus far, has no foundation left, upon which he can be sure of the *natural Attributes* or even of the *Existence* of God; Because to deny what unavoidably follows from the Supposition of his existence and natural Attributes, is in reality denying those natural Attributes and that Existence it self. On the contrary: He who believes the *Being and natural Attributes* of God, must of necessity (as has been shown in my former discourse) confess his *moral Attributes* also. Next, he who owns and has just notions of the moral Attributes of God, cannot avoid acknowledging the *obligations of Morality and natural Religion.* In like manner, he who owns the Obligations of Morality and natural Religion, must needs, to support those obligations and make them effectual in practise, believe a *future State of Rewards and Punishments*: And finally, he who believes both the obligations of natural Religion, and the certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; has no manner of reason left, why he should reject the *Christian Revelation,* when proposed to him in its original and genuine Simplicity. Wherefore since those Arguments which demonstrate to us the Being and Attributes of God, are so closely connected with those which prove the reasonableness and certainty of the Christian Revelation, that there is Now no consistent Scheme of Deism left; all modern Deists being forced to shift from one Cavil to another, and having no fixed and certain set of Principles to adhere to; I thought I could no way better prevent their evil Designs, and obviate all their

different Shifts and Objections; than by pursuing the same method of reasoning, by which I before demonstrated the *Being and Attributes of God*; and endeavouring to prove in like manner, by one direct and continued thread of Arguing, the reasonableness and certainty of the *Christian Revelation* also.

A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, Boyle Lectures, 1705, Introduction.

7. LACK OF UNIVERSALITY NOT AN OBJECTION TO REVELATION

Samuel Clarke

[*See note on* pp. 24 f.]

It appears plainly, that 'tis agreeable to the natural Hopes and Expectations of Men, that is, of Right Reason duly improved; to suppose God making some particular Revelation of his Will to Mankind, which may supply the undeniable Defects of the Light of Nature. And at the same time, 'tis evident that such a thing is by no means unworthy of the Divine Wisdom, or inconsistent with any of the Attributes of God; but rather, on the contrary, most suitable to them. Consequently, considering the manifold Wants and Necessities of Men, and the abundant Goodness and Mercy of God; there is great ground from right Reason and the Light of Nature, to believe, that God would not always leave Men wholly destitute of so needful an Assistance, but would at some time or other actually afford it them. Yet it does not from hence at all follow, (as some have imagined,) that God is *Obliged* to make such a Revelation: For then it must needs have been given in all Ages, and to all Nations; and might have been claimed and demanded as of Justice, rather than wished for and desired as of Mercy and condescending Goodness. But the fore-mentioned considerations are such as might afford Men reasonable ground to *Hope for* some Favour of this

kind, to be conferred at such Time, and in such Manner, and upon such Persons, as should seem best to supreme infinite Wisdom: At least, they might well dispose and prepare Men before-hand, whenever any Doctrine should come accompanied with just and good evidence of its being such a Revelation, to believe and embrace it with all readiness.

It has been made use of, by[1] a modern Author, as his principal and strongest Argument against the reasonableness of believing any Revelation at all; that it is contested there has been no Revelation universally owned and embraced as such, either in all Ages, or by all Nations in any Age. He pretends to acknowledge, that if the Doctrine of Christianity was *universally* entertained, he would not doubt of its being truly a Revelation of the Will of God to Mankind: But since, in Fact, there is no instituted Religion *universally* received as a Divine Revelation; and there are several Nations to whom the Christian Doctrine in particular, was never so much as preached, nor ever came to their knowledge at all; he concludes that, what is not universal and equally made known to *All Men*, cannot be needful for *Any*; and consequently, that there never was any real Want of a Revelation at all, nor any ground to think any further Assistance necessary to enable Men to answer all the Ends of their Creation, than the bare Light of Nature. This is the Summ and Strength of this Author's Reasoning; and herein all the Deniers of Revelation agree with him. Now, not to take notice here, that it is by no means impossible, but that all Men may be capable of receiving some Benefit from a Revelation, which yet a great part of them may never have heard of; If these Mens Reasoning was true, it would follow by the same Argument, that neither was Natural Religion necessary to inable Men to answer the ends of their Creation. For, though all the Truths of Natural Religion, are indeed certainly discoverable by the due use of right Reason alone; yet 'tis evident *All Men* are not indued with the same Faculties and Capacities, nor have they

[1] *Oracles of Reason*, p. 197, etc.

All equally afforded to them the same means of making that discovery; As these Gentlemen themselves upon some occasions are willing enough to own, when they are describing the barbarous Ignorance of some poor Indian Nations: And consequently the knowledge of Natural Religion being, in Fact, by no means universal; it will follow that there is no great Necessity even of That; but that Men may do very well without it, in performing the Functions of the Animal Life, and directing themselves wholly by the Inclinations of Sense; And thus these Gentlemen must at last be forced to let go all moral Obligations, and so recur unavoidably to absolute Atheism. The Truth is: As God was not obliged to make all his Creatures equal; to make Men, Angels; or to endue all Men, with the same Faculties and Capacities as Any; So neither is he bound to make all Men capable of the *same Degree* or the *same Kind* of Happiness, or to afford all Men the very same means and opportunities of obtaining it. There is ground enough, from the consideration of the manifest corruption of Humane Nature, to be so far sensible of the Want of a Divine Revelation, as that right Reason and the Light of Nature it self will lead a wise and considerate Man to think it very probable, that the infinitely merciful and good God may actually vouchsafe to afford Men some such supernatural Assistance: And consequently such a Person will be very willing, ready, and prepared to entertain a Doctrine which shall at any time come attended with just and good Evidence of its being truly a Revelation of the Will of God. But it does not at all from hence follow, either that God is absolutely bound to make such a Revelation; or that, if he makes it, it must equally be made to All Men; or that, since in Fact it is not made to All, therefore there is no Reason to believe that there is any Need or any Probability of its being made to Any.

A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, Boyle Lectures, 1705, Prop. VII, § 4.

8. CHRISTIANITY AS OLD AS THE CREATION

Matthew Tindal

MATTHEW TINDAL (1657–1733), Deist, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730) was the last of his publications. It is a clear and forcible statement of the Deistic Religion of Nature and may be regarded as the culmination of the Deistic movement. Historical Christianity is not directly attacked, but the argument tends to show that a revelation is superfluous.

The book called out a direct reply from William Law, which will be noticed later (see pp. 93 ff).

SINCERE EXAMINATION NO DANGER TO TRUE CHRISTIANITY

A. This early Visit, Sir, gives me hopes it will not be a short one.

B. I come to talk with you on a Subject, which may, perhaps, keep me longer with you than you desire.

A. Your uncommon Temper and Candor, in debating even the most important Points, will always make your Conversation agreeable, tho' ever so long; but pray, what is to be the Subject of our morning's Discourse?

B. I was yesterday in company with a great many Clergymen, it being our Bishop's primary Visitation: where the Complaint was general, of the Coldness and Indifference, with which People receiv'd the speculative Points of Christianity, and all its holy Rites; for which formerly they had shewn so great a Zeal. This Coldness they chiefly imputed to those *Low Churchmen*, who lay the main stress on *Natural Religion*; and withall so magnify the Doctrine of *Sincerity*, as in effect to place all Religions on a level, where the Professors are alike sincere. The Promoters of these Notions, as well as these Notions themselves, were expos'd with warmth; how justly, I will not determine, till we have talk'd the matter over with our usual Freedom: For which reason, I have made you this early Visit, and wou'd be glad to know the Sentiments

of so good a Judge, on these two important Points; viz. *Sincerity*, and *Natural Religion.*

A. I thank you for this Favour, and shall freely tell you, I so little agree with those Gentlemen in relation to Sincerity, that I think a sincere Examination into religious matters can't be too much press'd; this being the only way to discover true Christianity. The Apostles thought themselves oblig'd, in making Proselytes, to recommend an impartial Search; they both desir'd, and requir'd Men *to judge for themselves, to prove all things*, etc. this they thought necessary, in order to renounce a Religion, which the Force of Education had impress'd on their Minds and embrace another directly contrary to the Notions and Prejudices they had imbib'd. Nay, even those very Men, who most ridicule the Doctrine of Sincerity, never fail on other Occasions to assert, that Infidelity is owing to the want of a sincere Examination; and that whosoever impartially considers Christianity, must be convinc'd of its Truth. And I might add, That could we suppose, a sincere Examination wou'd not always produce this Effect, yet must it always make Men acceptable to God; since that is all God can require; all that it is in their power to do for the Discovery of his Will. These, in short, are my Sentiments as to this point; and as to the other, I think, too great a stress can't be laid on *Natural* Religion; which, as I take it, differs not from *Reveal'd*, but in the manner of its being communicated: The one being the Internal, as the other the External Revelation of the same unchangeable Will of a Being, who is alike at all times infinitely wise and good.

Revelation a republication of the Religion of Nature

B. The greater stress you lay on Reason, the more you extol Revelation; which being design'd to exalt and perfect our rational Nature, must be itself highly reasonable.

A. I grant you this is the Design of Religion; but have not the Ecclesiasticks in most Places entirely defeated this Design, and so far debas'd Human Nature, as to render it unsoci-

able, fierce and cruel? Have they not made external Revelation the Pretence of filling the Christian World with Animosity, Hatred, Persecution, Ruin and Destruction; in order to get an absolute Dominion over the Consciences, Properties and Persons of the Laity? But passing this over, if the Perfection of any Nature, whether human, angelical, or divine, consists in being govern'd by the Law of its Nature; and ours, in acting that Part, for which we were created; by observing all those Duties, which are founded on the Relation we stand in to God and one another; can Revelation any otherwise help to perfect Human Nature, but as it induces Men to live up to this Law of their Nature? And if this Law is the Test of the Perfection of any written Law; must not that be the most perfect Law, by which the Perfection of all others is to be try'd? And,

If nothing but Reasoning can improve Reason, and no Book can improve my Reason in any Point, but as it gives me convincing Proofs of its Reasonableness; a Revelation, that will not suffer us to judge of its Dictates by our Reason, is so far from improving Reason, that it forbids the Use of it; and reasoning Faculties unexercis'd, will have as little Force, as unexercis'd Limbs; he that is always carry'd, will at length be unable to go: And if the *Holy Ghost*, as Bishop *Taylor* says, *works by heightening, and improving our natural Faculties*;[1] it can only be by using such Means as will improve them, in proposing Reasons and Arguments to convince our Understanding; which can only be improv'd, by studying the Nature and Reason of Things: *I apply'd my Heart* (says the wisest of Men) *to know, and to search, and to seek out Wisdom, and the Reason of Things*, Eccles. 7. 25.

So that the Holy Ghost can't deal with Men as rational Creatures, but by proposing Arguments to convince their Understandings, and influence their Wills, in the same manner as if propos'd by other Agents; for to go beyond this, would be making Impressions on Men, as a Seal does on

[1] *Liberty of Prophecy*, ch. 18, p. 19.

Wax; to the confounding of their Reason, and their Liberty in choosing; and the Man would then be merely passive, and the Action would be the Action of another Being acting upon him; for which he could be in no way accountable: but if the Holy Ghost does not act thus, and Revelation itself be not arbitrary; must it not be founded on the Reason of Things? And consequently, be a *Republication, or Restoration of the Religion of Nature*?

God and man eternally the same

The Principles I maintain are so evident, that they who are introducing Things in opposition to them, yet must own their Force. Dare any say, that God is an Arbitrary Being, and his Laws not founded on the eternal Reason of Things; even while they are contending for his acting arbitrarily, and giving us such Laws as are founded on mere Will and Pleasure? Will any maintain, that our reasoning Faculties were not given us, to distinguish between Good and Evil, Religion and Superstition? Or that they will not answer the End for which they were given?

Will any affirm, that the Nature of God is not eternally the same? Or that the Nature of Man is chang'd? Or that the Relations God and Man stand in to one another, are not always the same; nay, even while they are making Alterations in these Relations, by supposing new Laws, and new Duties?

If All own, that God, at no Time, cou'd have any Motive to give Laws to Mankind, but for their Good; and that he is, at all Times, equally good, and, at all Times, acts upon the same Motives; must they not own with me, except they are inconsistent with themselves, that his Laws, at all Times must be the same? And that the Good of Mankind is the Test, the *Criterion*, or the internal Evidence, by which we are to judge of all his Laws? But,

If, after all, I am still criminal, it must be in not owning, that God created the greatest Part of Mankind to be damn'd; or, which is the same, made such Things necessary to their

Salvation, as they were incapable of knowing? And in my Asserting, that *God is a Rewarder of those, who diligently seek him*, Heb. 11. 6; tho' they do not seek him under the Direction of this, or that Set of Men; who, provided they can make themselves necessary *here*, care not who they damn *hereafter*. And thus,

In believing with St *Peter*, that *God is no Respecter of Persons*, Acts 10. 34; *but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him*: And with St *Paul*, that *the* Gentiles *do by Nature the Things contained in the Law*, Rom. 2. 14: And that *God will render to every Man* (whether Believer, or Unbeliever,) *according to his Deeds*: And that *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation,—Teaching us,—we shou'd live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 11, 12 (which takes in the whole of our Duty) *has appear'd to all Men*, and at all Times. And,

In believing with our Saviour, that *the Whole need not a Physician*, Mat. 9. 12; and that *the Doctrine he taught* shews itself to be *the Will of God*; and that he *did not speak of himself*, John 7. 17; and in believing the Description, that God himself gives of the New Covenant, *I will put my Laws into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts*, Heb. 8. 10:—*They shall not teach every Man his Neighbour.—They shall all know me from the least to the greatest*, Ver. 11.

In a word, All are forc'd to own these Sentiments, I contend for, except the *Anthropomorphites*; they, indeed, said, that *Fallible Reason must give place to infallible Revelation*; or in Dr *Waterland's* Words, "That to advance Natural Light, that is, *Pagan* Darkness, in opposition to Scripture Evidence, is setting up human Conjectures above divine Truths:"[1] And that, since the Scripture so frequently imputes human Parts, and Passions to God, we ought not to doubt of it; only because we can't reconcile it with that Philosophy, with which the Bulk of Mankind, for whom the Scripture was chiefly wrote, are intirely ignorant of.

[1] Remarks on Dr Clark's *Exposition of the Church Catechism*, p. 66.

In our next Conference (it being high Time to put an End to this) I shall shew you, that all Mankind, *Jews*, *Gentiles*, *Mahometans*, etc. agree, in owning the Sufficiency of the Law of Nature, to make Men acceptable to God; and that the primitive Christians believ'd, there was an exact Agreement between *Natural* and *Reveal'd Religion*; and that the Excellency of the Latter, did consist in being a Republication of the Former. *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, chs. 1, 12, 14.

9. NATURE AND THE ARTIFICER OF NATURE

William Paley

WILLIAM PALEY (1743–1805), Senior Wrangler 1763, from 1766 to 1775 Fellow and Lecturer of Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1775 Rector of Musgrave, Westmorland, and from 1782 Archdeacon of Carlisle, was perhaps the most widely influential theological writer in England at the end of our period. His *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) (see below, pp. 275 ff.) founded on the lectures he had given in Cambridge was at once adopted as a Cambridge textbook, and established his reputation. Paley expounds a clear and thoroughgoing system of utilitarian Ethics, reinforced by a belief in rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Of his more directly theological works, the two which call for mention here are *The Evidences of Christianity* (1794), in which he successfully rebuts the theory that the Apostles were guilty of fraud, and vindicates the sufficiency of the evidence for the Resurrection (see below, pp. 86 ff.); and *Natural Theology, or Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1802). The two passages which follow are taken from the last-mentioned work. Circumstances were greatly changed since the rise of the Deistic controversy, and Paley's interests were different from those of his predecessors at the beginning of the century. It is a sign of the decay of speculative theology that whereas Locke and Clarke had argued primarily *a priori* to the existence of God as the necessary First Cause, Paley relies entirely upon the argument *a posteriori* from the evidences of design. In spite of this important difference Paley may be regarded as a late representative of the same general tendency in theology which we have found exemplified in Locke and Clarke. He shares their confidence in the power of the unaided understanding to establish the fundamentals of theistic belief, and is untouched by the criticism of Hume and Kant. Paley makes no claim to originality, and in fact borrows freely from predecessors and contemporaries. His distinction lies in the unrivalled skill and candour with which he states the case for the prevailing form of Theism.

For Paley the truth of Revelation, like the truth of Natural Religion, is to be established *a posteriori*. It is a matter of evidences. The content of Revelation is now greatly attenuated. The primary purpose of the Christian Revelation was not to teach morals—for the principles of virtuous conduct were already sufficiently known, nor yet to redeem mankind—for Paley thought that the benefits of Christ's death availed for the human race apart from their revelation; but to provide sanctions for the rules of conduct which men already knew. "The members of civilised society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act; but without a future state, or, which is the same thing, without credited evidence of that state, they want a *motive* to their duty". It is therefore "the great end and office of a revelation from God, to convey to the world authorized assurances of the reality of a future existence" (*The Evidences of Christianity*, pt II, ch. 2).

In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a *stone*, and were asked how the stone came to be there: I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever; nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a *watch* upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given,—that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? why is it not as admissible in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, *e.g.* that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it. To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result:—We see a cylindrical box containing a coiled elastic spring, which by its endeavour

to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure) communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which catch in, and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer: and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel, no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it; but being once, as we have said, observed and understood), the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker: that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer: who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown,

but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to show with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connexion by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be spared, without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment,—these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had

instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found in the place where he found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, viz. of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.

Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction, to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watchmaker.

Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so.

And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of *metallic* nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing, is nothing. The expression, "the law of metallic nature", may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear; but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as "the law of vegetable nature", "the law of animal nature", or indeed as "the law of nature" in general, when assigned as the cause of phaenomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument: he knows the utility of the end: he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

Suppose, in the next place, that the person who found the watch should, after some time, discover, that, in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing, in the course of its movement, another watch like itself (the thing is conceivable): that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould for instance, or a complex adjustment of laths, files, and other tools, evidently and separately calculated for this purpose; let us inquire, what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion.

The first effect would be to increase his admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible mechanism, by which it was carried on, he would perceive, in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done,—for referring the construction of the watch to design, and to supreme art. If that construction *without* this property, or which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this farther property, the crown and perfection of all the rest.

He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, *in some sense*, the maker of the watch, which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different

sense from that, in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use. With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second; in no such sense as this was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn: but no latitude of expression would allow us to say, no stretch of conjecture could lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair, is neither more nor less than this; by the application of an unintelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, an effect is produced, viz. the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn; yet is this share the same, as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section. Therefore,

Though it be now no longer probable, that the individual watch, which our observer had found, was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet doth not this alteration in anywise affect the inference, that an artificer had been originally employed and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now, than they were before. In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency

to a use, that relation to an end, which we have remarked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question, by telling us that a preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance, without a contriver; order, without choice; arrangement, without any thing capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to a use, imply the presence of intelligence and mind. No one, therefore, can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it; —could be truly said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result connected with the utilities of other beings. All these properties, therefore, are as much unaccounted for, as they were before.

Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty farther back, i.e. by supposing the watch before us to have been produced from another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far, brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, nor dispensed with. If the difficulty were diminished the farther we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach towards a limit, *there*, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called infinite, we may conceive the limit to be attained: but where there is no such tendency or approach, nothing is effected by

lengthening the series. There is no difference as to the point in question (whatever there may be as to many points), between one series and another; between a series which is finite, and a series which is infinite. A chain, composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. And of this we are assured (though we never *can* have tried the experiment), because, by increasing the number of links, from ten for instance to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, etc. we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self-support. There is no difference in this respect (yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is finite and one that is infinite. This very much resembles the case before us. The machine which we are inspecting demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design, a designer; whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That other machine may, in like manner, have proceeded from a former machine: nor does that alter the case; contrivance must have had a contriver. That former one from one preceding it: no alteration still; a contriver is still necessary. No tendency is perceived, no approach towards a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series, as with another; a series which is finite, as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

The question is not simply, How came the first watch into existence? which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and consequently to have had no such *first*, for which it was necessary to provide a cause.

This, perhaps, would have been nearly the state of the question, if nothing had been before us but an unorganised, unmechanised substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to show that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession (if it were possible, which I think it is not, for unorganised bodies to spring from one another), or by individual perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether he had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for, in the watch which we are examining, are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, adaptation to the purpose. And the question which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, Whence this contrivance and design? The thing required is the intending mind, the adapted hand, the intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number or succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more, by increasing that number to infinity. If it be said, that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other's movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, viz. the watch from which it proceeded: I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitableness of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to a use (all which we discover in the watch), we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore, to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all of the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver; proofs of design, but no designer.

Our observer would farther also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him was, in truth and reality, the maker of every watch produced from it: there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) be-

tween the making of another watch with his own hands, by the mediation of files, lathes, chisels, etc. and the disposing, fixing, and inserting of these instruments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made in such a manner, as to form a new watch in the course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools, instead of another.

The conclusion which the *first* examination of the watch, of its works, construction, and movement, suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This conclusion is invincible. A *second* examination presents us with a new discovery. The watch is found, in the course of its movement, to produce another watch, similar to itself; and not only so, but we perceive in it a system or organisation, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have, or ought it to have, upon our former inference? What, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill, which had been employed in the formation of such a machine? Or shall it, instead of this, all at once turn us round to an opposite conclusion, viz. that no art or skill whatever has been concerned in the business, although all other evidences of art and skill remain as they were, and this last and supreme piece of art be now added to the rest? Can this be maintained without absurdity? Yet this is atheism.

Natural Theology, chs. 1 and 2.

10. FROM NATURE TO REVELATION

William Paley

[*See note on* pp. 36 f.]

Under this stupendous Being we live. Our happiness, our existence, is in his hands. All we expect must come from him. Nor ought we to feel our situation insecure. In every nature,

and in every portion of nature, which we can descry, we find attention bestowed upon even the minutest parts. The hinges in the wings of an *earwig*, and the joints of its antennae, are as highly wrought, as if the Creator had nothing else to finish. We see no signs of diminution of care by multiplicity of objects, or of distraction of thought by variety. We have no reason to fear, therefore, our being forgotten, or overlooked, or neglected.

The existence and character of the Deity, is, in every view, the most interesting of all human speculations. In none, however, is it more so, than as it facilitates the belief of the fundamental articles of *Revelation*. It is a step to have it proved, that there must be something in the world more than what we see. It is a farther step to know, that, amongst the invisible things of nature, there must be an intelligent mind, concerned in its production, order, and support. These points being assured to us by Natural Theology, we may well leave to Revelation the disclosure of many particulars, which our researches cannot reach, respecting either the nature of this Being as the original cause of all things, or his character and designs as a moral governor; and not only so, but the more full confirmation of other particulars, of which, though they do not lie altogether beyond our reasonings and our probabilities, the certainty is by no means equal to the importance. The true theist will be the first to listen to *any* credible communication of Divine knowledge. Nothing which he has learnt from Natural Theology will diminish his desire of farther instruction, or his disposition to receive it with humility and thankfulness. He wishes for light: he rejoices in light. His inward veneration of this great Being will incline him to attend with the utmost seriousness, not only to all that can be discovered concerning him by researches into nature, but to all that is taught by a revelation, which gives reasonable proof of having proceeded from him.

But, above every other article of revealed religion, does the anterior belief of a Deity bear with the strongest force upon that grand point, which gives indeed interest and importance

to all the rest,—the resurrection of the human dead. The thing might appear hopeless, did we not see a power at work adequate to the effect, a power under the guidance of an intelligent will, and a power penetrating the inmost recesses of all substance. I am far from justifying the opinion of those, who "thought it a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead:" but I admit, that it is first necessary to be persuaded, that there *is* a God, to do so. This being thoroughly settled in our minds, there seems to be nothing in this process (concealed as we confess it to be) which need to shock our belief. They who have taken up the opinion, that the acts of the human mind depend upon *organisation*, that the mind itself indeed consists in organisation, are supposed to find a greater difficulty than others do, in admitting a transition by death to a new state of sentient existence, because the old organisation is apparently dissolved. But I do not see that any impracticability need be apprehended even by these; or that the change, even upon their hypothesis, is far removed from the analogy of some other operations, which we know with certainty that the Deity is carrying on. In the ordinary derivation of plants and animals, from one another, a particle, in many cases, minuter than all assignable, all conceivable dimension; an aura, an effluvium, an infinitesimal; determines the organisation of a future body: does no less than fix, whether that which is about to be produced shall be a vegetable, a merely sentient, or a rational being; an oak, a frog, or a philosopher; makes all these differences; gives to the future body its qualities, and nature, and species. And this particle, from which springs, and by which is determined, a whole future nature, itself proceeds from, and owes its constitution to, a prior body: nevertheless, which is seen in plants most decisively, the incepted organisation, though formed within, and through, and by, a preceding organisation, is not corrupted by its corruption, or destroyed by its dissolution: but, on the contrary, is sometimes extricated and developed by those very causes; survives and comes into

action, when the purpose, for which it was prepared, requires its use. Now an oeconomy which nature has adopted, when the purpose was to transfer an organisation from one individual to another, may have something analogous to it, when the purpose is to transmit an organisation from one state of being to another state: and they who found thought in organisation, may see something in this analogy applicable to their difficulties; for, whatever can transmit a similarity of organisation will answer their purpose, because, according even to their own theory, it may be the vehicle of consciousness, and because consciousness carries identity and individuality along with it through all changes of form or of visible qualities. In the most general case, that, as we have said, of the derivation of plants and animals from one another, the latent organisation is either itself similar to the old organisation, or has the power of communicating to new matter the old organic form. But it is not restricted to this rule. There are other cases, especially in the progress of insect life, in which the dormant organisation does not much resemble that which encloses it, and still less suits with the situation in which the enclosing body is placed, but suits with a different situation to which it is destined. In the larva of the libellula, which lives constantly, and had still long to live under water, are descried the wings of a fly, which two years afterwards is to mount into the air. Is there nothing in this analogy? It serves at least to show, that even in the observable course of nature, organisations are formed one beneath another; and, amongst a thousand other instances, it shows completely, that the Deity can mould and fashion the parts of material nature, so as to fulfil any purpose whatever which he is pleased to appoint.

They who refer the operations of mind to a substance totally and essentially different from matter (as most certainly these operations, though affected by material causes, hold very little affinity to any properties of matter with which we are acquainted), adopt perhaps a juster reasoning and a better philosophy; and by these the considerations above

suggested are not wanted, at least in the same degree. But to such as find, which some persons do find, an insuperable difficulty in shaking off an adherence to those analogies, which the corporeal world is continually suggesting to their thoughts; to such, I say, every consideration will be a relief, which manifests the extent of that intelligent power which is acting in nature, the fruitfulness of its resources, the variety, and aptness, and success of its means; most especially every consideration, which tends to show that, in the translation of a conscious existence, there is not, even in their own way of regarding it, any thing greatly beyond, or totally unlike, what takes place in such parts (probably small parts) of the order of nature, as are accessible to our observation.

Again; if there be those who think, that the contractedness and debility of the human faculties in our present state seem ill to accord with the high destinies which the expectations of religion point out to us; I would only ask them whether any one, who saw a child two hours after its birth, could suppose that it would ever come to understand *fluxions*; or who then shall say, what farther amplification of intellectual powers, what accession of knowledge, what advance and improvement, the rational faculty, be its constitution what it will, may not admit of, when placed amidst new objects, and endowed with a sensorium adapted, as it undoubtedly will be, and as our present senses are, to the perception of those substances, and of those properties of things, with which our concern may lie.

Upon the whole; in every thing which respects this awful, but, as we trust, glorious change, we have a wise and powerful Being (the author, in nature, of infinitely various expedients for infinitely various ends), upon whom to rely for the choice and appointment of means adequate to the execution of any plan which his goodness or his justice may have formed, for the moral and accountable part of his terrestrial creation. That great office rests with *him*; be it *ours* to hope and to prepare, under a firm and settled persuasion, that, living and dying, we are his; that life is passed in his constant presence, that death resigns us to his merciful disposal. *Natural Theology*, ch. 27.

II

THE CREDENTIALS OF REVELATION

1. THE CERTAINTY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION PROVED BY FOUR RULES

Charles Leslie

CHARLES LESLIE (1650–1722), Non-Juror and controversialist, was the sixth son of John Leslie, "the fighting Bishop" of Clogher. He was educated at Enniskillen and Trinity College, Dublin. On the Revolution he refused to take the oaths to William and Mary and in 1693 obtained from James II at St Germains the *congé d'élire* for the consecration of the non-juring Bishops. He was active in defence of the interests of the House of Stuart, and in 1713 was given a place in the household of the Pretender. He returned to Ireland in 1721, and died there in the following year.

Leslie engaged in vigorous controversy with Burnett, and other Whig Divines, with Quakers, with Deists and finally with those Non-Jurors who favoured alterations and additions in the Liturgy of the Church of England. He was an acute and able controversialist—in Dr Johnson's opinion the only reasoner among the Non-Jurors, and "a reasoner who was not to be reasoned against".

For his theory of the relations of Church and State developed in the *Case of the Regale* (1700), see below, pp. 244 ff.

A short and easie Method with the Deists (London, 1698) was written in the first place to allay the disquiet of a lady friend "who had been stagger'd with the Arguments of Deism, even to distraction, since what had been so often rung in her Ears, of the story of *Christ* being but a Fable, like that of Mahomet or the Heathen Gods, wou'd dart into her thoughts in the midst of her Devotions, even at the Holy Sacrament". Leslie is able to add that his work "had the desir'd effect, and she was able to keep her ground with the Deists by the four marks, which none of the stories they told her of the Heathen Gods, of Mahomet, or the Legends, cou'd come up to" (*A Vindication*, Works, vol. I, pp. 119 f.).

Leslie's *Method* forecasts the coming controversy over Evidences. He does not decline the appeal to testimony, and is confident that it is possible to vindicate the genuineness of the Christian Revelation by purely external tests, and at the same time to unmask fraudulent rivals.

SIR,

In Answer to Yours of the Third Instant, I much condole with you your Unhappy Circumstances of being placed amongst such Company, where, as you say, you continually hear the Sacred *Scriptures*, and the Histories therein contain'd, particularly of *Moses* and of *Christ*, and all *Reveal'd* Religion turn'd into Ridicule by Men who set up for *Sense* and *Reason*. And they say, That ther is no greater Ground to believe in *Christ*, than in *Mahomet*: That all these pretences to *Revelation* are *Cheats*, and ever have been among *Pagans*, *Jews*, *Mahometans* and *Christians*: That they are all alike Impositions of *Cunning* and *Designing Men*, upon the *Credulity*, at first, of *Simple* and *Unthinking* People; till, their Numbers encreasing, their *Delusions* grew *Popular*, came at last to be Establish'd by *Laws*; and then the force of *Education* and *Custom* gives a Byass to the Judgments of after Ages, till such *Deceits* come really to be Believ'd, being receiv'd upon *Trust* from the Ages foregoing, without examining into the *Original* and *Bottom* of them. Which these our modern Men of *Sense* (as they desire to be esteem'd) say, That they only do, that they only have their *Judgments* freed from the slavish Authority of *Precedents* and *Laws*, in Matters of *Truth*, which, they say, ought only to be decided by Reason: Tho' by a prudent Complyance with *Popularity* and *Laws*, they preserve themselves from *Outrage* and Legal *Penalties*; for none of their Complexion are addicted to *Sufferings* or *Martyrdom*.

Now, Sir, that which you desire from me, is, some short Topic of *Reason*, if such can be found, whereby, without running to *Authorities*, and the intricate Mazes of *Learning*, which breed long Disputes, and which these Men of *Reason* deny by Wholesale, tho' they can give no *Reason* for it, only suppose that *Authors* have been Trump'd upon us, *Interpolated* and *Corrupted*, so that no stress can be laid upon them, tho' it cannot be shewn wherein they are so *Corrupted*; which, in Reason, ought to lie upon them to Prove, who Alledge it;

otherwise it is not only a *Precarious*, but a *Guilty Plea*: And the more, that they refrain not to Quote Books on their side, for whose Authority ther are no Better, or not so Good Grounds. However, you say, it makes your Disputes endless, and they go away with Noise and Clamour, and a Boast, That ther is nothing, at least nothing *Certain*, to be said on the *Christian* side. Therefore you are desirous to find some *One Topic* of *Reason*, which should Demonstrate the Truth of the *Christian* Religion; and at the same time, Distinguish it from the *Impostures* of *Mahomet*, and the old *Pagan* World: That our *Deists* may be brought to this *Test*, and be either oblig'd to Renounce their *Reason*, and the common *Reason* of *Mankind*, or to submit to the clear Proof, from *Reason*, of the *Christian* Religion; which must be such a *Proof*, as no *Imposture* can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the *Christian* Religion not to be an *Imposture*. And, whether such a Proof, one single Proof (to avoid Confusion) is not to be found out, you desire to know from me.

And you say, that you cannot imagine but ther must be such a Proof, because every *Truth* is in it self *Clear*, and *One*; and therefore that *One* Reason for it, if it be the true Reason, must be sufficient: And, if *Sufficient*, it is better than *Many*; for *Multiplicity* confounds, especially to weak Judgments.

Sir, you have impos'd an hard Task upon me; I wish I could perform it: For tho' *Every Truth* is *One*, yet our *Sight* is so feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it *Directly*, but by many *Inferences*, and laying of things together.

But I think that in the Case before us, ther is such a *Proof* as you require; and I will set it down as *Short* and *Plain* as I can.

First then I suppose, that the *Truth of the Doctrine of* CHRIST will be sufficiently Evinced, if the *Matters of Fact*, which are Recorded of him in the *Gospels* be *True*; for His *Miracles*, if *True*, do vouch the *Truth* of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to *Moses*. If he brought the Children of *Israel* through the *Red-Sea*, in that *Miraculous*

manner, which is related in *Exodus*, and did such other wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from GOD; These being the strongest Proofs we can desire, and which every *Deist* will confess he wou'd acquiesce in, if he saw them with his Eyes. Therefore the stress of this Cause will depend upon the Proof of these *Matters of Fact.*

1. And the Method I will take, is, *First*, to lay down such *Rules*, as to the *Truth* of *Matters of Fact*, in General, that where they All meet, such *Matters of Fact* cannot be *False.* And then, *Secondly*, to shew that all these *Rules* do meet in the *Matters of Fact* of *Moses*, and of *Christ*; and that they do not meet in the *Matters of Fact* of *Mahomet*, of the *Heathen Deities*, or can possibly meet in any *Imposture* whatsoever.

2. The *Rules* are these: 1st. That the Matter of Fact be such as that Mens outward Senses, their Eyes and Ears, may be Judges of it. 2. That it be done Publickly in the Face of the World. 3. That not only Publick Monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward Actions to be perform'd. 4. That such Monuments and such Actions or Observances be Instituted, and do Commence from the Time that the Matter of Fact was done.

* * * *

Therefore from what has been said, the Cause is Summ'd up Shortly in this, That tho' we cannot *See* what was done before our Time, yet by the *Marks* which I have laid down concerning the *Certainty* of *Matters of Fact* done before our Time, we may be as much Assur'd of the *Truth* of 'em as if we saw them with our Eyes; because whatever *Matter of Fact* has all the Four *Marks* before mention'd, could never have been *Invented* and Receiv'd but upon the Conviction of the *outward Senses* of all those who did Receive it, as before is Demonstrated. And therefore this *Topick* which I have Chosen, does stand upon the *Conviction* even of Mens *outward Senses.* And since you have Confin'd me to *one* Topick, I have not Insisted upon the others, which I have only Nam'd.

And now it lies upon the *Deists*, if they wou'd appear as Men of *Reason*, to shew some *Matter of Fact* of former Ages, which they allow to be *True*, that has greater *Evidences* of its *Truth*, than the *Matters of Fact* of *Moses* and of *Christ*: Otherwise they cannot, with any shew of *Reason*, Reject the one and yet Admit of the other.

But, I have given them Greater Latitude than this, for I have shewn such *Marks* of the *Truth* of the *Matters of Fact* of *Moses* and of *Christ*, as no other *Matters of Fact* of those Times, however *True*, have but these only: And I put it upon them to shew any *Forgery* that has *All* these *Marks*.

This is a short *Issue*. Keep them close to this. This Determins the *Cause* All at Once.

A short and easie Method with the Deists, wherein the Certainty of the Christian Religion is Demonstrated by Infallible Proof from IV rules, which are Incompatible to any Imposture that ever yet has been, or that can Possibly be. In a letter to a friend, §§ 1–2, 10–11.

2. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES RESTORED WITH THE HELP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

William Whiston

WILLIAM WHISTON (1667–1752), Mathematician and Divine. Deprived in 1710 of the Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics at Cambridge, in which he had succeeded Sir I. Newton, on the ground of his unorthodoxy on the Doctrine of the Trinity. He was a learned but unbalanced scholar, still remembered for his excellent translation of the works of Josephus. His *Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (1722) proceeds upon the fantastic theory that the original text of the Old Testament should be reconstructed according to the quotations made therefrom by the apostolic writers.

How wide a Difference there now is, and ever since the Days of *Origen* has been, between many of the Citations made in the New Testament, and those places in the Old whence they were taken; to say nothing here of those Passages which are cited in the one, and are now not at all extant in the other; all the Learned do well know: and this both as to the *Hebrew*

Original, and the *Septuagint* Version. They also do well know what immense Pains have been taken by the Christian Divines and Expositors, in order to reconcile these Citations with the Texts whence they are cited. They also cannot but have observ'd, how the *Hebrew* and *Septuagint* have, upon this Occasion, been put upon the Wrack, and even tortur'd by the Criticks, to see if, by almost any Violence, these Citations can be made to accord with the Texts cited; and this ever since the Days of *Origen*. I dare say also, that the truly judicious and impartial among the Learned do well know, that this has been hitherto done, generally speaking, with little Success; and that, for the main, those Differences do at this Day stand upon much the same Foot, and those Citations and Texts appear to be as little at Accord one with another now, as they were in the Days of *Jerom* 1300 Years ago. Now if we enquire what has been the Occasion of all this Learned Pains to so little Purpose; and whence it is that the New and Old Testament are, in these Points still left in so irreconcilable a State by our best Expositors; to the great Perplexity of good Christians, and the open Scandal of *Jews* and Infidels, we shall immediately find, that it is almost wholly owing to this one Maxim; "That the present Copies of the *Hebrew* Original, and *Septuagint* Version, at least of the *Hebrew* Original, are the very same now that they were in the Days of Christ and his Apostles, when those Citations were made: and that neither of them have been voluntarily or considerably corrupted since that Time". I do not say that all the Learned have been of that Mind: for most of the Ancients, and several of the Moderns have shrewdly suspected some pernicious Practices of the *Jews* in this Case. But I mean, that this has been a very common Opinion since the Days of *Jerom*; and that the principal Criticks among the Moderns, especially among the Protestants, have almost unanimously gone into it; and that those who have suspected, or supposed the contrary, have not been able fully to prove what they thus suspected or supposed, to the Satisfaction of

the inquisitive: no, not since the Discovery of the *Samaritan Pentateuch* it self: which yet, with the Works of *Philo*, the old Copies of *Josephus*, the *Roman Psalter*, and the numerous Citations in the New Testament, and the most Primitive Writers before *Origen*, were abundantly sufficient for the Demonstration of the same: as we have fully shewed in this Essay. Now as to this fixed Opinion of the present uncorrupt State of the *Jewish Hebrew Bibles* in particular, which is the most insisted on; and which has been the grand Occasion that these Citations and Texts have so long seemed irreconcilable: or, as to the proper Reasons and Arguments upon which such an Opinion is grounded; besides an unwarrantable Notion of the Obligation lying on the Divine Providence, rather to preserve the *Jewish Copies* of the Bible uncorrupt, even after the Jews were rejected of God, and their Commonwealth destroy'd, upon their Rejection and Murder of their true Messias; then those of the *Samaritans*, the *Greeks*, the *Latins*, or any other Nations; I do not find that the Abetters of it do produce any that deserve an Answer. It is still a Sort of *Postulatum* among them; not to be *proved*, but *taken for granted*. And since *Jerom*, by his great Skill in the *Hebrew*, and Reputation among the Western Christians, was able in great Measure, gradually to introduce a new Translation of his own, made from the later *Hebrew* Copies, in the room of such as were ever before made from another Original, I mean from the old uncorrupt *Septuagint*; it is suppos'd by many, that to dispute against those Readings, which the present *Hebrew*, and our common Translations thence do give us, tho' it be in Compliance with the old *Hebrew*, which the *Samaritans* ever receiv'd: which the *Septuagint* Interpreters made use of; which *Philo*, *Josephus*, our Saviour Christ, and his Apostles, with all the first Christians followed; is almost disputing against the Bible it self. *Jerom* gave this modern Copy the pompous Name of *The Hebrew Verity*; which it still retains with many. And a great Number of the Moderns, even ever since the Days of the same *Jerom*, do generally take it for

granted, that this *Hebrew* is the *Fountain*, and all the Versions but *Streams*; which are no farther valuable than as they are deriv'd therefrom, and agree thereto. Accordingly, it is commonly alledg'd, that to follow any *Version* here, is to prefer the *Stream* before the *Fountain*. As if it were possible for any to allow the present *Hebrew* to be still pure and uncorrupt, and yet to prefer any of those Versions before it, which are known by all to be in a great Degree otherwise. As if the proper Question here was not this, whether the later *Hebrew* does agree with the old *Hebrew*; or, whether it does not evidently appear that the *Hebrew* in the Days of *Josephus*, was considerably different from the *Hebrew* since the Days of *Aquila* and *Theodotion*? As to which Point, the Patrons of the present *Hebrew* seem to have little or nothing to say.

* * * *

And since I think I have, on the contrary, certainly discover'd, and fully prov'd, that not only the *Greek*, but the *Hebrew* Bible has been considerably corrupted since the New Testament Citations were made from it; I think my self better prepar'd than others to consider those Citations over again. And I must here profess, that upon my Examination of that Matter, I am clearly of Opinion, as this proposition asserts, That by the best Evidence we have, the Writers of the New Testament will be fully clear'd and justify'd, as to those their Citations.

An Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament, and for vindicating the Citations made thence in the New Testament, Proposition xiii.

3. THE GOSPEL FOUNDED UPON ALLEGORY

Anthony Collins

ANTHONY COLLINS (1676–1729), a prominent Deist. His *Discourse of Freethinking* (1713) a somewhat loosely constructed defence of the right "to think freely" had called forth crushing replies from Bentley and Swift.

Whiston's attempt to vindicate the literal and historical fulfilment of prophecy at the expense of the textual authenticity of the Hebrew Old Testament gave Collins an opening for a covert attack upon the evidential value of Prophecy. In *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724) Collins urges that the argument from Prophecy is the one crucial argument by which the truth of the Christian Religion must be maintained, since on this depended the proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. He then argues that, since the literal fulfilment of the prophecies cannot be maintained, the only course open to Christian apologists is to fall back upon the allegorical or typical interpretation, by which, as Collins plainly indicates, any interpretation can be extracted from the words which the exigencies of the situation may require. In Part II, from which the following extract is taken, Collins turns upon Whiston's treatment of the Old Testament, convicts him of innovating upon Christian tradition, and returns to his main point that allegorical interpretation alone can save the cause of Christian truth.

Collins' book provoked many replies, and in *The Literal Scheme of Prophecy considered* (1727) Collins returned to the charge. A notable feature of the last mentioned book is Collins's argument, as against his critic Bishop Chandler (1668–1750), for assigning the book of Daniel to the period of the Maccabees.

The system therefore or scheme of things set up by Mr W. seems to me to combat the christian scheme receiv'd in all ages and times, and asserts what is contrary to the most notorious fact, and to the most universal practise of all christians before, as well as after, JEROM. For if any one christian fact be true, it is, that christians in all ages and times, and more especially in the primitive times, have both understood the apostles to have argu'd allegorically from the prophesies cited by them out of the Old Testament, or have themselves argu'd allegorically from the prophecies they themselves cited out of the Old Testament; which last seems sufficient to prove the apostles to have been allegorical interpreters of the Old Testament, according to the common topick of divines, who contend that the earliest fathers best teach us the sense and doctrine of the apostles. And Mr W. is the first Theorist-divine, who, to assert the autority of the New Testament, has pretended, that the Old Testament (in really genuine passages) is *corrupted*; all other christians asserting the integrity of the Old (and some even with respect

to corrupted passages) to prove the autority of the New. And I believe he is the first christian author, who ever asserted, either that all the prophecies cited by the authors of the New Testament from the Old, were fulfill'd in their literal sense; or that to consider the apostles as applying any of them in an allegorical manner, was *a weak and enthusiastical* scheme: all others, as far as I can learn, contending at most for the literal sense of some prophesies only: and some[1] making it the glory *of christianity* to be founded on allegory, and not in *criticism*, which, they say, would have render'd the *writings* of the apostles *ten times more liable to exceptions than now they are*; and also to be *a wonderful confirmation of christianity*, that *the apostles*, who were *men of no literature and education*, and *never spent their time in the Schools of the Rabbi's*, should *be such eminent masters* in allegory or *Rabbinical learning*, and *should be so excellently vers'd in their traditionary explications of prophecies.*

It seems therefore most destructive of christianity to suppose; that *typical* or *allegorical arguing* is in any respect *weak and enthusiastical*, and that the apostles always argu'd in the matter of *prophesies* according to the literal sense of the *prophesies*, and the way of reasoning used in the schools: since it is most apparent; that the whole gospel is in every respect founded on *type* and *allegory*; that the apostles in most, if not in all cases, reason'd *typically* and *allegorically*; and that, if the apostles be suppos'd to reason always after the *rules* used in the schools, and if their writings be brought to the test of those *rules*, the books of the Old and New Testament will be in an *irreconcileable state*, and the *difficulties* against christianity will be incapable of being solv'd. *Any that call themselves christians*, says, Dr ALLIX, *should take heed how they deny the force and autority of that way of traditional interpretation, which has been anciently received in the Jewish church.*

A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, pt II.

[1] Nichols's *Conf. with a Theist*, vol. III, pp. 64, 65.

4. THE LIMITATION OF PROPHECY

Thomas Sherlock

THOMAS SHERLOCK (1678–1761), a leading Divine, successively Bishop of Bangor (1728), of Salisbury (1734) and of London (1748). He succeeded his father (William Sherlock, Dean of St Paul's) as Master of the Temple, 1704, a post which he retained till 1753. The six sermons published under the title *The Use and Intent of Prophecy* (1725) were delivered in the Temple Church in the Spring of 1724. They were one of the most effective replies from the orthodox side to the issue which had been raised by Collins. Sherlock does not attempt to defend in detail the correspondence between prophecy and fulfilment. He urges that prophecy is to be viewed in the perspective of the whole economy of Redemption. It is not to be supposed that the first recipients of the prophecy could have inferred how God would fulfil his prophecy, though we can see that the prophecies were actually fulfilled in Christ. In the end Sherlock falls back upon the conception of a double meaning in Prophecy: it is congruous, he thinks, with what we believe about God's purpose, to suppose that the words of Prophecy contained from the beginning a "secret evidence" which the event has later verified to us.

If this Prophecy (i.e. Gen. iii. 15) conveyed to our first Parents only a general Hope and Expectation of Pardon and Restoration, and was intended by God to convey no more to *them*; how come we, their Posterity, to find so much more in this Promise than we suppose them to find? How is it that we pretend to discover *Christ* in this Prophecy, to see in it the Mystery of his Birth, his Sufferings, and his final Triumph over all the Powers of Darkness? By what new Light do we discern all these Secrets, by what Art do we unfold them?

'Tis no Wonder to me, that such as come to the Examination of the Prophecies applied to *Christ*, expecting to find in each of them some express Character and Mark of *Christ*, plainly to be understood as such antecedently to his Coming, should ask these, or many other the like Questions; or that the Argument from antient Prophecy should appear so slight and trivial to those who know no better Use of it.

Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning; and whatever Degree of Light he thought fit to communicate to

our first Parents, or to their Children in After-times, there is no doubt but that *He* had a perfect Knowledge at all Times of all the Methods by which he intended to rescue and restore Mankind; and therefore all the Notices given by him to Mankind of his intended Salvation, must correspond to the great Event, whenever the Fulness of Time shall make it manifest. No Reason can be given why God should at all Times, or at any Time, clearly open the Secrets of his Providence to Men; it depends merely upon his good Pleasure to do it in what Time and in what Manner he thinks proper. But there is a necessary Reason to be given why all such Notices as God thinks fit to give, should answer exactly in due Time to the Completion of the great Design. It is absurd therefore to complain of the antient Prophecies for being obscure, for it is challenging God for not telling us more of his Secrets. But if we pretend that God has at length manifested to us by the Revelation of the Gospel the Method of his Salvation, it is necessary for us to shew, that all the Notices of his Salvation given to the old World do correspond to the Things which we have heard and seen with our Eyes. The Argument from Prophecy therefore is not to be formed in this manner; "All the antient Prophecies have expressly pointed out and characterized *Christ Jesus*:" But it must be formed in this manner; "All the Notices which God gave to the Fathers of his intended Salvation are perfectly answered by the coming of *Christ*". He never promised or engaged his Word in any Particular relating to the Common Salvation, but what he has fully made good by sending his Son to our Redemption. Let us try these Methods upon the Prophecy before us. If you demand that we should shew you, *à priori*, *Christ Jesus* set forth in this Prophecy, and that God had limited himself by this Promise to convey the Blessing intended by sending his own Son in the Flesh, and by no other Means whatever; you demand what I cannot shew, nor do I know who can. But if you enquire, whether this Prophecy, in the obvious and most natural Meaning of it, in that Sense in which our first

Parents, and their Children after, might easily understand it, has been verified by the Coming of *Christ*; I conceive it may be made as clear as the Sun at Noonday, that all the Expectations raised by this Prophecy has been compleatly answered by the Redemption wrought by *Christ Jesus*. And what have you to desire more than to see a Prophecy fulfilled exactly? If you insist that the Prophecy should have been more express, you must demand of God why he gave you no more Light; but you ought at least to suspend this Demand till you have a Reason to shew for it.

I know that this Prophecy is urged further, and that Christian Writers argue from the Expression of it, to shew that *Christ* is therein particularly foretold: He properly is the *Seed of a Woman* in a Sense in which no other ever was; his Sufferings were well prefigured by *the bruising of the Heel*, his compleat Victory over Sin and Death by *bruising the Serpent's Head*. When Unbelievers hear such Reasonings, they think themselves entitled to laugh; but their Scorn be to themselves. We readily allow, that the Expressions do not imply necessarily this Sense; we allow further, that there is no Appearance that our first Parents understood them in this Sense; or that God intended they should so understand them: But since this Prophecy has been plainly fulfilled in *Christ*, and by the Event appropriated to him only; I would fain know how it comes to be conceived to be so ridiculous a thing in us, to suppose that God, to whom the whole Event was known from the Beginning, should make choice of such Expressions, as naturally conveyed so much Knowledge as he intended to convey to our first Parents, and yet should appear in the Fulness of Time to have been peculiarly adapted to the Event which he from the Beginning saw, and which he intended the World should one Day see; and which when they should see, they might the more easily acknowledge to be the Work of his Hand, by the secret Evidence which he had inclosed from the Days of old in the Words of Prophecy. However the Wit of Man may despise this Method, yet is

there nothing in it unbecoming the Wisdom of God. And when we see this to be the Case, not only in this Instance, but in many other Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, it is not without Reason we conclude, that under the Obscurity of antient Prophecy there was an evidence of God's Truth kept in Reserve, to be made manifest in due Time.

As this Prophecy is the first, so it is the only considerable one, in which we have any Concern from the Creation to the Days of *Noah*. What has been discoursed therefore upon this Occasion, may be understood as an Account of the first Period of Prophecy. Under this Period the Light of Prophecy was proportioned to the Wants and Necessities of the World, and sufficient to maintain Religion after the Fall of Man, by affording sufficient Grounds for Trust and Confidence in God; without which Grounds, which could then no otherways be had but by Promise from God, Religion could not have been supported in the World. This Prophecy was the Grand Charter of God's Mercy after the Fall; Nature had no certain Help for Sinners liable to Condemnation; her Right was lost with her Innocence: It was necessary therefore either to destroy the Offenders, or to save them by raising them to a Capacity of Salvation, by giving them such Hopes as might enable them to exercise a reasonable Religion. So far the Light of Prophecy extended. By what Means God intended to work his Salvation, he did not expressly declare; and who has a Right to complain that he did not; or to prescribe to him Rules in dispensing his Mercy to the Children of Men, This Prophecy we, upon whom the latter Days are come, have seen fully verified: more fully than those to whom it was delivered could perhaps conceive. View this Prophecy, then, with respect to those to whom it was given, it answered their Want and the immediate End proposed by God; view it with respect to ourselves, and it answers ours; and shall we still complain of its Obscurity?

The Use and Intent of Prophecy in the several Ages of the World, Discourse iii.

5. THE RESURRECTION AN IMPOSTURE

Thomas Woolston

THOMAS WOOLSTON (1670–1733), an eccentric student of doubtful sanity. Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. His *Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1727–1729) precipitated the controversy on the historicity and evidential value of the Miracles. Woolston was a student of the Fathers, and argued that the figurative interpretation of the Miracles which he found in the Patristic writings should be adopted to the exclusion of their historical truth. His treatment of the Gospel narratives is often scurrilous. The following extracts from the sixth discourse—On the Resurrection—will give a sufficient impression of their quality. The greater part of the tract is thrown into the form of a supposed letter from a Rabbi to the author.

Woolston was one of the few Free-thinking writers who suffered in his person for his opinions. He was tried by the Lord Chief Justice at the Guildhall in 1729 and sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. Being unable to pay the fine, he spent the rest of his days in prison, in spite of the efforts of Samuel Clarke to secure his release.

SIR,

According to your Request, I here send you my Thoughts on *Jesus*'s Resurrection, in which I shall be shorter than I would be, because of the customary Bounds of your *Discourses*.

The Controversy between us *Jews* and you *Christians* about the *Messiah* has hitherto been of a diffusive Nature: But as the Subject of *this* is the Resurrection of your *Jesus*; so, by my Consent, we'll now reduce the Controversy to a narrow Compass, and let it turn intirely on this grand Miracle and Article of your Faith. If your *Divines* can prove *Jesus*'s Resurrection against the following Objections, then I will acknowledge him to be the *Messiah*, and will turn Christian, otherwise he must still pass with us for an Impostor and false Prophet.

I have often lamented the Loss of such Writings, which our *Ancestors* unquestionably dispers'd against *Jesus*, because of the clear Sight they would give us, into the Cheat and Imposture of his Religion. But I rejoice and thank God, there is little or no Want of them, to the Point in Hand. For I had not long meditated on the Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, as

your *Evangelists* have related it, but I plainly discern'd it to be the most notorious and monstrous Imposture, that ever was put upon Mankind. And if you please to attend to my following Arguments, which require no Depth of Judgment and Capacity to apprehend, I am persuaded that you and every one disinterested, will be of the same Mind too.

To overthrow and confute the Story of this monstrous and incredible Miracle, I was thinking once to premise an Argument of the Justice of the Sentence denounc'd against and executed upon *Jesus*, who was so far from being the innocent Person, you Christians would make of him, that, as may easily be proved, he was so grand a *Deceiver*, *Impostor* and *Malefactor*, as no Punishment could be too great for him. But this Argument (which I reserve against a Day of perfect Liberty, to publish by it self in Defence of the Honour and Justice of our *Ancestors*) would be too long for the Compass of this Letter; and therefore I pass it by, tho' it would give Force to my following Objections; it being hard and even impossible to imagine, that God would vouchsafe the Favour of a miraculous Resurrection to one, who for his Crimes deservedly suffer'd and underwent Death.

But waving, I say, that Argument for the present, which of itself would be enough to prejudice a reasonable Man against the Belief of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; I will allow *Jesus* to have been a much better Man, than I believe him to have been; or as good a one in Morals as your *Divines* do suppose him; and will only consider the Circumstances of the Evangelical Story of his Resurrection; from which, if I don't prove it to have been the most bare-fac'd Imposture that ever was put upon the World, I deserve for the Vanity of this Attempt, a much worse Punishment, than he for his Frauds endured.

* * * *

I consider'd lately, that *Easter* drew nigh, when it was usual for our *Divines* in their Pulpits, to insist on the Proof of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; and therefore I hasten'd the Publication of this *Discourse*, that they might have these two peculiar Texts,

viz. of *sealing the Stone* of the Sepulchre, and of *the last Error* or Imposture *will be worse than the first,* to treat on. He that produces a Sermon or Sermons, wresting the foresaid Texts out of the Hands of my *Rabbi,* and putting another Sense on them, to the Credit of *Jesus*'s and *Lazarus*'s Resurrection,

Erit mihi magnus Apollo,

and by my Consent shall be the next *Arch-Bishop* of *Canterbury.*

But my Heart aches a little for our *Divines,* and I almost despair of their clean Solutions of the foresaid two Difficulties. What must they do then? Why, they must give up their *Religion* as well as their *Church,* or go along with me to the Fathers for their mystical Interpretation of the whole Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection.

A sixth Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour.

6. THE APOSTLES TRIED AND ACQUITTED

Thomas Sherlock

[*See note on* p. 61]

In the controversy over Miracles, as in that on the Prophecies, Thomas Sherlock was the most effective protagonist in defence of Revelation. *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus* (1729) counters the contention of Woolston that that supreme miracle was an imposture. A friendly company of gentlemen of the Inns of Court are represented as discussing together the recent trial and conviction of Woolston. After some desultory conversation it is decided among them that the evidence of Christ's resurrection and the exceptions taken to it should be made the subject of investigation in the form of a trial; one of the company undertakes the office of Judge, another is made Counsel for Woolston, a third Counsel for the Apostles, and the date of the trial is fixed for a fortnight later.

Of this work Leslie Stephen remarks that it is "the concentrated essence of eighteenth century apologetic theology". It had an immense vogue. By 1765 it had reached a fourteenth edition in England; a German translation went through thirteen editions; it was also translated into French and was widely used by French Catholic apologists. The following extracts will explain and justify the resounding success which Sherlock achieved. He is of course innocent of any comparative valuation of the Gospel texts. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are all on the same footing.

Again it does not occur to him to consider the general mental background of the first century and to compare it with that of his own time. The issue presents itself to him as a plain contest between true miracle and fraud. But given his premisses the reasoning is cogent.

The Company met at the Time appointed: But it happened in this, as in like Cases it often does, that some Friends to some of the Company, who were not of the Party the First Day, had got notice of the Meeting; and the Gentlemen who were to debate the Question, found they had a more numerous Audience than they expected or desired. He especially who was to maintain the Evidence of the Resurrection, began to excuse the Necessity he was under of disappointing their Expectation, alledging that he was not prepared; and he had persisted in excusing himself, but that the Strangers who perceived what the Case was, offered to withdraw, which the Gentleman would by no means consent to: They insisting to go, he said, he would much rather submit himself to their Candour, unprepared as he was, than be guilty of so much Rudeness, as to force them to leave the Company. Upon which one of the Company, smiling said, It happens luckily that our Number is increased; when we were last together, we appointed a Judge, but we quite forgot a Jury, and now, I think, we are good Men and true, sufficient to make one. This Thought was pursued in several Allusions to legal Proceedings, which created some Mirth, and had this good Effect, that it dispersed the solemn Air which the mutual Compliments upon the Difficulty before-mentioned had introduced, and restored the Ease and Good-humour natural to the Conversation of Gentlemen.

The Judge perceiving the Disposition of the Company, thought it a proper Time to begin, and called out, Gentlemen of the Jury take your Places; and immediately seated himself at the upper End of the Table: The Company sat round him, and the Judge called upon the Counsel for *Woolston* to begin.

Mr A. Counsel for Woolston, *addressing himself to the Judge, said,*

May it please your Lordship; I conceive the Gentleman on

the other Side ought to begin, and lay his Evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the Court; till that is done, it is to no purpose for me to object. I may perhaps object to something which he will not admit to be any part of his Evidence, and therefore, I apprehend, the Evidence ought in the first place to be distinctly stated.

Judge. Mr B. What say you to that?

Mr B. Counsel on the other Side:

My Lord, if the Evidence I am to maintain, were to support any new Claim, if I were to gain any thing which I am not already possessed of, the Gentleman would be in the right; but the Evidence is old, and is Matter of Record, and I have been long in possession of all that I claim under it. If the Gentleman has any thing to say to dispossess me, let him produce it; otherwise I have no reason to bring my own Title into question. And this I take to be the known Method of proceeding in such Cases; no Man is obliged to produce his Title to his Possession; it is sufficient if he maintains it when it is called in question.

Mr A. Surely, my Lord, the Gentleman mistakes the Case; I can never admit myself to be out of Possession of my Understanding and Reason; and since he would put me out of this Possession, and compel me to admit things incredible, in virtue of the Evidence he maintains, he ought to set forth his Claim, or leave the World to be directed by common Sense.

Judge. Sir, you say right; upon Supposition that the Truth of the Christian Religion were the Point in Judgment. In that Case it would be necessary to produce the Evidence for the Christian Religion; but the Matter now before the Court is, whether the Objections produced by Mr *Woolston*, are of weight to overthrow the Evidence of Christ's Resurrection. You see then the Evidence of the Resurrection is supposed to be what it is on both Sides, and the thing immediately in Judgment, is the Value of the Objections, and therefore they must be set forth. The Court will be bound to take notice of

the Evidence, which is admitted as a Fact on both Parts. Go on, Mr A.

Mr A. My Lord, I submit to the Direction of the Court.

* * * *

Judge. Mr A. you are at Liberty either to reply to what has been said under this Head, or to go on with your Cause.

Mr A. My Lord, the Observations I laid before you were but introductory to the main Evidence on which the Merits of the Cause must rest; the Gentleman concluded that here must be a real Miracle or a great Fraud; a Fraud, he means, to which Jesus in his Life-time was a Party; there is, he says, no Medium; I beg his Pardon: Why might it not be an Enthusiasm in the Master which occasion'd the Prediction, and Fraud in the Servants who put it in Execution?

Mr B. My Lord, this is new Matter, and not a Reply; the Gentleman open'd this Transaction as a Fraud from one End to the other. Now he supposes Christ to have been an honest, poor *Enthusiast*, and the Disciples only to be Cheats.

Judge. Sir, if you go to new Matter, the Counsel on the other Side must be admitted to answer.

Mr A. My Lord, I have no such Intention; I was observing, that the Account I gave of Jesus was only to introduce the Evidence that is to be laid before the Court; it cannot be expected that I should know all the secret Designs of this Contrivance, especially considering that we have but short Accounts of this Affair, and those too convey'd to us thro' Hands of Friends and Parties to the Plot; in such a Case it is enough if we can imagine what the Views probably were; and in such Case too it must be very easy for a Gentleman of Parts to raise contrary Imaginations, and to argue plausibly from them. But the Gentleman has rightly observ'd, that if the Resurrection be a Fraud, there is an End of all Pretensions, good or bad, that were to be supported by it; therefore I shall go on to prove this Fraud, which is one main Part of the Cause now to be determin'd.

I beg leave to remind you, that Jesus in his Life-time foretold his Death, and that he should rise again the third Day. The first Part of his Prediction was accomplish'd; he dy'd upon the Cross, and was bury'd. I will not trouble you with the Particulars of his Crucifixion, Death and Burial; it is a well known Story.

Mr B. My Lord, I desire to know whether the Gentleman charges any Fraud upon this Part of the History; perhaps he may be of Opinion by and by that there was a sleight of Hand in the Crucifixion, and that Christ only counterfeited Death.

Mr A. No, no; have no such Fears; he was not crucify'd by his Disciples, but by the *Romans* and the *Jews*; and they were in very good earnest. I will prove beyond Contradiction that the dead Body was fairly laid in the Tomb, and the Tomb seal'd up; and it will be well for you if you can get it as fairly out again.

Judge. Go on with your Evidence.

* * * *

Judge. Gentlemen of the Jury, you have heard the Proofs and Arguments on both Sides, and it is now your Part to give a Verdict.

Here the Gentlemen whisper'd together, and the Foreman stood up.

Foreman. My Lord, the Cause has been long, and consists of several Articles, therefore the Jury hope you will give them your Directions.

Judge. No, no; you are very able to judge without my Help.

Mr A. My Lord, Pray consider, you appointed this Meeting, and chose your Office; Mr B. and I have gone thro' our Parts, and have some Right to insist on your doing your Part.

Mr B. I must join, Sir, in that Request.

Judge. I have often heard that all Honour has a Burden attending it, but I did not suspect it in this Office, which I conferr'd upon myself; but since it must be so, I will re-

collect and lay before you as well as I can the Substance of the Debate.

Gentlemen of the Jury, the Question before you is, whether the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ are guilty of giving false Evidence or no?

Two sorts of Objections or Accusations are brought against them; one charges Fraud and Deceit on the Transaction itself; the other charges the Evidence as forg'd, and insufficient to support the Credit of so extraordinary an Event.

* * * *

The Council for *Woolston*, among other Difficulties, started one, which if well grounded excludes all Evidence out of this Case. The Resurrection being a thing out of the Course of Nature, he thinks the Testimony of Nature, held forth to us in her constant Method of working, a stronger Evidence against the Possibility of a Resurrection, than any human Evidence can be for the Reality of one.

In answer to this, it is said on the other Side,

First, That a Resurrection is a thing to be judg'd of by Mens Senses; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a Man is dead; and should he come to life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no by the very same Means by which we judge those about us to be living Men.

Secondly, That the Notion of a Resurrection contradicts no one Principle of right Reason, interferes with no Law of Nature; and that whoever admits that God gave Man Life at first, cannot possibly doubt of his Power to restore it when lost.

Thirdly, That appealing to the settled Course of Nature, is referring the Matter in dispute not to Rules or Maxims of Reason and true Philosophy, but to the Prejudices and Mistakes of Men, which are various and infinite, and differ sometimes according to the Climate Men live in; because Men form a Notion of Nature from what they see; and therefore in cold Countries all Men judge it to be according to the Course of Nature for Water to freeze, in warm Countries they

judge it to be unnatural; consequently, that it is not enough to prove any thing to be contrary to the Laws of Nature, to say that it is usually or constantly to our Observation otherwise; and therefore tho' Men in the ordinary Course die, and do not rise again (which is certainly a Prejudice against the Belief of a Resurrection) yet is it not an Argument against the Possibility of a Resurrection.

* * * *

We are come now to the last, and indeed the most weighty Consideration.

The Council for the Apostles having in the Course of the Argument allow'd, that more Evidence is requir'd to support the Credit of the Resurrection, it being a very extraordinary Event, than is necessary in common Cases; in the latter Part of his Defence sets forth the extraordinary Evidence upon which this Fact stands; this is the Evidence of the Spirit; the Spirit of Wisdom and Power, which was given to the Apostles, to enable them to confirm their Testimony by Signs and Wonders, and mighty Works; this Part of the Argument was well argu'd by the Gentleman, and I need not repeat all he said.

The Council for *Woolston*, in his Reply, made two Objections to this Evidence.

The first was this: That the Resurrection having all along been pleaded to be a Matter of Fact and an Object of Sense, to recur to Miracles for the Proof of it, is to take it out of its proper Evidence, the Evidence of Sense, and to rest it upon a Proof which cannot be apply'd to it; for seeing one Miracle, he says, is no Evidence that another Miracle was wrought before it; as healing a sick Man is no Evidence that a dead Man was rais'd to Life.

To clear this Difficulty, you must consider by what Train of Reasoning Miracles come to be Proofs in any Case. A Miracle of itself proves nothing, unless this only, that there is a Cause equal to the producing the Effect we see. Suppose you should see a Man raise one from the Dead, and he should

go away and say nothing to you, you would not find that any Fact or any Proposition was prov'd or disprov'd by this Miracle; but should he declare to you in the Name of him by whose Power the Miracle was wrought, that Image-Worship was unlawful, you would then be possess'd of a Proof against Image-Worship. But how? Not because the Miracle proves any thing as to the Point itself, but because the Man's Declaration is authoriz'd by him who wrought the Miracle in Confirmation of his Doctrine; and therefore Miracles are directly a Proof of the Authority of Persons, and not of the Truth of Things.

To apply this to the present Case. If the Apostles had wrought Miracles, and said nothing of the Resurrection, the Miracles would have prov'd nothing about the Resurrection one way or other; but when as Eye-witnesses they attested the Truth of the Resurrection, and wrought Miracles to confirm their Authority, the Miracles did not directly prove the Resurrection, but they confirm'd and establish'd beyond all Suspicion the proper Evidence, the Evidence of Eye-witnesses; so that here is no change of the Evidence from proper to improper, the Fact still rests upon the Evidence of Sense, confirm'd and strengthen'd by the Authority of the Spirit. If a Witness calls in his Neighbours to attest his Veracity, they prove nothing as to the Fact in Question, but only confirm the Evidence of the Witness; the Case is here the same, tho' between the Authorities brought in Confirmation of the Evidence there is no Comparison.

The second Objection was, That this Evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us; it was well, the Gentleman says, for those who had it; but what is that to us who have it not?

To adjust this Difficulty, I must observe to you, that the Evidence now under Consideration was not a private Evidence of the Spirit, or any inward Light, like to that which the Quakers in our Time pretend to, but an Evidence appearing in the manifest and visible Works of the Spirit; and this

Evidence was capable of being transmitted, and actually has been transmitted to us upon unquestionable Authority; and to allow the Evidence to have been good in the first Ages, and not in this, seems to me to be a Contradiction to the Rules of Reasoning; for if we see enough to judge that the first Ages had reason to believe, we must needs see at the same time that it is reasonable for us also to believe; as the present Question only relates to the nature of the Evidence, it was not necessary to produce from History the Instances to shew in how plentiful a manner this Evidence was granted to the Church; whoever wants this Satisfaction, may easily have it.

Gentlemen of the Jury, I have laid before you the Substance of what has been said on both Sides, you are now to consider of it, and to give your Verdict.

The Jury consulted together, and the Foreman rose up.

Foreman. My Lord, we are ready to give our Verdict.

Judge. Are you all agreed?

Jury. Yes.

Judge. Who shall speak for you?

Jury. Our Foreman.

Judge. What say you? Are the Apostles guilty of giving false Evidence in the Case of the Resurrection of Jesus, or not guilty?

Foreman. Not guilty.

Judge. Very well. And now, Gentlemen, I resign my Commission, and am your humble Servant.

The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus.

7. ALLEGED MIRACULOUS POWERS OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH EXPLAINED

Conyers Middleton

Conyers Middleton (1683–1750), Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, famous as a leading antagonist of Richard Bentley, was a renowned classical scholar. He was Chief University Librarian, 1721–1750.

Protestant Christians in our period were generally agreed that genuine miracles were no longer to be looked for in the Church, but to the question when miraculous powers ceased to be exercised different answers were

given. Miracles attested by Holy Scripture were alone accepted with practical unanimity, but some accepted the genuineness of miracles alleged to have been wrought in the early centuries. The eccentric Whiston held that the power of working miracles was lost in the fourth century when the Church adopted the Athanasian 'heresy'. The title of Conyers Middleton's Essay (published 1747), from which the following extracts are taken, sufficiently indicates his position: *A free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, Which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, From the Earliest Ages through several successive Centuries, By which it is shewn, That we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers, That any such Powers were continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles.*

It was an easy step to extend the argument to the miracles recorded in the Canonical Scriptures. Middleton does not take this step, but he raises the question, and his arguments against such an extension are plainly not stated with conviction.

When we reflect on the corrupt and degenerate state of the Church, in the end of the fourth century, allowed by the most diligent inquirers into Antiquity; and that this age was the pattern to all that succeded it; in which the same corruptions were not onely practised, but agreeably to the nature of all corruption, carried still to a greater excess, and improved from bad to worse, down to the time of the Reformation; we may safely conclude, without weighing the particular scruples, which may arise upon each single miracle, that they were all, in the gross, of the same class and species, the mere effects of fraud and imposture. For we can hardly dip into any part of Ecclesiastical History, of what age soever, without being shocked by the attestation of several, which from the mere incredibility of them, appear at first sight to be fabulous. This is confessed on all sides, even by the warmest defenders of the Primitive Fathers, and cannot be accounted for in any other way, than by ascribing it, to the experience, which those Fathers had, of the blind credulity and superstition of the ages, in which they lived, and which had been trained by them, to consider *the impossibility of a thing, as an argument for the belief of it.* But in whatever light we contemplate these stories; whether as believed, or as forged by them, or as affirmed onely, and not believed; it

necessarily destroys their credit in all other miraculous relations whatsoever. Yet it is surprizing to see, with what ease, the Advocates of these miracles overlook and contemn all reflections of this kind, and think it sufficient to tell us, that *the Fathers, tho' honest, were apt to be very credulous*: for with these disputants, credulity, it seems, how gross soever, casts not the least slur upon their testimony; which in all cases, where it does not confute itself by it's own extravagance, they maintain to be convincing and decisive, and superior to all suspicion. Whereas the sole inference, which reason would teach us to draw from an attestation of miracles, so conspicuously fabulous, is; that the same witnesses are not to be trusted in any; as being either incapable, from a weakness of judgement, of discerning the truth and probability of things; or determined by craft and fraud, to defend every thing that was usefull to them. In a word; in all inquiries of this nature, we may take it for a certain rule; that those, who are conscious of the power of working true miracles, can never be tempted either to invent, or to propagate any, which are false; because the detection of any one, would taint the credit of all the rest, and defeat the end proposed by them. But Impostors are naturally drawn, by a long course of success, into a security, which puts them off their guard, and tempts them gradually, out of mere wantonness, and contempt of those, whom they had so frequently deluded, to stretch their frauds beyond the bounds of probability, till by repeated acts of this kind, they tire the patience of the most credulous, and expose their tricks to the scorn even of the populace.

* * * *

It is objected, that by the character, which I have given of the ancient Fathers, *the authority of the books of the New Testament*, which were transmitted to us through their hands, will be rendered precarious and uncertain.

To which I answer; that the objection is trifling and groundless, and that the authority of those books does not depend upon the faith of the Fathers, or of any particular

set of men, but on the general credit and reception which they found, not onely in all the Churches, but with all the private Christians of those ages, who were able to purchase copies of them: among whom, tho' it might perhaps be the desire of a few to corrupt, yet it was the common interest of all, to preserve, and of none, to destroy them. And we find accordingly, that they were guarded by all with the strictest care, so as to be conceled from the knowledge and search of their heathen adversaries, who alone were desirous to extirpate them....Let the craft therefore of the ancient Fathers be as great, as we can suppose it to be: let it be capable of adding some of their own forgeries for a while to the Canon of Scripture; yet it was not in the power of any craft, to impose spurious pieces in the room of those genuin ones, which were actually deposited in all Churches, and preserved with the utmost reverence, in the hands of so many private Christians.

But I may go a step farther, and venture to declare; that if we should allow the objection to be true, it cannot in any manner hurt my argument: for if it be natural and necessary, that the craft and credulity of witnesses should always detract from the credit of their testimony; who can help it? or on what is the consequence to be charged, but on that nature and constitution of things, from which it flows? or if the authority of any books be really weakened, by the character which I have given of the Fathers, will it follow from thence, that the character must necessarily be false, and that the Fathers were neither crafty nor credulous? that surely can never be pretended; because the craft and credulity which are charged upon them must be determined by another sort of evidence; not by consequences, but by facts; and if the charge be confirmed by these, it must be admitted as true, how far soever the consequences may reach.

A free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, Which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, chs. iv and v.

8. NO TESTIMONY SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH A MIRACLE

David Hume

[*See note on* pp. 129 f.]

HUME's Essay "Of Miracles" was published in 1748 in *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* (afterwards called *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*). But the subject had occupied him earlier; it was probably to a first draft of the Essay that he referred in a letter to H. Home of 2 December 1737 in which he wrote that he was enclosing "some *Reasonings concerning Miracles*, which I once thought of publishing with the rest [*i.e.* with what appeared later as *A Treatise of Human Nature*, vols. I and II, 1739], but which I am afraid will give too much offence, even as the world is disposed at present". When published eleven years later, the Essay caused great offence and called forth numerous replies. The notoriety it acquired and the interest it aroused in Hume's other writings make it important historically. But as an illustration of Hume's thought it has received disproportionate attention. His main contention in the Essay is that a uniform experience establishes the laws of nature as admitting of no exceptions, that a miracle is a violation of these laws, and that consequently no testimony—which must be inferior to the evidence of the senses—is sufficient to establish a miracle. But his philosophy as a whole is designed to show that, though experience induces belief in the uniformity of nature, this belief has no sufficient grounds in reason.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to

happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed, in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.[1]

The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish: And even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior". When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact,

[1] Sometimes an event may not, *in itself, seem* to be contrary to the laws of nature, and yet, if it were real, it might, by reason of some circumstances, be denominated a miracle; because, in *fact*, it is contrary to these laws. Thus if a person, claiming a divine authority, should command a sick person to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, the clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow, in short, should order many natural events, which immediately follow upon his command; these might justly be esteemed miracles, because they are really, in this case, contrary to the laws of nature. For if any suspicion remain, that the event and command concurred by accident, there is no miracle and no transgression of the laws of nature. If this suspicion be removed, there is evidently a miracle, and a transgression of these laws; because nothing can be more contrary to nature than that the voice or command of a man should have such an influence. A miracle may be accurately defined, *a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.* A miracle may either be discoverable by men or not. This alters not its nature and essence. The raising of a house or ship into the air is a visible miracle. The raising of a feather, when the wind wants ever so little of a force requisite for that purpose, is as real a miracle, though not so sensible with regard to us.

which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

* * * *

Upon the whole, then, it appears, that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted[1] to a probability, much less to a proof; and that, even supposing it amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof; derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavour to establish. It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience, which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but substract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from the remainder. But according to the principle here explained, this substraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation; and therefore we may establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion.

* * * *

I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason: and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure. To make this more evident, let us examine those miracles, related in scripture;

[1] [1st ed. "can ever amount".]

and not to lose ourselves in too wide a field, let us confine ourselves to such as we find in the *Pentateuch*, which we shall examine, according to the principles of these pretended Christians, not as the word or testimony of God himself, but as the production of a mere human writer and historian. Here then we are first to consider a book, presented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people, written in an age when they were still more barbarous, and in all probability long after the facts which it relates, corroborated by no concurring testimony, and resembling those fabulous accounts, which every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading this book, we find it full of prodigies and miracles. It gives an account of a state of the world and of human nature entirely different from the present: Of our fall from that state: Of the age of man, extended to near a thousand years: Of the destruction of the world by a deluge: Of the arbitrary choice of one people, as the favourites of heaven; and that people the countrymen of the author: Of their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most astonishing imaginable: I desire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and after a serious consideration declare, whether he thinks that the falsehood of such a book, supported by such a testimony, would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the miracles it relates; which is, however, necessary to make it be received, according to the measures of probability above established.

An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, Section x, "Of Miracles".

9. THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY PROVED BY INTERNAL MARKS OF DIVINITY

Soame Jenyns

SOAME JENYNS (1704–1787), a country gentleman who sat in Parliament for the Borough of Cambridge, 1758–1780, and the author of theological and other papers which were widely read and discussed. His *View of the*

Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion (1776) bears significant testimony to the change which had taken place in the minds of some educated people since the opening of the controversy on the evidences in George I's reign. Jenyns himself had been influenced by the tendencies to unbelief which were prevalent in his youth, but had been drawn back to the profession of Christianity by the "internal" marks of its divinity. The relative depreciation of learned argument from external evidences did not please many of Jenyns' readers and perhaps this was in Dr Johnson's mind when he gave his opinion on the book to Dr Mayo: "I think it a pretty book; not very theological indeed; and there seems to be an affectation of ease and carelessness, as if it were not suitable to his character to be very serious about the matter". Paley makes honourable mention of Soame Jenyns' book in Part II of the *Evidences* where he is dealing with the auxiliary evidences of Christianity (*Evidences*, pt II, ch. ii, "The Morality of the Gospel"), but Paley, unlike Jenyns, still bases his case on the external evidences of Miracle.

Most of the writers, who have undertaken to prove the divine origin of the Christian Religion, have had recourse to arguments drawn from these three heads: the prophecies still extant in the Old Testament—the miracles recorded in the New—or, the internal evidence arising from that excellence, and those clear marks of supernatural interposition, which are so conspicuous in the religion itself. The two former have been sufficiently explained and enforced by the ablest pens; but the last, which seems to carry with it the greatest degree of conviction, has never, I think, been considered with that attention, which it deserves.

I mean not here to depreciate the proofs arising from either prophecies, or miracles: they both have, or ought to have, their proper weight; prophecies are permanent miracles, whose authority is sufficiently confirmed by their completion, and are therefore solid proofs of the supernatural origin of a religion, whose truth they were intended to testify; such are those to be found in various parts of the scriptures relative to the coming of the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unexampled state in which the Jews have ever since continued, all so circumstantially descriptive of the events, that they seem rather histories of past, than predictions of future transactions; and whoever will seriously consider the im-

mense distance of time between some of them and the events which they foretell, the uninterrupted chain by which they are connected for many thousand years, how exactly they correspond with those events, and how totally unapplicable they are to all others in the history of mankind; I say, whoever considers these circumstances, he will scarcely be persuaded to believe that they can be the productions of preceding artifice, or posterior application, or can entertain the least doubt of their being derived from supernatural inspiration.

The miracles recorded in the New Testament to have been performed by Christ and his Apostles, were certainly convincing proofs of their divine commission to those who saw them; and as they were seen by such numbers, and are as well attested, as other historical facts, and above all, as they were wrought on so great and so wonderful an occasion, they must still be admitted as evidence of no inconsiderable force; but, I think, they must now depend for much of their credibility on the truth of that religion, whose credibility they were at first intended to support. To prove therefore the truth of the Christian Religion, we should begin by shewing the internal marks of divinity, which are stamped upon it; because on this the credibility of the prophecies and miracles in a great measure depends: for if we have once reason to be convinced, that this religion is derived from a supernatural origin, prophecies and miracles will become so far from being incredible, that it will be highly probable, that a supernatural revelation should be foretold, and enforced by supernatural means.

* * * *

And here I cannot omit observing, that the personal character of the author of this religion is no less new, and extraordinary, than the religion itself, who "spake as never man spake", and lived as never man lived: in proof of this, I do not mean to alledge, that he was born of a virgin, that he fasted forty days, that he performed a variety of miracles, and

after being buried three days, that he arose from the dead; because these accounts will have but little effect on the minds of unbelievers, who, if they believe not the religion, will give no credit to the relation of these facts; but I will prove it from facts which cannot be disputed; for instance, he is the only founder of a religion in the history of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally unconducive to any worldly purpose whatever: all others, Mahomet, Numa, and even Moses himself, blended their religious institutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their respective people; but Christ neither aimed at, nor would accept of any such power; he rejected every object, which all other men pursue, and made choice of all those which others fly from, and are afraid of: he refused power, riches, honours, and pleasure, and courted poverty, ignominy, tortures, and death. Many have been the enthusiasts and impostors, who have endeavoured to impose on the world pretended revelations, and some of them from pride, obstinacy, or principle, have gone so far, as to lay down their lives, rather than retract; but I defy history to shew one, who ever made his own sufferings and death a necessary part of his original plan, and essential to his mission; this Christ actually did, he foresaw, foretold, declared, their necessity, and voluntarily endured them. If we seriously contemplate the divine lessons, the perfect precepts, the beautiful discourses, and the consistent conduct of this wonderful person, we cannot possibly imagine, that he could have been either an idiot or a madman; and yet, if he was not what he pretended to be, he can be considered in no other light; and even under this character he would deserve some attention, because of so sublime and rational an insanity there is no other instance in the history of mankind.

If any one can doubt of the superior excellence of this religion above all which preceded it, let him but peruse with attention those unparalleled writings in which it is trans-

mitted to the present times, and compare them with the most celebrated productions of the pagan world; and if he is not sensible of their superior beauty, simplicity, and originality, I will venture to pronounce, that he is as deficient in taste as in faith, and that he is as bad a critic as a Christian.

A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion, Introduction and Proposition II.

10. THE GUARANTEE OF TRUE TESTIMONY

William Paley

[*See note on* pp. 36 f.]

I deem it unnecessary to prove that mankind stood in need of a revelation, because I have met with no serious person who thinks that, even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance which is superfluous. I desire moreover, that, in judging of Christianity, it may be remembered, that the question lies between this religion and none: for, if the Christian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other.

Suppose, then, the world we live in to have had a Creator; suppose it to appear, from the predominant aim and tendency of the provisions and contrivances observable in the universe, that the Deity, when he formed it, consulted for the happiness of his sensitive creation; suppose the disposition which dictated this counsel to continue; suppose a part of the creation to have received faculties from their Maker, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will, and of voluntarily pursuing any end for which he has designed them; suppose the Creator to intend for these, his rational and accountable agents, a second state of existence, in which their situation will be regulated by their behaviour in the first state, by which supposition (and by no other) the objection to the divine government in not putting a difference

between the good and the bad, and the inconsistency of this confusion with the care and benevolence discoverable in the works of the Deity is done away; suppose it to be of the utmost importance to the subjects of this dispensation to know what is intended for them, that is, suppose the knowledge of it to be highly conducive to the happiness of the species, a purpose which so many provisions of nature are calculated to promote: Suppose, nevertheless, almost the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, the misfortune of their situation, or by the loss of some prior revelation, to want this knowledge, and not to be likely, without the aid of a new revelation, to attain it: Under these circumstances, is it improbable that a revelation should be made? is it incredible that God should interpose for such a purpose? Suppose him to design for mankind a future state; is it unlikely that he should acquaint him with it?

Now in what way can a revelation be made, but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Consequently, in whatever degree it is probable, or not very improbable, that a revelation should be communicated to mankind at all; in the same degree is it probable, or not very improbable, that miracles should be wrought. Therefore, when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation manifestly wanted, and, if true, of inestimable value, the improbability which arises from the miraculous nature of the things related is not greater than the original improbability that such a revelation should be imparted by God.

I wish it, however, to be correctly understood, in what manner, and to what extent, this argument is alleged. We do not assume the attributes of the Deity, or the existence of a future state, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality always must be proved by evidence. We assert only, that in miracles adduced in support of revelation there is not any such antecedent improbability as no testimony can surmount. And for the purpose of maintaining this assertion,

we contend, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in attestation of a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themselves for that state, is not in itself greater than the event, call it either probable or improbable, of the two following propositions being true: namely, first, that a future state of existence should be destined by God for his human creation; and, secondly, that, being so destined, he should acquaint them with it. It is not necessary for our purpose, that these propositions be capable of proof, or even that, by arguments drawn from the light of nature, they can be made out to be probable; it is enough that we are able to say concerning them, that they are not so violently improbable, so contradictory, to what we already believe of the divine power and character, that either the propositions themselves, or facts strictly connected with the propositions (and therefore no further improbable than they are improbable), ought to be rejected at first sight, and to be rejected by whatever strength or complication of evidence they be attested.

This is the prejudication we would resist. For to this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. that no human testimony can in any case render them credible. I think the reflection above stated, that, if there be a revelation, there must be miracles, and that, under the circumstances in which the human species are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair answer to the whole objection.

But since it is an objection which stands in the very threshold of our argument, and, if admitted, is a bar to every proof, and to all future reasoning upon the subject, it may be necessary, before we proceed further, to examine the principle upon which it professes to be founded; which principle is concisely this, That it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

Now there appears a small ambiguity in the term "experience", and in the phrases, "contrary to experience", or "contradicting experience", which it may be necessary to remove in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we being present did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted, that in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we, being present and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience properly so called: and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. It matters nothing, whether the fact be of a miraculous nature, or not. But although this be the experience, and the contrariety, which archbishop Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr Hume opens his Essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr Hume himself intended to object. And, short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term "contrary to experience", but one, viz. that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say "not generally": for to state concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was *ever* experienced, or that *universal* experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

Now the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that, if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true that miracles were wrought on the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general

experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? is it a probability of any great strength or force? is it such as no evidence can encounter? And yet this probability is the exact *converse*, and therefore the exact measure, of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

* * * *

Mr Hume states the case of miracles to be a contest of opposite improbabilities, that is to say, a question whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false: and this I think a fair account of the controversy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative justice, that, in describing the improbability of miracles, he suppresses all those circumstances of extenuation, which result from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of the Deity; his concern in the creation, the end answered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its subserviency to the plan pursued in the work of nature. As Mr Hume has represented the question, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previously assured of the constant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no such Being exists in the universe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deserving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no assignable end whatever, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious. This surely cannot be a correct statement. In adjusting also the other side of the balance, the strength and weight of testimony, this author has provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof by telling us, that we are not obliged to explain how the story of the evidence arose. Now I think that we *are* obliged; not, perhaps, to show by positive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypothesis how it might so happen. The existence of the testimony is a phaenomenon; the truth of the fact solves the phaenomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have some other to rest in; and none, even by our adversaries, can

be admitted, which is not consistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at present, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

But the short consideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation in Mr Hume's conclusion, is the following. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case, and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account;—still, if Mr Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity.

Instances of spurious miracles supported by strong apparent testimony, undoubtedly demand examination; Mr Hume has endeavoured to fortify his argument by some examples of this kind. I hope in a proper place to show that none of them reach the strength or circumstances of the Christian evidence. In these, however, consist the weight of his objection: in the principle itself, I am persuaded, there is none.

A View of the Evidences of Christianity, Preparatory Considerations.

III

THE GROUNDS AND SUFFICIENCY OF NATURAL RELIGION CONSIDERED

1. THE LIMITS OF REASON

William Law

WILLIAM LAW (1686–1761) was the son of Thomas Law, a grocer, and was born at King's Cliffe, near Stamford, in Northamptonshire. He entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as a Sizar in 1705, and in 1711 was ordained and elected a Fellow. He was a Non-Juror at the accession of George I. In 1717 he published the first of his *Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor*, Benjamin Hoadly (see p. 249), and the others followed in the course of the next two years. In 1723 he attacked Mandeville in a work entitled *Remarks upon A Late Book entituled The Fable of the Bees* etc. He moved to Putney in 1727 to become tutor to Edward Gibbon, the father of the historian. Whilst there, he met Charles and John Wesley (see p. 153), read Tauler, Thomas À Kempis, and other mystics, and also published his most famous book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728), a practical treatise on devotion and the Christian life. In 1732 he studied, and was greatly influenced by, Jacob Boehme, the mystic. He retired to King's Cliffe, where he had founded a school for girls, in 1740; and, after a brief period in Thrapston, settled finally at King's Cliffe. There he was joined by Miss Hester Gibbon, the historian's aunt, and Mrs Hutcheson, who wished to live according to the *Serious Call*. The two ladies managed the school, which now included a boys' school. William Law lived a secluded life, occupied in writing and correspondence with friends and disciples, and in local charity, sometimes to the embarrassment of his neighbours. His numerous controversial and devotional writings were collected in 1762.

The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated, published in 1731, was a direct reply to Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (see pp. 31 ff.). The burden of his reply, in which in some degree he anticipated the argument of Butler's *Analogy* (see pp. 115 ff.), was the insufficiency of human reason to embrace all knowledge or to test all truth; his intention, however, was not to disparage reason but to shew that the world and the ways of God were larger than the theories of the rationalistic critics of revelation, and he was not slow to point out that many of the objections they had brought against Revealed Religion could be turned against Natural Religion also.

May one not therefore justly wonder, what it is that could lead any people into an imagination of the absolute perfection of *human reason*? There seems no more in the state of mankind to betray a man into this fancy, than to persuade him that the reason of *infants* is absolutely perfect. For sense and experience are as full and strong a proof against one, as against the other.

But it must be said for these writers, that they decline all arguments from facts and experience, to give a better account of human nature; but with the same justice, as if a man was to lay aside the authority of *history*, to give you a truer account of the life of *Alexander*.

They argue about the perfection of human reason, not as if it were something *already* in being, that had its *nature* and *condition*, and show'd itself to be what it is; but as if it were something that might take its state and condition, according to their fancies and speculations about it.

Their objection against revelation is founded upon the pretended sufficiency, and absolute perfection, of the light and strength of human reason, to teach all men all that is wise, and holy, and divine, in religion. But how do they prove this perfection of human reason? Do they appeal to mankind as proofs of this perfection? Do they produce any body of men, in this, or any other age of the world, that without any assistance from revelation have attained to this perfection of religious knowledge? This is not so much as pretended to: The history of such men is entirely wanting. And yet the want of such a fact as this, has even the force of demonstration against this pretended sufficiency of natural reason.

Because it is a matter not capable of any other kind of proof, but must be admitted as certainly true, or rejected as certainly false, according as fact and experience bear witness for or against it.

For an enquiry about the light, and strength, and sufficiency of reason to guide and preserve men in the knowledge

and practice of true religion, is a question, as *solely* to be resolved by *fact and experience*, as if the enquiry was about the *shape* of man's body, or the *number* of his senses. And to talk of a light and strength of reason, natural to man, which fact and experience have never yet proved, is as egregious nonsense, as to talk of natural senses, or faculties of his body, which fact and experience have never yet discovered.

For as the *existence* of man cannot be proved, but from fact and experience; so every *quality* of man, whether of body or mind, and every degree of that quality, can only be proved by fact and experience.

The degrees of human *strength*, the nature of human *passions*; the duration of human *life*, the light and strength of human *reason* in matters of religion, are things not possible to be known in any *other degree*, than *so far* as fact and experience prove them.

From the bare consideration of a rational soul in union with a body, and bodily passions, we can neither prove man to be *strong* or *weak*, *good* or *bad*, *sickly* or *sound*, *mortal* or *immortal*: all these qualities must discover themselves, as the *eye* discovers its degree of *sight*, the *hand* its degree of *strength*, etc.

To enquire therefore, whether men have by nature, light and strength sufficient to guide, and keep them in the true religion? is the same appeal to fact and experience, as to enquire, whether men are *mortal*, *sickly*, or *sound*; or how far they can *see* and *hear*. For nothing that relates to human nature, as a quality of it, can possibly have any other proof.

As therefore these Gentlemen are, in this debate, without any proof, or even pretence of proof, from fact and experience, so their cause ought to be look'd upon to be as vain and romantick, as if they had asserted, that men have senses naturally fitted to hear sounds, and see objects at all distances, tho' fact and experience, the only means of knowing it, if it was so, has, from the creation to this time, proved the quite contrary.

The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated. In Answer to a Book, entitul'd, Christianity as old as the Creation, ch. iv.

2. THE WORLD AS DIVINE VISUAL LANGUAGE

George Berkeley

GEORGE BERKELEY (1685–1753), Bishop of Cloyne from 1734, was born near Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1700, and was elected a Fellow in 1707. He visited London in 1713, meeting Addison, Pope, Steele, Swift, and other members of the literary and philosophical world; and he travelled in France and Italy. He was presented to the Deanery of Dromore in 1722, but legal difficulties arose, and before the case was decided he became Dean of Derry in 1724. A scheme for a College in the Bermudas had occupied much of his thought and energy, and in 1728, having collected a large sum from friends, and secured a promise from Walpole, he set sail, landing in Rhode Island in 1729. But the promises of the government were not fulfilled, and he returned to London in 1731. In 1734 he became Bishop of Cloyne, where he lived in seclusion, occupied in literary work and the care of his diocese. In 1752 he retired to Oxford, where he died in the following year.

Berkeley's principal philosophical and religious writings are: *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713), *Alciphron, or, the Minute Philosopher* (1732), *The Theory of Vision, or Visual Language, shewing the immediate presence and providence of a deity, Vindicated and Explained* (1733), and *Siris, a chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar-Water, and divers other subjects connected together and arising one from another* (1744). With the exception of the last, these books are mainly occupied with the exposition, defence, and application of his Idealism, first fully expounded in the *Principles*. Setting out from Locke's position that all objects of the mind are *ideas*, he denied that they could be caused by material substance, which he rejected as an incomprehensible abstraction, and asserted that the *esse* of things is *percipi*. The only active substance is mind or spirit; of this we have a "notion" in ourselves, and we infer the existence of other finite spirits, and of God the omnipresent eternal spirit, who is the cause of "that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge" which are the orderly world of nature. "Some truths are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz. that all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind; that their *being* is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not actually exist in my mind, or in that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit: it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit" (*Principles*, § VI). His theory of the visible world as

"divine visual language", expressed in the final sections of the *Principles*, was in Berkeley's mind no mere appendage to a theory of knowledge. Throughout his writings, he is contending for a spiritual interpretation of reality and for the "consideration of God and our *Duty*". This is especially evident in *Alciphron*, where he devotes to their defence all his philosophical acumen and brilliance as a writer. In *Siris*, written in the seclusion of his later years, the same purpose is manifest, though now more under the influence of Neoplatonism. Its final section is a fit expression of the vision that had inspired alike his speculations and his active philanthropy. "The eye by long use comes to see even in the darkest cavern: and there is no subject so obscure but we may discern some glimpse of truth by long poring on it. Truth is the cry of all, but the game of a few. Certainly, where it is the chief passion, it doth not give way to vulgar cares and views; nor is it contented with a little ardour in the early time of life; active, perhaps, to pursue, but not so fit to weigh and revise. He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as his youth, the later growth, as well as first fruits, at the altar of Truth" (*Siris*, § CCCLXVIII).

From what hath been said, it is plain that we cannot know the Existence of other Spirits, otherwise than by their Operations, or the Ideas by them excited in us. I perceive several Motions, Changes, and Combinations of Ideas, that inform me there are certain particular Agents like my self, which accompany them, and concur in their Production. Hence, the Knowledge I have of other Spirits is not immediate, as is the Knowledge of my Ideas; but depending on the Intervention of Ideas, by me referred to Agents or Spirits distinct from my self, as Effects or concomitant Signs.

But though there be some Things which convince us, humane Agents are concerned in producing them; yet it is evident to every one, that those Things which are called the Works of Nature, that is, the far greater part of the Ideas or Sensations perceived by us, are not produced by, or dependent on the Wills of Men. There is therefore some other Spirit that causes them; since it is repugnant that they should subsist by themselves. But if we attentively consider the constant Regularity, Order, and Concatenation of natural Things, the surprising Magnificence, Beauty and Perfection of the larger, and the exquisite Contrivance of the smaller Parts of the Creation, together with the exact Harmony and

Correspondence of the whole, but above all, the never enough admired Laws of Pain and Pleasure, and the Instincts or natural Inclinations, Appetites, and Passions of Animals; I say if we consider all these Things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the Attributes, One, Eternal, infinitely Wise, Good, and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, *who works all in all*, and *by whom all things consist.*

Hence it is evident, that GOD is known as certainly and immediately as any other Mind or Spirit whatsoever, distinct from our selves. We may even assert, that the Existence of GOD is far more evidently perceived than the Existence of Men; because the Effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to humane Agents. There is not any one Mark that denotes a Man, or Effect produced by him, which does not more strongly evince the Being of that Spirit who is the *Author of Nature.* For it is evident that in affecting other Persons, the Will of Man hath no other Object, than barely the Motion of the Limbs of his Body; but that such a Motion should be attended by, or excite any Idea in the Mind of another, depends wholly on the Will of the CREATOR. He alone it is who *upholding all Things by the Word of His Power*, maintains that Intercourse between Spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the Existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear Light which enlightens every one is it self invisible.

It seems to be a general Pretence of the unthinking Herd, that they cannot see GOD. Could we but see him, say they, as we see a Man, we should believe that he is, and believing obey his Commands. But alas we need only open our Eyes to see the sovereign Lord of all Things with a more full and clear View than we do any one of our Fellow-Creatures. Not that I imagine we see GOD (as some will have it) by a direct and immediate View, or see Corporeal Things, not by themselves, but by seeing that which represents them in the Essence of GOD, which Doctrine is I must confess to me in-

comprehensible. But I shall explain my Meaning. A humane Spirit or Person is not perceived by Sense, as not being an Idea; when therefore we see the Colour, Size, Figure, and Motions of a Man, we perceive only certain Sensations or Ideas excited in our own Minds: And these being exhibited to our View in sundry distinct Collections, serve to mark out unto us the Existence of finite and created Spirits like our selves. Hence it is plain, we do not see a Man, if by *Man* is meant that which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do: But only such a certain Collection of Ideas, as directs us to think there is a distinct Principle of Thought and Motion like to our selves, accompanying and represented by it. And after the same manner we see GOD; all the difference is, that whereas some one finite and narrow Assemblage of Ideas denotes a particular humane Mind, whithersoever we direct our View, we do at all Times and in all Places perceive manifest Tokens of the Divinity: Every thing we see, hear, feel, or any wise perceive by Sense, being a Sign or Effect of the Power of GOD; as is our Perception of those very Motions, which are produced by Men.

It is therefore plain, that nothing can be more evident to any one that is capable of the least Reflexion, than the Existence of GOD, or a Spirit who is intimately present to our Minds, producing in them all that variety of Ideas or Sensations, which continually affect us, on whom we have an absolute and entire Dependence, in short *in whom we live, and move, and have our Being*. That the Discovery of this great Truth which lies so near and obvious to the Mind, should be attained to by the Reason of so very few, is a sad instance of the Stupidity and Inattention of Men, who, though they are surrounded with such clear Manifestations of the Deity, are yet so little affected by them, that they seem as it were blinded with excess of Light.

But you will say, Hath Nature no share in the Production of natural Things, and must they be all ascribed to the immediate and sole Operation of GOD? I answer, If by *Nature*

is meant only the visible *Series* of Effects, or Sensations imprinted on our Minds according to certain fixed and general Laws: Then it is plain that Nature taken in this Sense cannot produce anything at all. But if by *Nature* is meant some Being distinct from GOD, as well as from the Laws of Nature, and Things perceived by Sense, I must confess that Word is to me an empty Sound, without any intelligible Meaning annexed to it. Nature in this Acceptation is a vain *Chimera* introduced by those Heathens, who had not just Notions of the Omnipresence and infinite Perfection of GOD. But it is more unaccountable, that it should be received among *Christians* professing belief in the Holy Scriptures, which constantly ascribe those Effects to the immediate Hand of GOD, that Heathen Philosophers are wont to impute to *Nature. The LORD, he causeth the Vapours to ascend; he maketh Lightnings with Rain; he bringeth forth the Wind out of his Treasures*, Jerem. Chap. 10. ver. 13. *He turneth the shadow of Death into the Morning, and maketh the Day dark with Night.* Amos Chap. 5. ver. 8. *He visiteth the Earth, and maketh it soft with Showers: He blesseth the springing thereof, and crowneth the Year with his Goodness; so that the Pastures are clothed with Flocks, and the Valleys are covered over with Corn.* See *Psalm* 65. But notwithstanding that this is the constant Language of Scripture; yet we have I know not what Aversion from believing, that GOD concerns himself so nearly in our Affairs. Fain would we suppose him at a great distance off, and substitute some blind unthinking Deputy in his stead, though (if we may believe Saint *Paul*) *he be not far from every one of us.*

It will I doubt not be objected, that the slow and gradual Methods observed in the Production of natural Things, do not seem to have for their Cause the immediate Hand of an *Almighty Agent.* Besides, Monsters, untimely Births, Fruits blasted in the Blossom, Rains falling in desert Places, Miseries incident to humane Life, are so many Arguments that the whole Frame of Nature is not immediately actuated and superintended by a Spirit of infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

But the Answer to this Objection is in a good measure plain from *Sect.* 62, it being visible, that the aforesaid Methods of Nature are absolutely necessary, in order to working by the most simple and general Rules, and after a steady and consistent Manner; which argues both the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of GOD. Such is the artificial Contrivance of this mighty Machine of Nature, that whilst its Motions and various Phenomena strike on our Senses, the Hand which actuates the whole is it self unperceivable to Men of Flesh and Blood. *Verily* (saith the Prophet) *thou art a GOD that hidest thy self*, Isaiah Chap. 45. ver. 15. But though GOD conceal himself from the Eyes of the *Sensual* and *Lazy*, who will not be at the least Expense of Thought; yet to an unbiassed and attentive Mind, nothing can be more plainly legible, than the intimate Presence of an *All-wise Spirit*, who fashions, regulates, and sustains the whole Systeme of Being. It is clear from what we have elsewhere observed, that the operating according to general and stated Laws, is so necessary for our Guidance in the Affairs of Life, and letting us into the Secret of Nature, that without it, all Reach and Compass of Thought, all humane Sagacity and Design could serve to no manner of purpose: It were even impossible there should be any such Faculties or Powers in the Mind. Which one Consideration abundantly out-balances whatever particular Inconveniences may thence arise.

We should further consider, that the very Blemishes and Defects of Nature are not without their Use, in that they make an agreeable sort of Variety, and augment the Beauty of the rest of the Creation, as Shades in a Picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlightened Parts. We would likewise do well to examine, whether our taxing the Waste of Seeds and Embryos, and accidental Destruction of Plants and Animals, before they come to full Maturity, as an Imprudence in the Author of Nature, be not the effect of Prejudice contracted by our Familiarity with impotent and saving Mortals. In *Man* indeed a thrifty Management of

those Things, which he cannot procure without much Pains and Industry, may be esteemed *Wisdom*. But we must not imagine, that the inexplicably fine Machine of an Animal or Vegetable, costs the great CREATOR any more Pains or Trouble in its Production than a Pebble doth: nothing being more evident, than that an omnipotent Spirit can indifferently produce everything by a mere *Fiat* or Act of his Will. Hence it is plain, that the splendid Profusion of natural Things should not be interpreted, Weakness or Prodigality in the Agent who produces them, but rather be looked on as an Argument of the riches of his Power.

As for the mixture of Pain or Uneasiness which is in the World, pursuant to the general Laws of Nature, and the Actions of finite imperfect Spirits: This, in the State we are in at present, is indispensably necessary to our well-being. But our Prospects are too narrow: We take, for Instance, the Idea of some one particular Pain into our Thoughts, and account it *Evil*; whereas if we enlarge our View, so as to comprehend the various Ends, Connexions, and Dependencies of Things, on what Occasions and in what Proportions we are affected with Pain and Pleasure, the Nature of humane Freedom, and the Design with which we are put into the World; we shall be forced to acknowledge that those particular Things, which considered in themselves appear to be *Evil*, have the Nature of *Good*, when considered as linked with the whole Systeme of Beings.

From what hath been said it will be manifest to any considering Person, that it is merely for want of Attention and Comprehensiveness of Mind, that there are any Favourers of *Atheism* or the *Manichean Heresy* to be found. Little and unreflecting Souls may indeed burlesque the Works of Providence, the Beauty and Order whereof they have not Capacity, or will not be at the Pains to comprehend. But those who are Masters of any Justness and Extent of Thought, and are withal used to reflect, can never sufficiently admire the divine Traces of Wisdom and Goodness that shine

throughout the Oeconomy of Nature. But what Truth is there which shineth so strongly on the Mind that, by an Aversion of Thought, a wilful shutting of the Eyes, we may not escape seeing it? Is it therefore to be wondered at, if the generality of Men, who are ever intent on Business or Pleasure, and little used to fix or open the Eye of their Mind, should not have all that Conviction and Evidence of the Being of GOD which might be expected in reasonable Creatures?

We should rather wonder, that Men can be found so stupid as to neglect, than that neglecting they should be unconvinced of such an evident and momentous Truth. And yet it is to be feared that too many of Parts and Leisure, who live in Christian Countries, are merely through a supine and dreadful Negligence, sunk into a sort of *Atheism*. Since it is downright impossible, that a Soul pierced and enlightened with a thorough Sense of the Omnipresence, Holiness, and justice of that *Almighty Spirit*, should persist in a remorseless Violation of his Laws. We ought therefore earnestly to meditate and dwell on those important Points; that so we may attain Conviction without all Scruple *that the Eyes of the LORD are in every place beholding the Evil and the Good*; *that he is with us and keepeth us in all places whither we go, and giveth us Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on*; that he is present and conscious to our innermost Thoughts; and, that we have a most absolute and immediate dependence on him. A clear View of which great Truths cannot choose but fill our Hearts with an awful Circumspection and holy Fear, which is the strongest Incentive to *Virtue*, and the best Guard against *Vice*.

For after all, what deserves the first place in our Studies, is the Consideration of *GOD* and our *Duty*; which to promote, as it was the main drift and design of my Labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if by what I have said I cannot inspire my Readers with a pious Sense of the Presence of GOD: And having shewn the Falseness or Vanity of those barren Speculations, which make the chief Employment of learned Men, the better dispose them to

reverence and embrace the salutary Truths of the GOSPEL, which to know and to practise is the highest Perfection of humane Nature.

A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge wherein the Chief Causes of Error and Difficulty in the Sciences, *with the Grounds of* Scepticism, Atheism, *and* Irreligion, *are inquired into*, §§ CXLV–CLVI.

3. THE AUTHORITY OF CONSCIENCE

Joseph Butler

JOSEPH BUTLER (1692–1752), Bishop of Durham during the last two years of his life, is amongst the greatest English theologians and moralists. He was the son of a Presbyterian linen-draper of Wantage, and went to a Dissenting academy, first in Gloucester, then in Tewkesbury whither it had moved, with a view to the Presbyterian ministry. Whilst there, in 1713, he began a correspondence with Samuel Clarke (see pp. 24 f.). But he conformed to the Church of England, and entered Oriel College, Oxford, in 1715. He was Preacher at the Rolls Chapel (1719–1726), Rector successively of Houghton-le-Skerne (1722–1725) and Stanhope (1725–1740) in Co. Durham, and Prebendary of Salisbury (1721–1738) and of Rochester (1736–1740). In 1738 he became Bishop of Bristol, and he was also Dean of St Paul's from 1740 to 1750, when he was translated from Bristol to Durham. The interview between Butler and John Wesley (see p. 153), recorded in Wesley's *Journal*, took place in August 1739, when Wesley was preaching to the colliers at Kingswood.

Butler's chief published works were *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (1726) and *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736). His ethical doctrines are most fully expressed in the *Sermons* and in Dissertation I "Of the Nature of Virtue" appended to the *Analogy*; but the moral nature of man is the basis of all his thought. The *Analogy* was a reply to the critics of Revealed Religion, but it was also much more. Butler takes as proved "that there is an intelligent Author of Nature" (*Analogy*, Introduction), and in defending "the scheme of Christianity" he makes use of the traditional arguments from miracle and prophecy. But his strength lay less in particular arguments than in the breadth of his survey of experience and the basis on which his conclusion rested. It was the breadth of his argument, setting him above the particular arguments of his age, which caused him at first to be neglected; and, though afterwards profoundly influential in England, he has remained almost unknown abroad. The basis of his argument for God's moral government of the world is man's moral nature. "That which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature....That we have this moral approving and disapproving

faculty, is certain from our experiencing it in ourselves, and recognising it in each other" (Dissertation I). It is "the voice of God speaking in us" (*Ibid.*). On this his argument rests; for here, in man's moral nature, we can discern the end for which he was created—it is a moral end. But we are an inferior part of creation; our state here is one of probation, our knowledge incomplete. Instead, therefore, of "that idle and not very innocent Employment of forming imaginary Models of a World, and Schemes of governing it" (*Analogy*, Introduction), Butler undertakes a broad survey of the course of Nature as the source from which we may learn more fully the method of God's government and the character of His moral purpose. He concludes that the course of Nature is congruous with the principles of Natural Religion, and congruous also with the principles of Revealed Religion, made known by a special dispensation and supported by particular proofs. Religion, therefore, both Natural and Revealed, presents us with a scheme such as Nature itself suggests, "imperfectly comprehended" indeed, but "not a Subject of Ridicule, unless that of Nature be so too" (*Analogy*, Introduction). And if both moral in character and an object of reasonable belief, prudence and duty alike require us to make it also the guide of our conduct.

For when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law to themselves (Rom. ii. 14).

As speculative Truth admits of different Kinds of Proof, so likewise Moral Obligations may be shewn by different Methods. If the real Nature of any Creature leads him and is adapted to such and such Purposes only, or more than to any other; this is a Reason to believe the Author of that Nature intended it for those Purposes. Thus there is no Doubt the Eye was intended for us to see with. And the more complex any Constitution is, and the greater Variety of Parts there are which thus tend to some one End, the stronger is the Proof that such End was designed. However, when the inward Frame of Man is considered as any Guide in Morals, the utmost Caution must be used that none make Peculiarities in their own Temper, or anything which is the Effect of particular Customs, though observable in several, the Standard of what is common to the Species; and above all, that the highest Principle be not forgot or excluded, That to which belongs the Adjustment and Correction of all other

inward Movements and Affections: Which Principle will of Course have some Influence, but which being in Nature supream, as shall now be shown, ought to preside over and govern all the rest. The Difficulty of rightly observing the two former Cautions; the Appearance there is of some small Diversity amongst Mankind with respect to this Faculty, with respect to their natural Sense of moral Good and Evil; and the Attention necessary to survey with any Exactness what passes within, have occasioned that it is not so much agreed what is the Standard of the internal Nature of Man, as of his external Form. Neither is this last exactly settled. Yet we understand one another when we speak of the Shape of a Humane Body; so likewise we do when we speak of the Heart and inward Principles, how far soever the Standard is from being exact or precisely fixt. There is therefore Ground for an Attempt of shewing Men to themselves, of shewing them what Course of Life and Behaviour their real nature points out and would lead them to. Now Obligations of Virtue shown, and Motives to the Practice of it enforced, from a Review of the Nature of Man, are to be considered as an Appeal to each particular Person's heart and natural Conscience: As the external Senses are appealed to for the Proof of things cognizable by them. Since then our inward Feelings, and the Perceptions we receive from our external Senses, are equally real; to argue from the former to Life and Conduct is as little liable to Exception, as to argue from the latter to absolute speculative Truth. A Man can as little doubt whether his Eyes were given him to see with, as he can doubt of the Truth of the Science of *Optics*, deduced from ocular Experiments: And allowing the inward Feeling Shame, a Man can as little doubt whether it was given him to prevent his doing shameful Actions, as he can doubt whether his Eyes were given him to guide his Steps. And as to these inward Feelings themselves, that they are real, that Man has in his Nature Passions and Affections, can no more be questioned, than that he has external Senses. Neither can

the former be wholly mistaken; though to a Degree liable to greater Mistakes than the latter.

There can be no doubt but that several Propensions or Instincts, several Principles in the Heart of Man, carry him to Society, and to contribute to the Happiness of it, in a Sense and a Manner in which no inward Principle leads him to Evil. These Principles, Propensions or Instincts which lead him to do Good, are approved of by a certain Faculty within, quite distinct from these Propensions themselves. All this hath been fully made out in the foregoing Discourse.[1]

But it may be said, "What is all this, though true, to the Purpose of Virtue and Religion? These require, not only that we do good to others when we are led this Way, by Benevolence or Reflection, happening to be stronger than other Principles, Passions, or Appetites; but likewise that the *whole* Character be formed upon Thought and Reflection; that *every* Action be directed by some determinate Rule, some other Rule than the Strength and Prevalency of any Principle or Passion. What Sign is there in our Nature (for the Inquiry is only about what is to be collected from thence) that this was intended by its Author? Or how does so various and fickle a Temper as that of Man appear adapted thereto? It may indeed be absurd and unnatural for Men to act without any Reflection; nay without Regard to that particular Kind of Reflection which you call Conscience, because this does belong to our Nature: For as there never was a Man but who approved one Place, Prospect, Building, before another; so it does not appear that there ever was a Man who would not have approved an Action of Humanity rather than of Cruelty, Interest and Passion being quite out of the Case. But Interest and Passion do come in, and are often too strong for and prevail over Reflection and Conscience. Now as Brutes have various Instincts, by which they are carried on to the End the Author of their Nature intended them for: Is not Man in the same Condition, with this Difference only,

[1] [Sermon I, "Upon Humane Nature".]

that to his Instincts (*i.e.* Appetites and Passions) is added the Principle of Reflection or Conscience? And as Brutes act agreeably to their Nature, in following that Principle or particular Instinct which for the present is strongest in them: Does not Man likewise act agreeably to his Nature, or obey the Law of his Creation, by following that Principle, be it Passion or Conscience, which for the present happens to be strongest in him? Thus different Men are by their particular Nature hurried on to pursue Honour, or Riches, or Pleasure: There are also Persons whose Temper leads them in an uncommon Degree to Kindness, Compassion, doing Good to their Fellow-Creatures; as there are others who are given to suspend their Judgment, to weigh and consider Things, and to act upon Thought and Reflection. Let every one then quietly follow his Nature, as Passion, Reflection, Appetite, the several Parts of it, happen to be strongest: But let not the Man of Virtue take upon him to blame the Ambitious, the Covetous, the Dissolute; since these equally with him obey and follow their Nature. Thus, as in some Cases we follow our Nature in doing the Works *contained in the Law*, so in other Cases we follow Nature in doing contrary".

Now all this licentious Talk entirely goes upon a Supposition, that Men follow their Nature in the same Sense, in violating the known Rules of Justice and Honesty for the sake of a present Gratification, as they do in following those Rules when they have no Temptation to the contrary. And if this were true, that could not be so which St *Paul* asserts, that Men are *by Nature a Law to themselves*. If by following Nature were meant only acting as we please, it would indeed be ridiculous to speak of Nature as any Guide in Morals: Nay the very mention of deviating from Nature would be absurd; and the mention of following it, when spoken by way of Distinction, would absolutely have no Meaning. For did ever any one act otherwise than as he pleased? And yet the Antients speak of deviating from Nature as Vice; and of following Nature so much as a Distinction, that according

to them the Perfection of Virtue consists therein. So that Language itself should teach People another Sense of the Words *following Nature*, than barely acting as we please. Let it however be observed, that though the Words *Humane Nature* are to be explained, yet the real Question of this Discourse is not concerning the Meaning of Words, any other than as the Explanation of them may be needful to make out and explain the Assertion, that *every Man is naturally a Law to himself*; that *every one may find within himself the Rule of Right, and Obligations to follow it.* This St *Paul* affirms in the Words of the Text, and this the foregoing Objection really denies by seeming to allow it. And the Objection will be fully answered, and the Text before us explained, by observing that *Nature* is considered in different Views, and the Word used in different Senses; and by shewing in what View it is considered, and in what Sense the Word is used, when intended to express and signify that which is the Guide of Life, that by which Men are a Law to themselves. I say, the Explanation of the Term will be sufficient, because from thence it will appear, that in some Senses of the Word, *Nature* cannot be, but that in another Sense it manifestly is, a Law to us.

I. By *Nature* is often meant no more than some Principle in Man, without regard either to the Kind or Degree of it. Thus the Passion of Anger, and the Affection of Parents to their Children, would be called equally *natural.* And as the same Person hath often contrary Principles, which at the same Time draw contrary Ways, he may by the same Action both follow and contradict his Nature in this Sense of the Word, he may follow one Passion and contradict another.

II. *Nature* is frequently spoken of as consisting in those Passions which are strongest, and most influence the Actions; which being vicious ones, Mankind is in this Sense naturally vicious, or vicious by Nature. Thus St *Paul* says of the *Gentiles, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins, and walked according to the Spirit of Disobedience* (Ephes. ii. 3), *that they were by Nature the*

Children of Wrath. They could be no otherwise Children of Wrath by Nature, than they were vicious by Nature.

Here then are two different Senses of the Word *Nature*, in neither of which Men can at all be said to be a Law to themselves. They are mentioned only to be excluded; to prevent their being confounded, as the latter is in the Objection, with another Sense of it, which is now to be inquired after, and explained.

III. The Apostle asserts, that *the Gentiles do by NATURE the things contained in the Law.* Nature is indeed here put by way of Distinction from Revelation, but yet it is not a mere Negative. He intends to express more than that by which they *did not*, that by which they *did* the Works of the Law; namely, by *Nature.* It is plain the meaning of the Word is not the same in this Passage as in the former, where it is spoken of as Evil; for in this latter it is spoken of as Good, as that by which they acted, or might have acted virtuously. What that is in Man by which he is *naturally a Law to himself*, is explained in the following Words: *Which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Consciences also bearing Witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.* If there be a distinction to be made between the *Works written in their Hearts*, and the *Witness of Conscience*; by the former must be meant the natural Disposition to Kindness and Compassion, to do what is of good Report, to which this Apostle often refers: That Part of the Nature of Man, treated of in the foregoing Discourse, which with very little Reflection and of Course leads him to Society, by means of which he naturally acts a just and good Part in it, unless other Passions or Interest lead him astray. Yet since other Passions, and Regards to private Interest, which lead us (though indirectly, yet they lead us) astray, are themselves in a Degree equally natural, and often most prevalent; and since we have no Method of seeing the particular Degrees in which one or the other is placed in us by Nature; it is plain the former, considered meerly as natural, good and right as they are, can no

more be a Law to us than the latter. But there is a superior Principle of Reflection or Conscience in every Man, which distinguishes between the internal Principles of his Heart, as well as his external Actions: which passes Judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some Actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust: Which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns Him the doer of them accordingly: And which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of Course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual Sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. But this Part of the Office of Conscience is beyond my present Design explicitly to consider. It is by this Faculty, natural to Man, that he is a moral Agent, that he is a Law to himself: by this Faculty, I say, not to be considered merely as a Principle in his Heart, which is to have some Influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own Authority of being so. This *Prerogative*, this *natural Supremacy* of the Faculty which surveys, approves, or disapproves the several Affections of our mind and Actions of our Lives, being that by which Men are a Law to themselves, their Conformity or Disobedience to which Law of our Nature renders their Actions in the highest and most proper Sense, natural or unnatural; it is fit it be further explained to you: And I hope it will be so, if you will attend to the following Reflections.

Man may act according to that Principle or Inclination which for the present happens to be strongest, and yet act in a Way disproportionate to, and violate his real proper Nature. Suppose a brute Creature by any Bait to be allured into a Snare by which he is destroyed: He plainly followed the Bent of his Nature, leading him to gratify his Appetite: There is an entire Correspondence between his whole Nature and such an Action: Such Action therefore is natural. But suppose a Man, foreseeing the same Danger of certain Ruin,

should rush into it for the sake of a present Gratification: He in this instance would follow his strongest Desire, as did the brute Creature; but there would be as manifest a Disproportion between the Nature of a Man and such an Action, as between the meanest Work of Art, and the Skill of the greatest Master in that Art: Which Disproportion arises not from considering the action singly in *itself*, or in its *Consequences*; but from *Comparison* of it with the Nature of the Agent. And since such an Action is utterly disproportionate to the Nature of Man, it is in the strictest and most proper Sense unnatural, this Word expressing that Disproportion. Therefore instead of the Words *Disproportionate to his Nature*, the Word *Unnatural* may now be put, this being more familiar to us: But let it be observed, that it stands for the same thing precisely. Now what is it which renders such a rash Action unnatural? Is it that he went against the Principle of reasonable and cool Self-love, considered *meerly* as a Part of his nature? No: For if he had acted the contrary Way, he would equally have gone against a Principle or Part of his Nature, Passion or Appetite. But to deny a present Appetite, from Foresight that the Gratification of it would end in immediate Ruin or extreme Misery, is by no Means an unnatural Action: Whereas to contradict or go against cool Self-love for the sake of such Gratification, is so in the Instance before us. Such an Action then being unnatural, and its being so not arising from a Man's going against a Principle or Desire barely, nor in going against that Principle or Desire which happens for the present to be strongest; it necessarily follows, that there must be some other Difference or Distinction to be made between these two Principles, Passion and cool Self-love, than what I have yet taken Notice of: And this Difference, not being a Difference in Strength or Degree, I call a Difference in *Nature* and in *Kind*. And since in the Instance still before us, if Passion prevails over Self-love, the consequent Action is unnatural; but if Self-love prevails over Passion, the Action is natural: It is manifest that Self-love is

in Humane Nature a superiour Principle to Passion. This may be contradicted without violating that Nature, but the former cannot. So that if we will act conformably to the Oeconomy of Humane Nature, reasonable Self-love must govern. Thus, without particular Consideration of Conscience, we may have a clear Conception of the *superiour Nature* of one inward Principle to another, and see that there really is this natural Superiority, quite distinct from Degrees of Strength and Prevalency.

Let us now take a View of the Nature of Man, as consisting partly of various Appetites, Passions, Affections, and partly of the Principle of Reflection or Conscience, leaving quite out all Consideration of the different Degrees of Strength in which either of them prevail, and it will further appear that there is this natural Superiority of one inward Principle to another, and that it is even part of the idea of reflection or Conscience. Passion or Appetite implies a direct simple Tendency towards such and such Objects, without Distinction of the means by which they are to be obtained. Consequently from the former, Appetite or Passion, there will be a Desire of particular Objects, in Cases where they cannot be obtained without manifest Injury to others. Reflection or Conscience comes in, and disapproves the pursuit of them in these Circumstances; but the Desire remains. Which is to be obeyed, appetite or Reflection? Cannot this Question be answered from the Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Nature meerly, without saying which is strongest? Or need this at all come into Consideration? Would not the Question be *intelligibly* and fully answered by saying, that the Principle of Reflection or Conscience being compared with the various Appetites, Passions, and Affections in Men, the former is manifestly superiour and chief, without regard to Strength? And how often soever the latter happens to prevail, it is meer *Usurpation*: The former remains in Nature and in Kind its Superiour; and every Instance of such Prevalence of the latter is an Instance of breaking in upon and Violation of the Constitution of Man.

All this is no more than the Distinction, which every Body is acquainted with, between *meer Power* and *Authority*; only instead of being intended to express the Difference between what is possible, and what is lawful in Civil Government, here it has been shewn applicable to the several Principles in the Mind of Man. Thus that Principle by which we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own Heart, Temper, and Actions, is not only to be considered as what is in its turn to have some Influence; which may be said of every Passion, of the lowest Appetites: But likewise as being superiour, as from its very Nature manifestly claiming Superiority over all others; insomuch that you cannot form a Notion of this Faculty, Conscience, without taking in Judgment, Direction, Superintendency: This is a constituent Part of the Idea, that is, of the Faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very Oeconomy and Constitution of Man, belongs to it. Had it Strength as it has Right, had it Power as it has manifest Authority, it would absolutely govern the World.

This gives us a further View of Humane Nature, shews us what Course of Life we were made for: Not only that our real Nature leads us to be influenced in some Degree by Reflection and Conscience, but likewise in what Degree we are to be influenced by it, if we will fall in with, and act agreeably to the Constitution of our Nature: That this Faculty was placed within to be our proper Governour, to direct and regulate all under Principles, Passions, and Motives of Action. This is its Right and Office: Thus sacred is its Authority. And how often soever Men violate and rebelliously refuse to submit to it, for supposed interest which they cannot otherwise obtain, or for the sake of Passion which they cannot otherwise gratify, this makes no Alteration as to the *natural Right* and *Office* of Conscience.

Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel, Sermon II, "Upon Humane Nature".

4. THE ANALOGY OF RELIGION NATURAL AND REVEALED TO THE CONSTITUTION AND COURSE OF NATURE

Joseph Butler

[*See note on* pp. 104 f.]

PROBABILITY THE GUIDE OF LIFE

Probable Evidence is essentially distinguished from demonstrative by this, that it admits of Degrees; and of all Variety of them, from the highest moral Certainty, to the very lowest Presumption. We cannot indeed say a thing is probably true upon one very slight Presumption for it; because, as there may be Probabilities on both sides of a Question, there may be some against it: and though there be not, yet a slight Presumption does not beget that Degree of Conviction, which is implied in saying a thing is probably true. But that the slightest possible Presumption, is of the nature of a Probability, appears from hence; that such low Presumption often repeated, will amount even to moral Certainty. Thus a Man's having observed the Ebb and Flow of the Tide to Day, affords some sort of Presumption, though the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again to Morrow: But the observation of this Event for so many Days, and Months, and Ages together, as it has been observed by Mankind, gives us a full assurance that it will.

That which chiefly constitutes Probability is expressed in the Word Likely, *i.e.* like some Truth,[1] or true Event; like it, in itself, in its Evidence, in some more or fewer of its Circumstances. For when we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose that an Event has or will come to pass, 'tis from the Mind's remarking in it a Likeness to some other Event, which we have observed has come to pass. And this observation forms, in numberless daily Instances, a Presumption,

[1] Verisimile.

Opinion, or full Conviction, that such Event has or will come to pass; according as the observation is, that the like Event has sometimes, most commonly, or always so far as our observation reaches, come to pass at like distances of Time, or Place, or upon like Occasions. Hence arises the Belief, that a Child, if it lives twenty years, will grow up to the stature and strength of a Man; that Food will contribute to the preservation of its Life, and the want of it for such a number of days, be its certain Destruction. So likewise the rule and measure of our Hopes and Fears concerning the success of our Pursuits; our Expectations that Others will act so and so in such Circumstances; and our Judgment that such Actions proceed from such Principles; all These rely upon our having observed the like to what we hope, fear, expect, judge, I say upon our having observed the like either with respect to Others or Ourselves. And thus, whereas the Prince[1] who had always lived in a warm Climate, naturally concluded in the way of Analogy, that there was no such thing as Water's becoming hard; because he had always observed it to be fluid and yielding: We on the contrary, from Analogy conclude, that there is no Presumption at all against This: that 'tis supposeable, there may be Frost in *England* any given day in *January* next; probable that there will on some day of the month; and that there is a moral Certainty, *i.e.* Ground for an expectation without any doubt of it, in some part or other of the Winter.

Probable Evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of Information; and is to be considered as relative only to Beings of limited Capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of Knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false: But to us, Probability is the very Guide of Life.

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[1] The Story is told by Mr *Lock* in the Chapter of Probability.

Hence, namely from analogical Reasoning, *Origen*[1] has with singular Sagacity observed, that *he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of Difficulties in it, as are found in the Constitution of Nature.* And in a like way of Reflexion it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same Reason, deny the World to have been formed by Him. On the other hand, if there be an Analogy or Likeness between the System of things, and Dispensation of Providence, which Revelation informs us of, and that System of Things and Dispensation of Providence, which Experience together with Reason informs us of, *i.e.* the known Course of Nature; this is a Presumption, that they have both the same Author and Cause; at least so far as to answer objections against the former's being from God, drawn from any thing which is analogical or similar to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from Him: for an Author of Nature is here supposed.

* * * *

Let us then, instead of that idle and not very innocent Employment of forming imaginary Models of a World, and Schemes of governing it, turn our Thoughts to what we experience to be the Conduct of Nature with respect to intelligent Creatures; which may be resolved into general Laws or Rules of Administration, in the same way as many of the Laws of Nature respecting inanimate Matter may be collected from Experiments. And let us compare the known Constitution and Course of Things, with what is said to be the moral System of Nature; the acknowledged Dispensations of Providence, or that Government which we find ourselves under, with what Religion teaches us to believe and expect;

[1] *Χρὴ μέν τοι γε τὸν ἅπαξ παραδεξάμενον τοῦ κτίσαντος τὸν κόσμον εἶναι ταύτας τὰς γραφὰς πεπεῖσθαι, ὅτι ὅσα περὶ τῆς κτίσεως ἀπαντᾷ τοῖς ζητοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶν γραφῶν, Phil.* p. 23, ed. Cant. [*Philocalia*, ii, 5].

and see whether they are not analogous and of a piece. And upon such a comparison, it will I think be found, that they are very much so; that both may be traced up to the same general Laws, and resolved into the same Principles of divine Conduct.

The Analogy here proposed to be considered, is of pretty large Extent, and consists of several Parts; in Some, more, in Others, less, exact. In some few instances perhaps it may amount to a real practical Proof; in others not so. Yet in these it is a Confirmation of what is proved other ways. It will undeniably show, what too many want to have showed them, that the System of Religion both natural and revealed, considered only as a System, and prior to the Proof of it, is not a Subject of Ridicule, unless That of Nature be so too. And it will afford an Answer to almost all Objections against the System both of natural and revealed Religion; though not perhaps an Answer in so great a Degree, yet in a very considerable Degree an Answer, to the Objections against the Evidence of it: For Objections against a Proof, and Objections against what is said to be proved, the Reader will observe are different things.

Now the divine Government of the World, implied in the Notion of Religion in general and of Christianity, contains in it; That Mankind is appointed to live in a future State; That There, every one shall be rewarded or punished; rewarded or punished respectively for all that Behaviour Here, which we comprehend under the Words Virtuous or Vitious, morally good or evil: That our present Life is a Probation, a State of Trial, and of Discipline, for that future one; Notwithstanding the Objections, which men may fancy they have, from Notions of Necessity, against there being any such moral Plan as this at all; And whatever Objections may appear to lie against the Wisdom and Goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present: That this World being in a State of Apostacy and Wickedness, and consequently of Ruin, and the Sense both of their Condition

and Duty being so greatly corrupted amongst Men, this gave occasion for an additional Dispensation of Providence; of the utmost Importance; proved by Miracles; but containing in it many things appearing to us strange and not to have been expected; a Dispensation of Providence, which is a Scheme or System of things; carried on by the Mediation of a divine Person, the Messiah, in order to the Recovery of the World; yet not revealed to all Men, nor proved with the strongest possible Evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a Part of Mankind, and with such particular Evidence as the Wisdom of God thought fit. The Design then of the following Treatise will be to shew, that the several Parts principally objected against in this Moral and Christian Dispensation, including its Scheme, its Publication, and the Proof which God has afforded us of its Truth; that the particular Parts principally objected against in this whole Dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the Constitution and Course of Nature, or Providence; that the chief Objections themselves which are alledged against the former, are no other, than what may be alledged with like Justness against the latter, where they are found in Fact to be inconclusive; and that this Argument from Analogy is in general, unanswerable, undoubtedly of Weight, and very material on the side of Religion, notwithstanding the Objections which may seem to lie against it, and the real Ground which there may be, for Difference of Opinion, as to the particular Degree of Weight which is to be laid upon it. This is a general Account of what may be looked for in the following Treatise.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY

But the Importance of Christianity will more distinctly appear by considering it more distinctly: *First*, as a Republication, and external Institution, of natural or essential Religion, adapted to the present Circumstances of Mankind, and intended to promote natural Piety and Virtue: And

Secondly, as containing an Account of a Dispensation of things, not discoverable by Reason, in Consequence of which, several distinct Precepts are enjoined us. For though natural Religion is the Foundation and principal Part of Christianity, it is not in any Sense the whole of it.

I. Christianity is a Republication of natural Religion. It instructs Mankind in the moral System of the World: that it is the Work of an infinitely perfect Being, and under his Government; that Virtue is his Law; and that He will finally judge Mankind in Righteousness, and render to all according to their Works, in a future State. And, which is very material, it teaches natural Religion, in its genuine Simplicity; free from those Superstitions, with which, it was totally corrupted, and under which, it was in a manner lost.

Revelation is farther, an authoritative Publication of natural Religion, and so affords the Evidence of Testimony for the Truth of it. Indeed the Miracles and Prophecies recorded in Scripture, were intended to prove a particular Dispensation of Providence, the Redemption of the World by the Messiah: But this does not hinder, but they may also prove God's general Providence over the World, as our moral Governor and Judge. And they evidently do prove it; because This Character of the Author of Nature, is necessarily connected with and implied in That particular revealed Dispensation of things: It is likewise continually taught expressly, and insisted upon, by those Persons, who wrought the Miracles and delivered the Prophecies. So that indeed natural Religion seems as much proved by the Scripture Revelation, as it would have been, had the Design of Revelation been nothing else than to prove it.

* * * *

Farther: As Christianity served these Ends and Purposes, when it was first published, by the miraculous Publication itself; so it was intended to serve the same Purposes, in future Ages, by Means of the Settlement of a visible Church: of a Society, distinguished from common ones and from the rest

of the World, by peculiar religious Institutions; by an instituted Method of Instruction, and an instituted Form of external Religion. Miraculous Powers were given to the first Preachers of Christianity, in Order to their introducing it into the World: A visible Church was established, in order to continue it, and carry it on successively throughout all Ages. Had Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, only taught, and by Miracles proved, Religion to their Cotemporaries; the Benefits of their Instructions would have reached but to a small Part of Mankind. Christianity must have been, in a great Degree, sunk and forgot in a very few Ages. To prevent this, appears to have been one Reason, why a visible Church was instituted; to be, like a City upon a Hill, a standing Memorial to the World, of the Duty which we owe our Maker; to call Men continually, both by Example and Instruction, to attend to it, and, by the Form of Religion, ever before their Eyes, remind them of the Reality; to be the Repository of the Oracles of God; and hold up the Light of Revelation in Aid to That of Nature, and propagate it throughout all Generations to the End of the World—the Light of Revelation, considered here in no other View, than as designed to enforce natural Religion. And in Proportion as Christianity is professed and taught in the World, Religion, natural or essential Religion, is thus distinctly and advantageously laid before Mankind; and brought again and again to their Thoughts, as a Matter of infinite Importance. A visible Church has also a farther Tendency to promote natural Religion, as being an instituted Method of Education, intended to be of more peculiar Advantage to those who would conform to it. For one End of the Institution was, that by Admonition and Reproof, as well as Instruction, by a general regular Discipline, and publick Exercises of Religion; *the body of Christ*, as the Scripture speaks, should be *edified, i.e.* trained up in Piety and Virtue, for a higher and better State. This Settlement then appearing thus beneficial, tending in the Nature of the thing to answer, and in some degree actually

answering, those Ends; it is to be remembered, that the very Notion of it implies positive Institutions: for the Visibility of the Church consists in them. Take away every thing of this Kind, and you loose the very Notion itself. So that if the things now mentioned are Advantages, the Reason and Importance of positive Institutions in general, is most obvious; since without them, these Advantages could not be secured to the World. And it is mere idle Wantonness, to insist upon knowing the Reasons, why such particular ones were fixt upon, rather than others.

The Benefit arising from this supernatural Assistance, which Christianity affords to natural Religion, is what some Persons are very slow in apprehending. And yet it is a thing distinct in itself, and a very plain obvious one. For will any in good earnest really say, that the Bulk of Mankind in the heathen World, were in as advantageous a Situation with regard to natural Religion, as they are now amongst us: That it was laid before them, and enforced upon them, in a Manner as distinct, and as much tending to influence their Practice?

* * * *

II. Christianity is to be considered in a further View; as containing an Account of a Dispensation of things, not at all discoverable by Reason, in Consequence of which, several distinct Precepts are injoined us. Christianity is not only an external Institution of natural Religion, and a new Promulgation of God's general Providence, as righteous Governor and Judge of the World; but it contains also a Revelation of a particular Dispensation of Providence, carrying on by his Son and Spirit, for the Recovery and Salvation of Mankind, who are represented, in Scripture, to be in a State of Ruin. And in Consequence of this Revelation being made, we are commanded *to be baptized*, not only *in the name of the Father*, but also, *of the Son and of the Holy Ghost:* and other Obligations of Duty, unknown before, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, are revealed. Now the Importance of these Duties may be judged of, by observing that they arise, not from positive Command

merely; but also from the Offices, which appear, from Scripture, to belong to those divine Persons in the Gospel Dispensation; or from the Relations, which, we are there informed, they stand in to us. By Reason is revealed the Relation, which God the Father stands in to us. Hence arises the Obligation of Duty, which we are under to Him. In Scripture are revealed the Relations, which the Son and Holy Spirit stand in to us. Hence arise the Obligations of Duty, which we are under to them. The Truth of the Case, as one may speak, in each of these three Respects being admitted, that God is the Governor of the World, upon the Evidence of Reason; that Christ is the Mediator between God and Man, and the Holy Ghost our Guide and Sanctifier, upon the Evidence of Revelation—the Truth of the Case, I say, in each of these Respects being admitted; it is no more a Question, why it should be commanded, that we be baptized in the name of the Son and of the holy Ghost, than that we be baptized in the name of the Father.

CONCLUSION

All the general Objections against the moral System of Nature having been obviated, it is shewn, that there is not any peculiar Presumption at all against Christianity considered, either as not discoverable by Reason, or as unlike to what is so discovered; nor any worth mentioning, against it as miraculous, if any at all; none certainly, which can render it in the least incredible. It is shewn, that upon Supposition of a divine Revelation, the Analogy of Nature renders it, beforehand, highly credible, I think probable, that many things in it, must appear liable to great Objections; and that we must be incompetent Judges of it, to a great Degree. This Observation is, I think, unquestionably true, and of the very utmost Importance: But it is urged, as I hope it will be understood, with great Caution of not vilifying the Faculty of Reason, which is *the candle of the Lord within us* (Prov. xx. 27);

though it can afford no Light, where it does not shine; nor judge, where it has no Principles to judge upon. The Objections here spoken of, being first answered in the View of Objections against Christianity as a Matter of Fact, are in the next Place considered as urged, more immediately, against the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of the Christian Dispensation. And it is fully made out, that they admit of exactly the like Answer, in every Respect, to what the like Objections against the Constitution of Nature admit of: That, as partial Views give the Appearance of Wrong to things, which, upon farther Consideration and Knowledge of their Relations to other things, are found just and good; so it is perfectly credible, that the things objected, against the Wisdom and Goodness of the Christian Dispensation, may be rendred Instances of Wisdom and Goodness, by their Reference to other things beyond our View: Because Christianity is a Scheme as much above our comprehension, as That of Nature; and, like That, a Scheme in which Means are made use of to accomplish Ends, and which, as is most credible, may be carried on by general Laws. And it ought to be attended to, that this is not an Answer taken, merely or chiefly, from our Ignorance; but from somewhat positive, which our Observation shews us. For, to like Objections, the like Answer is experienced to be just, in numberless parallel Cases. The Objections against the Christian Dispensation, and the Method by which it is carried on, having been thus obviated, in general and together; the chief of them are considered distinctly, and the particular things objected to, are shewn credible, by their perfect Analogy, each apart, to the Constitution of Nature. Thus; If Mankind be fallen from his primitive State, and to be restored, and infinite Wisdom and Power engages in accomplishing our Recovery: it were to have been expected, it is said, that this should have been effected at once; and not by such a long Series of Means, and such a various Oeconomy of Persons and things; one Dispensation preparatory to another, this to

a farther one, and so on through an indefinite Number of Ages, before the End of the Scheme proposed can be compleatly accomplished: a Scheme conducted by infinite Wisdom, and executed by almighty Power. But our finding that every thing in the Constitution and Course of Nature, is Thus carried on, shews such Expectations concerning Revelation, to be highly unreasonable; and is a satisfactory Answer to them, when urged as Objections against the Credibility, that the great Scheme of Providence in the Redemption of the World, may be of this Kind, and to be accomplished in this Manner. As to the particular Method of our Redemption, the Appointment of a Mediator between God and Man; this is most obviously analogous to the general Conduct of Nature, *i.e.* the God of Nature, in appointing Others to be the Instruments of his Mercy, as we experience in the daily Course of Providence. The Condition of this World, which the Doctrine of our Redemption by Christ presupposes, so much falls in with natural Appearances, that heathen Moralists inferred it from those Appearances; inferred, that human Nature was fallen from its original Rectitude, and, in Consequence of this, degraded from its primitive Happiness. Or, however this Opinion came into the World, these Appearances must have kept up the Tradition, and confirmed the Belief of it. And as it was the general Opinion under the Light of Nature, that Repentance and Reformation, alone and by itself, was not sufficient to do away Sin, and procure a full Remission of the Penalties annext to it; and as the Reason of the thing does not at all lead to any such Conclusion: So every Day's Experience shews us, that Reformation is not, in any Sort, sufficient to prevent the present Disadvantages and Miseries, which, in the natural Course of things, God has annexed to Folly and Extravagance. Yet there may be Ground to think, that the Punishments, which, by the general Laws of divine Government, are annext to Vice, may be prevented; that Provision may have been, even originally, made, that they should be

prevented by some Means or other, though they could not by Reformation alone. For we have daily Instances of *such Mercy*, in the general Conduct of Nature: Compassion for Misery, Medicines for Diseases, Friends against Enemies. There is Provision made, in the original Constitution of the World, that much of the natural bad Consequences of our Follies, which Persons themselves alone cannot prevent, may be prevented by the Assistance of Others; Assistance, which Nature enables, and disposes, and appoints them to afford. By a Method of Goodness analogous to this, when the World lay in Wickedness and consequently in Ruin, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son* to save it. And *he being made perfect by suffering, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him*, Joh. iii. 16, Heb. v. 9. Indeed neither Reason nor Analogy would lead us to think, in particular, that the Interposition of Christ, in the Manner in which he did interpose, would be of that Efficacy for Recovery of the World, which the Scripture teaches us it was: But neither would Reason nor Analogy lead us to think, that other particular Means would be of the Efficacy, which Experience shews they are, in numberless Instances. And therefore, as the Case before us does not admit of Experience, so, that neither Reason nor Analogy can shew, how or in what particular Way, the Interposition of Christ as revealed in Scripture, is of that Efficacy, which it is there represented to be; this is no Kind nor Degree of Presumption against its being really of That Efficacy. Farther; The general Analogy of Nature is an Answer to Objections against Christianity, from the Light of it not being universal, nor its Evidence so strong as might possibly have been. That God has made such Variety of Creatures, is indeed an Answer to the former: But that he dispenses his Gifts in such Variety, both of Degrees and Kinds, amongst Creatures of the same Species, and even to the same Individuals at different Times; is a more obvious and full Answer to it. And it is so far from being the Method of Providence in other Cases, to afford us such overbearing

Evidence, as some require in Proof of Christianity, that on the contrary, the Evidence upon which we are naturally appointed to act in common Matters, throughout a very great Part of Life, is doubtful in a high Degree. And admitting the Fact, that God has afforded to some, no more that doubtful Evidence of Religion; the same Account may be given of it, as of Difficulties and Temptations with regard to Practice. But as it is not impossible, surely, that this alledged Doubtfulness may be Men's own Fault; it deserves their most serious Consideration, whether it be not so. However, it is certain, that Doubting implies a Degree of Evidence for That, of which we doubt; and that this Degree of Evidence, as really lays us under Obligations, as demonstrative Evidence.

The whole then of Religion is throughout credible: Nor is there, I think, any thing relating to the revealed Dispensation of things, more different from the experienced Constitution and Course of Nature, than some Parts of the Constitution of Nature are, from other Parts of it. And if so, the only Question which remains, is, what positive Evidence can be alledged for the Truth of Christianity. This too in general has been considered, and the Objections against it estimated. Deduct then, what is to be deducted from that Evidence, upon Account of any Weight which may be thought to remain in these Objections, after what the Analogy of Nature has suggested in Answer to them: and then consider, what are the practical Consequences from all this, upon the most sceptical Principles, one can argue; for I am writing to Persons who entertain these Principles. And upon such Consideration, it will be obvious, that Immorality, as little Excuse as it admits of in itself, is greatly aggravated, in Persons who have been made acquainted with Christianity, whether they believe it, or not: Because the moral System of Nature, or natural Religion, which Christianity lays before us, approves itself, almost intuitively, to a reasonable Mind upon seeing it proposed. In the next Place, with regard to Christi-

anity, it will be observed; That there is a Middle, between a full Satisfaction of the Truth of it, and a Satisfaction of the contrary. The middle State of Mind between these two, consists in a serious Apprehension, that it may be true, joined with Doubt, whether it be so. And This, upon the best judgment I am able to make, is as far towards speculative Infidelity, as any Sceptick can at all be supposed to go, who has had true Christianity, with the proper Evidence of it, laid before him, and has in any tolerable Measure considered them. For I would not be mistaken to comprehend all, who have ever heard of it. Because, as it seems evident that in many Countries called Christian, neither Christianity, nor its Evidence are fairly laid before Men: So in Places where both are, there appear to be some, who have very little attended to either, and who reject Christianity with a Scorn proportionate to their Inattention; and yet are by no means without Understanding in other Matters. Now it appears, that a serious Apprehension that Christianity may be true, lays Persons under the strictest Obligations of a serious Regard to it, throughout the whole of their Life: a Regard not the same exactly, but in many Respects nearly the same, with what a full Conviction of its Truth would lay them under. Lastly, It will appear, that Blasphemy and Prophaneness, I mean with regard to Christianity, are absolutely without Excuse. For there is no Temptation to it, but from the Wantonness of Vanity or Mirth: And these, considering the infinite Importance of the Subject, are no such Temptations as to afford any Excuse for it. If this be a just Account of things, and yet Men can go on to vilify or disregard Christianity, which is to talk and act, as if they had a Demonstration of its Falshood; there is no Reason to think they would alter their Behaviour to any Purpose, though there were a Demonstration of its Truth.

The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature, Introduction; pt II, ch. i; pt II, Conclusion.

5. THE ARGUMENTS FOR NATURAL RELIGION REVIEWED

David Hume

DAVID HUME (1711–1776) was born in Edinburgh, and studied law at Edinburgh University. After a few months in Bristol, he spent three years (1734–1737) in France, and in 1739 published the first two volumes of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The third volume appeared in 1740. This work, Hume's greatest philosophical achievement, attracted little attention at the time. *Essays Moral and Political* appeared 1741–1742, and *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* (afterwards called *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*) in 1748. The latter, in which was included the essay "Of Miracles", restated in more popular form the doctrines of the *Treatise*, Book I. He accompanied General St Clair on an expedition against Port L'Orient in 1747, and on a military embassy to Vienna and Turin in 1748. In 1752 he became Keeper of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, having failed to obtain a professorship at Glasgow. *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, founded on the *Treatise*, Book III, was published in 1751, and *Political Discourses* in 1752. Hume's literary activity was afterwards largely devoted to the composition of the *History of England* (1754–1761), but in addition he published *Four Dissertations* (I, "The Natural History of Religion"; II, "Of the Passions", based upon the *Treatise*, Book II; III, "Of Tragedy"; IV, "Of the Standard of Taste") in 1757. He accompanied Lord Hertford to Paris in 1763, and was Secretary to the Embassy in 1765; there he was received at court, and by the literary society of the capital. He returned to London in 1766 with Rousseau, who very soon provoked a quarrel with him. He was Under-Secretary of State to Henry Seymour Conway from 1767 to 1768, and returned to Edinburgh in 1769. The *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, which he had refrained from publishing during his lifetime, were published by Adam Smith and by his own nephew David Hume in 1779.

Hume's philosophy, most fully represented in the *Treatise*, carried to its sceptical conclusion the empirical tradition derived from Locke and influenced by Berkeley; and, together with that of Locke, it may be said to have dominated English philosophical thinking until the full influence of Kant and German Idealism was felt in the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. It was especially Hume's treatment of causation that afterwards influenced Kant; but his conclusions on that problem were only one consequence of a train of thought which both undermined the Rationalism dominant in the theology of the Deists and also cast doubt upon the validity of the inductive and experimental method increasingly prominent in the rapidly developing natural sciences. Hume was well aware of the sceptical consequences to which his enquiries led. But he was no less aware that they were the inevitable consequences of

the fundamental doctrines from which they were developed. "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS" (*Treatise*, Book I, pt I, section i), the latter being derived from, and the fainter copies of, the former; "*all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*"; "*the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*" (*Treatise*, Book I, Appendix). From this it followed that the "necessary connexion" of causation assumed to hold in the world was but a customary association of ideas based upon constant conjunction in the past; and also that the self was "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement" (*Treatise*, Book I, pt III, section vi).

The Dissertation on "The Natural History of Religion" is remarkable for the clear distinction drawn between the foundation of religion in reason and its origin in human nature. Hume's assertions that "polytheism and idolatry was...the first and most ancient religion of mankind", and that its source must be sought in men's "hopes and fears" as they looked forth upon an incalculable world, rather than in "speculative curiosity", mark the beginning of a new approach to the study of religion and a truer sense of history; but the rigidity with which the distinction is drawn and the tone in which it is expounded shew how far this promise still was from its fulfilment.

The *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, which, with Berkeley's *Three Dialogues* and *Alciphron*, are the most notable example in English literature of this form of writing, contain Hume's maturest reflection upon the ultimate problems of philosophy. The discussions are reported by Pamphilus, who takes no part in them himself. The three speakers are the philosophical Cleanthes, the brilliant and sceptical Philo, and the rigidly orthodox Demea, who withdraws before the debate is ended. The traditional arguments for the existence of God are discussed, and Kant's criticism of them is in a number of respects anticipated; but towards the end the discussion concentrates on the moral difficulties which theism involves. It seems unnecessary to interpret the conclusion, where Cleanthes and Philo reach something like agreement, as other than Hume's own conclusion, though Hume himself cannot be identified with any one of the speakers.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD: THE ARGUMENT *a posteriori*

Not to lose any time in circumlocutions, said CLEANTHES, addressing himself to DEMEA, much less in replying to the pious declamations of PHILO; I shall briefly explain how I conceive this matter. Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a

degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human designs, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed. By this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence.

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That all inferences, CLEANTHES, [said PHILO,] concerning fact, are founded on experience; and that all experimental reasonings are founded on the supposition, that similar causes prove similar effects, and similar effects similar causes; I shall not, at present, much dispute with you. But observe, I intreat you, with what extreme caution all just reasoners proceed in the transferring of experiments to similar cases. Unless the cases be exactly similar, they repose no perfect confidence in applying their past observation to any particular phenomenon. Every alteration of circumstances occasions a doubt concerning the event; and it requires new experiments to prove certainly, that the new circumstances are of no moment or importance. A change in bulk, situation, arrangement, age, disposition of the air, or surrounding bodies; any of these particulars may be attended with the most unexpected consequences: And unless the objects be quite familiar to us, it is the highest temerity to expect with assurance, after any of these changes, an event similar to that which before fell under our observation. The slow and de-

liberate steps of philosophers, here, if any where, are distinguished from the precipitate march of the vulgar, who, hurried on by the smallest similitudes, are incapable of all discernment or consideration.

But can you think, CLEANTHES, that your usual phlegm and philosophy have been preserved in so wide a step as you have taken, when you compared to the universe, houses, ships, furniture, machines; and from their similarity in some circumstances inferred a similarity in their causes? Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observation. It is an active cause, by which some particular parts of nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? Does not the great disproportion bar all comparison and inference? From observing the growth of a hair, can we learn any thing concerning the generation of a man? Would the manner of a leaf's blowing, even though perfectly known, afford us any instruction concerning the vegetation of a tree?

But allowing that we were to take the *operations* of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgment concerning the *origin* of the whole, (which never can be admitted); yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe? Our partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions; but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion.

So far from admitting, continued PHILO, that the operations of a part can afford us any just conclusion concerning the origin of the whole, I will not allow any one part to form a rule for another part, if the latter be very remote from the

former. Is there any reasonable ground to conclude, that the inhabitants of other planets possess thought, intelligence, reason, or any thing similar to these faculties in men? When Nature has so extremely diversified her manner of operation in this small globe; can we imagine, that she incessantly copies herself throughout so immense a universe? And if thought, as we may well suppose, be confined merely to this narrow corner, and has even there so limited a sphere of action; with what propriety can we assign it for the original cause of all things? The narrow views of a peasant, who makes his domestic oeconomy the rule for the government of kingdoms, is in comparison a pardonable sophism.

But were we ever so much assured, that a thought and reason, resembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole universe, and were its activity elsewhere vastly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe; yet I cannot see, why the operations of a world constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world, which is in its embryo-state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. By observation, we know somewhat of the oeconomy, action, and nourishment of a finished animal; but we must transfer with great caution that observation to the growth of a foetus in the womb, and still more to the formation of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine.

A very small part of this great system, during a very short time, is very imperfectly discovered to us: and do we then pronounce decisively concerning the origin of the whole?

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Let me here observe too, continued CLEANTHES, that this religious argument, instead of being weakened by that scepticism so much affected by you, rather acquires force from it, and becomes more firm and undisputed. To exclude all argument or reasoning of every kind, is either affectation or madness. The declared profession of every reasonable sceptic is only to reject abstruse, remote, and refined arguments; to adhere to common sense and the plain instincts of nature; and to assent, where-ever any reason strikes him with so full a force, that he cannot, without the greatest violence, prevent it. Now the arguments for Natural Religion are plainly of this kind; and nothing but the most perverse, obstinate metaphysics can reject them. Consider, anatomize the eye; survey its structure and contrivance; and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation. The most obvious conclusion, surely, is in favour of design; and it requires time, reflection, and study, to summon up those frivolous, though abstruse objections, which can support Infidelity. Who can behold the male and female of each species, the correspondence of their parts and instincts, their passions, and whole course of life before and after generation, but must be sensible, that the propagation of the species is intended by Nature? Millions and millions of such instances present themselves through every part of the universe; and no language can convey a more intelligible, irresistible meaning, than the curious adjustment of final causes. To what degree, therefore, of blind dogmatism must one have attained, to reject such natural and such convincing arguments?

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD: THE ARGUMENT *a priori*

But if so many difficulties attend the argument *a posteriori*, said DEMEA; had we not better adhere to that simple and sublime argument *a priori*, which, by offering to us infallible demonstration, cuts off at once all doubt and difficulty? By

this argument, too, we may prove the INFINITY of the divine attributes; which, I am afraid, can never be ascertained with certainty from any other topic. For how can an effect, which either is finite, or, for aught we know, may be so; how can such an effect, I say, prove an infinite cause? The unity too of the Divine Nature, it is very difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to deduce merely from contemplating the works of nature; nor will the uniformity alone of the plan, even were it allowed, give us any assurance of that attribute. Whereas the argument *a priori*....

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I shall not leave it to PHILO, said CLEANTHES, (though I know that the starting objections is his chief delight) to point out the weakness of this metaphysical reasoning. It seems to me so obviously ill-grounded, and at the same time of so little consequence to the cause of true piety and religion, that I shall myself venture to show the fallacy of it.

I shall begin with observing, that there is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any arguments *a priori*. Nothing is demonstrable, unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing, that is distinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being, whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it.

It is pretended that the Deity is a necessarily-existent being; and this necessity of his existence is attempted to be explained by asserting, that, if we knew his whole essence or nature, we should perceive it to be as impossible for him not to exist as for twice two not to be four. But it is evident, that this can never happen, while our faculties remain the same as at present. It will still be possible for us, at any time, to conceive the non-existence of what we formerly conceived to exist; nor can the mind ever lie under a necessity of supposing

any object to remain always in being; in the same manner as we lie under a necessity of always conceiving twice two to be four. The words, therefore, *necessary existence*, have no meaning; or, which is the same thing, none that is consistent.

But farther; why may not the material universe be the necessarily-existent Being, according to this pretended explication of necessity? We dare not affirm that we know all the qualities of matter; and for aught we can determine, it may contain some qualities, which, were they known, would make its non-existence appear as great a contradiction as that twice two is five. I find only one argument employed to prove, that the material world is not the necessarily-existent Being; and this argument is derived from the contingency both of the matter and the form of the world. "Any particle of matter", 'tis said,[1] "may be *conceived* to be annihilated; and any form may be *conceived* to be altered. Such an annihilation or alteration, therefore, is not impossible." But it seems a great partiality not to perceive, that the same argument extends equally to the Deity, so far as we have any conception of him; and that the mind can at least imagine him to be non-existent, or his attributes to be altered. It must be some unknown, inconceivable qualities, which can make his non-existence appear impossible, or his attributes unalterable: And no reason can be assigned, why these qualities may not belong to matter. As they are altogether unknown and inconceivable, they can never be proved incompatible with it.

Add to this, that in tracing an eternal succession of objects, it seems absurd to inquire for a general cause or first author. How can any thing, that exists from eternity, have a cause; since that relation implies a priority in time, and a beginning of existence?

In such a chain, too, or succession of objects, each part is caused by that which preceded it, and causes that which succeeds it. Where then is the difficulty? But the WHOLE, you say, wants a cause. I answer, that the uniting of these

[1] Dr Clarke.

parts into a whole, like the uniting of several distinct counties into one kingdom, or several distinct members into one body, is performed merely by an arbitrary act of the mind, and has no influence on the nature of things. Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable, should you afterwards ask me, what was the cause of the whole twenty. This is sufficiently explained in explaining the cause of the parts.

The Moral Attributes of the Deity

And is it possible, CLEANTHES, said PHILO, that after all these reflections, and infinitely more, which might be suggested, you can still persevere in your Anthropomorphism, and assert the moral attributes of the Deity, his justice, benevolence, mercy, and rectitude, to be of the same nature with these virtues in human creatures? His power we allow infinite: whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal are happy: therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite: he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end: but the course of Nature tends not to human or animal felicity: therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no inferences more certain and infallible than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men?

EPICURUS's old questions are yet unanswered.

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?

You ascribe, CLEANTHES, (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to Nature. But what, I beseech you, is the object of that curious artifice and machinery, which she has displayed in all animals? The preservation alone of individuals, and propagation of the species. It seems enough for her purpose, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without

any care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it. No resourse for this purpose: no machinery, in order merely to give pleasure or ease: no fund of pure joy and contentment: no indulgence, without some want or necessity accompanying it. At least, the few phenomena of this nature are overbalanced by opposite phenomena of still greater importance.

Our sense of music, harmony, and indeed beauty of all kinds, gives satisfaction, without being absolutely necessary to the preservation and propagation of the species. But what racking pains, on the other hand, arise from gouts, gravels, megrims, tooth-achs, rheumatisms; where the injury to the animal-machinery is either small or incurable? Mirth, laughter, play, frolic, seem gratuitous satisfactions, which have no farther tendency: spleen, melancholy, discontent, superstition, are pains of the same nature. How then does the divine benevolence display itself, in the sense of you Anthropomorphites? None but we Mystics, as you were pleased to call us, can account for this strange mixture of phenomena, by deriving it from attributes, infinitely perfect, but incomprehensible.

And have you at last, said CLEANTHES smiling, betrayed your intentions, PHILO? Your long agreement with DEMEA did indeed a little surprise me; but I find you were all the while erecting a concealed battery against me. And I must confess, that you have now fallen upon a subject worthy of your noble spirit of opposition and controversy. If you can make out the present point, and prove mankind to be unhappy or corrupted, there is an end at once of all religion. For to what purpose establish the natural attributes of the Deity, while the moral are still doubtful and uncertain?

You take umbrage very easily, replied DEMEA, at opinions the most innocent, and the most generally received even amongst the religious and devout themselves: and nothing can be more surprising than to find a topic like this, concerning the wickedness and misery of man, charged with no less

than Atheism and profaneness. Have not all pious divines and preachers, who have indulged their rhetoric on so fertile a subject; have they not easily, I say, given a solution of any difficulties which may attend it? This world is but a point in comparison of the universe; this life but a moment in comparison of eternity. The present evil phenomena, therefore, are rectified in other regions, and in some future period of existence. And the eyes of men, being then opened to larger views of things, see the whole connection of general laws; and trace, with adoration, the benevolence and rectitude of the Deity, through all the mazes and intricacies of his providence.

No! replied CLEANTHES, No! These arbitrary suppositions can never be admitted, contrary to matter of fact, visible and uncontroverted. Whence can any cause be known but from its known effects? Whence can any hypothesis be proved but from the apparent phenomena? To establish one hypothesis upon another, is building entirely in the air; and the utmost we ever attain, by these conjectures and fictions, is to ascertain the bare possibility of our opinion; but never can we, upon such terms, establish its reality.

The only method of supporting divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace) is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. Your representations are exaggerated: your melancholy views mostly fictitious: your inferences contrary to fact and experience. Health is more common than sickness: pleasure than pain: happiness than misery. And for one vexation which we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments.

Admitting your position, replied PHILO, which yet is extremely doubtful; you must, at the same time, allow, that, if pain be less frequent than pleasure, it is infinitely more violent and durable. One hour of it is often able to outweigh a day, a week, a month of our common insipid enjoyments: And how many days, weeks, and months are passed by several in the most acute torments? Pleasure, scarcely in one instance, is ever able to reach ecstasy and rapture: And in no

one instance can it continue for any time at its highest pitch and altitude. The spirits evaporate; the nerves relax; the fabric is disordered; and the enjoyment quickly degenerates into fatigue and uneasiness. But pain often, good God, how often! rises to torture and agony; and the longer it continues, it becomes still more genuine agony and torture. Patience is exhausted; courage languishes; melancholy seizes us; and nothing terminates our misery but the removal of its cause, or another event, which is the sole cure of all evil, but which, from our natural folly, we regard with still greater horror and consternation.

But not to insist upon these topics, continued PHILO, though most obvious, certain, and important; I must use the freedom to admonish you, CLEANTHES, that you have put the controversy upon a most dangerous issue, and are unawares introducing a total Scepticism into the most essential articles of natural and revealed theology. What! no method of fixing a just foundation for religion, unless we allow the happiness of human life, and maintain a continued existence even in this world, with all our present pains, infirmities, vexations, and follies, to be eligible and desirable! But this is contrary to every one's feeling and experience: It is contrary to an authority so established as nothing can subvert: No decisive proofs can ever be produced against this authority; nor is it possible for you to compute, estimate, and compare all the pains and all the pleasures in the lives of all men and of all animals: And thus by your resting the whole system of religion on a point, which, from its very nature, must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess, that that system is equally uncertain.

But allowing you, what never will be believed; at least, what you never possibly can prove; that animal, or at least human happiness, in this life, exceeds its misery; you have yet done nothing: For this is not, by any means, what we expect from infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not

by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive: except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity, and that our common measures of truth and falsehood are not applicable to them; a topic, which I have all along insisted on, but which you have from the beginning rejected with scorn and indignation.

But I will be contented to retire still from this intrenchment, for I deny that you can ever force me in it: I will allow, that pain or misery in man is *compatible* with infinite power and goodness in the Deity, even in your sense of these attributes: What are you advanced by all these concessions? A mere possible compatibility is not sufficient. You must *prove* these pure, unmixt, and uncontrollable attributes from the present mixed and confused phenomena, and from these alone. A hopeful undertaking! Were the phenomena ever so pure and unmixt, yet being finite, they would be insufficient for that purpose. How much more, where they are also so jarring and discordant?

Here, CLEANTHES, I find myself at ease in my argument. Here I triumph. Formerly, when we argued concerning the natural attributes of intelligence and design, I needed all my sceptical and metaphysical subtilty to elude your grasp. In many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever possible for us to repose any weight on them. But there is no view of human life, or of the condition of mankind, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone. It is your turn now to tug the labouring oar, and to support your

philosophical subtilties against the dictates of plain reason and experience.

I scruple not to allow, said CLEANTHES, that I have been apt to suspect the frequent repetition of the word *infinite*, which we meet with in all theological writers, to savour more of panegyric than of philosophy; and that any purposes of reasoning, and even of religion, would be better served, were we to rest contented with more accurate and more moderate expressions. The terms, *admirable, excellent, superlatively great, wise*, and *holy*; these sufficiently fill the imaginations of men; and any thing beyond, besides that it leads into absurdities, has no influence on the affections or sentiments. Thus, in the present subject, if we abandon all human analogy, as seems your intention, DEMEA, I am afraid we abandon all religion, and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration. If we preserve human analogy, we must for ever find it impossible to reconcile any mixture of evil in the universe with infinite attributes; much less, can we ever prove the latter from the former. But supposing the Author of Nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind; a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted. A less evil may then be chosen, in order to avoid a greater: Inconveniences be submitted to, in order to reach a desirable end: And in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present. You, PHILO, who are so prompt at starting views, and reflections, and analogies; I would gladly hear, at length, without interruption, your opinion of this new theory; and if it deserves our attention, we may afterwards, at more leisure, reduce it into form.

My sentiments, replied PHILO, are not worth being made a mystery of; and therefore, without any ceremony, I shall deliver what occurs to me with regard to the present subject. It must, I think, be allowed, that, if a very limited intelli-

gence, whom we shall suppose utterly unacquainted with the universe, were assured, that it were the production of a very good, wise, and powerful Being, however finite, he would, from his conjectures, form *beforehand* a different notion of it from what we find it to be by experience; nor would he ever imagine, merely from these attributes of the cause, of which he is informed, that the effect could be so full of vice and misery and disorder, as it appears in this life.

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Look round this universe[, PHILO continued]. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children!

Here the MANICHAEAN system occurs as a proper hypothesis to solve the difficulty: and no doubt, in some respects, it is very specious, and has more probability than the common hypothesis, by giving a plausible account of the strange mixture of good and ill which appears in life. But if we consider, on the other hand, the perfect uniformity and agreement of the parts of the universe, we shall not discover in it any marks of the combat of a malevolent with a benevolent being. There is indeed an opposition of pains and pleasures in the feelings of sensible creatures: but are not all the operations of Nature carried on by an opposition of principles, of hot and cold, moist and dry, light and heavy? The true conclusion is, that the original Source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles; and has no more regard to good above ill, than to heat above cold, or to drought above moisture, or to light above heavy.

There may *four* hypotheses be framed concerning the first causes of the universe: *that* they are endowed with perfect goodness; *that* they have perfect malice; *that* they are opposite and have both goodness and malice; *that* they have neither goodness nor malice. Mixt phenomena can never prove the two former unmixt principles. And the uniformity and steadiness of general laws seem to oppose the third. The fourth therefore, seems by far the most probable.

What I have said concerning natural evil will apply to moral, with little or no variation; and we have no more reason to infer, that the rectitude of the Supreme Being resembles human rectitude than that his benevolence resembles the human. Nay, it will be thought, that we have still greater cause to exclude from him moral sentiments, such as we feel them; since moral evil, in the opinion of many, is much more predominant above moral good than natural evil above natural good.

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I shall farther add, said CLEANTHES, to what you have so well urged, that one great advantage of the principle of Theism, is, that it is the only system of cosmogony which can be rendered intelligible and complete, and yet can throughout preserve a strong analogy to what we every day see and experience in the world. The comparison of the universe to a machine of human contrivance is so obvious and natural, and is justified by so many instances of order and design in Nature, that it must immediately strike all unprejudiced apprehensions, and procure universal approbation. Whoever attempts to weaken this theory, cannot pretend to succeed by establishing in its place any other, that is precise and determinate: It is sufficient for him, if he start doubts and difficulties; and by remote and abstract views of things, reach that suspense of judgment, which is here the utmost boundary of his wishes. But besides that this state of mind is in itself unsatisfactory, it can never be steadily maintained against such striking appearances as continually engage us into the

religious hypothesis. A false, absurd system, human nature, from the force of prejudice, is capable of adhering to with obstinacy and perseverance: But no system at all, in opposition to a theory supported by strong and obvious reason, by natural propensity, and by early education, I think it absolutely impossible to maintain or defend.

So little, replied PHILO, do I esteem this suspense of judgement in the present case to be possible, that I am apt to suspect there enters somewhat of a dispute of words into this controversy, more than is usually imagined. That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art is evident; and according to all the rules of good reasoning, we ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their causes have a proportional analogy. But as there are also considerable differences, we have reason to suppose a proportional difference in the causes; and in particular ought to attribute a much higher degree of power and energy to the supreme cause than any we have ever observed in mankind. Here then the existence of a DEITY is plainly ascertained by reason: and if we make it a question, whether, on account of these analogies, we can properly call him a *mind* or *intelligence*, notwithstanding the vast difference which may reasonably be supposed between him and human minds; what is this but a mere verbal controversy? No man can deny the analogies between the effects: To restrain ourselves from enquiring concerning the causes, is scarcely possible: From this enquiry, the legitimate conclusion is, that the causes have also an analogy: And if we are not contented with calling the first and supreme cause a GOD or DEITY, but desire to vary the expression; what can we call him but MIND or THOUGHT, to which he is justly supposed to bear a considerable resemblance?

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If the whole of Natural Theology, [said PHILO,] as some people seem to maintain, resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined proposition,

That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence: If this proposition be not capable of extension, variation, or more particular explication: If it affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance: And if the analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried no farther than to the human intelligence; and cannot be transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the qualities of the mind: If this really be the case, what can the most inquisitive, contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain, philosophical assent to the proposition, as often as it occurs; and believe that the arguments on which it is established, exceed the objections which lie against it? Some astonishment indeed will naturally arise from the greatness of the object; some melancholy from its obscurity; some contempt of human reason, that it can give no solution more satisfactory with regard to so extraordinary and magnificent a question. But believe me, CLEANTHES, the most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation, that heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate, this profound ignorance, by affording some particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our faith. A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: While the haughty Dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of Theology by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor. To be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian.

Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, pts II, III, IX, X, XI, XII.

6. THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION IN HUMAN NATURE DISTINGUISHED FROM ITS FOUNDATION IN REASON

David Hume

[*See note on* pp. 129 f.]

As every enquiry, which regards religion, is of the utmost importance, there are two questions in particular, which challenge our attention, to wit, that concerning its foundation in reason, and that concerning its origin in human nature. Happily, the first question, which is the most important, admits of the most obvious, at least, the clearest solution. The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion. But the other question, concerning the origin of religion in human nature, is exposed to some more difficulty. The belief of invisible, intelligent power has been very generally diffused over the human race, in all places and in all ages; but it has neither perhaps been so universal as to admit of no exception, nor has it been, in any degree, uniform in the ideas, which it has suggested. Some nations have been discovered, who entertained no sentiments of Religion, if travellers and historians may be credited; and no two nations, and scarce any two men, have ever agreed precisely in the same sentiments. It would appear, therefore, that this conception springs not from an original instinct or primary impression of nature, such as gives rise to self-love, affection between the sexes, love of progeny, gratitude, resentment; since every instinct of this kind has been found absolutely universal in all nations and ages, and has always a precise determinate object, which it inflexibly pursues. The first religious principles must be secondary; such as may easily be perverted by various accidents and causes, and

whose operation too, in some cases, may, by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, be altogether prevented. What those principles are, which give rise to the original belief, and what those accidents and causes are, which direct its operation, is the subject of our present enquiry.

It appears to me, that, if we consider the improvement of human society, from rude beginnings to a state of greater perfection, polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind. This opinion I shall endeavour to confirm by the following arguments.

It is a matter of fact incontestable, that about 1700 years ago all mankind were polytheists. The doubtful and sceptical principles of a few philosophers, or the theism, and that too not entirely pure, of one or two nations, form no objection worth regarding. Behold then the clear testimony of history. The farther we mount up into antiquity, the more do we find mankind plunged into polytheism. No marks, no symptoms of any more perfect religion. The most ancient records of human race still present us with that system as the popular and established creed. The north, the south, the east, the west, give their unanimous testimony to the same fact. What can be opposed to so full an evidence?

As far as writing or history reaches, mankind, in ancient times, appear universally to have been polytheists. Shall we assert, that, in more ancient times, before the knowledge of letters, or the discovery of any art or science, men entertained the principles of pure theism? That is, while they were ignorant and barbarous, they discovered truth: But fell into error, as soon as they acquired learning and politeness.

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If we would, therefore, indulge our curiosity, in enquiring concerning the origin of religion, we must turn our thoughts towards polytheism, the primitive religion of uninstructed mankind.

Were men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system. For though, to persons of a certain turn of mind, it may not appear altogether absurd, that several independent beings, endowed with superior wisdom, might conspire in the contrivance and execution of one regular plan; yet is this a merely arbitrary supposition, which, even if allowed possible, must be confessed neither to be supported by probability nor necessity. All things in the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author; because the conception of different authors, without any distinction of attributes or operations, serves only to give perplexity to the imagination, without bestowing any satisfaction on the understanding. The statue of LAOCOON, as we learn from PLINY, was the work of three artists: But it is certain, that, were we not told so, we should never have imagined, that a groupe of figures, cut from one stone, and united in one plan, was not the work and contrivance of one statuary. To ascribe any single effect to the combination of several causes, is not surely a natural and obvious supposition. On the other hand, if, leaving the works of nature, we trace the footsteps of invisible power in the various and contrary events of human life, we are necessarily led into polytheism and to the acknowledgment of several limited and imperfect deities. Storms and tempests ruin what is nourished by the sun. The sun destroys what is fostered by the moisture of dews and rains. War may be favourable to a nation, whom the inclemency of the seasons afflicts with famine. Sickness and pestilence may depopulate a kingdom, amidst the most profuse plenty. The same nation is not, at the same time, equally successful by sea and by land. And a nation, which now triumphs over

its enemies, may anon submit to their more prosperous arms. In short, the conduct of events, or what we call the plan of a particular providence, is so full of variety and uncertainty, that, if we suppose it immediately ordered by any intelligent beings, we must acknowledge a contrariety in their designs and intentions, a constant combat of opposite powers, and a repentance or change of intention in the same power, from impotence or levity. Each nation has its tutelar deity. Each element is subjected to its invisible power or agent. The province of each god is separate from that of another. Nor are the operations of the same god always certain and invariable. To-day he protects: To-morrow he abandons us. Prayers and sacrifices, rites and ceremonies, well or ill performed, are the sources of his favour or enmity, and produce all the good or ill fortune, which are to be found amongst mankind.

We may conclude, therefore, that, in all nations, which have embraced polytheism, the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind. Accordingly, we find, that all idolaters, having separated the provinces of their deities, have recourse to that invisible agent, to whose authority they are immediately subjected, and whose province it is to superintend that course of actions, in which they are, at any time, engaged. JUNO is invoked at marriages; LUCINA at births. NEPTUNE receives the prayers of seamen; and MARS of warriors. The husbandman cultivates his field under the protection of CERES; and the merchant acknowledges the authority of MERCURY. Each natural event is supposed to be governed by some intelligent agent; and nothing prosperous or adverse can happen in life, which may not be the subject of peculiar prayers or thanksgivings.

It must necessarily, indeed, be allowed, that, in order to carry men's attention beyond the present course of things, or

lead them into any inference concerning invisible intelligent power, they must be actuated by some passion, which prompts their thought and reflection; some motive, which urges their first enquiry. But what passion shall we here have recourse to, for explaining an effect of such mighty consequence? Not speculative curiosity surely, or the pure love of truth. That motive is too refined for such gross apprehensions; and would lead men into enquiries concerning the frame of nature, a subject too large and comprehensive for their narrow capacities. No passions, therefore, can be supposed to work upon such barbarians, but the ordinary affections of human life; the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with a trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life. And in this disordered scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity.

The Natural History of Religion, Introduction, Section I, Section II.

IV

THE PASSING OF THE AGE OF REASON

1. SALVATION BY FAITH: A GOSPEL FOR SINNERS

John Wesley

JOHN WESLEY (1703–1791), leader of the Methodist movement, was born at Epworth, Lincolnshire, of which his father, Samuel Wesley, was Rector. In 1713 he was sent to the Charterhouse School, and in 1720 he entered Lincoln College, Oxford. He was ordained Deacon in 1725 and elected a Fellow of Lincoln in the following year. He retained his Fellowship till his marriage in 1751. From 1727 to 1729 he acted as curate to his father, but in the latter year returned to Oxford, where he joined his brother Charles as a member of the "holy club", nicknamed "methodists". He came under the influence of William Law (see p. 93) in 1732. In 1735 he sailed for Georgia as a missionary of the S.P.G., and was greatly influenced by the group of Moravians whom he met there. But the mission was a disappointment, and he returned to England in 1738. He continued to associate with the Moravians, and it was at a meeting of a religious society in London founded by the Moravian, Peter Böhler, that he was converted on 24 May, 1738. In the same year he visited Zinzendorf at Herrnhut. He began open-air preaching, following George Whitefield, at Bristol in 1739, where he met Bishop Butler (see p. 104). Henceforward his life was devoted to his evangelistic work and to organising the Methodist Societies. He is said to have travelled 250,000 miles and to have preached 40,000 sermons.

By grace are ye saved through faith. Eph. ii. 8.

1. All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of His mere grace, bounty, or favour; His free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of His mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul", and stamped on that soul the image of

God, and "put all things under his feet". The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand. "All our works, Thou, O God, hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? With his own works? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being "come short of the glory of God", the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is "grace upon grace!" If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" And thus it is. Herein "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us. "By grace" then "are ye saved through faith." Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire—

I. WHAT FAITH IT IS THROUGH WHICH WE ARE SAVED.

II. WHAT IS THE SALVATION WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH.

III. HOW WE MAY ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

1. And, first, it is not barely the faith of a Heathen.

Now, God requireth of a Heathen to believe, "that God is; that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him";

and that He is to be sought by glorifying Him as God, by giving Him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a Heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a Heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, "I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God" (Luke iv. 34). Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One; yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto you the way of salvation". Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing—that God was made manifest in the flesh; that He will "tread all enemies under His feet"; and that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God". Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on Him as to "leave all and follow Him"; although they had then power to work miracles, to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease"; yea, they had then "power and authority over all devils"; and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to "preach the kingdom of God".

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ:

Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it. Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern Heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this: it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"; and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved".

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection. It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as He "was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification". Christian faith is, then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, *as given for us*, and *living in us*. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ, *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favour of God; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with Him, and cleaving to Him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption", or, in one word, our salvation.

II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the second thing to be considered.

1. And, first, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, *Ye shall be* (though that also is true), but, "*Ye are saved* through faith".

2. *Ye are saved* (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought His First-begotten into the world: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins". And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All His people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in Him", He will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, "of the flesh and of the spirit". Through faith that is in Him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First, from the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should He "be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it": and whereas, "by the law is" only "the knowledge of sin", but no deliverance from it, so that, "by" fulfilling "the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in His sight": now, "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe". Now, "they are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ". "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the law, being made a curse for us". He hath "blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross". "There is therefore no condemnation now to them which" believe "in Christ Jesus".

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father.

"They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they

are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. i. 13). Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them". And hereby they are persuaded (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fullness of persuasion), that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord".

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (I John iii. 5, &c.). Again: "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God". Once more: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I John v. 18).

6. He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not (1) by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning; but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2) by any wilful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3) by any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he by the grace of God, stifleth in the birth. Nor (4) doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this

they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin": and though he cannot say he hath not sinned, yet now "he sinneth not".

7. This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification*; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on Him, and a deliverance from the whole body of sin, through Christ *formed in his heart.* So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again.* He is *born again of the Spirit* unto a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God". He is a new creature: old things are passed away: all things in him are become new. And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the ἄδολον, "*sincere* milk of the word, and grows thereby"; going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he comes unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ".

III. The first usual objection to this is,

1. That to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but necessarily productive of all good works, and all holiness".

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St Paul's time: for even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith?" We answer, first, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, secondly, "we establish the law", both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way,

whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them". These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which He hath appointed, do all the "good works which He had before prepared that they should walk therein", and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride? We answer, Accidentally it may: therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle, "Because of unbelief", the first branches "were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God. On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off". And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection (Rom. iii. 27), "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith". If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him "that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. iv. 5). To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text (Eph. ii. 4, &c.): "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves". Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "it is the gift of God"; the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation which He of His own good pleasure, His mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of His grace; that believing ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before

our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation; so far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe; for it is then God that worketh in us: and, therefore, that He giveth us a reward for what He Himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of His mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin? Indeed, it may and will: many will "continue in sin that grace may abound"; but their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance: and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with Him, they will cry aloud that He would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek Him in all the means He hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till He come; "He will come, and will not tarry". And He can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's shedding abroad this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailer repented, believed, and was baptized; as were three thousand, by St Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching. And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that He is still "mighty to save".

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair". True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. He that "goeth about to establish his own righteousness" cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort", to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That "whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed: that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him": here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? For Zacchaeus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say, "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps He may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee"; so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God". O glad tidings! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red like crimson", though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon".

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told that salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached to all. But what saith the Holy Ghost? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved", is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching; that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom then are we not to preach it? Whom shall we except? The poor? Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. "Suffer these", in any wise, to come

unto Christ, "and forbid them not." The sinners? Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature". If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak".

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that "by grace are ye saved through faith": because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls *the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion*, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath "overspread the land as a flood". Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness which is of God by faith" be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them". They can talk as sublimely of the law, as he that hath it written by God in his heart. To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: but take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law to every one that believeth"; and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from

life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever "salvation by faith" is declared to the world: for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright that champion of the Lord of hosts, Martin Luther, from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud, strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!" especially when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath Thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth then, thou little child that believest in Him, and His "right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, "conquering and to conquer", until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory".

Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Sermon preached at St Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on 11 June 1738.

2. A SENTIMENTAL FAITH

Jean Jacques Rousseau

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712–1778) sprang from a French family which had been settled in Geneva since the early sixteenth century. In his sixteenth year he ran away from home and at Turin exchanged his ancestral Protestantism for the profession of Roman Catholicism. For the greater part of the next twelve years he lived in Savoy, an inmate of the household of Madame de Warens, a lady of great charm and volatile temperament, like himself a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. He first visited Paris in 1741, and in 1744 he settled permanently in the capital, making a living first as a private secretary and then as a musical composer and copyist. In Paris he was thrown into close association with Diderot and the other Encyclopaedists. Though he imbibed their ideas and shared their hostility to the ruling authorities in Church and State, their chilling rationalism, and negative attitude in morals and religion, left him dissatisfied. In 1749 he passed through a kind of conversion which made of him a changed man, and inspired the creative works which carried his fame through France and beyond and marked an epoch in the spiritual history of Europe. Rousseau's fundamental idea was that of a return from the sophistication of society to the blessedness of man's natural state. In 1754, in accordance with his new-found principle that a man should identify himself with the religion of his native land, Rousseau was reconciled to the Protestant Church at Geneva. With the publication of an indictment of the Stage in the form of a letter to D'Alembert, a definite breach opened between Rousseau and the Encyclopaedists, and after 1760 the philosophers and the new champion of sentiment were in hostile camps. Three of Rousseau's chief writings were now published in rapid succession: *La nouvelle Héloïse* appeared in 1761, *Contrat Social* in 1762, and in the same year the *Émile*. The appearance of *Émile* was the signal for an attack by authority. Rousseau was obliged to leave Montmorency, where he had been living since 1757 under the protection of the Duke of Luxembourg. When Geneva repeated the condemnation of Paris, Rousseau betook himself to Motiers and placed himself under the protection of Frederick the Great. He was expelled thence in 1765 by the fanaticism of the villagers. In 1766 he was befriended by David Hume and was in England under Hume's protection 1766–1767. Rousseau was at this time the victim of obsessions and, conceiving an unfounded suspicion of Hume's loyalty, he quarrelled violently with him. The first part of the *Confessions* (published posthumously) was composed during Rousseau's stay in England. In 1770 he was again in Paris, and here he continued to live in poverty and comparative obscurity until 1778, the year of his death.

The *Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard* was published as part of the fourth book of *Émile* (1762), Rousseau's treatise on education. The first

draft (still extant in MS) was probably written in the years 1757–1758, before the breach with the Encyclopaedists. Before publication in the *Émile* this earlier draft was expanded to include a polemic against the materialistic doctrine expounded in Helvétius's *De l'Esprit* (1758), and at the same time the references to the Christian religion were made more definitely sympathetic (*cf.* the critical edition of P. M. Masson (Paris, 1914), pp. xxxiii ff.). The *Profession* is a sentimental manifesto. The Curate's Creed is a variety of the prevailing Deism of the eighteenth century, but it is suffused with an emotional fervour, heightened by reaction from the growing scepticism and materialism of the philosophical movement. The idea of Revelation is criticised and the traditional "proofs" are found inadequate. The Curate maintains an attitude of respectful doubt towards Revelation, but at the same time he pays a glowing tribute to the beauty and holiness of the Gospel teaching, which he sets in contrast with the arrogance of the philosophers.

An Escape from Vain Argument

The first thing of profit that I drew from these reflections was to learn to limit my enquiries to that which directly concerned me; in everything else to remain in profound ignorance, and only to disturb myself to the point of doubting about those things which it was important for me to know.

Further I learnt that so far from freeing me from useless doubts, the philosophers would only multiply the doubts which harassed me, and resolve none of them. So I took another guide, and I said to myself: let us consult the inner light, it will mislead me less than the philosophers, or, at any rate, if I make a mistake, it will be my own, and I shall do myself less harm by following my own illusions than by surrendering to their lies.

Then passing in review the different opinions which had in turn engaged me since I was born, I saw that though none of them was clear enough to produce immediate conviction, they were of differing degrees of probability, and that interior assent was given or withheld in varying measure. After this first observation, I silenced my prejudices, and compared all these different ideas with one another. I found that the first and the commonest idea was also the simplest and the most reasonable, and that it only failed to secure universal assent, because it was not the last to be advanced. Picture all

your philosophers, ancient and modern; first they have exhausted their bizarre systems of forces, chance, fate, necessity, atoms, an animated universe, living matter, materialism of every kind; then, after them all imagine the illustrious Clarke explaining the universe, declaring at last Him who is the Being of beings, and the disposer of the world. What universal wonder, what unanimous applause would have greeted this new system! So great is it, so consoling, so sublime, so fit to exalt the soul, to lay a foundation for virtue. At the same time it is striking, luminous, simple, and, so far as I can see, when we compare it with the absurdities of every other system, it contains less that is incomprehensible to the mind of man. I said to myself: insoluble objections are common to all systems, because the mind of man is too limited to resolve them, therefore they establish nothing against any one in particular. But how great is the difference in the direct proofs! When one system alone explains everything, ought it not to be preferred, when it contains no more difficulty than the rest?

I have then within me the love of truth, which is my entire philosophy, and for method, an easy and simple rule which dispenses me from the vain subtlety of arguments. Acting on this rule I proceed to examine those branches of knowledge which concern me, determined to admit as evident everything to which, in the sincerity of my heart, I cannot refuse my assent; as true, whatever appears to me to have a necessary connexion with what is evident, and to leave all else in uncertainty, neither rejecting nor accepting, and not torturing myself to reach an explanation, when it leads to nothing which is valuable for practical life.

Conscience the Guide of Man

For us, to exist is to feel; our sense of feeling is most certainly prior to our understanding and we have feelings before we have ideas. The cause of our existence, whatever it may be, has provided for our preservation by giving us feelings in

keeping with our nature, and it cannot be denied that those feelings at least are innate. As regards the individual, those feelings are love of self, fear of pain, terror of death, desire of happiness. But if, as one cannot doubt, man is sociable by nature, or at least made to become so, he can only be sociable in virtue of other innate feelings connected with his kind; for physical needs, if we consider them alone, must separate men rather than bring them together. Now, the driving force of conscience is born of the moral system formed by this double relationship—to one's self and to one's kind. To know the good is not to love it; man has not an innate knowledge of the good; but as soon as his reason makes him know it, his conscience leads him to love it; it is this feeling which is innate.

* * * *

Conscience! Conscience! divine instinct, immortal and heavenly voice; sure guide of a being who though ignorant and limited is yet intelligent and a free agent; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God—it is you who make the excellence of man's nature and the moral quality of his deeds—without you I feel nothing in me which raises me above the animals, save the sad privilege of straying from error to error with the help of an understanding which lacks rule, and a reason which lacks principle.

Natural Religion without Revelation

The opinions which you have just explained to me, I said, appear to me more novel in respect of what you acknowledge you do not know, than of what you say you believe. I see in them practically that Theism or Natural Religion which Christians pretend to confuse with atheism or irreligion, though in reality it is the exactly opposite doctrine. But in the actual state of my faith, I must climb rather than come down in order to adopt your opinions, and not being so wise as you I find it hard to stay exactly where you are. At least I will be equally sincere, and therefore I will take counsel

with myself. If I am to follow your example, it must be under the guidance of inward conviction, and you yourself have taught me that when this has been long silenced, it cannot be recalled in a moment. I carry your words in my heart. I must think over them. If, when I have taken good counsel with myself, I am as fully convinced as you are, you shall be my last apostle, and I will be your convert to the end. But go on with your lesson. You have told me but a half of what I ought to know. Speak to me of Revelation, of the Scriptures, of those obscure dogmas, about which I have been in uncertainty since my childhood, being unable to grasp them or to believe them, and not knowing how either to accept or to reject.

Yes, my son, he replied embracing me, I will finish telling you what I think. I will not open half only of my heart to you, but to authorise me to have no reserves with you, it was necessary for you to express your wish that it should be so. So far I have told you nothing that I did not believe could be useful to you, and of which I was not deeply convinced. The task which remains is quite different. I see in it nothing but difficulty, mystery, obscurity. I approach it with uncertainty and distrust. I set about it with apprehension, and I tell you my doubts rather than my opinion. If your own views were more settled, I should hesitate to reveal my own to you; but in your present state you will gain by thinking as I do. For the rest, give to my words no other authority than that of reason; I do not know that I am not mistaken. It is difficult in a discussion not to adopt at times a positive tone, but in this case remember that when I affirm, I am only giving reasons for doubt. Look for the truth yourself; for my part I promise you no more than good faith.

In what I have said you see Natural Religion alone; it is indeed strange that there need be any other. How can I know that such a necessity exists? Of what can I be guilty, when I serve God according to the lights which He bestows upon my mind, and according to the feelings with which He

inspires my heart? What purity in morals, or what dogma at once useful to man and honourable to his Maker, can I get from a positive doctrine, which I could not get, without it, from a good use of my own faculties? For the glory of God, for the good of society, and for my own profit, shew me what can be added to the duties of the natural law, and shew me what virtue can be produced from a new cult, which is not already a result of mine. Our greatest ideas about the Godhead reach us through reason alone. Observe Nature. Listen to the voice within. Has not God told us everything through our eyes, our conscience, our judgement? What more will men say to us? Their revelations, by ascribing to God human passions, only degrade Him. Far from making clearer our conceptions of the Eternal Being, I notice that particular doctrines confuse those conceptions; instead of ennobling them, they cheapen them; to the unsearchable mysteries which already surround Him, they add absurd contradictions. These dogmas make man proud, intolerant, cruel; instead of establishing peace upon the earth, they bring fire and sword. I ask myself what is the good of it all, and I do not know what answer to give. I see there nothing but the crimes of men and the miseries of the human race.

The Problem of the Evidence of Faith

All the theology which I am able to acquire for myself by contemplation of the universe, and by the good use of my faculties is confined to what I have already explained to you. To know more, one must have recourse to extraordinary means. These means cannot be human authority, for, since no man is of a different species from me, all that a man may know by nature, I too may know, and another man may be deceived as much as I. When I believe what he says, it is not because he says it, but because he proves it. The testimony of men is in the end then only that of my own reason, and adds nothing to the natural means which God has given me whereby I may know the truth.

O Apostle of truth, what then have you to say to me of which I do not remain the judge?—God Himself has spoken; listen to His revelation.—Ah! that is another matter. God has spoken. That indeed is of importance. And to whom has He spoken?—To men.—Why then have I heard none of it?—He has commissioned other men to give you His message.—I see: it is men who are to tell me what God has said. I would rather have heard God Himself. It would have cost Him no more, and I should have been protected from deception.—But He guarantees you against that by making plain that the envoys are sent from Him.—In what way?—By miracles.—And where are these miracles?—In books.—And who wrote these books?—Men.—And who saw these miracles?—The men who attest them.—What! Always a human testimony. Always men who tell me what other men have told them. How many men there are between God and me! Still let us look, test, compare, verify. Oh! if God had but deigned to spare me all this work, should I have served him less truly?

My friend just consider in what a terrible discussion I find myself engaged! What profound learning I need to get back into the most remote antiquity, to examine, weigh up, compare prophecies, revelations, facts, all the evidences of faith propounded in every country of the world!

The Holiness of the Gospel

I tell you too that the majesty of the Scriptures amazes me, the holiness of the Gospel speaks to my heart. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their parade; how small they are beside it! Can it be that a book at once so sublime and so simple is the work of men? Can it be that he whose story it tells is but a man himself?...Shall we say that the Gospel story was deliberately invented? My friend, it is not thus that men invent.

Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard, I^e^ Partie, ch. 3; I^e^ Partie, ch. 11; II^e^ Partie, ch. 1; II^e^ Partie, ch. 2; II^e^ Partie, ch. 7.

3. THE TRUTHS OF HISTORY AND THE TRUTHS OF REASON

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING (1729–1781), the most representative figure of the *Aufklärung* in Germany and the originator of the classical German literature, played a decisive part in the theological development of Germany and, through Germany, of modern Protestantism. He was the second son of J. G. Lessing, *Pastor Primarius* in Kamenz, Oberlausitz. He entered the University of Leipzig in 1746 as a student in theology, but devoted himself mainly to literature and the theatre. After a brief period in Wittenberg, he spent three years in Berlin, supporting himself by literary work, and in 1751 became literary critic of the *Vossische Zeitung*. There he met Voltaire and made the acquaintance of Moses Mendelssohn. He settled in Leipzig in 1755, occupied mainly with the drama. He returned to Berlin in 1758, and in 1760 became Secretary to General von Tauentzien in Breslau. To this period belong his study of Spinoza and the preparation of his two most important works, *Laokoon: or concerning the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) and *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767), both published when he was again in Berlin. He was invited to take part in the foundation of a national theatre in Hamburg, where he spent three years. In 1770, at the invitation of the Duke of Brunswick, he became Librarian of the Library at Wolfenbüttel, a post which he held till his death in 1781.

Most of Lessing's theological writings and controversies belong to this last period of his life at Wolfenbüttel. Between 1774 and 1778 he published extracts from the papers of the rationalist H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768), who had been Professor of Oriental Languages in Hamburg. Of these, known as the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*, the last two especially, "On the Story of the Resurrection" and "On the Object of Jesus and His Apostles", gave great offence. He wrote himself on the origins of Christianity and on the problems of Revelation. In the paper entitled *Concerning the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power* (1777), addressed to Herr Director Schumann of Hanover, Lessing urges the hopelessness of the attempt to arrive at demonstrative certainty from data which, like the prophecies and miracles of Scripture, are historical and therefore at best probable. *The Education of the Human Race* (1780), Lessing's last writing, contains his own constructive theory of Revelation.

Prophecies fulfilled, which I myself experience, are one thing: prophecies fulfilled, of which I only know from history that others declare themselves to have experienced them, are another.

Miracles, which I see with my own eyes, and have opportunity to test for myself, are one thing: miracles, of which I only know from history that others declare themselves to have seen and tested them, are another.

* * * *

Or is it always the case that what I read in the pages of trustworthy historical writers is no less certain for me than what I myself know by experience?

I do not know that any one has ever maintained this. What is maintained is only that the reports of these prophecies and miracles which we possess are as certain as historical truths can be. And then it is added that although historical truths cannot be demonstrated, none the less we must believe them as firmly as we do truths that have been demonstrated.

To this I answer: who denies that our reports concerning these miracles and prophecies are as trustworthy as historical truths can ever be? Not I. But if they are only as trustworthy as this, why are they used as though they were infinitely more trustworthy?

What do I mean? Why this: that something quite different, and something much more is built upon them, than it is legitimate to build upon truths historically proved.

If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by historical truths.

That is to say: *accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.*

I do not for a moment deny that in Christ prophecies were fulfilled, nor yet that Christ wrought miracles. But, since the proof of these miracles by means of miracles still current at this present has entirely ceased, and since these miracles are merely narratives of miracles (even though they be narratives which are not, and which cannot be, gainsaid), I deny that they can or should bind me to the slightest faith in other teachings of Christ. These other teachings I accept on other grounds.

* * * *

It is said: "the Christ, of whom you must allow historically that He raised the dead, and that He Himself rose from death, Himself said that God has a Son of the same essence with Himself, and that He is this Son".

Good enough, were it more than historically certain that Christ said this.

But if you press me further, and say: "O yes! but this is more than historically certain, for inspired historical writers, who cannot err, guarantee it":

Then I say that unfortunately it is only historically certain that these writers were inspired and could not err.

There, there is the broad and ugly ditch, which I cannot get over, however often and however earnestly I try. If any man can help me over, I beg him, I adjure him to come to my aid. What he does for me will merit the reward of Heaven.

Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft.

4. REVELATION AS THE EDUCATION OF THE HUMAN RACE

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

[*See note on* p. 172]

That which Education is to the Individual, Revelation is to the Race.

Education is Revelation coming to the individual Man; and Revelation is Education which has come, and is yet coming, to the Human Race.

Whether it can be of any advantage to the science of instruction to contemplate Education in this point of view I will not here inquire; but in Theology it may unquestionably be of great advantage, and may remove many difficulties, if Revelation be conceived of as the Educator of Humanity.

Education gives to Man nothing which he might not educe out of himself; it gives him that which he might educe out of himself, only quicker and more easily. In the same way too, Revelation gives nothing to the human species, which the human reason left to itself might not attain; only it has given, and still gives to it, the most important of these things earlier.

And just as in Education, it is not a matter of indifference in what order the powers of a man are developed, as it cannot impart to a man all at once; so was God also necessitated to maintain a certain order, and a certain measure in His Revelation.

* * * *

While God guided His chosen people through all the degrees of a childlike education, the other nations of the earth had gone on by the light of reason. The most part had remained far behind the chosen people. Only a few had got before them. And this, too, takes place with children, who are allowed to grow up left to themselves; many remain quite raw; some educate themselves even to an astonishing degree.

But as these more fortunate few proved nothing against the use and the necessity of Education, so the few heathen nations, who even appear to have made a start in the knowledge of God before the chosen people, proved nothing against a Revelation. The Child of Education begins with slow yet sure footsteps: it is late in overtaking many a more happily organised child of nature; but it *does* overtake it; and thenceforth can never be distanced by it again.

Similarly—Putting aside the doctrine of the Unity of God, which in a way is found, and in a way is not found, in the books of the Old Testament—that the doctrine of immortality at least is not discoverable in it, but wholly foreign to it, and all the doctrine connected therewith of reward and punishment in a future life, proves just as little against the Divine origin of these books. For let us suppose that these doctrines were not only wanting therein, but even that they were not

at all true; let us suppose that for mankind all was over in this life; would the Being of God be for this reason less demonstrated? Would God be for this less at liberty, would it less become Him, to take immediate charge of the temporal fortunes of any people out of this perishable race? The miracles which He performed for the Jews, the prophecies which He caused to be recorded through them, were surely not for the few mortal Jews, in whose time they had happened and been recorded: He had His intentions therein in reference to the whole Jewish people, to the entire Human Race, which, perhaps, would have been destined to remain for ever here on earth, if even every individual Jew and every individual man had died for ever.

Once more, The absence of those doctrines in the writings of the Old Testament proves nothing against their Divinity. Moses was sent from God even though the sanction of his law only extended to this life. For why should it extend further? He was surely sent only to the Israelitish people, to the Israelitish people *of that time*, and his commission was perfectly adapted to the knowledge, capacities, yearnings of the *then existing* Israelitish people, as well as to the destination of that which belonged to the future. And this is sufficient.

So far ought Warburton to have gone, and no further. But that learned man overdrew the bow. Not content that the absence of these doctrines was no *discredit* to the Divine mission of Moses, it must even be a *proof* to him of the Divinity of the mission. And if he had only sought this proof in the adaptation of such a law to such a people!

But he betook himself to the hypothesis of a miraculous system continued in an unbroken line from Moses to Christ, according to which, God had made every individual Jew exactly happy or unhappy in proportion as his obedience or disobedience to the law deserved. He would have it that this miraculous system had compensated for the want of those doctrines (of eternal rewards and punishments, etc.) without

which no state can subsist; and that such a compensation even proved what that want at first sight appeared to negative—(the Divine Mission).

How well it was that Warburton could by no argument prove or even make likely this continuous miracle, in which he placed the existence of the Israelitish Theocracy! For could he have done so, in truth he could then, and not till then, have made the difficulty really insuperable, to me at least. For the truth which the Divine Mission of Moses was to restore, would, in fact, have been actually made doubtful by it: a truth which God, it is true, did not mean to reveal; but certainly not, on the other hand, to make harder of attainment.

I explain myself by that which is a picture of Revelation. A Primer for children may fairly pass over in silence this or that important piece of the knowledge or art which it expounds, respecting which the Teacher judged, that it is not yet fitted for the capacities of the children for whom he was writing. But it must contain absolutely nothing which blocks up the way towards the knowledge which is held back, or misleads the children from it. Rather far, all the approaches towards it must be carefully left open; and to lead them away from even one of these approaches, or to cause them to enter it later than they need, would alone be enough to change the mere imperfection of such a Primer into an actual fault.

In the same way, in the writings of the Old Testament those Primers for the rude Israelitish people, unpractised in thought, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and future recompenses, might be fairly left out: but they were bound to contain nothing which could have even procrastinated the progress of the people, for whom they were written, in their way to this grand truth. And to say but a small thing, what could have more procrastinated it than the promise of such a miraculous recompense in this life?

* * * *

And then you have all the properties of excellence which belong to a Primer for a childlike people, as well as for children.

But every Primer is only for a certain age. To delay the child, that has outgrown it, longer in it than it was intended for, is a disgrace. For to be able to do this in a way in any sort profitable, you must insert into it more than there is really in it, and extract from it more than it can contain. You must look for and make too much of allusions and hints; squeeze allegories too closely; interpret examples too circumstantially; press too much upon words. This gives the child a petty, crooked, hair-splitting understanding: it makes him full of mysteries, superstitions; full of contempt for all that is comprehensible and easy.

The very way in which the Rabbins handled *their* sacred books! The very character which they thereby imparted to the character of their people!

A better Instructor must come and tear the exhausted Primer from the child's hands. CHRIST came!

That portion of the human race which God had willed to comprehend in one Educational plan, was ripe for the second step of Education. He had, however, only willed to comprehend in such a plan one which by language, mode of action, government, and other natural and political relationships, was already united in itself.

That is, this portion of the human race was come so far in the exercise of its reason, as to need, and to be able to make use of, nobler and worthier motives of moral action than temporal rewards and punishments, which had hitherto been its guides. The child had become a youth. Sweetmeats and toys have given place to the budding desire to be as free, as honoured, and as happy as its elder brother.

For a long time, already, the best individuals of that portion of the human race (called above the eldest brother) had been accustomed to let themselves be ruled by the shadow of such nobler motives. The Greek and Roman did everything to

live on after this life, even if it were only in remembrance of their fellow-citizens.

It was time that another *true* life to be expected after this should gain an influence over the youth's actions.

And so Christ was the first certain practical Teacher of the immortality of the soul.

The first *certain* Teacher. Certain, through the prophecies which were fulfilled in Him; certain, through the miracles which He achieved; certain, through His own revival after a death through which He had sealed His doctrine. Whether we can still *prove* this revival, these miracles, I put aside, as I leave on one side *who* the Person of Christ was. All *that* may have been at that time of great weight for the *reception* of His doctrine, but it is now no longer of the same importance for the recognition of the *truth* of His doctrine.

The first *practical* Teacher. For it is one thing to conjecture, to wish, and to believe the immortality of the soul, as a philosophic speculation: quite another thing to direct the inner and outer acts by it.

And this at least Christ was the first to teach. For although, already before Him, the belief had been introduced among many nations, that bad actions have yet to be punished in that life; yet they were only such actions as were injurious to civil society, and consequently, too, had already had their punishment in civil society. To enforce an inward purity of heart in reference to another life, was reserved for Him alone.

His disciples have faithfully propagated these doctrines: and if they had even had no other merit, than that of having effected a more general publication, among other nations, of a Truth which Christ had appeared to have destined only for the Jews, yet would they have, even on that account alone, to be reckoned among the Benefactors and Fosterers of the Human Race.

If, however, they transplanted this one great Truth together with other doctrines, whose truth was less enlightening, whose usefulness was of a less exalted character, how

could it be otherwise? Let us not blame them for this, but rather seriously examine whether these very commingled doctrines have not become a new *impulse* of *direction* for human reason.

At least, it is already clear that the New Testament Scriptures, in which these doctrines after some time were found preserved, have afforded, and still afford, the second better Primer for the race of man.

* * * *

As we by this time can dispense with the Old Testament, in reference to the doctrine of the unity of God, and as we are by degrees beginning also to be less dependent on the New Testament, in reference to the immortality of the soul: might there not in this Book also be other truths of the same sort prefigured, mirrored as it were, which we are to marvel at, as revelations, exactly so long as until the time shall come when Reason shall have learned to educe them, out of its other demonstrated truths, and bind them up with them?

For instance, the doctrine of the Trinity. How if this doctrine should at last, after endless errors, right and left, only bring men on the road to recognise that God cannot possibly be One in the sense in which finite things are one, that even His unity must be a transcendental unity, which does not exclude a sort of plurality? Must not God at least have the most perfect conception of Himself, *i.e.* a conception in which is found every thing which is in Him? But would every thing be found in it which is in Him, if a mere conception, a mere possibility, were found even of His necessary Reality as well as of His other qualities? This possibility exhausts the being of His other qualities. Does it that of His necessary Reality? I think not. Consequently God can either have no perfect conception of Himself at all, or this perfect conception is just as necessarily real (*i.e.* actually existent) as He Himself is. Certainly the image of myself in the mirror is nothing but an empty representation of me, because it only has that of me upon the surface of which

beams of light fall. But now if this image had everything, everything without exception, which I have myself, would it then still be a mere empty representation, or not rather a true reduplication of myself? When I believe that I recognise in God a similar reduplication, I perhaps do not so much err, as that my language is insufficient for my ideas: and so much at least remains for ever incontrovertible, that they who wish to make the idea thereof popular for comprehension, could scarcely have expressed themselves more intelligibly and suitably than by giving the name of a Son through whom God testifies of Himself from eternity.

And the doctrine of Original Sin. How, if at last everything were to convince us, that man standing on the highest and lowest step of his humanity, is not so entirely master of his actions as to be *able* to obey moral laws?

And the doctrine of the Son's satisfaction. How, if at last, all compelled us to assume that God, in spite of that original incapacity of man, chose rather to give him moral laws, and forgive him all transgressions in consideration of His Son, *i.e.* in consideration of the self-existent total of all His own perfections, compared with which, and in which, all imperfections of the individual disappear, than *not* to give him those laws, and then to exclude him from all moral blessedness, which cannot be conceived of without moral laws?

* * * *

Go thine inscrutable way, Eternal Providence! Only let not me despair in Thee because of this inscrutableness. Let me not despair in Thee, even if Thy steps appear to me to be going back. It is not true that the shortest line is always straight.

Thou hast on Thine Eternal Way so much to carry on together, so much to do! so many side steps to take! And what if it were as good as proved that the vast slow wheel, which brings mankind nearer to this perfection, is only put in motion by smaller, swifter wheels, each of which contributes its own individual unit thereto?

It is so! The very same Way by which the Race reaches its perfection, must every individual man—one sooner, another later—have travelled over. Have travelled over in one and the same life? Can he have been, in one and the self-same life, a sensual Jew and a spiritual Christian? Can he in the self-same life have overtaken both?

Surely not that! But why should not every individual man have existed more than once upon this World?

Is this hypothesis so laughable merely because it is the oldest? Because the human understanding, before the sophistries of the Schools had dissipated and debilitated it, lighted upon it at once?

Why may not even I have already performed those steps of my perfecting which merely temporal penalties and rewards can bring man to?

And, once more, Why not all those steps, to perform which the views of Eternal Rewards so powerfully assist us?

Why should I not come back as often as I am capable of acquiring fresh knowledge, fresh expertness? Do I bring away so much from once, that there is nothing to repay the trouble of coming back?

Is this a reason against it? Or, because I forget that I have been here already? Happy is it for me that I do forget. The recollection of my former condition would permit me to make only a bad use of the present. And that which even I must forget *now*, is that necessarily forgotten for ever?

Or is it a reason against the hypothesis that so much time would have been lost to me? Lost?—And how much then should I miss?—Is not a whole Eternity mine?

Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts. English translation *The Education of the Human Race* [by F. W. Robertson], 1858.

5. THE REALM OF NATURE AND THE REALM OF ENDS

Immanuel Kant

IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804) was the son of a saddler of Königsberg, where almost the whole of his own life was spent. He grew up in a simple home and in a religious atmosphere of a strongly Pietistic type. The influence of these early surroundings remained with him to the end. His mother especially he remembered with gratitude, though she died when he was only thirteen years old; "she planted and nourished", he wrote afterwards, "the first seed of good in me, she opened my heart to the influences of nature, she awoke and widened my ideas, and her teaching has had a lasting wholesome influence on my life". In 1732 he was sent to the Collegium Fridericianum, and in 1740 he became a student in the University of his native town. His family was poor, and after the death of his father in 1746 he supported himself for a time as tutor in one or more families in the country. In 1755 he began to lecture in the University of Königsberg. He published in the same year a work developing a Nebular Theory of the origin of the planetary system, and he retained a keen interest in astronomical and physical problems to the end of his life. Other works followed, including two on philosophy in 1763; and in 1770 he became Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University. There he remained, engaged in teaching and writing, the methodical routine of his life ordered to the last detail, a familiar figure to the citizens of Konigsberg as he took his daily walk, and with an ever growing reputation in the philosophical world beyond.

Something has been said elsewhere of the main character and intention of Kant's thought.[1] The most important works of the "Critical" period are the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 2nd ed., 1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Critique of Judgement* (1790). The first, which has been the most important philosophical influence of modern times, defines the nature and limits of theoretical knowledge, indicating only briefly the problems of value, to which the two other *Critiques* are mainly devoted. It contains Kant's famous criticism of the proofs of the existence of God.[2] The second contains Kant's account, already given in part in the earlier *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), of moral experience and its theological implications. The third deals with aesthetic experience and the teleological interpretation of the world, especially of living organisms. It was intended to mediate between the two earlier *Critiques*, concerned respectively with theoretical knowledge

[1] See the Introduction, above pp. xxix–xxxiv.

[2] Transszendentale Dialektik, Zweites Buch, 3. Hauptstück.

and absolute value, but it also in some degree qualifies the negative attitude to teleological interpretation of the world displayed in the first *Critique*.

Most of the passages which follow illustrate Kant's account of moral experience and of the faith in God, Freedom, and Immortality involved in it. Those entitled "Human Nature Radically Bad" are from the first part of the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, published in its complete form in 1793. A section of this first part appeared in the *Berlinische Monatschrift* in 1792 and aroused the suspicion of the religious censorship set up a few years earlier by Frederick William. A further section was refused publication. Kant completed the book, obtained the approval of the University of Königsberg and the *Imprimatur* of the Philosophical Faculty of Jena, and published it. He received a rebuke from the King, who required that he should teach or write nothing further in this manner. Kant promised "as your Majesty's most loyal subject" that he would write or lecture no more on religion, natural or revealed. In a note made at the time he wrote, "To recall or deny one's inner conviction is base; but to be silent in a case like the present is the duty of a subject; and, though everything one speaks must be true, it is not for that reason a duty to speak publicly the whole truth". The "Reason", within the limits of which true religion is confined, is the "Practical Reason" or Conscience. The book illustrates the exclusive place held by moral reverence and duty in religion as Kant understood it. The first part, dealing with moral evil and sin, is Kant's attempt to unite the recognition of the gravity and universality of sin—expressed in the Christian doctrine of Original Sin—with the fundamental principle of his ethical thought, *viz.* moral freedom or "autonomy" as the essential condition of moral worth. The later sections of the book reveal Kant's attitude to the doctrines of historical Christianity and to religious practice. Kant does not question the need or the reality of divine grace and assistance. But it is enough for the good man to be assured of their reality, and humbly to trust in God's good purpose and wisdom; to know the manner in which He wills to carry out His purpose is not at all necessary, and, by diverting us from our true task, may even become a hindrance. Our task is to do all in our power to become worthy of His assistance. Thus Christianity—and Christianity, as the only purely moral religion, is the only true religion—consists in the moral faith and teaching of the Gospel, separated from the admixture of revealed mysteries and *cultus* that later ages, from the time of the Apostles onward, grafted upon it. Mysteries of revealed doctrine sought to define, not our duty, but the manner of God's assistance, which it in no way concerns us to know; and rites and ceremonies, where they were more than aids to moral duty, were vain adulation and flattery of God. True religion is the moral faith of the Gospel taught in its purity by Christ, the striving for purity of character and the conscientiousness of a good life. The knowledge of unconditional moral obligation is the sole ground of faith in God's grace, and the fulfilment of this obligation is the sole ground of worthiness to receive it.

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within.* I have not to search for them and conjecture them as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence. The former begins from the place I occupy in the external world of sense, and enlarges my connexion therein to an unbounded extent with worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and moreover into limitless times of their periodic motion, its beginning and continuance. The second begins from my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world which has true infinity, but which is traceable only by the understanding, and with which I discern that I am not in a merely contingent but in a universal and necessary connexion, as I am also thereby with all those visible worlds. The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates as it were my importance as an *animal creature*, which after it has been for a short time provided with vital power, one knows not how, must again give back the matter of which it was formed to the planet it inhabits (a mere speck in the universe). The second on the contrary infinitely elevates my worth as an *intelligence* by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent on animality and even on the whole sensible world, at least so far as may be inferred from the destination assigned to my existence by this law, a destination not restricted to conditions and limits of this life, but reaching into the infinite.

But though admiration and respect may excite to inquiry, they cannot supply the want of it. What then is to be done in order to enter on this in a useful manner and one adapted to the loftiness of the subject? Examples may serve in this as a warning, and also for imitation. The contemplation of the world began from the noblest spectacle that the human senses present to us, and that our understanding can bear to follow

in their vast reach; and it ended—in astrology. Morality began with the noblest attribute of human nature, the development and cultivation of which give a prospect of infinite utility; and ended—in fanaticism or superstition. So it is with all crude attempts where the principal part of the business depends on the use of reason, a use which does not come of itself, like the use of the feet, by frequent exercise, especially when attributes are in question which cannot be directly exhibited in common experience. But after the maxim had come into vogue, though late, to examine carefully beforehand all the steps that reason purposes to take, and not to let it proceed otherwise than in the track of a previously well considered method, then the study of the structure of the universe took quite a different direction, and thereby attained an incomparably happier result. The fall of a stone, the motion of a sling, resolved into their elements and the forces that are manifested in them, and treated mathematically, produced at last that clear and henceforward unchangeable insight into the system of the world, which as observation is continued may hope always to extend itself, but need never fear to be compelled to retreat.

This example may suggest to us to enter on the same path in treating of the moral capacities of our nature, and may give us hope of a like good result. We have at hand the instances of the moral judgment of reason. By analysing these into their elementary conceptions, and in default of *mathematics* adopting a process similar to that of *chemistry*, the *separation* of the empirical from the rational elements that may be found in them, by repeated experiments on common sense, we may exhibit both *pure*, and learn with certainty what each part can accomplish of itself, so as to prevent on the one hand the errors of a still *crude* untrained judgment, and on the other hand (what is far more necessary) the *extravagances of genius*, by which, as by the adepts of the philosopher's stone, without any methodical study or knowledge of nature, visionary treasures are promised and the true are

thrown away. In one word, science (critically undertaken and methodically directed) is the narrow gate that leads to the true *doctrine of practical wisdom*, if we understand by this not merely what one ought to *do*, but what ought to serve *teachers* as a guide to construct well and clearly the road to wisdom which every one should travel, and to secure others from going astray. Philosophy must always continue to be the guardian of this science, and although the public does not take any interest in its subtle investigations, it must take an interest in the resulting *doctrines*, which such an examination first puts in a clear light.

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, Beschluss. English translation in T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, "Critical Examination of Practical Reason", Conclusion.

6. THE GOOD WILL AND THE MORAL LAW

Immanuel Kant

[*See note on* pp. 183 f.]

THE GOOD WILL

Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other *talents* of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and which, therefore, constitutes what is called *character*, is not good. It is the same with the *gifts of fortune*. Power, riches, honour, even health, and the general well-being and contentment with one's condition which is called *happiness*, inspire pride, and often presumption, if there is not a good will to correct the influence of these on the mind, and with this also to rectify the whole principle of acting, and adapt it to its end.

The sight of a being who is not adorned with a single feature of a pure and good will, enjoying unbroken prosperity, can never give pleasure to an impartial rational spectator. Thus a good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of being worthy of happiness.

There are even some qualities which are of service to this good will itself, and may facilitate its action, yet which have no intrinsic unconditional value, but always presuppose a good will, and this qualifies the esteem that we justly have for them, and does not permit us to regard them as absolutely good. Moderation in the affections and passions, self-control and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects, but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of the person; but they are far from deserving to be called good without qualification, although they have been so unconditionally praised by the ancients. For without the principles of a good will, they may become extremely bad, and the coolness of a villain not only makes him far more dangerous, but also directly makes him more abominable in our eyes than he would have been without it.

A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay even of the sum total of all inclinations. Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add nor take away anything from this value. It would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle

it the more conveniently in common commerce, or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to true connoisseurs, or to determine its value.

Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Erster Abschnitt. English translation in T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals", First Section.

DUTY

Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating, but requirest submission, and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening aught that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but merely holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind, and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience), a law before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly counter-work it; what origin is there worthy of thee, and where is to be found the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kindred with the inclinations; a root to be derived from which is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men can give themselves?

It can be nothing less than a power which elevates man above himself (as a part of the world of sense), a power which connects him with an order of things that only the understanding can conceive, with a world which at the same time commands the whole sensible world, and with it the empirically determinable existence of man in time, as well as the sum total of all ends (which totality alone suits such unconditional practical laws as the moral). This power is nothing but *personality*, that is, freedom and independence on the mechanism of nature, yet, regarded also as a faculty of a being which is subject to special laws, namely, pure practical laws given by its own reason; so that the person as belonging to the sensible world is subject to his own personality as belonging to the intelligible [supersensible] world. It is then not to be wondered at that man, as belonging to both worlds, must regard his own nature in reference to its second and

highest characteristic only with reverence, and its laws with the highest respect.

On this origin are founded many expressions which designate the worth of objects according to moral ideas. The moral law is *holy* (inviolable). Man is indeed unholy enough, but he must regard *humanity* in his own person as holy. In all creation every thing one chooses and over which one has any power, may be used *merely as means*; man alone, and with him every rational creature, is an *end in himself*. By virtue of the autonomy of his freedom he is the subject of the moral law, which is holy. Just for this reason every will, even every person's own individual will, in relation to itself, is restricted to the condition of agreement with the *autonomy* of the rational being, that is to say, that it is not to be subject to any purpose which cannot accord with a law which might arise from the will of the passive subject himself; the latter is, therefore, never to be employed merely as means, but as itself also, concurrently, an end. We justly attribute this condition even to the Divine will, with regard to the rational beings in the world, which are His creatures, since it rests on their *personality*, by which alone they are ends in themselves.

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, Erster Teil, Erstes Buch, Drittes Hauptstück. English translation in T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, "Critical Examination of Practical Reason", Part First, Book I, ch. iii.

7. FAITH IN GOD, FREEDOM, AND IMMORTALITY

Immanuel Kant

[*See note on* pp. 183 f.]

THE MORAL PROOF OF THE BEING OF GOD

The moral law as the formal rational condition of the use of our freedom obliges us by itself alone, without depending on any purpose as material condition; but it nevertheless deter-

mines for us, and indeed *a priori*, a final purpose towards which it obliges us to strive; and this purpose is the *highest good in the world* possible through freedom.

The subjective condition under which man (and, according to all our concepts, every rational finite being) can set a final purpose before himself under the above law is happiness. Consequently, the highest physical good possible in the world, to be furthered as a final purpose as far as in us lies, is *happiness*, under the objective condition of the harmony of man with the law of *morality* as worthiness to be happy.

But it is impossible for us in accordance with all our rational faculties to represent these two requirements of the final purpose proposed to us by the moral law, as *connected* by merely natural causes, and yet as conformable to the Idea of that final purpose. Hence the concept of the *practical necessity* of such a purpose through the application of our powers does not harmonise with the theoretical concept of the *physical possibility* of working it out, if we connect with our freedom no other causality (as a means) than that of nature.

Consequently, we must assume a moral World-Cause (an Author of the world), in order to set before ourselves a final purpose consistently with the moral law; and in so far as the latter is necessary, so far (*i.e.* in the same degree and on the same ground) the former also must be necessarily assumed; *i.e.* we must admit that there is a God.

This proof, to which we can easily give the form of logical precision, does not say: it is as necessary to assume the Being of God as to recognise the validity of the moral law; and consequently he who cannot convince himself of the first, can judge himself free from the obligations of the second. No! there must in such case only be given up the *aiming at* the final purpose in the world, to be brought about by the pursuit of the second (viz. a happiness of rational beings in harmony with the pursuit of moral laws, regarded as the highest good). Every rational being would yet have to cognise himself as straitly bound by the precepts of morality, for its laws are

formal and command unconditionally without respect to purposes (as the matter of volition). But the one requisite of the final purpose, as practical Reason prescribes it to beings of the world, is an irresistible purpose imposed on them by their nature (as finite beings), which Reason wishes to know as subject only to the moral law as inviolable *condition*, or even as universally set up in accordance with it. Thus Reason takes for final purpose the furthering of happiness in harmony with morality. To further this so far as is in our power (*i.e.* in respect of happiness) is commanded us by the moral law; be the issue of this endeavour what it may. The fulfilling of duty consists in the form of the earnest will, not in the intermediate causes of success.

Suppose then that partly through the weakness of all the speculative arguments so highly extolled, and partly through many irregularities in nature and the world of sense which come before him, a man is persuaded of the proposition, There is no God; he would nevertheless be contemptible in his own eyes if on that account he were to imagine the laws of duty as empty, invalid and inobligatory, and wished to resolve to transgress them boldly. Such an one, even if he could be convinced in the sequel of that which he had doubted at the first, would always be contemptible while having such a disposition, although he should fulfil his duty as regards its [external] effect as punctiliously as could be desired, for [he would be acting] from fear or from the aim at recompense, without the sentiment of reverence for duty. If, conversely, as a believer [in God] he performs his duty according to his conscience, uprightly and disinterestedly, and nevertheless believes that he is free from all moral obligation so soon as he is convinced that there is no God, this could accord but badly with an inner moral disposition.

We may then suppose the case of a righteous man *e.g.* *Spinoza*, who holds himself firmly persuaded that there is no God, and also (because in respect of the Object of morality a similar consequence results) no future life; how is he to

judge of his own inner purposive destination, by means of the moral law, which he reveres in practice? He desires no advantage to himself from following it, either in this or another world; he wishes, rather, disinterestedly to establish the good to which that holy law directs all his powers. But his effort is bounded; and from nature, although he may expect here and there a contingent accordance, he can never expect a regular harmony agreeing according to constant rules (such as his maxims are and must be, internally), with the purpose that he yet feels himself obliged and impelled to accomplish. Deceit, violence, and envy will always surround him, although he himself be honest, peaceable, and kindly; and the righteous men with whom he meets will, notwithstanding all their worthiness of happiness, be yet subjected by nature which regards not this, to all the evils of want, disease, and untimely death, just like the beasts of the earth. So it will be until one wide grave engulfs them together (honest or not, it makes no difference), and throws them back—who were able to believe themselves the final purpose of creation—into the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter from which they were drawn.—The purpose, then, which this well-intentioned person had and ought to have before him in his pursuit of moral laws, he must certainly give up as impossible. Or else, if he wishes to remain dependent upon the call of his moral internal destination, and not to weaken the respect with which the moral law immediately inspires him, by assuming the nothingness of the single, ideal, final purpose adequate to its high demand (which cannot be brought about without a violation of moral sentiment), he must, as he well can—since there is at least no contradiction from a practical point of view in forming a concept of the possibility of a morally prescribed final purpose—assume the being of a *moral* author of the world, that is, a God.

FAITH

Objects, which in reference to the use of pure practical Reason that is in conformity with duty must be thought *a priori* (whether as consequences or as grounds), but which are transcendent for its theoretical use, are mere *things of faith.* Of this kind is the *highest good* in the world, to be brought about by freedom. The concept of this cannot be established as regards its objective reality in any experience possible for us and thus adequately for the theoretical use of Reason; but its use is commanded by practical pure Reason in reference to the best possible working out of that purpose, and it consequently must be assumed possible. This commanded effect, *together with the only conditions of its possibility thinkable by us,* viz. the Being of God and the immortality of the soul, are *things of faith* (*res fidei*), and of all objects are the only ones which can be so called.[1] For though what we learn by *testimony* from the experience of others must be believed by us, yet it is not therefore a thing of faith; for it was the proper experience of some *one* witness and so a thing of fact, or is presupposed as such. Again it must be possible by this path (that of historical faith) to arrive at knowledge; and the Objects of history and geography, like everything in general which it is at least possible to know by the constitution of our cognitive faculties, belong not to things of faith but to things of fact. It is only objects of pure Reason which can be things of faith at all, though not as objects of the mere pure speculative Reason: for then they could not be reckoned with certainty among things, *i.e.* Objects of that cognition which is possible for us. They are Ideas, *i.e.* concepts of the objective reality of which we cannot theoretically be certain. On the other hand,

[1] Things of faith are not therefore *articles of faith*; if we understand by the latter things of faith to the *confession* of which (internal or external) we can be bound. Natural theology contains nothing like this. For since they, as things of faith (like things of fact) cannot be based on theoretical proofs, [they are accepted by] a belief which is free and which only as such is compatible with the morality of the subject.

the highest final purpose to be worked out by us, by which alone we can become worthy of being ourselves the final purpose of creation, is an Idea which has in a practical reference objective reality for us, and is also a thing. But because we cannot furnish such reality to this concept in a theoretical point of view, it is a mere thing of faith of the pure Reason, along with God and Immortality, as the conditions under which alone we, in accordance with the constitution of our (human) Reason, can conceive the possibility of that effect of the use of our freedom in conformity with law. But belief in things of faith is a belief in a pure practical point of view, *i.e.* a moral faith, which proves nothing for theoretical pure rational cognition, but only for that which is practical and directed to the fulfilment of its duties; it in no way extends speculation or the practical rules of prudence in accordance with the principle of self-love. If the supreme principle of all moral laws is a postulate, so is also the possibility of its highest Object; and consequently, too, the condition under which we can think its possibility is postulated along with it and by it. Thus the cognition of the latter is neither knowledge nor opinion of the being and character of these conditions, regarded as theoretical cognition; but is a mere assumption in a reference which is practical and commanded for the moral use of our Reason.

If we were able also plausibly to base upon the purposes of nature, which physical Teleology presents to us in such rich abundance, a *determinate* concept of an intelligent World-Cause, then the existence of this Being would not be a thing of faith. For since this would not be assumed on behalf of the performance of my duty, but only in reference to the explanation of nature, it would be merely the opinion and hypothesis most conformable to our Reason. Now such Teleology leads in no way to a determinate concept of God; on the contrary, this can only be found in the concept of a moral Author of the World, because this alone furnishes the final purpose to which we can only reckon ourselves [as

attached] if we behave conformably to what the moral law prescribes as final purpose and consequently obliges us [to do]. Hence it is only by its reference to the Object of our duty, as the condition of the possibility of attaining the final purpose of the same, that the concept of God attains the privilege of counting as a thing of faith, in our belief; but on the other hand, this same concept cannot make its Object valid as a thing of fact. For, although the necessity of duty is very plain for practical Reason, yet the attainment of its final purpose, so far as it is not altogether in our own power, is only assumed on behalf of the practical use of Reason, and therefore it is not so practically necessary as duty itself.

Faith (as *habitus*, not as *actus*) is the moral attitude of Reason as to belief in that which is unattainable by theoretical cognition. It is therefore the constant principle of the mind, to assume as true, on account of the obligation in reference to it, that which it is necessary to presuppose as condition of the possibility of the highest moral final purpose; although its possibility or impossibility be alike impossible for us to see into. Faith (absolutely so called) is trust in the attainment of a design, the promotion of which is a duty, but the possibility of the fulfilment of which (and consequently also that of the only conditions of it thinkable by us) is not to be *comprehended* by us. Faith, then, that refers to particular objects, which are not objects of possible knowledge or opinion (in which latter case it ought to be called, especially in historical matters, credulity and not faith), is quite moral. It is a free belief, not in that for which dogmatical proofs for the theoretically determinant Judgement are to be found, or in that to which we hold ourselves bound, but in that which we assume on behalf of a design in accordance with laws of freedom. This, however, is not, like opinion, without any adequate ground; but, is grounded as in Reason (although only in respect of its practical employment), and *adequately for its design*. For without this, the moral attitude of thought in its repudiation of the claim of the theoretical Reason for

proofs (of the possibility of the Objects of morality) has no permanence; but wavers between practical commands and theoretical doubts. To be *incredulous* means to cling to maxims, and not to believe testimony in general; but he is *unbelieving*, who denies all validity to rational Ideas, because there is wanting a *theoretical* ground of their reality. He judges therefore dogmatically. A dogmatical *unbelief* cannot subsist together with a moral maxim dominant in the mental attitude (for Reason cannot command one to follow a purpose, which is cognised as nothing more than a chimera); but a *doubtful faith* can. To this the absence of conviction by grounds of speculative Reason is only a hindrance, the influence of which upon conduct a critical insight into the limits of this faculty can remove, while it substitutes by way of compensation a paramount practical belief.

Kritik der Urteilskraft, §§ 87, 91. English translation in J. H. Bernard, *Kant's Critique of Judgement.*

8. HUMAN NATURE RADICALLY BAD

Immanuel Kant

[*See note on* pp. 183 f.]

MAN BY NATURE BAD

Vitiis nemo sine nascitur. Horat.

According to what has been said above, the proposition: Man is *bad*, can only mean: He is conscious of the moral law, and yet has adopted into his maxim (occasional) deviation therefrom. He is *by nature* bad is equivalent to saying: This holds of him considered as a species; not as if such a quality could be inferred from the specific conception of man (that of man in general) (for then it would be necessary); but by what is known of him through experience he cannot be otherwise judged, or it may be presupposed as subjectively necessary in every man, even the best.

Now this propensity itself must be considered as morally bad, and consequently not as a natural property, but as something that can be imputed to the man, and consequently must consist in maxims of the elective will which are opposed to the law; but on account of freedom these must be looked upon as in themselves contingent, which is inconsistent with the universality of this badness unless the ultimate subjective ground of all maxims is, by whatever means, interwoven with humanity and, as it were, rooted in it; hence we call this a natural propensity to evil, and as the man must nevertheless always incur the blame of it, it may be called even a *radical badness* in human nature, innate (but not the less drawn upon us by ourselves).

Now that there must be such a corrupt propensity rooted in men, need not be formally proved in the face of the multitude of crying examples which experience sets before one's eyes *in the acts* of man.

* * * *

Now the source of this badness—1. Cannot, as is usually done, be placed in the *sensibility* of man and the natural inclinations springing therefrom. For not only have these no direct reference to badness (on the contrary, they afford the occasion for the moral character to show its power, occasion for virtue), but further we are not responsible for their existence (we cannot be, for being implanted in us they have not us for their authors), whereas we are accountable for the propensity to evil; for as this concerns the morality of the subject, and is consequently found in him as a freely acting being, it must be imputed to him as his own fault, notwithstanding its being so deeply rooted in the elective will that it must be said to be found in man by nature. The source of this evil—2. Cannot be placed in a *corruption* of Reason which gives the moral law, as if Reason could abolish the authority of the law in itself and disown its obligation; for this is absolutely impossible. To conceive oneself as a freely acting being, and yet released from the law which is appropriate to

such a being (the moral law), would be the same as to conceive a cause operating without any law (for determination by natural laws is excluded by freedom), and this would be a contradiction. For the purpose then of assigning a source of the moral evil in man, *sensibility* contains too little, for in taking away the motives which arise from freedom it makes him a mere *animal being*; on the other hand, a Reason releasing from the moral law, a *malignant reason* as it were (a simply bad Rational Will) involves too much, for by this, antagonism to the law would itself be made a spring of action (for the elective will cannot be determined without some spring), so that the subject would be made a *devilish* being. Neither of these views, however, is applicable to man.

Now although the existence of this propensity to evil in human nature can be shown by experience, from the actual antagonism in time between human will and the law, yet this proof does not teach us its proper nature and the source of this antagonism. This propensity concerns a relation of the free elective will (an elective will, therefore, the conception of which is not empirical) to the moral law as a spring (the conception of which is likewise purely intellectual); its nature then must be cognised *a priori* from the concept of the Bad, so far as the laws of freedom (obligation and accountability) bear upon it. The following is the development of the concept:

Man (even the worst) does not in any maxim, as it were, rebelliously abandon the moral law (and renounce obedience to it). On the contrary, this forces itself upon him irresistibly by virtue of his moral nature, and if no other spring opposed it he would also adopt it into his ultimate maxim as the adequate determining principle of his elective will, that is, he would be morally good. But by reason of his physical nature, which is likewise blameless, he also depends on sensible springs of action, and adopts them also into his maxim (by the subjective principle of self-love). If, however, he adopted them into his maxim *as adequate of themselves alone* to determine his will without regarding the moral law (which he has with-

in), then he would be morally bad. Now as he naturally adopts both into his maxim, and as he would find each, if it were alone, sufficient to determine his will, it follows that if the distinction of the maxims depended merely on the distinction of the springs (the matter of the maxims), namely, according as they were furnished by the law or by an impulse of sense, he would be morally good and bad at once, which (as we saw in the Introduction) is a contradiction. Hence the distinction whether the man is good or bad must lie, not in the distinction of the springs that he adopts into his maxim, but in the *subordination:* i.e. *which of the two he makes the condition of the other* (that is, not in the matter of the maxim but in its form). Consequently a man (even the best) is bad only by this, that he reverses the moral order of the springs in adopting them into his maxims; he adopts, indeed, the moral law along with that of self-love; but perceiving that they cannot subsist together on equal terms, but that one must be subordinate to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the spring of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas, on the contrary, the latter ought to be adopted into the general maxims of the elective will as the sole spring, being the *supreme condition* of the satisfaction of the former.

The springs being thus reversed by his maxim, contrary to the moral order, his actions may, nevertheless, conform to the law just as though they had sprung from genuine principles: provided reason employs the unity of maxims in general, which is proper to the moral law, merely for the purpose of introducing into the springs of inclination a unity that does not belong to them, under the name of happiness (*ex. gr.* that truthfulness, if adopted as a principle, relieves us of the anxiety to maintain consistency in our lies and to escape being entangled in their serpent coils). In which case the empirical character is good, but the intelligible character bad.

Now if there is in human nature a propensity to this, then

there is in man a natural propensity to evil; and since this propensity itself must ultimately be sought in a free elective will, and therefore can be imputed, it is morally bad. This badness is *radical*, because it corrupts the source of all maxims; and at the same time being a natural propensity, it cannot be *destroyed* by human powers, since this could only be done by good maxims; and when by hypothesis the ultimate subjective source of all maxims is corrupt, these cannot exist; nevertheless, it must be possible to *overcome* it, since it is found in man as a freely acting being.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL CAPACITY FOR GOOD

What man is or ought to be in a moral sense he must make or must have made *himself*. Both must be the effect of his free elective will, otherwise it could not be imputed to him, and, consequently, he would be *morally* neither good nor bad. When it is said he is created good, that can only mean that he is created for *good*, and the original *constitution* in man is good; but this does not yet make the man himself good, but according as he does or does not adopt into his maxim the springs which this constitution contains (which must be left altogether to his own free choice), he makes himself become good or bad. Supposing that a supernatural co-operation is also necessary to make a man good or better, whether this consists only in the diminution of the obstacles or in a positive assistance, the man must previously make himself worthy to receive it and to *accept* this aid (which is no small thing), that is, to adopt into his maxim the positive increase of power, in which way alone it is possible that the good should be imputed to him, and that he should be recognised as a good man.

Now how it is possible that a man naturally bad should make himself a good man transcends all our conceptions; for how can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? But since it is already admitted that a tree originally good (as to its capacities) has brought forth bad fruit, and the fall from good to bad (when it is considered that it arises from freedom) is not

more conceivable than a rising again from bad to good, the possibility of the latter cannot be disputed. For notwithstanding that fall, the command "we *ought* to become better men", resounds with undiminished force in our soul; consequently, we must be able to do so, even though what we ourselves can do should be insufficient of itself, and though we should thereby only make ourselves susceptible of an inscrutable higher assistance. It must, however, be presupposed that a germ of good has remained in its complete purity, which could not be destroyed or corrupted—a germ that certainly cannot be self-love, which, when taken as the principle of all our maxims, is in fact the source of all evil.

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But that a man should become not merely a *legally* but a *morally* good (God-pleasing) man, that is, virtuous in his intelligible character (*virtus noumenon*), a man who, when he recognises a thing as his duty, needs no other spring than this conception of duty itself; this is not to be effected by gradual *reform*, as long as the principle of his maxims remains impure, but requires a *revolution* in the mind (a transition to the maxim of holiness of mind), and he can only become a new man by a kind of new birth, as it were by a new creation (Gospel of John iii. 5, compared with Gen. i. 2) and a change of heart.

But if a man is corrupt in the very foundation of his maxims, how is it possible that he should effect this revolution by his own power and become a good man of himself? And yet duty commands it, and duty commands nothing that is not practicable for us. The only way this difficulty can be got over is, that a revolution is necessary for the mental disposition, but a gradual reform for the sensible temperament, which opposes obstacles to the former; and being necessary, must therefore be possible; that is, when a man reverses the ultimate principle of his maxims by which he is a bad man by a single immutable resolution (and in so doing puts on a new man); then so far he is in principle and disposition a subject susceptible of good; but it is only in continued effort and growth

that he is a good man, that is, he may hope with such purity of the principle that he has taken as the supreme maxim of his elective will, and by its stability, that he is on the good (though narrow) road of constant *progress* from bad to better. In the eyes of one who penetrates the intelligible principle of the heart (of all maxims of elective will), and to whom therefore this endless progress is a unity, that is, in the eyes of God, this comes to the same as being actually a good man (pleasing to Him), and in so far this change may be considered as a revolution; but in the judgment of men, who can estimate themselves and the strength of their maxims only by the superiority which they gain over sensibility in time, it is only to be viewed as an ever continuing struggle for improvement; in other words, as a gradual reform of the perverse disposition, the propensity to evil.

Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft, Erstes Stück. English translation in T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, "First Part of the Philosophical Theory of Religion".

V

THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE

1. THE NECESSITY OF A TRUE HISTORY OF SCRIPTURE

Spinoza

BENEDICT SPINOZA (1632–1677) was born at Amsterdam of Spanish-Jewish extraction. At an early age he learnt to despise the lore of the synagogue in which he had been educated, and turned his attention to physics and philosophy. In 1656 he was excommunicated. His greatest philosophical work, the *Ethica*, was probably written between 1661 and 1665, but publication was withheld for political reasons and the book did not appear until after the philosopher's death.

In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, published anonymously in 1670, Spinoza is lead to discuss the proper method of interpreting Scripture. In order to secure liberty for philosophical speculation, he insists on the necessity of a radical separation between philosophy and theology. Opinions and beliefs incidentally stated or implied in various books of the Bible are not to be accepted as necessarily true. The primary purpose of Scripture is to impart practical guidance to mankind in the conduct of life. This limitation of the function of Scripture becomes plain when we recognise that it is a compilation of various works by different writers each with his own characteristics. The prophetic writings are not to be taken as direct communications concerning the nature of God and the workings of his providence, for on these matters the prophets differed among themselves. The essential purport of their message is to be found in those doctrines, wherein they all agree, as to the duty of man towards God and towards his fellows. Hence in order to understand the Scripture, it is first requisite that we have a true history of the Scripture. With astonishing sagacity Spinoza outlines a programme for a critical history of the Bible. He points out objections to the tradition that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and conjectures, in the absence of certain evidence, that it was the work of Ezra.

THAT PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY MUST BE DISTINGUISHED

From what hath been alledged, we have sufficiently proved what we proposed, namely that God fitted and suted his *Revelations* according to the Capacity and Opinions of the

Prophets; and that they might be and indeed were, ignorant of things meerly speculative, which did not pertain to Charity and a godly Life, that the *Prophets* were also of very different Opinions, and consequently in the Knowledge of Natural and Spiritual things, we are not to rely and ground our selves upon them: We conclude then, that we are not bound to believe any thing more from the *Prophets*, then the end and substance of what they revealed; and that in other things, it is free for a Man to believe as he thinks best, (for example) *Cains Revelation* teacheth us, that God did admonish him to live well, which was the intent, end, and substance of the Revelation; but it doth not declare to us the freedom of Mans Will, or any other Philosophical Matter; therefore tho' in the Words and Reasons of that Admonition, freedom of Will seem to be clearly asserted, yet 'tis lawful to be of a contrary Opinion, since those Words and Reasons, were only applyed and suited to the Capacity of *Cain*....Nor are we to determin otherwise of the Reasons used by Christ, to convince the Pharisees of their Ignorance and Obstinacy, and to perswade his Disciples to live righteously; all those Reasons were accommodated to the Opinions and Principles of the Persons to whom they were urged (for example) when Christ said to the *Pharisees*, *Mat. Chap.* 12. *v.* 26. *If Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself, how then shall his Kingdom stand*, here Christ convinceth the *Pharisees*, from their own Principles and Opinions, who said he cast out Devils by Belzebub, the Prince of Devils; but we ought not to conclude, that Christs words are an absolute proof, that there are Devils and a Kingdom of Devils. So also when he said to his Disciples, *Matth. Chap.* 18. *v.* 10. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little Ones, for I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Heaven*, by these Words Christ taught nothing more, then that they ought not to be proud, or despise any one; whatever else was said, was only the better to perswade his Disciples; the same may be said of the Signs and Discourses of the Apostles; nor need we say

more of this Subject, because it would be extreamly tedious to Quote all those places of Scripture which are Writen only *Ad hominem*, or according to Mens Capacity; and with a great prejudice to Philosophy, are maintain'd to be Divine Doctrines. 'Tis sufficient to have mention'd these few general ones, the Curious Reader may himself examine the rest; but seeing all those things which I have spoken concerning *Prophets* and *Prophesy*, do directly concern the thing I aimed at, which was to divide Philosophy from Theology.

THE HISTORY OF SCRIPTURE

Most Men acknowledge the Holy Scripture to be the Word of God, which teacheth Mankind the way to true Happiness and Salvation; but this Opinion hath so little influence upon Mens Lives, that the common People take no care, to regulate theirs according to the Doctrines of Scripture; and every Man believing himself divinely inspired, would under pretence of Religion, compel all others to be of his Opinion. We often see those whom we call Divines, very solicitous to father their own Fancies upon Scripture, and the Divine Authority thereof, making no scruple with great boldness to interpret it, and tell us what is the mind of the Holy Ghost. When they meet with any difficulties, they do not so much fear mistaking the Holy Spirits meaning, and the right way to Salvation; as to be found guilty of Error, and by loosing their Authority to fall into contempt; but if Men did heartily believe that which they profess concerning the Scriptures, they would lead other kind of Lives, there would not be half so much contention and hatred in the World as now there is; nor would Men with so much Blind Zeal and boldness, venture upon expounding Scripture, and introduce so many novelties into Religion; but on the contrary, would be very cautious of maintaining any thing for Scripture Doctrine, which is not manifestly contained in it, and the Men who have not been affraid to adulterate Scripture in so many places, would never have commited such impious Sacriledge.

But ambition and wickedness have so far prevailed, that Religion doth now consist, not so much in obeying the dictates of the Holy Spirit, as in defending Mens own fantastical opinions; Charity is now no part of Religion, but discord and implacable hatred pass under the masque of Godly Zeal. To these evils superstition hath joyned it self, teaching Men to despise reason and nature, and to admire and reverence that only which is repugnant to both, 'tis no wonder that Men to be thought the greater admirers of Scripture, should Study so to expound it, that it may seem contradictory both to nature and reason, and therefore dream of profound misteries hidden in it, which misteries (that is their own absurdities) they labour and weary themselves to find out; and neglecting things which are of most use, ascribe to the Holy Spirit, all the Dotages of their own imagination, and with much heat and passion, endeavor to defend their own idle conceits. Whatever is the result of Mens understanding, that Men endeavor to maintain by clear and pure reason, but all opinions derived from their passions and affections, must be defended by them to avoid these troubles. And to free our minds from all Theological prejudices, that we may not rashly receive the Foolish inventions of Men, for the Doctrins of God; I will now treat of a right method of interpreting Scripture, of which method whoever is ignorant, he can never certainly know the true Sense and meaning, either of the Scripture or the Holy Ghost. I say in few Words, that the method of interpreting Scripture, doth not differ from the method of interpreting nature; for as the method of explaining nature, cheifly consists in framing a History thereof, from whence, as from undeniable concessions, shall follow the definitions of natural things; so likewise to expound Scripture it is absolutely necessary to compose a true History thereof, that thence, as from sure principles, we may by rational consequences collect the meaning of those who were Authors of the Scripture, that every one (who admits of no other Principles or concessions in expounding Scripture, or in reasoning

of the things therein contain'd, but such as are fetcht from the Scripture it self, or the History of it) may proceed without danger of Erring, and be able to discourse and reason as securely of things which exceed human capacity, as of any thing we know by natural light.

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To give a clear demonstration of the Scripture's Divinity, we must from the Scripture it self, prove the Truth of the Moral Doctrins which it teacheth, because in that Truth only, the Divine Authority of Scripture appears; for as we have already shewn, the certainty of the Prophets, consisted in their being just and vertuous, which to make us believe them, ought likewise appear to us. We have already shewn that Miracles cannot prove the Divine Nature of God, and that they might be wrought by false Prophets. The Divine Authority of Scripture appears then, in its teaching us what is true and real Vertue, and that can be proved only by Scripture it self; if not, we could not without a great deal of prejudice believe the Scriptures, and think them to be of divine inspiration: the Scripture indeed, doth not give us any definition of the things whereof it treats, so neither doth Nature; and therefore as from several Actions of Nature, we make definitions of natural things; in the same manner, from several narrations of all things contained in Scripture, are conclusions to be drawn. The general rule then of interpreting Scripture is, that we conclude nothing to be Doctrine, which doth not manifestly and clearly appear, from the History of Scripture; what kind of History it ought to be, and what are the Principal things it ought to contain, comes now to be declared.

First, it ought to contain the Nature and Proprieties of that Language in which the Books of Scripture were Originally Written, and which the Authors of those Books were wont to speak; that so all the Senses which every Speech, according to the ordinary use of speaking will bear and admit, may be found out; and because the Pen-Men both of the Old and

New *Testament* were *Jews*, the knowledge of the Hebrew Tongue, is above all things necessary, to understand not only the Books of the Old *Testament*, which were Written in Hebrew, but also of the New; for tho' some of the Books of the *New Testament*, were published in other Languages, yet they are full of *Hebrewisms*.

Secondly, The Sentences of every Book, ought to be Collected and reduced to Heads; that so all that concern one and the same Subject, may be easily found, and all those which seem doubtful and obscure, or repugnant to one another, ought to be noted: I call all those Speeches clear or obscure, whose Sense is easily or difficultly made out by the context, and not in respect of the Truth of those Speeches, easily or difficultly perceived by reason; for only the Sense of what the Scripture saith, and not the verity is our business; we are therefore to take special heed, that in searching out the Sense of Scripture, we do not suffer our reason, as it is founded upon the Principles of natural knowledge, to be prepossest with prejudice; and likewise that we do not confound the true Sense of the words, with the verity of the matter; for the true Sense is to be found out, only by the use of the Language, or by such a way of reasoning, as is grounded only upon Scripture. That all these things may be perfectly understood, take this example for illustration; These sayings of *Moses God is Fire*, and *God is jealous* how plain and clear are they, so long as we regard only the signification of the words, but in respect of reason and truth, how dark and obscure, yea tho' the litteral Sense of the words be contrary to natural reason, yet unless it contradict any fundamental Principles derived from Scripture, their litteral Sense is still to be retained; so on the contrary, if these sayings in their litteral construction, should be found repugnant to Principles deduced from Scripture, tho' they should be most agreeable to reason, yet they ought to be Metaphorically not litteraly understood. To know then whether Moses did, or did not believe God to be Fire, we ought not to conclude the one or

the other, because the Opinion is either contrary or consonant to reason, but it must be gathered from some other of *Moses* own sayings (for example) because *Moses* in very many places hath plainly declared, that God is not like any visible thing, either in Heaven, Earth, or the Waters, we must conclude that either this saying, *God is Fire*, or else all his other sayings are to be Metaphorically interpreted, but because we ought as seldom as 'tis possible, to depart from the litteral Sense, we must therefore inquire whether this saying *God is Fire* will admit of any other Sense beside the litteral, (that is) whether the word *Fire* signify any other thing beside natural *Fire*, and if in the *Hebrew Tongue*, it can never be found to signify any thing else, then this saying of *Moses* is no other way to be interpreted, tho' it be repugnant to reason: but on the other side all those other sayings of *Moses*, tho' consentaneous to reason, are to be conformable and accomodate to this; but if the common use of the Language will not suffer this to be done, then those several sayings are Irreconcileable, and we are to suspend our judgment of them. But now because the Word *Fire*, is also taken for anger and jealousy, *Job. chap.* 31. v. 12. these sayings of *Moses* are easily reconcileable, and we may lawfully conclude, that these two Sentences *God is Fire*, and *God is jealous* signify both the same thing.

Moreover, because *Moses* plainly saith, God is jealous, and doth no where declare that God is free from all manner of passion and affections of the mind, we may conclude that *Moses* did think, or at least taught other Men to think, God was jealous tho' we believe the opinion contrary to reason: for as we have already shewn, it is not lawful for us, to wrest the Sense and meaning of Scripture, according to the dictates of our reason or preconceived Opinions, because all our knowledge both of the Old and New Testament, must be derived only from themselves.

Thirdly, This History of Scripture, ought to give such an account of the Books of the Prophets remaining with us, as

may inform us, of the Lives, Manners and Studies of the Authors of every Book; who the Person was, upon what occasion he wrote, in what time, to whom; and in what Language, and *Lastly*, it ought to tell us, what was the Fortune of every Book, how it was first received, into whose hands it fell, how many various readings it had, how it came to be received for sacred and Canonical. And *Lastly*, how all the several Books came together into one Volume; I say all these things this History of Scripture ought to contain. To know what Sentences of Scripture are to be taken for Laws and precepts, and what only for moral Doctrins, it is very expedient to know the Life, Manners, and Study of the Author; beside we can with more ease know, the meaning of any Mans Words, when we know his genius, disposition and ingenuity. Moreover, that we may not confound Doctrins whose morality and Obligation is perpetual, with those that were but temporary, and of use only to some particular People; it behoveth us to know, upon what occasion, at what time, to what Nation, in what Age, all these instructions were Written. *Lastly*, it is fit we should know, beside the Authority of every Book, whether the Books have been adulterated, or at least whether any Errors have crept into them, and whether they have been corrected by Learned and Faithful Men, all which things are absolutely necessary to be known, that we may not with Blind Zeal receive every thing obtruded upon us, but believe that only, which is certain, plain, and past all doubt.

After we have such a History of Scripture, and have firmly resolved to conclude nothing to be the Doctrine of the Prophets, which doth not naturally follow, or may be clearly drawn from this history; then it will be time to prepare our selves, to search out the meaning of the Prophets, and of the Holy Ghost; which to do, the like method and order is required, that is to be used in interpreting nature by its own History; for as in searching out natural things, we first endeavour to inquire concerning that which is Universal, and

common to all nature, as Motion and Rest; and the Laws and Rules of both, which nature always observes, and by which it continually Acts, and from these we afterwards by degrees proceed to other things less general; so likewise from this History of Scripture, we are first to inquire after that which is most general, and is the Basis and Foundation of all Scripture, and is commended by all the Prophets, for the most profitable and perpetual Doctrine to Mankind (for example) that there is only one omnipotent God, who only is to be worshipt, who provideth for all, and loveth those best, who serve him and love their Neighbours as themselves, is a Doctrine every where so express and plain in Scripture, that no Body ever doubted the Sense and meaning thereof; but what God is, why and in what manner he beholdeth and provideth for all things, the Scripture doth no where expressly and positively declare, nor teach it as an eternal Doctrine, but on the contrary, the Prophets as we have already shewn, did not agree amongst themselves concerning these things, and therefore in matters of like nature, we are not positively to determine what is the Doctrine and meaning of the Holy Spirit, tho' it may be very well made out by natural knowledge. This general Doctrine of the Scripture, being rightly known, we are then to pass on to things less Universal, which concern the common use of Life, and which are derived like rivulets from this general Doctrine. Such are all the particular external Actions of real Vertue, which cannot be Practiced but as occasion is offer'd, and whatsoever in Scripture relating to them seems doubtful or obscure, must be explain'd and determin'd by the Universal Doctrine; and for those things which seem contradictory one to another, we are to examin. Upon what occasion, at what time, and to whom they were written (for example) when Christ said, *Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.* We know not who are the Mourners meant in this Text; but because Christ afterwards, bids us take no thought for any thing, but seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, which he

commends to us as our chiefest good, *Math. chap.* 6. v. 33. therefore it follows, that the Mourners meant by Christ, must be those who lamented to see the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, so much neglected by Men; for which no others could Mourn, but those whose affections were Heavenly, and contemned all things here below.

* * * *

But hitherto I have only shewn, the Way to find out the Sense of those Scripture Sentences, which concern the Use of Life; and are therefore more easily understood; because among the Penmen of the Bible, there never was any controversy about them; but other passages in Scripture which concern Matters meerly Speculative, are not so plain and obvious, because the Way to them is very narrow; for tho' in things meerly Speculative, the Prophets as we have already shewn, differ'd amongst themselves, and the narrations of things, were suited to the prejudice of every Age, yet it is not at all Lawful for us to determine, what was the meaning of one Prophet, by the clear Places of another; unless it be evident to us, that they were both of one Opinion: how then the meaning of the Prophets, in such Cases is to be known by the History of Scripture, I will in few words declare; we must in the first Place, begin with what is most general, and from those Sentences of Scripture, which are most plain and clear, inquire what is Prophesy or Revelation, and in what it chiefly consists. Next we ought to inquire, what a Miracle is, and after that of things usual and common; this being done, we ought to consider the Opinions of every Prophet, and from them guess at the meaning of every Prophesy, History and Miracle: but what caution we are to use, that in these things we do not confound the Sense of the Prophets and Historians, with the meaning of the Holy Spirit, and the Truth of the Matter, I have already shewn in their proper Places. But this is to be noted concerning the meaning of Revelations, that this my method teacheth us, to find out only those things, which the Prophets heard or saw, and not what they signified

and represented to us by Figures and Hierogliphicks; of these things we can only make Conjectures, but cannot certainly derive them from the fundamental Principles of Scripture. Now though I have shewn the manner of interpreting Scripture, and proved it to be the sure way of finding out the Sense thereof; yet indeed I confess those Men may have a more certain Knowledge of the true meaning of it (if any such Men there be) who have received a Traditional Explication thereof, made by the Prophets themselves (which the *Pharisees* affirm they have) or such as have a high *Priest* who cannot err in expounding Scripture, and that the *Roman Catholics* boast of their *Popes*: but seeing we cannot be sure of such a Tradition, or the Authority of such a *Priest* or *Pope*, we cannot build upon either, because the Primitive *Christians* deny the one, and the most Antient Sects of the *Jews* the other. And if we consider the Series and Succession of Years, which the *Pharisees* received from their *Rabbies*, by which they carry their Tradition as high as *Moses* himself, we shall find it false, as I have proved in another place: such a Tradition therefore, ought to be much suspected, and tho' in our method, we are forced to suppose some kind of *Jewish* Tradition to be sincere and uncorrupt, namely, the Signification of words in the *Hebrew* Tongue, which we have received from the Jews, yet we need not much doubt this, tho' we very well may the other; for it can be of no Advantage or Use to any Man, to change the Signification of any Word, tho' it often may be, to alter the Sense of a Speech. It is also very difficult to be done, for he that should endeavor to change the Sense of any Word, must necessarily construe all those Authors, who have written in that Tongue, and used that Word in its common acceptation, according to the Genuine Sense of every Author; or else must falsify them with a great deal of Caution. The ignorant multitude as well as Learned Men, are the keepers of a Language, but the Learned only preserve the Sense of Speeches and Books, and consequently, tho' Learned men may change or corrupt the Sense of some scarce Book; yet

they cannot the Signification of Words: beside if any man had a mind to alter the Signification of a Word, to which he is accustomed, he cannot without a great deal of difficulty do it, either in speaking or writing. For these and other Reasons I am perswaded, it never yet came into any man's head to corrupt a Language, tho' many have perverted the Sense of a writer, either by changing or misinterpreting his sayings. If our method (which layeth this for a ground, that the knowledge of Scripture, is to be drawn only from the Scripture) be plain and true; then where it is not able to give us the true Sense and Knowledge of Scripture, we may well despair of it.

Esdras the Author of the Pentateuch

If we consider the Preface of the Book (i.e. *Deuteronomy*), and all the Places which speak of *Moses* in the Third Person, and many other things, which cannot now be known, which he added or exprest in other words, that they might be the better understood by those that lived in his time; without doubt had we the very Book of the Law which *Moses* wrote, we should find that all the Commandments very much differ not only in words, but in Order, Matter and Sense. Compare the Decalogue of this Book with that in *Exodus*, where it is expresly set down, we shall find this to vary from that; for the *Fourth* Commandment in *Deuteronomy* is not only commanded in another Form; but is enlarged, and the Reason of it likewise differs much from that in *Exodus*; so that this as in other Places was done by *Esdras*, because he explained the Law of God to those that lived in his days; and therefore 'tis likely this was the Book of the Law of God, which he set forth and expounded, and I likewise believe it the first of all those Books he wrote, because it contains the Laws of his Country, which the People extreamly wanted, and also because this Book is with no Antecedent Connexion joyned to another, but without any kind of reference begins thus. *These be the Words of Moses.* And after he finished this Book, and taught the People

the Laws, I believe he applyed himself to compose the whole History of the *Jewish* Nation, from the Creation of the World to the first Destruction of the City *Jerusalem*; inserting this Book of *Deuteronomy* in its proper Place, and perhaps to the first five Books gave the name of *Moses*, because his Life is the Principal Subject of them.

The Fundamentals of Religion

Now I will not fear to name those Doctrines of Universal Faith, or those Fundamentals of Scripture that (by what I have proved in these two last Chapters) tend all to this; that there is a Supreme Being that loveth Justice and Charity, to whom all that will be saved, must be obedient, and worship him, in the exercise of Justice and love towards their Neighbour, and from hence these several Positions clearly and easily follow. First, That there is a God or Supreme Being, who is most just and merciful, by whose Example every Man ought to regulate his life; he that knoweth not, or doth not believe that God is, cannot obey him, or acknowledge him to be his Judge. Secondly, That this God is one, which Opinion is absolutely necessary to make a Man adore, admire, and love God, for Devotion, Admiration, and Love, are caused by that excellency which is in one above all others. Thirdly, That he is every where present, or that all things are known to him, for if any thing were hidden from him, or if Man did not think that he seeth all things, we might doubt of his Equity and Justice, whereby he governeth all things. Fourthly, That he hath Supreme Power and Dominion over all things, that he doth nothing by compulsion, but of his own good Will and Pleasure; all are bound to obey him, and he no body. Fifthly, That the worship of God, and obedience to him, consists only in Justice and Charity towards our Neighbours. Sixthly, that only they who obey God by such a course of life will be saved, and others who live Slaves to their Lusts and Pleasures will be condemned. If Men did not firmly believe this, there would be no reason why a Man should rather obey God than

his own desires and pleasures. Seventhly and lastly, God pardoneth the sins of those that repent; there is no Man living without sin, and therefore if this were not an Article of Faith, all would despair of Salvation, and there would be no reason to believe God merciful; but he who stedfastly believes, that God, through Grace and Mercy, whereby he ordereth all things, pardoneth Men's offences, and is thereby more inflamed with love towards God, he knoweth *Christ* according to the Spirit, and *Christ* is in him. Every one of these things is necessary to be known, that all Men without exception may obey God, according to the prescript of the Law which we have already explained. If you take away any of the aforesaid Positions or Doctrines, there can be no Obedience; but what God, or what this exemplar of living well is? Whether he be Fire, a Spirit, Light, Cogitation, &c. it concerns not our Faith, neither in what notion or respect he is an example for us to live by. Whether it be because he hath a just and merciful Mind, or because all things subsist and act by him, and consequently, we by and through him understand what is just and good; it matters not what every Man thinks or concludes of these things, neither is Faith concerned, whether a Man believe that God is, in respect of his Power, Omnipresent; or whether he govern all things by the freedom or necessity of his nature; whether he prescribe Laws as a Prince, or teach Eternal Verities; whether Men obey God as free agents, because they have freedom of Will, or because they are necessitated by God's Decrees? Whether the reward of good Men, and the punishment of evil, be natural or supernatural? Faith is not concerned how a Man understands these things, so long as he makes no conclusions whereby he may take a liberty of sinning, or lessen his Obedience to God: Of these Doctrines of Faith a Man may make such an interpretation, as is most likely to make him believe, and obey God chearfully without any reluctancy; for as we have already shewn, Faith was heretofore revealed and written, according to the Capacity and Opinions of the Prophets and People of

that time, so that now also, every Man is bound to apply his Faith to his own Reason, in such a manner as may make him without the least doubting or reluctancy believe; for as we have proved, Faith rather requires Piety than Verity, and as Faith cannot be pious and saving, without Obedience, so nothing but Obedience makes a Man a faithful Believer; his Faith is not best, who can give the best reasons for it, but he that hath done the most and greatest works of Justice and Charity.

SCRIPTURE TEACHES PIETY ONLY

Amongst those that know not how to distinguish and divide Philosophy from Theology, there is very great dispute, whether the Scripture ought to be subservient to Reason, or Reason to Scripture, (that is) whether we are to judge of the Sense of Scripture by Reason; or whether Reason ought to submit to Scripture? The *Scepticks*, who deny the certainty of Reason, maintain one of these Opinions, and the *Dogmatists*, who judge all things by Reason, the other; but both, as appears by what I have said, are extremely mistaken; for whoever follows either of the two Opinions, must necessarily deprave either Reason or Scripture. We have shewn that the Scripture doth teach us no Philosophy, but only Piety, and all things contained in it, are fitted to the Capacity and Opinions of vulgar people: Whoever then goes about to apply it to Philosophy, must father upon the Prophets, many things whereof they did never so much as dream, and interpret that to be their meaning which never was. He, on the other side, who makes Reason or Philosophy a Handmaid to Divinity, will be necessitated to let the mistaken Opinions of old times pass for Divine Truths; possessing and blinding his Understanding with Error and Prejudice, and both run mad together without Reason.

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, chs. 1, 7, 8, 14, 15. English translation from the Latin, anon., London, 1689.

2. THE COMPOSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Richard Simon

RICHARD SIMON (1638–1712), French Divine and Biblical critic. In his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, on which he had been engaged from 1670 to 1677, Simon presented the main conclusions which had been reached by critical scholarship with regard to the Old Testament, and advocated the theory that in the Hebrew commonwealth there had existed from the time of Moses a class of public recorders, or prophets, to whom the writing or editing of the Old Testament scriptures was to be ascribed. By this hypothesis Simon was able to make light of critical objections to the traditional view of Scripture such as those advanced by Hobbes and Spinoza, since he maintained that these prophets were themselves inspired by the Holy Ghost, while at the same time he himself used a wide freedom in questioning traditional views of authorship, particularly with regard to the Pentateuch. Before the book could be published, a copy or an advertisement fell into the hands of Simon's enemies at Port Royal. Simon's unusual freedom in dealing with questions of Biblical criticism laid him open to attack, and with Bossuet's help a decree of the Council of State (19 June 1678) was obtained to suppress the book, and the whole impression of 1300 copies was seized by the police and destroyed. A few copies only had already passed out of the printer's hands. An inaccurate edition based on one of these copies was published at Amsterdam in 1680 without Simon's consent, and an English translation (used in the following extracts), made from this edition, was published in London (1682). Simon meantime was engaged in negotiation with Bossuet. When at length these negotiations broke down, an authoritative edition was published at Rotterdam (1685) (see Aug. Bernus, *Notice bibliographique sur Richard Simon*, Bâle, 1882). The most important reply to Simon's book was the Protestant Le Clerc's *Sentimens de quelques théologiens de Hollande*, which led to a protracted controversy. Le Clerc himself at this stage agreed with Simon in questioning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

In addition to his book on the Old Testament, Simon published works on the text and the versions of the New Testament, as well as a critical survey of the history of New Testament exegesis which is still valuable.

DIFFICULTIES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE RESOLVED, AND ITS AUTHORITY VINDICATED

It is to be observ'd that I, considering onely their benefit who desire throughly to understand the Holy Scriptures, have inserted many usefull principles for the resolving of the

greatest difficulties of the Bible, and at the same time answering of the Objections which are usually brought against the Authority of the Holy Scriptures. For example, having established in the Hebrew Commonwealth the Prophets or publick Writers, who took care of collecting faithfully the acts of what pass'd of most importance in the State, we need not too curiously enquire, as usually men do, who were the Authours of each particular Book of the Bible, because it is certain that they were all writ by Prophets, which the Hebrew Commonwealth never wanted as long as it lasted.

Besides, as these same Prophets, which may be call'd publick Writers, for the distinguishing of them from other private Writers, had the liberty of collecting out of the ancient Acts which were kept in the Registers of the Republick, and of giving a new form to these same Acts by adding or diminishing what they thought fit; we may hereby give a very good reason for the additions and alterations in the Holy Scriptures without lessening of their Authority, since the Authours of these additions or alterations were real Prophets directed by the Spirit of God. Wherefore their alterations in the ancient Acts are of as great Authority as the rest of the Text of the Bible.

We may by this same principle easily answer all the false and pernicious consequences drawn by *Spinosa*[1] from these alterations or additions for the running down the Authority of the Holy Scripture, as if these corrections had been purely of humane Authority; whereas he ought to have consider'd that the Authours of these alterations having had the Power of writing Holy Scriptures had also the Power of correcting them. Wherefore I have made no scruple to give some examples of these alterations, and to conclude that all we find in the Holy Scriptures was not writ by contemporary Authours.

S. Jerom, Theodoret, and several other Fathers who were of this opinion, thought not that they hereby lessened the

[1] *Spinosa,* Tract. Theolog. cap. 8.

Authority of the Holy Scriptures, supposing at the same time that the Authours of these corrections were inspired by God.

By this principle we may also easily answer several objections which are usually made, to shew that *Moses* is not the onely Authour of the Books which we have under his name; for they prove onely that something has been added in series of time, which destroys not the Authority of the ancient Acts which were writ in *Moses's* time.

Herein *Spinosa* has shewn his ignorance, or rather malice in crying down the Authority of the *Pentateuch*, by reason of some alterations or additions therein, without considering the quality of the Authours of these alterations.

A Critical History of the Old Testament not dangerous to Catholics

The people which were advertised of these errours, and of many others which the negligence of Transcribers had brought into the holy Scriptures, were not at all scandaliz'd at it, and the Fathers noted them with much liberty, as we may see in their Commentaries chiefly upon the New Testament, where they observe the transposition of words, the divers readings and other alterations; part of which they lay upon the Hereticks of those times, whom they accuse for altering the Greek copies of the New Testament. They were perswaded that these errours that were crept into the Bible by the means of these Transcribers, had no relation to Faith or good Manners, or carried any weight to the framing of the Judgment which we ought to make of the Scriptures in general.

This does not hinder us but that we should acknowledge the Divine Providence in the preservation of this Book which has past through so many hands and so many ages. A great many of these errours of Transcribers relate to the Chronology and Genealogies in the Books of the Old Testament: but we may say with *S. Augustine* that these difficulties are in the number of those of which we may speak freely and we may

be ignorant of *salvâ Fide quâ Christiani sumus*: wherefore although he was perswaded that the Translation of the Septuagint was Divine and Prophetick, he makes no scruple sometimes to leave it; and does say that the Greek Copies are corrupt in such and such places.

* * * *

All these reasons and several others not now necessary to be named, made me take the liberty of examining in my Book the divers readings and other changes which have happened in the holy Text. The Catholicks, who are perswaded their Religion depends not onely on the Text of Scripture, but likewise on the Tradition of the Church, are not at all scandaliz'd, to see that the misfortune of Time and the negligence of Transcribers have wrought changes in the holy Scriptures as well as in prophane Authours: there are none but prejudic't Protestants or ignorant people that can be offended at it. I say, prejudic't Protestants or ignorant people, because the most understanding amongst them have made no scruple to acknowledge them as well in the Old as in the New Testament. The most learned Work which we have upon the several readings and other changes of the Old Testament, is the Book of *Ludovicus Capellus*, Minister and Professour at *Saumur*, intituled *Critica Sacra*.

'Tis true this Book so much displeased those of his Religion, that they stopt the Impression of it, till John Capell, who a while since turn'd Catholick and was the Son of the Authour, got leave of the King to print his Father's Book. Father *Morin* of the Oratory had likewise a hand in this Impression, thinking he should doe great service for the Church against the Protestants in publishing this Work, which was printed at *Paris* by *Cramoisi*, in the year 1650, and it contains nothing else but several readings, and a great many errours which he thought were crept into the Copies of the Bible, through the fault of Transcribers. The Authour acknowledges he had been thirty six years about it, so that in some sort it may be called a Master-piece of this nature. 'Tis true *Buxtorf* has

writ a very learned answer, but has rather contributed to the reputation than disadvantage of it, and excepting some places, which are not very many, *Capellus* his Book remains untouch't.

Some English Protestants have writ against this Work, endeavouring to render the Authour odious among those of his own Religion, as if he had been in agreement with Father *Morin*; but the Apology which *Capell* has writ in his own defence, shews clearly that he has said nothing of which he was not fully perswaded. And that his enemies to no purpose upbraid him of destroying with the Papists (to use their own terms) the Word of God. *Grotius* on the other side very much commends this Criticisme in an Epistle to this Authour, where he tells him among other things, *Contentus esto magnis potius quam multis laudatoribus.* Upon the whole matter the contrary opinion to *Capellus* has been maintained by none but the most zealous and most ignorant Protestants; chiefly since *Buxtorf* the Son has undertaken to defend the purity of the Hebrew Text, following his Father's prejudice, who had consulted about this point none but the Writing of the Rabbins. Those amongst the Catholicks who are of the same opinion, seem to have embrac't it onely as they were Professours of the Hebrew Tongue, but not having examin'd into the depth of the matter.

I thought then that following so great an Authour, who is so generally approved by the Catholicks against the Protestants, I might freely make a critical History of the Text of the Hebrew Bible; and as he complained that for want of manuscript Copies he could not observe several more readings, I have supplied that defect by the search which I have made into good Manuscripts, which I have with care examin'd. By the help of these Manuscripts I have likewise given rules to discover the original of most part of the errours of Transcribers, so that one may more easily establish the true reading of the Text of the Bible: one may likewise at the same time discover the good Hebrew Manuscripts from those which

are not so, and to that purpose I have compared several Copies, marking their good and their evil qualities.

Histoire critique du Vieux Testament, Book I, ch. i. English translation "by a Person of Quality", London, 1682.

3. THE SOURCES OF GENESIS

Jean Astruc

JEAN ASTRUC (1684–1766), son of a former Pastor of the Reformed Church, who on the eve of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes had joined the Roman communion, was a noted French physician. He graduated at the University of Montpellier, where in 1717 he became Professor. Three treatises on the Plague (1720–1724) brought him fame, and in 1728 he left Montpellier for Paris. In 1730 he was appointed consulting physician to the King, and in the next year Professor at the Collège Royal. He was a learned physician, and, it is said, an excellent lecturer, but conservative in his professional attitude. In 1756 he published anonymously an attack on the growing practice of inoculation.

This distinguished physician has earned the fame of laying the foundations of the modern Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch. The *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paroît que Moyse s'est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse* was published anonymously in 1753. The author relates that he had written the work some time before it was published, and that he hesitated to give it to the world lest the freethinkers of his time should use it to lessen respect for the authority of the Pentateuch. Astruc does not revive the doctrines of Spinoza or Simon concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch. With Le Clerc in his later phase he accepts the traditional ascription to Moses, and approaches Genesis from a new angle: noting the stylistic peculiarities and especially the distribution of the Divine names, he uses these clues to distinguish separate documents within the canonical text. Astruc had had precursors (see Ad. Lods, "Astruc et la critique biblique de son temps" in *Rev. d'hist. et de phil. rel.* 1924, pp. 109ff.), but he seems not to have known of their conjectures, and in any case he carries through his observations and deductions with a thoroughness which constitutes his work a fresh departure in Old Testament study. In Astruc's lifetime the *Conjectures*, though not unnoticed, attracted comparatively little attention. But his methods and his main conclusions came into their own with the publication of Eichhorn's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (vol. II, 1781). The achievement of the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch in the nineteenth century has been an extension of the work which Astruc initiated.

Moses related in Genesis events which happened 2433 years before he was born. This is the interval, according to Ussher's chronology based on the original Hebrew, between the Creation of the World, where Genesis begins, and the birth of Moses; and this interval is almost as great as that from the foundation of Rome to our own time. It is true that as the thread of the history advances, the facts become closer to the time of Moses, but there is none of them, not even the latest, the death of the patriarch Joseph, which did not antedate by a number of years the time when Moses was born, and, *a fortiori* the time when he wrote; for he did not begin to write until after he had led the people of God out of Egypt, at the age of eighty years, and perhaps even later.

It is then not possible that Moses knew of himself what he relates in Genesis, and in consequence we must suppose, either that he was informed of it by revelation, or that he learnt it by accounts of those who themselves had been witnesses.

I know no one who has advanced the former view and I believe that no one will ever think of doing so. Moses in Genesis always speaks as a simple historian; he never says that what he relates has been given to him by inspiration. We must then not assume such revelation without any foundation. When the prophets spoke of things which had been revealed to them, they did not fail to give warning that they were speaking in the name of God and on his behalf; and this was the practice of Moses himself in the other books of the Pentateuch when he had some revelation to communicate to the Hebrew people, or some command of God to convey. Would he have failed to adopt the same precaution in composing the book of Genesis, had he found himself in the same position?

We must then admit, that Moses was able to write the history of the events related in Genesis, covering according to Ussher a period of 2369 years, only because he knew of them from his ancestors, who, from generation to generation,

had witnessed them. But at the same time we must also agree that Moses was enlightened in an especial manner and by inspiration, in his choice of the facts which he derived from his ancestors, and of the circumstances of those facts; and this is the foundation of the divine faith which is due from us towards the history which he has left us.

This first point once established, there is little difficulty in the rest. There are two ways only by which the knowledge of earlier events can have been transmitted to Moses; either by a tradition purely oral, that is from mouth to mouth, or by a written tradition, that is by narratives or memoirs left in writing.

Those who adopt the former opinion, and I admit that they are the majority, do not fail to take advantage of the long lives of the patriarchs, to shew that this oral tradition may have been transmitted from Adam to Moses by a very small number of persons, because "Shem, who saw Lamech, who saw Adam, saw at least Abraham, and Abraham saw Jacob, who saw men who themselves saw Moses" (*Pensées de Pascal*, Art. XI[1]). This observation, which is just, has been long put forward, and it has been adopted by all who have written on this subject. They claim thereby to make the tradition easier and more sure, since they avoid making it pass by a large number of hands, in which process it might have been obscured, weakened, changed.

But were the number of those by whose agency the facts may have come down to Moses yet smaller, it is hard to be convinced that in a tradition several times repeated, there could have been such exact recollection of the topographical description of the earthly paradise, of the names of the four rivers which watered it; of the names and natural peculiarities of the countries by which they passed; of the age of each

[1] [So the Port Royal text, which Astruc follows, to conform with the text of Genesis. Pascal wrote: "Sem, qui a vu Lamech, qui a vu Adam, a vu aussi Jacob, qui a vu ceux qui ont vu Moïse; donc le déluge et la création sont vrais" (*Pensées*, no. 625, ed. Brunschvicg).]

patriarch; of the exact time when they began to have children, and when they died....

M. le Clerc and M. Simon have felt these difficulties and they have both maintained that it was clear enough that Moses in writing Genesis, had had the help of some ancient memoirs which had guided him concerning the circumstances, dates and chronological order of the events which he relates, as well as concerning the detail of the genealogies.

* * * *

Fundamentally I agree with these writers, but I push my conjectures further, and I am more emphatic. I claim that Moses had in his hands some ancient memoirs, containing the history of his ancestors, from the creation of the world; that in order to lose nothing of these memoirs, he divided them up into fragments, according to the facts related therein; that he inserted these fragments in the whole work, some following others, and that it is from this collection that the book of Genesis was made. These are the grounds on which I base my position:

I. There are in Genesis frequent repetitions of the same facts which are at once obvious. The creation of the world, and in particular the creation of the first man, is related twice; the history of the deluge twice, and with respect to certain circumstances, three times. Several other like examples may be found in the rest of the book. What are we to think of repetitions like these? Is it credible that Moses would have allowed them to stand in a work so short and so compressed, if he had composed it himself; and is it not rather clear that these repetitions arise from the fact that Genesis is simply a compilation of two or three earlier memoirs, relating the same facts, which Moses thought right to combine together fragment by fragment; that Moses inserted them into the work as a whole in order to preserve all that he received from his ancestors concerning the history of the first ages of the world and in particular concerning the history and origin of his nation?

II. In the Hebrew text of Genesis God is for the most part designated by two different names. The first is *Elohim*....The other name of God is *Jehovah*, and this, as all commentators agree, is the great name of God which expresses His essence....

It might be supposed that these two names *Elohim* and *Jehovah* are used without distinction in the same passages of Genesis, as synonymous terms suitable for varying the style. But this would be a mistake. These words are never confused together: there are whole chapters, or large parts of chapters, where God is always called *Elohim* and never *Jehovah*; there are others, at least as numerous, where the name *Jehovah* alone is given to God, and never *Elohim*.

If Moses had composed Genesis on his own account, it would be necessary to assign to him this strange and bizarre variation. But is it conceivable that in the composition of a book so short as Genesis, he would have shewn such a degree of negligence? Can any similar example be adduced? and may we venture without proof to ascribe to Moses a fault which no other writer has ever committed? Is it not on the contrary more natural to explain this variation by supposing, as I do, that the book of Genesis is composed of two or three memoirs, joined and stitched together in fragments, the authors of which consistently gave to God each the same name, but each a name peculiar to himself, the one *Elohim*, and the other *Jehovah* or *Jehovah Elohim*?

Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paroît que Moyse s'est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse, Réflexions préliminaires.

4. THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE

Robert Lowth

ROBERT LOWTH (1710–1787), scholar and divine, Bishop of Oxford (1766–1777), of London (1777–1787). From 1741 to 1750 he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and during his tenure of the Chair delivered lectures on Hebrew poetry which introduced a new appreciation of the

poetical books of the Old Testament, viewed as literature, and won him a European reputation. The lectures were published in Latin in 1753 (*Praelectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*) and were later translated both into German and into English. Lowth's controversy with Warburton (see below, p. 267) arose out of Lowth's treatment of the Book of Job in these lectures, which Warburton chose to regard as an act of defiance directed against himself.

It would not be easy, indeed, to assign a reason, why the writings of Homer, of Pindar, and of Horace, should engross our attention and monopolize our praise, while those of Moses, of David and Isaiah pass totally unregarded. Shall we suppose that the subject is not adapted to a seminary, in which sacred literature has ever maintained a precedence? Shall we say, that it is foreign to this assembly of promising youth, of whom the greater part have consecrated the best portion of their time and labour to the same department of learning? Or must we conclude, that the writings of those men, who have accomplished only as much as human genius and ability could accomplish, should be reduced to method and theory; but that those which boast a much higher origin, and are justly attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, may be considered as indeed illustrious by their native force and beauty, but not as conformable to the principles of science, nor to be circumscribed by any rules of art? It is indeed most true, that sacred Poetry, if we contemplate its origin alone, is far superior to both *nature* and *art*; but if we would rightly estimate its excellencies, that is if we wish to understand its power in exciting the human affections, we must have recourse to both: for we must consider what those affections are, and by what means they are to be excited. Moreover, as in all other branches of science, so in Poetry, art or theory consists in a certain knowledge derived from the careful observation of nature, and confirmed by practice and experience; for men of learning having remarked in things what was graceful, what was fit, what was conducive to the attainment of certain ends, they digested such discoveries as had been casually made, and reduced them to an established

order or method: whence it is evident, that art deduces its origin from the works of genius, not that genius has been formed or directed by art; and that it is properly applied in illustrating the works of even those writers, who were either ignorant of its rules, or inattentive to them. Since then it is the purpose of sacred Poetry to form the human mind to the constant habit of true virtue and piety, and to excite the more ardent affections of the soul, in order to direct them to their proper end; whoever has a clear insight into the instruments, the machinery as it were, by which this end is effected, will certainly contribute not a little to the improvement of the critical art. Now although it be scarcely possible to penetrate to the fountains of this celestial Nile, yet it may surely be allowed us to pursue the meanders of the stream, to mark the flux and reflux of its waters, and even to conduct a few rivulets into the adjacent plains.

* * * *

It is impossible to conceive anything more simple and unadorned than the common language of the Hebrews. It is plain, correct, chaste, and temperate; the words are uncommon neither in their meaning nor application; there is no appearance of study, nor even of the least attention to the harmony of the periods. The order of the words is generally regular and uniform. The verb is the first word in the sentence, the noun, which is the agent, immediately succeeds, and the other words follow in their natural order. Each circumstance is exhibited at a single effort, without the least perplexity or confusion of the different parts; and, what is remarkable, by the help of a simple particle, the whole is connected from the beginning to the end in a continued series, so that nothing appears inconsistent, abrupt, or confused. The whole composition, in fine, is disposed in such an order, and so connected by the continued succession of the different parts, as to demonstrate clearly the regular state of the author, and to exhibit the image of a sedate and tranquil mind. But in the Hebrew

poetry the case is different, in part at least, if not in the whole. The free spirit is hurried along, and has neither leisure nor inclination to descend to those minute and frigid attentions. Frequently, instead of disguising the secret feelings of the author, it lays them quite open to public view; and the veil being as it were suddenly removed, all the affections and emotions of the soul, its sudden impulses, its hasty sallies and irregularities, are conspicuously displayed.

Should the curious inquirer be desirous of more perfect information upon this subject, he may satisfy himself, I apprehend, with no great labour or difficulty. Let him take the book of Job; let him read the historical proem of that book; let him proceed to the metrical parts, and let him diligently attend to the first speech of Job. He will, I dare believe, confess, that, when arrived at the metrical part, he feels as if he were reading another language; and is surprized at a dissimilarity in the style of the two passages much greater than between that of Livy and Virgil, or even Herodotus and Homer. Nor indeed could the fact be otherwise according to the nature of things; since in the latter passage the most exquisite pathos is displayed, such indeed as has not been exceeded, and scarcely equalled by any effort of the Muses. Not only the force, the beauty, the sublimity of the sentiments are unrivalled; but such is the character of the diction in general, so vivid is the expression, so interesting the assemblage of objects, so close and connected the sentences, so animated and passionate the whole arrangement, that the Hebrew literature itself contains nothing more poetical.

Praelectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum, ii and xiv. English translation by G. Gregory, London, 1787.

5. THE SPIRIT OF HEBREW POETRY

Johann Gottfried Herder

JOHANN GOTTFRIED VON HERDER (1744–1803), one of the originating minds in German thought, and of outstanding importance as a founder of the Romantic Movement in literature and history. After holding

various educational and ministerial appointments, he became in 1776, thanks to the influence of Goethe, General-Superintendent and Court Preacher at Weimar, where he spent the rest of his life. The following passage from the *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782–1783) illustrates Herder's fundamental idea that religion and literature are to be interpreted in relation to the whole development of human life and culture. As against the Kantian antithesis of freedom and necessity, Herder finds human history to be a natural process throughout, in which the powers native to man interact with the conditions of time and place. Like Rousseau he looks back to a primitive state, where he thinks to find a spontaneity and simplicity, which the sophistication of civilisation has obscured or destroyed. Thus the complaint that Hebrew poetry is barbaric is in truth testimony to its value as a free spontaneous expression of the human soul.

Alciphron. Here you are, engaged once more with this miserable barbaric language! You see the effect of youthful impressions, and how essential it is that from our earliest years we should be freed from the antique rubbish of the past. In later life escape is impossible.

Euthypron. You talk like one of our modern philosophers who wish to liberate men from all the prejudices of childhood, and as far as may be from childhood itself. Do you understand this "miserable barbaric" language? And why is it that you think thus of it?

A. Alas! I know it well enough. It tormented me as a child, and still it torments me when in philosophy, or history, or wherever else I hear the echo of its lofty unreason. The rattle of the old cymbals and tambourines—the whole Janissary music of the savage races, which it is the fashion to speak of as "oriental parallelism", rings in my ears, and I still see David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, and the prophet summoning a fiddler to inspire him.

E. I gather that, though you have made acquaintance with the language, it has not been for love of it.

A. No indeed! But I have learnt it properly with all Dr Dantz's rules. I could quote them to you, but without knowing what they mean.

E. So much the worse. Now I can understand why the language is so repellent to you. But, my dear friend, we

should not allow a bad method to make us hate the science, which we had the misfortune to encounter for the first time in such a form. Do you honour a man simply according to his clothes?—even if it be a strange suit which has been forced upon him?

A. Certainly not. My inclination is to discard all prejudices, so soon as they can be shewn to be such. I think however that in this case it will be a hard task, for I have made a pretty good trial both of the language and of its literature.

E. We will try, and we must each help the other. Truth would be in a sad case, if men could not unite in its interests, and I would call down a curse on all the impressions of my youth, if at this present time they were merely fetters on my freedom. But you must know that I do not owe my sense of the poetic spirit of this language to youthful impressions. I learnt it as you did. It was long before I acquired a taste to appreciate it, but gradually I attained to the spirit which now makes it for me a holy language, the mother of our noblest apprehensions and of that primitive human civilisation, which spread itself over but a small stretch of the earth, and without our deserving it, reached us too.

A. That simply means that you make an idol of it.

E. Not at all. We will treat it as human speech, and its literature too as merely human. To satisfy you that I am not stealing a march upon you, we will speak of it only as an organ of ancient poetry. Does this subject-matter please you? It is certainly not delusive.

A. Indeed it gives me a high degree of satisfaction. I enjoy talking about ancient languages when they are discussed from a purely human standpoint. They are the form in which men's thoughts, good or bad, have been shaped; they afford the clearest traces of the character and outlook of particular races, from which, by comparison with others, we may always learn. By all means begin to talk about this language of Oriental Hurons; in any case their poverty will enrich us, and lead us to discover strange ideas.

E. What do you think most essential to a poetic language, whether it be spoken by Hurons or Otahitans? Is it not action, descriptive power, passion, melody, rhythm?

A. Certainly.

E. And the language which has pre-eminently developed these qualities is pre-eminently poetic? You know, my friend, that the languages of comparatively uncivilized peoples may have these qualities in a high degree, indeed actually in a higher degree than many over-civilized modern peoples. I need not remind you of the people for which Ossian sang, nor of the age of the Greek Homer himself.

A. From this it does not follow that every barbarous nation has its Homer and its Ossian.

E. Some perhaps have even more, but for themselves alone and not for other languages. To judge of a nation, we must enter into their age, their country, their circle of thought and feeling; we must see how they live, how they are brought up; what objects they look out upon; what they passionately desire; we must know their climate, their sky, the structure of their instruments, their dancing, their music. All this we must study, not as strangers or enemies, but as brethren and kinsfolk, and then we may ask whether they have a Homer, or an Ossian of their own kind, for their own needs. You see that there are but few peoples for whom we have started such an enquiry, or indeed are yet able to do so. With the Hebrews we certainly can do this. Their poesy is before us.

Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie, Erster Theil, Kap. i.

VI

THE CHURCH IN ITS RELATION TO THE STATE

1. TOLERATION

John Locke

[*See note on* pp. 1 f.]

The Toleration of those that differ from others in Matters of Religion, is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine Reason of Mankind that it seems monstrous for Men to be so blind, as not to perceive the Necessity and Advantage of it, in so clear a Light. I will not here tax the Pride and Ambition of some, the Passion and uncharitable Zeal of others. These are Faults from which Humane Affairs can perhaps scarce ever be perfectly freed; but yet such as no body will bear the plain Imputation of, without covering them with some specious Colour; and so pretend to Commendation, whilst they are carried away by their own irregular Passions. But however, that some may not colour their spirit of Persecution and unchristian Cruelty, with a Pretence of Care of the Publick Weal, and Observation of the Laws; and that others, under pretence of Religion, may not seek Impunity for their Libertinism and Licentiousness: in a word, that none may impose either upon himself or others, by the Pretences of Loyalty and Obedience to the Prince, or of Tenderness and Sincerity in the Worship of God; I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the Business of Civil Government from that of Religion, and to settle the just Bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the Controversies

that will be always arising, between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a Concernment for the Interest of Mens Souls, and on the other side, a Care of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth seems to me to be a Society of Men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own *Civil Interests*.

Civil Interests I call Life, Liberty, Health, and Indolency of Body; and the Possession of outward things, such as Money, Lands, Houses, Furniture, and the like.

It is the Duty of the Civil Magistrate, by the impartial Execution of equal Laws, to secure unto all the People in general, and to every one of his Subjects in particular, the just Possession of these things belonging to this Life. If any one presume to violate the Laws of Publick Justice and Equity, established for the Preservation of these things, his Presumption is to be check'd by the fear of Punishment, consisting in the Deprivation or Diminution of those Civil Interests, or Goods, which otherwise he might and ought to enjoy. But seeing no Man does willingly suffer himself to be punished by the Deprivation of any part of his Goods, and much less of his Liberty or Life, therefore is the Magistrate armed with the Force and Strength of all his Subjects, in order to the punishment of those that violate any other Man's Rights.

Now that the whole Jurisdiction of the Magistrate reaches only to these civil Concernments; and that all Civil Power, Right, and Dominion, is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the Salvation of Souls; these following Considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

First. Because the Care of Souls is not committed to the Civil Magistrate any more than to other Men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such Authority to one Man over

another, as to compell any one to his Religion. Nor can any such Power be vested in the Magistrate by the *Consent of the People*; because no man can so far abandon the care of his own Salvation, as blindly to leave it to the choice of any other, whether Prince or Subject, to prescribe to him what Faith or Worship he shall embrace. For no Man can, if he would, conform his Faith to the Dictates of another. All the Life and Power of true Religion consists in the inward and full perswasion of the mind: And Faith is not Faith without believing. Whatever Profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our mind that the one is true, and the other well pleasing unto God; such Profession and such Practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great Obstacles to our Salvation. For in this manner, instead of expiating other Sins by the exercise of Religion; I say, in offering thus unto God Almighty such a Worship as we esteem to be displeasing unto him, we add unto the number of our other sins those also of Hypocrisie, and Contempt of his Divine Majesty.

In the second place. The care of Souls cannot belong to the Civil Magistrate, because his Power consists only in outward force: But true and saving Religion consists in the inward perswasion of the Mind; without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the Understanding, that it cannot be compell'd to the belief of any thing by outward Force. Confiscation of Estate, Imprisonment, Torments, nothing of that Nature can have any such Efficacy as to make Men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things.

* * * *

In the third place. The care of the Salvation of Mens Souls cannot belong to the Magistrate; because, though the rigour of Laws and the force of Penalties were capable to convince and change Mens minds, yet would not that help at all to the Salvation of their Souls. For there being but one Truth, one way to heaven; what hopes is there that more Men would

be led into it, if they had no other Rule to follow but the Religion of the Court; and were put under a necessity to quit the Light of their own Reason; to oppose the Dictates of their own Consciences; and blindly to resign up themselves to the Will of their Governors, and to the Religion, which either Ignorance, Ambition, or Superstition had chanced to establish in the Countries where they were born? In the variety and contradiction of Opinions in Religion, wherein the Princes of the World are as much divided as in their Secular Interests, the narrow way would be much straitned. One Country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the World would be put under an Obligation of following their Princes in the ways that lead to Destruction. And that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the Notion of a Deity, Men would owe their eternal Happiness or Misery to the places of their Nativity.

These Considerations, to omit many others that might have been urged to the same purpose, seem unto me sufficient to conclude that all the Power of Civil Government relates only to Mens Civil Interests; is confined to the care of the things of this World; and hath nothing to do with the World to come.

Let us now consider what a Church is. A Church then I take to be a voluntary Society of Men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the publick worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the Salvation of their Souls.

I say it is a free and voluntary Society. No body is born a Member of any Church. Otherwise the Religion of Parents would descend unto Children, by the same right of Inheritance as their Temporal Estates, and every one would hold his Faith by the same Tenure he does his Lands; than which nothing can be imagined more absurd. Thus therefore that matter stands. No Man by nature is bound unto any particular Church or Sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that Society in which he believes he has found that

Profession and Worship which is truly acceptable unto God. The hopes of Salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that Communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there. For if afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the Doctrine, or incongruous in the Worship of that Society to which he has joined himself; Why should it not be as free for him to go out, as it was to enter? No Member of a Religious Society can be tied with any other Bonds but what proceed from the certain expectation of eternal Life. A Church then is a Society of Members voluntarily uniting to this end.

It follows now that we consider what is the Power of this Church, and unto what Laws it is subject.

Forasmuch as no Society, how free soever or upon whatsoever slight occasion instituted (whether of Philosophers for Learning, of Merchants for Commerce, or of men of leisure for mutual Conversation and Discourse,) No Church or Company, I say, can in the least subsist and hold together, but will presently dissolve and break to pieces, unless it be regulated by some Laws, and the Members all consent to observe some Order. Place and time of meeting must be agreed on. Rules for admitting and excluding Members must be established. Distinction of Officers, and putting things into a regular Course, and such like, cannot be omitted. But since the joining together of several Members into this Church-Society, as has already been demonstrated, is absolutely free and spontaneous, it necessarily follows, that the Right of making its Laws can belong to none but the Society itself; or at least (which is the same thing) to those whom the Society by common consent has authorised thereunto. Some perhaps may object, that no such Society can be said to be a true Church, unless it have in it a Bishop, or Presbyter, with Ruling Authority derived from the very Apostles, and continued down unto the present times by an uninterrupted Succession.

To these I answer. In the first place, Let them shew me the Edict by which Christ has imposed that Law upon his

Church. And let not any man think me impertinent, if in a thing of this consequence, I require that the Terms of that Edict be very express and positive. For the Promise he has made us, that *wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His Name, he will be in the midst of them* (*Matt.* 18. 20), seems to imply the contrary. Whether such an Assembly want any thing necessary to a true Church, pray do you consider. Certain I am, that nothing can be there wanting unto the Salvation of Souls; which is sufficient to our purpose.

Next, Pray observe how great have always been the Divisions amongst even those who lay so much stress upon the Divine Institution, and continued Succession of a certain Order of Rulers in the Church. Now their very dissention unavoidably puts us upon a necessity of deliberating, and consequently allows a Liberty of choosing that which upon consideration we prefer.

And in the last place, I consent that these men have a Ruler of their Church, established by such a long Series of Succession as they judge necessary; provided I may have liberty at the same time to join my self to that Society, in which I am perswaded those things are to be found which are necessary to the Salvation of my Soul. In this manner Ecclesiastical Liberty will be preserved on all sides, and no man will have a Legislator imposed upon him, but whom himself has chosen.

But since men are so sollicitous about the true Church, I would only ask them, here by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ, to make the Conditions of her Communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express Words, to be necessary to Salvation; I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ, than for men to impose their own Inventions and Interpretations upon others, as if they were of Divine Authority; and to establish by Ecclesiastical Laws, as absolutely necessary to the Profession of Christianity, such things as the Holy Scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly

command. Whosoever requires those things in order to Ecclesiastical Communion, which Christ does not require in order to life Eternal; he may perhaps indeed constitute a Society accommodated to his own Opinion, and his own Advantage; but how that can be called the Church of Christ which is established upon Laws that are not his, and which excludes such Persons from its Communion as he will one day receive into the Kingdom of Heaven, I understand not. But this being not a proper place to enquire into the marks of the true Church, I will only mind those that contend so earnestly for the Decrees of their own Society, and that cry out continually the Church, the Church, with as much noise, and perhaps upon the same Principle, as the Ephesian Silversmiths did for their Diana; this, I say, I desire to mind them of, That the Gospel frequently declares that the true Disciples of Christ must suffer Persecution; but that the Church of Christ should persecute others, and force others by Fire and Sword, to embrace her Faith and Doctrine, I could never yet find in any of the Books of the New Testament.

The end of a Religious Society (as has already been said) is the Public Worship of God, and by means thereof the acquisition of Eternal Life. All Discipline ought therefore to tend to that End, and all Ecclesiastical Laws to be thereunto confined. Nothing ought, nor can be transacted in this Society, relating to the Possession of Civil and Worldly Goods. No Force is here to be made use of, upon any occasion whatsoever. For Force belongs wholly to the Civil Magistrate, and the possession of all outward Goods is subject to his Jurisdiction.

But it may be asked, By what means then shall Ecclesiastical Laws be established, if they must be thus destitute of all compulsive Power. I answer, They must be established by means suitable to the Nature of such Things, whereof the external Profession and Observation, if not proceeding from a thorow Conviction and Approbation of the Mind, is altogether useless and unprofitable. The Arms by which the

Members of this Society are to be kept within their Duty, are Exhortations, Admonitions, and Advices. If by these means the Offenders will not be reclaimed, and the Erroneous convinced, there remains nothing farther to be done, but that such stubborn and obstinate Persons, who give no ground to hope for their Reformation, should be cast out and separated from the Society. This is the last and utmost Force of Ecclesiastical Authority. No other Punishment can thereby be inflicted, than that the relation ceasing between the Body and the Member which is cut off, the Person so condemned ceases to be a part of that Church.

A Letter concerning Toleration.

2. THE CHURCH NOT DEPENDENT UPON THE STATE

Charles Leslie

[*See note on* p. 51]

It has been said of Charles Leslie's work, the *Case of the Regale, etc.* (1700), that it "marks the culminating point of English Sacerdotalism". Leslie's work called forth a reply from Matthew Tindal—*The Rights of the Christian Church* (1706). The *Case of the Regale* was reprinted in 1838 during the Tractarian Movement.

We find by experience that the State, particularly in *England*, have been out in their politicks, in reducing the Church to so low an ebb of credit and authority with the People; for we have seen that Laws and Constitutions have prov'd too weak to restrain the unruly passions and ambition of designing Men. The State have no security so great as the Principles of the People, when they are taught to obey for conscience sake, and to believe that Rebellion is a damning Sin; which the Church cannot inculcate into them, farther than her credit reaches with them. And when they see Bishops made by the Court, they are apt to imagine that they speak to them the Court-Language; and lay no farther stress

upon it, than the charge of a Judge at an Assizes, who has receiv'd his instructions before-hand from the Court. And, by this means, the State has lost the greatest security of their Government.

Besides, that this does insensibly draw Men into a disesteem and suspicion of Religion in the general; whose foundation they cannot think to be divine, while they see the Church deposable by the State. Hence they are inclin'd, and easily impos'd upon by *Deists* and *Atheists*, to resolve all into Priest-craft, managed by a superior State-craft. This looses all Bonds sacred and civil; dissolves all relations, as well natural as political; and gives full reins to all lewdness, immoralities, rebellion, and whatever wickedness, where there is prospect of success, or that can be acted *Impuné*.

That the State can never find their security in such a frame of things: That if Religion were a State-craft, it were not such, unless they can make the People believe it not to be so; which they cannot do, while they see the Governors of the Church exercising almost no ecclesiastical Power, but what is dependent upon the State: That the Heathen Governments understood this so well, as to preserve their Religion most sacred, and the Priests inviolable, and superior to all others, in what related to their function, That God himself did so ordain it among the *Jews*: That it were a greater security to the State, to have a false Religion, so it were believ'd by the People, than to have no Religion at all: That nothing can be believ'd to be Religion by any People, but what they think to be divine, that is, sent immediately from God; and they think nothing to be so, that is in the Power of Man to alter, or transverse.

Then it was urg'd, that the *Erastian* Principle has had two visible effects in *England*: That it had turn'd the Gentry, Deists; and the common People, Dissenters: For the Dissenters, one and all, from Presbyterians down to Muggletonians, pretend to divine Commission, independent of all the Powers upon the Earth; therefore the People run to

them; and look upon the Church of *England*, as a Parliamentary Religion, and establishment of the State: And the *Deists*, when they find themselves in Committees of Religion, can never think that there is any thing divine in that which they see stand and fall by their Vote.

That next to the obligation of conscience, before spoke of, there is no security so great to any Government, as that mutual trust and confidence which ought to be betwixt a Prince and his People. Where that is once broken, it is the hardest thing in the World to cement it again: The best actions are misconstru'd on both sides; no promises or oaths are longer believ'd or trusted.

Now this of the *Regale* is so far from promoting of these good ends, that it is almost unavoidable but it must dissolve them. It is a perpetual seed of jealousy and discontent on both sides: For a King may look upon those who are zealous for Religion and the Church of *Christ*, as Enemies to his Crown and Dignity, and seeking to impair his Prerogative: And on the other hand, the friends of the Church may be tempted to think his *Regale* an Encroachment upon her original and inherent Rights; and consequently that instead of being a Defender of the Faith, and Nursing-Father to her, he is her greatest invader and enemy.

This consequence is so natural, that in every place almost, where the *Regale* has obtain'd, the effects of it have been seen: Not only in the great encrease of Dissenters, for the reason before-mentioned; but even in contests betwixt the Church and the King, especially where he happens to be of a different Communion from that of the establish'd Church; and yet must have the disposal of Bishopricks, and other affairs of the Church in his Power, can set up ecclesiastical Commissions, in what hands he thinks fit; hinder Convocations to sit, or act, etc. of this we have seen instances at home.

* * * *

Now because it wou'd look so preposterous, and against the common sentiments of Mankind, especially of Christians,

not to give the Church the preference to the State: Therefore Kings have taken upon them to be Heads of the Church within their own dominions: And because this look'd heterogeneous in the hands of a mere Lay-Man who might not be a Member of that Church, therefore Kings were made of an amphibious nature, and complemented with the title of *Mixta Persona*, an *Hermaphrodite*, half Lay and half Clergy. And the Nobility got in too under the new invention of Lay-Elders, as now in *Scotland*, and govern all the affairs of the Church.

And considering how they have (by these means) reduc'd her commission and authority, it can be attributed to nothing but the wonderful and over-ruling Providence, that there is so much left, as that shadow of a Church that is left! Or any, tho' but outward and seeming reverence, paid to Sacraments or other institutions of Religion, that are administer'd by her hands! Or that the administration of them should be still left in her hands! Tho' that is not done by all. That our Churches should be frequented or kept in repair, where the major and more prevailing number would wish them under ground! But in such instances as these God is wont to shew his Power: As he placed the Sand for a bound to the Sea, that tho' it rage and swell, yet is limited by the decree, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, here shall thy proud waves be staid.*

Nothing but this could have restrain'd that Spirit of Atheism, Deism, Fanaticism, and Prophaneness, that rages without human controul.

And the Church is laid as low and fenceless as the Sand under their storms; which had long since overwhelm'd the City of God (after the change of her Governors) if the almighty promise, *Mat.* xvi. 18, xxviii. 20. had not interpos'd to preserve some embers alive in the midst of these torrents: And they will be preserv'd till the time appointed by God shall come, when his Breath shall put new Life in them, to lick up that Sea that now covers, but cannot drown them.

Tho' the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same: The Rivers of the Flood thereof shall

make glad the City of God. The persecutors and oppressors of the Church shall be converted, and their rage, like that of the Sea, against her, shall turn into Humility and Love to her, like smooth gentle streams to refresh and nourish her: *For God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her when the morning appeareth.*

This is the City, the Society over which the temporal Governments of the Earth have assum'd the dominion! And have said, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,* Psal. ii. 3.

Be wise now therefore O ye Kings, and consider, lest while nothing less will serve you than to be Heads of this Society, you cease to be members: For what is that member that will be Head?

And let not so weak a thought arise in your minds, as if all this were only the self-seeking of the Clergy, out of pride to advance themselves. Alas! it must have the quite contrary effect with any of them who considers what an heavy charge they have undertaken, and what account will be exacted from them for their faithful discharge of it! That the Blood of all those Souls who perish thro' their negligence or default will be requir'd at their hands! That they have to *wrestle not* only *against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of the darkness of this World, against* wicked Spirits that are set up *in high places*: And whoever opposes these with that truth and freedom that is necessary, instead of honour, must expect reproach and persecution; of which it is not the least, that they cannot vindicate the honour of *Christ's* commission without being thought to seek their own glory: Yet that must not hinder; the successors of the holy Apostles must be content to pass, as they did, thro' *evil report and good report, as deceivers, and yet true.*

Case of the Regale, and of the Pontificate stated in a Conference concerning the Independency of the Church upon any Power on Earth, in the exercise of her purely Spiritual Power and Authority, §§ 5, 20.

3. CHRIST'S KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

Benjamin Hoadly

BENJAMIN HOADLY (1676–1761), Low Church Ecclesiastic and Divine, was Fellow of Catharine Hall, Cambridge (1697–1701), and successively Bishop of Bangor, Hereford, Salisbury and Winchester. His Sermon here printed (1717), with his *Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-Jurors* (1716), precipitated the Bangorian controversy and thereby led to the silencing of Convocation. Hoadly was a disciple and friend of Dr Samuel Clarke (see pp. 24f.), and published his collected works. Among Hoadly's other publications may be mentioned his *Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament* (1735), which was one of the works which prompted Waterland's treatise on the Eucharist.

Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World. St John xviii. 36.

One of those great Effects which length of Time is seen to bring along with it, is the Alteration of the Meaning annexed to certain Sounds. The Signification of a Word, well known and understood by Those who first made use of it, is very insensibly varied, by passing thrô many Mouths, and by being taken and given by Multitudes, in common Discourse; till it often comes to stand for a Complication of Notions, as distant from the original Intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as Darkness is to Light. The Ignorance and Weakness of Some, and the Passions and Bad Designs of Others, are the great Instruments of this Evil: which, even when it seems to affect only indifferent Matters, ought in reason to be opposed, as it tends in it's nature to confound Men's Notions in weightier Points; but, when it hath once invaded the most Sacred and Important Subjects, ought, in Duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised Zeal, as what toucheth the very Vitals of all that is good, and is just going to take from Men's Eyes the Boundaries of Right and Wrong.

The only cure for this *Evil*, in Cases of so great Concern, is to have recourse to the Originals of Things: to the Law of Reason, in those Points which can be traced back thither;

and to the Declarations of *Jesus Christ*, and his immediate Followers, in such Matters, as took their Rise solely from those Declarations. For the case is plainly this, that Words and Sounds have had such an Effect, (not upon the Nature of Things, which is unmoveable, but) upon the Minds of Men in thinking of them; that the very same Word remaining, (which at first truly represented One certain Thing,) by having Multitudes of new inconsistent Ideas, in every Age and every Year, added to it, becomes itself the greatest Hindrance of the true understanding of the Nature of the Thing first intended by it.

* * * *

It is with this view, that I have chosen those *Words*, in which our Lord himself declared the Nature of *his own Kingdom*. This *Kingdom* of *Christ*, is the same with the *Church* of *Christ*. And the *Notion* of the *Church* of *Christ*, which, at first, was only the Number, small or great, of Those who believed *Him* to be the Messiah; or of Those who subjected themselves to *Him*, as their *King*, in the Affair of *Religion*; having since that Time been so diversified by the various *Alterations* it hath undergone, that it is almost impossible so much as to number up the many *inconsistent Images* that have come, by daily Additions, to be united together in it: nothing, I think, can be more useful, than to consider the same thing, under some other *Image*, which hath not been so much used; nor consequently so much defaced. And since the *Image* of *His Kingdom*, is *That*, under which our Lord himself chose to represent it: We may be sure that, if we sincerely examine our Notion of his *Church*, by what He saith of his *Kingdom*, that *it is not of this World*, we shall exclude out of it, everything that he would have excluded; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And what I have to say, in order to this, will be comprehended under Two *General Heads*.

I. As the *Church* of *Christ* is the *Kingdom of Christ*, *He* himself is *King*: and in this it is implied, that He is himself the sole *Law-giver* to his *Subjects*, and himself the sole *Judge* of their

Behaviour, in the Affairs of *Conscience* and *Eternal Salvation*. And in this Sense therefore, *His Kingdom is not of this World*; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be said properly to supply his Place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the Consciences or Religion of his People. For if this were so, that any such absolute *Vicegerent Authority*, either for the making *new Laws*, or interpreting *Old* Ones, or *judging* his *Subjects*, in *Religious* Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the *Church* of *Christ*, would not be the *Kingdom of* Christ, but the *Kingdom* of those Men, vested with such *Authority*. For, whoever hath such an *Authority* of making Laws, is so far a *King*: and whoever can add new Laws to those of *Christ*, equally obligatory, is as truly a *King*, as *Christ* himself is: Nay, whoever hath an *absolute Authority* to *interpret* any written, or spoken Laws; it is He, who is truly the *Law-giver*, to all Intents and Purposes; and not the Person who first wrote, or spoke them.

In humane Society, the *Interpretation* of *Laws* may, of necessity, be lodged, in some Cases, in the Hands of Those who were not originally the *Legislators*. But this is not Absolute; nor of bad Consequence to *Society*: because the *Legislators* can resume the *Interpretation* into their own Hands, as they are Witnesses to what passes in the World; and as They can, and will, sensibly interpose in all those Cases, in which their Interposition becomes necessary. And therefore, They are still properly the *Legislators*. But it is otherwise in *Religion*, or the *Kingdom* of *Christ*. He himself never interposeth, since his first Promulgation of his Law, either to convey *Infallibility* to Such as pretend to handle it over again; or to assert the true *Interpretation* of it, amidst the various and contradictory Opinions of Men about it. If He did certainly thus interpose, He himself would still be the Legislator. But, as He doth not; if such an absolute *Authority* be once lodged

with Men, under the Notion of Interpreters, They then become the *Legislators*, and not Christ; and They rule in their own Kingdom, and not in His.

It is the same thing, as to Rewards and Punishments, to carry forward the great End of his *Kingdom*. If any Men upon Earth have a *Right* to add to the *Sanctions* of his Laws; that is to increase the Number, or alter the Nature, of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of his Subjects, in Matters of Conscience, or Salvation: They are so far *Kings* in his stead; and Reign in *their own* Kingdom, and not in His. So it is, whenever They erect Tribunals, and exercise a *Judgement* over the Consciences of Men; and assume to Themselves the Determination of such Points, as cannot be determined, but by One who knows the Hearts; or, when They make any of their own Declarations, or Decisions, to concern and affect the State of Christ's Subjects, with regard to the Favour of God: this is so far, the taking *Christ's Kingdom* out of *His Hands*, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring Themselves to be *Vice-gerents*, or *Law-makers*, or *Judges*, under *Christ*, in order to carry on the Ends of his Kingdom. For it comes to this at last, since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their mistakes and contradictions, that, if They have this power of interpreting, or adding, Laws, and judging Men, in such a sense, that *Christians* shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those Laws, and to submit to those Decisions; I say, if They have this power lodged with them, then the *Kingdom*, in which they rule, is not the Kingdom of *Christ*, but of *Themselves*; He doth not rule in it, but They: And, whether They happen to agree with him, or to differ from Him, as long as they are the *Lawgivers*, and *Judges*, without any Interposition from *Christ*, either to guide or correct their *Decisions*, *They* are *Kings* of this *Kingdom*, and not *Christ Jesus*.

If therefore, the *Church* of *Christ* be the *Kingdom* of *Christ*; it is essential to it, that *Christ* himself be the Sole *Law-giver*,

and Sole *Judge* of his Subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure of *Almighty God*; and that All His *Subjects*, in what station soever they may be, are equally *Subjects* to *Him*; and that No One of them, any more than Another, hath *Authority*, either to make *New Laws*, for *Christ's* Subjects; or to impose a sense upon the Old Ones, which is the same thing; or to Judge, Censure, or Punish, the Servants of *Another Master*, in matters relating purely to *Conscience*, or *Salvation*. If any Person hath any other Notion, either thro' a long Use of Words with Inconsistent Meanings, or thro' a negligence of Thought; let him but ask himself, whether the *Church* of *Christ* be the Kingdom of *Christ*, or not. And, if it be, whether this Notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other *Legislators* and *Judges*, in matters relating to Conscience, or the favour of God; or, whether it can be *His* Kingdom, if any Mortal Man hath such a Power of *Legislation* and *Judgment* in it. This Enquiry will bring Us back to the first, which is the only True, Account of the *Church* of *Christ*, or the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, in the mouth of a Christian: That it is the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to *Jesus Christ* alone, as their *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in matters relating to the Favour of God, and their *Eternal Salvation*.

II. The next principal point is, that, if the *Church* be the *Kingdom* of *Christ*; and this *Kingdom be not of this World*: this must appear from the Nature and End of the *Laws* of Christ, and of those Rewards and Punishments, which are the Sanctions of his Laws. Now his *Laws* are Declarations, relating to the Favour of God in another State after this. They are Declarations of those Conditions to be perform'd, in this World, on our part, without which God will not make us Happy in that to come. And they are almost All general Appeals to the *Will* of that God; to his *Nature*, known by the Common Reason of Mankind; and to the imitation of that *Nature*, which must be our Perfection. The *Keeping his Commandments* is declared the Way to Life; and the *doing his Will*,

the Entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven*. The being *Subjects* to *Christ*, is to this very End, that We may the better and more effectually perform the *Will* of *God*. The *Laws* of this *Kingdom*, therefore, as *Christ* left them, have nothing of *this* World in their view; no Tendency, either to the Exaltation of *Some*, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their absolute Dominion over the Faith and Religious conduct of *Others* of his Subjects; or to the erecting of any sort of *Temporal Kingdom*, under the Covert and Name of a *Spiritual* one.

The *Sanctions* of *Christ's Law* are *Rewards* and *Punishments*. But of what sort? Not the Rewards of this World; not the Offices, or Glories, of this State; not the pains of Prisons, Banishments, Fines, or any lesser and more *Moderate Penalties*; nay, not the much lesser *Negative Discouragements* that belong to *Humane* Society. He was far from thinking that *These* could be the Instruments of such a *Persuasion*, as He thought acceptable to God. But, as the Great End of his *Kingdom* was to guide Men to Happiness, after the short Images of it were over here below; so, He took his Motives from that place, where his Kingdom first began, and where it was at last to end; from those *Rewards* and *Punishments* in a future State, which had no relation to this World: And, to shew that his *Kingdom was not of* this World, all the *Sanctions* which he thought fit to give to *His* Laws, were *not of this World at all.*

St Paul understood this so well, that He gives an Account of His own Conduct, and that of Others in the same Station, in these words, *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men*: whereas, in too many *Christian Countries*, since his days, if Some, who profess to succeed *Him*, were to give an Account of their own Conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain; *Knowing the terrors of this World, and having them in our power, We do, not persuade men, but force their outward Profession against their inward Persuasion.*

Now, wherever *this* is practis'd, whether in a great degree, or a small, in that place there is so far a Change, from a

Kingdom which *is not of this world*, to a *Kingdom* which *is of this world*. As soon as ever you hear of any of the *Engines* of *this world*, whether of the greater, or the lesser sort, you must immediately think that then, and so far, the *Kingdom of this world* takes place. For, if the very Essence of *God's* worship be Spirit and Truth; If *Religion* be *Virtue* and *Charity*, under the *Belief* of a Supreme Governour and Judge; if True Real *Faith* cannot be the effect of *Force*; and, if there can be no *Reward* where there is no *Willing Choice*: then, in all, or any of these Cases, to apply Force or Flattery, Worldly pleasure or pain; is to act contrary to the Interests of True *Religion*, as it is plainly opposite to the Maxims upon which *Christ* founded his Kingdom; who chose the *Motives* which are *not of this world*, to support a *Kingdom* which *is not of this world*. And indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that wherever the *Rewards* and *Punishments* are changed, from future to present, from the World to come, to the World now in possession; there, the *Kingdom* founded by our *Saviour* is, in the Nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what He professed, *His Kingdom Was not*: that is, *of this World*; of the same sort with other Common *Earthly* Kingdoms, in which the Rewards are, Worldly Honours, Posts, Offices, Pomp, Attendance, Dominion; and the Punishments are, Prisons, Fines, Banishments, Gallies and Racks; or something Less, of the same sort.

If *these* can be the true supports of a *Kingdom* which is *not of this World*; then Sincerity, and Hypocrisy; Religion, and No Religion; Force, and Persuasion; A Willing Choice, and a Terrified Heart; are become the same things: Truth and Falshood stand in need of the same methods, to propagate and support them; and our *Saviour* himself was little acquainted with the *Right* way of increasing the Number of such *Subjects*, as He wished for. If he had but at first enlighten'd the *Powers* of *this World*, as He did St *Paul*; and employed the *Sword* which They bore, and the *Favours* They had in their hands, to bring *Subjects* into his *Kingdom*; this had been an

Expeditious and an effectual way, according to the Conduct of some of his professed Followers, to have had a glorious and Extensive Kingdom, or Church. But this was not his Design; unless it could be compassed in quite a different way.

And therefore, when you see *Our Lord*, in *his* methods, so far removed from Those of Many of his Disciples; when You read Nothing, in his Doctrine about his own *Kingdom*, of taking in the Concerns of this World, and mixing them with those of Eternity; no Commands that the Frowns and Discouragements of this present State should in any Case attend upon Conscience and Religion; No Rules against the Enquiry of All His Subjects into his *Original Message* from Heaven; no Orders for the kind and charitable force of *Penalties*, or *Capital Punishments*, to make Men think and choose aright; no Calling upon the *secular Arm*, whenever the *Magistrate* should become *Christian*, to inforce his Doctrines, or to back his *Spiritual Authority*; but, on the contrary, as plain a Declaration as a few Words can make, that *His Kingdom is not of this World*: I say, when you see this, from the whole Tenor of the *Gospel*, so vastly opposite to Many who take his name into their Mouths, the Question with you ought to be, Whether He did not know the Nature of his own *Kingdom*, or *Church*, better than Any since his Time? whether you can suppose, He left any such matters to be decided against *Himself*, and his own Express professions; and, whether if an *Angel from Heaven* should give you any Account of his *Kingdom*, contrary to what He himself hath done, it can be of any Weight, or Authority, with Christians.

I have now made some such observations, drawn from the *Church* being the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, and not of any *Men* in that *Kingdom*; from the *Nature* of his *Laws*, and from those *Rewards* and *Punishments*, which are the Sanctions of those Laws; as lead us naturally into the true *Notion* of the *Church*, or *Kingdom*, of *Christ*, by excluding out of it every *thing* inconsistent with *His* being *King*, *Law-giver* and *Judge*; as well as with the Nature of His *Laws*, and of His promises and Threatenings.

I will only make two or three Observations, grounded upon this: And so conclude. And

1. From what hath been said it is very plain, in general, that the Grossest Mistakes in Judgment, about the Nature of *Christ's Kingdom*, or *Church*, have arisen from hence, that Men have argued from Other visible *Societies*, and Other Visible *Kingdoms of this World*, to what ought to be Visible, and Sensible, in *His Kingdom*: Constantly leaving out of their *Notion*, the most Essential Part of it, that *Christ* is *King* in his own Kingdom; forgetting this *King* himself, because He is not now seen by mortal Eyes; and Substituting *Others* in his Place, as *Law-givers* and *Judges*, in the same Points, in which He must either *Alone*, or not at all, be *Law-giver* and *Judge*; not contented with such a *Kingdom* as He established, and desires to reign in; but urging and contending, that His *Kingdom* must be like *Other Kingdoms*. Whereas He hath positively warn'd them against any such Arguings, by assuring Them that this *Kingdom* is *His Kingdom*, and that it is *not of this World*; and therefore that No *one* of *His Subjects* is *Law-giver* and *Judge* over *Others* of them, in matters relating to *Salvation*, but *He* alone; and that We must not Frame our Ideas from the *Kingdoms of this World*, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible manner, in *His Kingdom*.

2. From what hath been said it appears that the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, which is the *Church* of *Christ*, is the *Number* of Persons who are Sincerely, and Willingly *Subjects* to *Him*, as *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in all matters truly relating to Conscience, or Eternal Salvation. And the more close and immediate this Regard to *Him* is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that They are of his *Kingdom*. This may appear fully to their own Satisfaction, if They have recourse to *Him* himself, in the *Gospel*; if They think it a sufficient Authority that He hath declared the *Conditions* of their *Salvation*, and that No Man upon Earth hath any Authority to declare any other, or to add one tittle to them; if They resolve to perform what They see, He laith a stress upon; and if They trust no mortal,

with the absolute direction of their *Consciences*, the pardon of their Sins, or the determining of their Interest in God's favour; but wait for their Judge, who alone can bring to light *the hidden things of darkness*.

If they feel themselves disposed and resolved to receive the Words of *Eternal Life* from *Himself*; to take their *Faith* from what He himself *once delivered*, who knew better than all the rest of the World what He required of his own Subjects; to direct their Worship by his Rule, and their whole practice by the General Law which He laid down: if They feel themselves in this disposition, They may be very certain that They are truly his *Subjects*, and Members of his *Kingdom*. Nor need they envy the Happiness of *Others*, who may think it a much more evident Mark of their belonging to the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, that They have *other* Law-givers, and Judges, in Christ's Religion, beside Jesus Christ; that They have recourse not to *his own* Words, but the Words of *Others* who profess to interpret them; that They are ready to Submit to this *Interpretation*, let it be what it will; that They have set up to Themselves the *Idol* of an unintelligible *Authority*, both in *Belief*, and *Worship*, and *Practice*; in Words, *under* Jesus Christ, but in deed and in truth *over* Him; as it removes the minds of his *Subjects* from *Himself*, to Weak, and passionate Men; and as it claims the same Rule and Power in *his Kingdom*, which he himself *alone* can have. But,

3. This will be *Another observation*, that it evidently destroys the *Rule* and *Authority* of *Jesus Christ*, as *King*, to set up any Other *Authority* in *His* Kingdom, to which His Subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to Submit their Consciences, or their Conduct, in what is properly called Religion. There are some Professed Christians, who contend openly for such an *Authority*, as indispensably obliges All around Them to Unity of Profession; that is, to Profess even what They do not, what They cannot, believe to be true. This sounds so grossly, that *Others*, who think They act a glorious part in opposing such an Enormity, are very willing,

for their own sakes, to retain such an *Authority*, as shall oblige Men, whatever They themselves think, though not to profess what They do not believe, yet, to forbear the *profession* and *publication* of what They do believe, let them believe it of never so great Importance.

Both these *Pretensions* are founded upon the mistaken *Notion* of the *Peace*, as well as *Authority*, of the *Kingdom*, that is the *Church*, of *Christ*. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a Christian mind, I am not able to say: because They both equally found the *Authority* of the *Church* of *Christ*, upon the ruines of Sincerity and Common Honesty, and mistake Stupidity and Sleep, for Peace; because They would both equally have prevented *All Reformation* where it hath been, and will for ever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, because both equally devest *Jesus Christ* of his *Empire* in *his own* Kingdom; set the obedience of his Subjects loose from Himself; and teach them to prostitute their *Consciences* at the feet of *Others*, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them.

The *Peace* of *Christ's Kingdom* is a manly and Reasonable *Peace*; built upon Charity, and Love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another, as God receives us. As for any other Peace; founded upon a Submission of our *Honesty*, as well as our *Understandings*; it is falsely so called. It is not the *Peace* of the *Kingdom* of *Christ*; but the *Lethargy* of it: and a *Sleep unto Death*, when his *Subjects* shall throw off their relation to Him; fix their subjection to Others; and even in Cases, where They have a right to see, and where they think They see, his Will otherwise, shall shut their Eyes and go blindfold at the Command of *Others*; because those *Others* are not pleas'd with their Enquiries into the Will of their great Lord and Judge.

To conclude, The *Church of Christ* is the *Kingdom of Christ*. He is *King* in his own Kingdom. He is Sole *Law-giver* to his Subjects, and Sole *Judge*, in matters relating to Salvation. His Laws and Sanctions are plainly fixed: and relate to the Favour of God, and not at all to the Rewards, or Penalties,

of this World. All his Subjects are *equally* his Subjects; and, as such, *equally* without Authority to alter, to add to, or to interpret, his Laws so as to claim the absolute Submission of *Others* to such Interpretation. And All are *His Subjects*, and in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed by *Him*. Their *Faith* was *once* delivered by *Him*. The Conditions of their Happiness were *once* laid down by *Him*. The Nature of *God's Worship* was *once* declared by *Him*. And it is easy to judge, whether of the Two is most becoming a *Subject* of the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, that is, a *Member* of his *Church*; to seek all these particulars in those plain and short Declarations of their *King* and *Law-giver* himself: or to hunt after Them thro' the infinite contradictions, the numberless perplexities, the endless disputes, of *Weak Men*, in several Ages, till the Enquirer himself is lost in the Labyrinth, and perhaps sits down in Despair, or Infidelity. If *Christ* be our *King*, let us shew ourselves *Subjects* to *Him* alone, in the great affair of Conscience and Eternal Salvation: and, without fear of Man's judgment, live and act as becomes Those who wait for the appearance of an All-knowing and Impartial Judge; even *that King*, whose *Kingdom is not of this World.*

A Sermon preach'd before the King at the Royal Chapel at St James's on Sunday March 31, 1717.

4. CHURCH AUTHORITY REAL THOUGH NOT ABSOLUTE

William Law

[*See note on* p. 93]

Of the many pamphlets called forth by Hoadly's Sermon, none was more effective than Law's *Letter* (1717), from which the following passages are taken.

Your Lordship saith, you can't help it, if People will charge you with *Evil Intentions* and *Bad Views*. I intend no such Charge: But I wonder, your Lordship should think it hard,

that any one should infer from these Places, that you *are against the Interest of the Church of* England.

For, my Lord, cannot the *Quakers*, *Muggletonians*, *Deists*, *Presbyterians*, assert you as much in their Interest as we can? Have you said any thing for us, or done any thing for us in this *Preservative*, but what you have equally done for them? Your Lordship is ours, as you fill a Bishoprick; but we are at a loss to discover from this Discourse what other Interest we have in your Lordship: For you openly expose our Communion, and give up all the Advantages of it, by telling all sorts of People, if they are but sincere in their own way, they are as much in God's Favour as any body else. Is this supporting our Interest, my Lord?

Suppose a Friend of King George should declare it to all Britains whatever, that tho' they were divided into Five Thousand different Parties, to set up different Pretenders; yet if they were but Sincere in their Designs, they would be as much in the Favour of God, as those who are most firmly attach'd to his Majesty. Does your Lordship think, such a one would be thought any great Friend to the Government? And, my Lord, is not this the Declaration you made as to the Church of England? Have you not told all Parties, that their Sincerity is enough? Have you said so much as one Word in Recommendation of our Communion: Or, if it was not for your Church-Character in the Title-Page of this Discourse, could any one alive conceive what Communion you was of? Nay, a Reader, that was a Stranger, would imagine, that he who will allow no Difference between Communions, is himself of no Communion. Your Lordship, for ought I know, may act according to the strictest Sincerity, and may think it your Duty to undermine the Foundations of the Church. I am only surprized, that you should refuse to own the Reasonableness of such a Charge. Your Lordship hath cancell'd all our Obligations to any particular Communion, upon pretence of Sincerity.

* * * *

A little Knowledge of Human Nature will teach us, that our Sincerity may be often charged with Guilt; not as if we were guilty because we are sincere; but because it may be our Fault that we are hearty and sincere in such or such ill-grounded Opinions. It may have been from some ill Conduct of our own, some Irregularities, or Abuse of our Faculties, that we conceive things as we do, and are fix'd in such or such Tenets. And can we think so much owing to a *Sincerity* in Opinions, contracted by ill Habits and guilty Behaviour? There are several faulty Ways, by which People may cloud and prejudice their Understandings, and throw themselves in a very odd Way of thinking; for some Cause or other *God may send them a strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie.* And will your Lordship say, that those who are thus sunk into Errors, it may be, through their own ill Conduct, or as a Judgment of God upon them, are as much in his Favour, as those that love and adhere to the Truth? This, my Lord, is a shocking Opinion, and has given Numbers of Christians great Offence, as contradicting common Sence and plain Scripture; as setting all Religion upon the Level as to the Favour of God.

* * * *

Dr *Snape* says, you represent the Church of Christ as a Kingdom, in which Christ neither acts himself, nor hath invested any one else with Authority to act for him. At this your Lordship cries, *Lay your Hand upon your Heart, and ask, Is this a Christian, Human, Honest Representation of what your own Eyes read in my Sermon?*

My Lord, I have dealt as sincerely with my Heart as it is possible; and I must confess, I take the Doctor's Representation to be Christian and Honest. For tho' you sometimes contend against Absolute and Indispensable Authority; yet it is plain, that you strike at all Authority, and assert, as the Doctor saith, that Christ hath not invested any one on Earth with an Authority to act for him.

You expressly say, *That as to the Affairs of Conscience and Eternal Salvation, Christ hath left no Visible Human Authority behind him.*

Now, my Lord, is not this saying, that he has left no Authority at all? For Christ came with no other Authority Himself: But as to Conscience and Salvation, he erected a Kingdom which related to nothing but Conscience and Salvation: And therefore they who have no Authority as to Conscience and Salvation, have no Authority at all in his Kingdom. Conscience and Salvation are the only Affairs of that Kingdom.

Your Lordship denies, that any one has Authority in these Affairs; and yet you take it ill to be charged with asserting, that Christ hath not invested any one with Authority for him. How can any one act for him, but in his Kingdom? How can they act in his Kingdom, if they have nothing to do with Conscience and Salvation, when his Kingdom is concerned with nothing else?

Again, your Lordship saith, that no one of them (Christians) *any more than another, hath Authority either to make new Laws for Christ's Subjects, or to impose a Sense upon the old ones; or to Judge, Censure or Punish the Servants of another Master, in Matters purely relating to Conscience.*

I can meet with no Divine, my Lord, either Juror or Non-Juror, High or Low, Churchman or Dissenter, that does not think your Lordship has plainly asserted in these Passages, what the Doctor has laid to your Charge, *that no one is invested with Authority from Christ to act for him.*

* * * *

It plainly appears, That every Reason you have offered against Church-Authority, concludes with as much Strength, against *all* Authority, as that which is *Absolute.* And therefore Dr *Snape* has done you no Injury in charging you with the Denial of *All* Authority.

There happens, My Lord, to be *only* this Difference between your Sermon and the Defence of it, that That is so many Pages against Church-Authority, *as such,* and This is

a Confutation of the *Pope's Infallibility*. It is very strange, that so *Clear a Writer*, who has been so long enquiring into the Nature of *Government*, should not be able to make himself be understood upon it: That your Lordship should be only preaching against the Pope; and yet *All the Lower House of Convocation* should unanimously conceive, that your Doctrine therein deliver'd, tended to *subvert all Government and Discipline in the Church of Christ.*

And, my Lord, it will appear from what follows, that your Lordship is even of the same Opinion your self; and that you imagin'd, you had banish'd *all* Authority, *as such*, out of the Church, by those Arguments you had offered against an *Absolute Authority*. This is plain, from the following Passage; where you ridicule *that* which Dr *Snape* took to be *an Authority*, though not Absolute. When Dr *Snape* said, That no Church-Authority was to be obeyed in any thing contrary to the Reveal'd Will of God, your Lordship triumphs thus: *Glorious Absolute Authority, indeed, in your own Account, to which Christ's Subjects owe no Obedience, till they have examined into his own Declarations; and then they obey not this Authority, but him.*[1]

Here you make nothing of that Authority which is not Absolute; and yet you think it hard to be told, that you have taken away all *Church-Authority*. That which is Absolute, you expressly deny; and here you say, that which is not Absolute is nothing at all. Where then is the *Authority* you have left? Or how is it that Christ has impower'd any one to act in his Name?

Your Lordship fights safe under the Protection of the Word Absolute; but your Aim is at all Church-Power. And your Lordship makes too hasty an Inference, that because it is not Absolute, it is none at all. If you ask, where you have made this Inference, it is on occasion of the above-mentioned Triumph; where your Lordship makes it an insignificant Authority, which is only to be obey'd so long as it is not contrary to Scripture.

[1] *Answer*, p. 27.

Your Lordship seems to think, all is lost, as to Church-Power; because the Doctor does not claim an *Absolute one*; but allows it to be subject to Scripture: As if *all* Authority was *Absolute*, or else nothing at all. I shall therefore consider the Nature of this Church-Power, and shew, that though it is not *Absolute*, yet it is a Real Authority, and is not such a mere Notion as your Lordship makes it.

An *Absolute Authority*, according to your Lordship, is, what is to be always obeyed by every Individual that is subject to it, in all Circumstances. This is an Authority that we utterly deny to the Church. But, I presume, there may be an *Authority* inferiour to this, which is nevertheless, a *Real* Authority, and is to be esteemed as such, and that for these Reasons:

First, I hope, it will be allow'd me, that our Saviour came into the World with Authority. But it was not lawful for the *Jews* to receive him, if they thought his Appearance not agreeable to those Marks and Characters they had of him in their Scriptures. May I not here say, my Lord, *Glorious Authority of Christ indeed, to which the Jews ow'd no Obedience, till they had examined their Scriptures; and then they obey, not Him, but Them!*

Again, The Apostles were sent into the World with Authority: But yet, those who thought their Doctrines unworthy of God, and unsuitable to the Principles of Natural Religion, were obliged not to obey them. *Glorious Authority indeed, of the Apostles, to whom Mankind ow'd no Obedience, till they had First examin'd their own Notions of God and Religion; and then they obeyed, not the Apostles, but Them.*

I hope, my Lord, it may be allow'd, that the Sacraments are Real Means of Grace: But it is certain, they are only *conditionally* so, if those that partake of them, are endowed with suitable Dispositions of Piety and Vertue. *Glorious Means of Grace of the Sacraments, which is only obtained by such pious Dispositions; and then it is owing to the* Dispositions, *and not the* Sacraments. Now, my Lord, if there can be such a thing

as instituted *Real* Means of Grace, which are only *conditionally apply'd*, I cannot see, why there may not be an instituted Real Authority in the Church, which is only to be *conditionally* obey'd.

Your Lordship has written a great many Elaborate Pages to prove the *English* Government Limited; and that no Obedience is due to it, but whilst it preserves our Fundamentals; and, I suppose, the People are to judge for themselves, whether these are safe, or not. *Glorious Authority of the* English *Government, which is to be obeyed no longer than the People think it their Interest to obey it.*

Will your Lordship say, There is *no Authority* in the *English* Government, because only a *Conditional Obedience* is due to it, whilst we think it supports our Fundamentals? Why then must the *Church-Authority* be reckoned nothing at all, because only a *Rational Conditional* Obedience is to be paid, whilst we think it not contrary to Scripture? Is a Limited, Conditional Government in the State, such a Wise, Excellent, and Glorious Constitution? And is the same Authority in the Church, such Absurdity, nonsence, and nothing at all, as to any actual Power?

If there be such a thing as Obedience upon Rational Motives, there must be such a thing as Authority that is not Absolute, or that does not require a *Blind, Implicit* Obedience. Indeed, Rational Creatures can obey no other Authority; they must have Reasons for what they do. And yet because the Church claims only this *Rational* Obedience, your Lordship explodes *such* Authority as none at all.

Yet it must be granted, that *no other* Obedience was due to the *Prophets*, or our *Saviour* and his Apostles: They were only to be obey'd by those who Thought their Doctrines *worthy* of God. So that if the Church has *no* Authority, because we must first consult the Scriptures, before we obey it; neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles, had *any Authority*, because the *Jews* were first to consult their Scriptures, and the *Heathen* their Reason, before they obey'd 'em. And yet this is all that

is said against *Church-Authority*; That because they are to judge of the *Lawfulness* of its Injunctions, therefore they owe it no Obedience: Which false Conclusion, I hope, is enough exposed.

The Bishop of Bangor's Late Sermon, *and his letter to Dr Snape in defence of it, answer'd. And the Dangerous Nature of some Doctrines in his* Preservative, *set forth in a Letter to his Lordship.*

5. THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

William Warburton

WILLIAM WARBURTON (1698–1779), critic, controversialist and Divine, from 1760 Bishop of Gloucester, was a prominent figure in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. In 1738–1739 he published a "Vindication" of Pope's *Essay on Man* which gave great satisfaction to the poet and led to a close association between the two men. When Pope died in 1744 he left Warburton proprietor of all his works on which Warburton had written or should write commentaries. Shortly after Pope's death Warburton edited the *Dunciad* and in 1751 published a general edition of Pope's works.

Warburton's chief contribution to theology was the once famous but now forgotten defence of the Old Testament Revelation, *The Divine Legation of Moses* (vol. I, 1738; vol. II, 1741). In this book he accepts the position that Moses did not teach a future state of rewards and punishments, and then argues paradoxically that since this belief is ordinarily necessary to the well being of society, its absence from the Mosaic dispensation proves that Moses was supported by Revelation (see Lessing's reference to Warburton, pp. 176 f. above).

Warburton was a violent controversialist and flung himself self-confidently upon the greatest of his contemporaries including Wesley and Hume. His last encounter was with Robert Lowth (see pp. 229 f. above) whose views on the Book of Job in the Lectures on Hebrew Poetry were made the object of a fierce onslaught in the fourth edition of vol. II of the *Divine Legation* (1765). Lowth's biting answer marked the end of Warburton's reign (see Mark Pattison, *Essays*, vol. II, pp. 135 ff.).

The Alliance between Church and State (1736), from which the following passages are taken, was one of his earlier works, and perhaps the most successful book he wrote. It attained a tenth edition in 1846. Accepting Locke's fundamental conception of the Church as a voluntary society independent of the State, he proceeds to defend the limitation imposed upon this principle by the existence of a Test Law, enacted by the State to protect the Church.

THE NATURE OF THE UNION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

The conferring on the Supreme Magistrate, the TITLE OF HEAD OF THE CHURCH, *is by no Means inconsistent with the Nature of our holy Religion.* This *Title* hath been misrepresented by the Enemies of our happy Establishment, as the setting up a Legislator, in *Christ's Kingdom*, in the Place of *Christ*. But it hath been shewn, that no other Jurisdiction is given to the Civil Magistrate by this *Supremacy* than the Church, as a mere political Body, exercised before the Convention. This with regard to the Title of *Head of the Church*, the famous Act 26 *Hen.* VIII. *c.* 1. explicitely declares, "The King, his Heirs, and Successors, shall be taken and reputed the only SUPREME HEAD in Earth, of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND—And shall have full Power from time to time, to visit, reform, correct, and amend all such Errors, Heresies, and Enormities whatsoever they be, which BY ANY MANNER OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY OR JURISDICTION ARE OR LAWFULLY MAY BE REFORMED, ordered, corrected, or amended". That is, which the Church, as a Society or Political Body, was before empowered to do. For only in that Capacity hath she this Power. From hence it follows, that if the Magistrate's Jurisdiction be an Usurpation on the Rights of *Christ's Kingdom*, so likewise was the Church's. That the Church's was no Usurpation, but perfectly consistent with the Rights of *Christ's Kingdom* may be thus proved; *Judaism* was, in every Sense, as strictly, at least, and properly the *Kingdom of God*, as *Christianity* is the *Kingdom of Christ*: Yet that did not hinder, but that there was, by God's own Approbation and Allowance, an Inferior Jurisdiction in the Jewish State. What then shall make the same unlawful in the Christian Church? *This*, Both had in common, to be Political Societies by divine Appointment; but different in *this*, that God, for wise Ends, minutely prescribed the whole Mode of *Jewish* Policy: And *Christ*, on the contrary, with the same divine Wisdom, only constituted the Church a Policied Society in *general*; and left

the Mode of it to human Discretion.[1] But I suspect the Matter sticks here: these Men will not allow the Church, or Kingdom of *Christ*, to be a Society in any proper Sense. This indeed is the darling Notion of the Enemies of Establishments. It is certain, the Argument of usurping in *Christ's* Kingdom, hath no Force but on the Supposition that the Church is no proper Society. However this Subterfuge we have totally overthrown; having proved at large that the Church is indeed a Society.

THUS have we shewn the mutual Privileges *given* and *received* by Church and State, in entering into this famous *Convention*. The Aim of the State being, agreeably to its Nature, *Utility*: And the Aim of the Church, agreeably to her's, *Truth*. From whence we may observe, that as these Privileges all took their Rise, by necessary Consequence from the fundamental Article of the Convention, which was, *that the Church should serve the State, and the State protect the Church*; so they receive all possible Addition of Strength, from their mutual Dependency on one another. This we have Cause to desire may be received as a certain Mark that our *Plan of Alliance* is no precarious arbitrary Hypothesis, but a Theory founded in Reason, and the unvariable Nature of Things. For having, from the real Essence of the two Societies, collected the *Necessity* of allying, and the *Freedom* of the Compact; we have, from the *Necessity*, fairly introduced it; and, from its *Freedom*, consequentially established every mutual Term and Condition of it. So that now if the Reader should ask, "Where this Charter, or Treaty of Convention for the Union of the two Societies, on the Terms here delivered, is to be met with", we are enabled to answer him. We say, it may be found in the same *Archive* with the famous ORIGINAL COMPACT between Magistrate and People, so much insisted on, in Vindication of the common Rights of Subjects. Now when a Sight of this Compact is required of the Defenders of Civil Liberty, they hold it sufficient to say, that it is enough

[1] See Hooker's *Eccl. Pol.*

for all the Purposes of Fact and Right, that such Original Compact is the only legitimate Foundation of Civil Society; That if there were no such Thing formally executed, there was virtually; That all Differences between Magistrate and People ought to be regulated on the Supposition of such a Compact; and all Government reduced to the Principles therein laid down; for that the Happiness of which Civil Society is productive, can only be attained by it, when formed on those Principles. Now, something like this, we say of our ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.

* * * *

Let us see what it is which prevents a Man's contracting with himself. It is of the Essence of all Contracts that there be, 1. The Concurrence of two Wills; and, 2. A mutual Obligation on two Persons for the Performance of their mutual Promises. But one Man having but one *Will*, there is no *Foundation* for a Compact, which requires the Concurrence of two Wills: And having but one *Person* there is no *Efficacy* in the Compact, because no Obligation: For what a Man promises to himself, himself can acquit. Therefore an Obligation, which the obliged can destroy by the sole Act of his *Will*, is no reality. Hence it appears that a Man's contracting with himself is, of all Fancies, the most absurd.

THUS, we see, the Defect of that *Compact, of one Individual with himself*, proceeds from the Want of two *Wills* and *Persons*. If then, two Societies have really two distinct *Wills*, and two distinct *Personalities*; the Subject Matter, of which these two artificial Bodies are composed, being one and the same, cannot possibly hinder those two Societies from entering into Compact; nor that Compact from having all the Effects of such as are adjudged most real.

That two such Societies have two distinct *Wills* and Personalities I shall shew. When any Number of Men form themselves into a Society, whether Civil or Religious, that Society becomes a *Body*, different from *what* the Number of Individuals made before the Society was formed. Else the Society

would be nothing; or, in other Words, no Society would be formed. Here then is a *Body* distinct from what was made by the Number of Individuals: And is called *factitious* to difference it from the *natural Body*; being, indeed, the *Creature of* human Will. But a *Body* must have its *proper Personality and Will*, which, without *these*, is a Name, or Shadow. This Personality and Will, are neither the Personality and Will of one Individual, nor of all together. Not of one, is self evident, Not of *all*, because the MAJORITY, in this *factitious Body*, hath the Denomination of the *Person* and of the *Will* of the Society. We conclude then, that the *Will* and *Personality* of a Community are as different and distinct from the Will and Personality of the Individuals, of which it is composed, as the *Body* itself is. And, that as in the Erection of a Community, a *factitious Body* was created, so were a *factitious Personality and Will*. The reality of this *Personality* is clearly seen in the Administration of the *Law of Nations*, where two States are, in all respects, considered as two Men living in the State of Nature.

* * * *

HERE then we have two Societies, made up of one and the same Number of Individuals, with each its distinct Personality and Will; each different from those of the other, and from *those* of the Individuals. But the different *Natures* of the Societies not only make their Wills and Personalities distinct, but their different *Ends* will keep them so. For each Society being created for one certain End, it hath its own proper Views and Interests: And tho' each be so closely related to the other as to have one common *Suppositum*, yet it pursues its proper Interests only; without further Regard to the Interests of the other, than as *those* support its own. In this, the *artificial* Man, Society, is much unlike the *natural*; who being created for *several Ends* hath several Interests and Relations; and may therefore be considered *under several Capacities*, as a *Religious*, a *Civil*, a *Rational* Animal, etc. And yet they all make but one and the same Man. But one and the same

political Society cannot be considered, in one View, as a Religious; in another, as a Civil; and, in another, as a Literary Community. *One* Society can be precisely *but one* of these Communities.

A TEST LAW JUSTIFIED

The necessity of a NATIONAL RELIGION was, till of late, one of the most uncontested Principles in Politics. The practice of all Nations and the Opinions of all Writers concurred to give it Credit. To collect what the best and wisest Authors of Antiquity, where the Consent was universal, have said in favour of a *National Religion*, would be endless. We shall content ourselves with the Opinion of two modern Writers in its favour: who, being professed Advocates for the common Rights of Mankind, will, we suppose, have a favourable hearing. "This (says one of them) was ancient Policy [*viz.* the Union of the Civil and Religious Interests] and hence it is necessary that the People should have a public leading in Religion. For to deny the Magistrate a Worship, or take away a NATIONAL CHURCH, is as mere Enthusiasm as the Notion which sets up Persecution."[1] "Toward keeping Mankind in Order (says the other) it is necessary there should be some Religion professed and even ESTABLISHED."[2] Indeed not many, even now, will *directly* deny this *Necessity*; tho', by employing such Arguments against a Test as hold equally against an *Establishment*, they open a Way, tho' a little more oblique, to this Conclusion. But it is that unavoidable Consequence of an Established Church, in every Place where there are Diversities of Religions, a Test-Law, which makes the Judgments of so many revolt; and chuse rather to give up an *Establishment* than receive it with this tyrannical Attendant. Tho' it appears, at first View, so evident that, when a Church and State are in Union, he that cannot give Security for his Behaviour to *both*, may with as

[1] Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*, vol. I, Tr. i, § 2.
[2] Wollaston's *Relig. of Nature Delin.* p. 124.

much Reason be deprived of some Civil Advantages, as he, who, before the Union, could not give Security to the State alone.

The Matter, therefore, of greatest Concern remains to be enquired into; namely, how the Equity of a *Test-Law* can be deduced from those Principles of the Law of Nature and Nations, by which we have so clearly proved the Justice of an *Established Religion*. But here, as before in the Case of an Establishment, it is not our Purpose to defend this or that national Form or Mode, but a TEST-LAW in general. By which I understand *some sufficient Proof or Evidence required from those admitted into the Administration of public Affairs, of their being Members of the Religion established by Law.*

AND, in shewing the Justice, Equity, and Necessity of a *Test-Law*, I shall proceed in the Manner I set out, and have hitherto preserved, of deducing all my Conclusions, in a continued Chain of reasoning, from the simple Principles at first laid down.

HITHERTO I have considered that Alliance, between Church and State, which produces an *Establishment*, only under its more simple Form, i.e. where there is but *one* Religion in the State. But it may so happen, that, either at the Time of Convention, or afterwards, there may be *more than one.*

I. IF there be more than one at the Time of Convention, the State allies it self with the *largest* of those Religious Societies. It is *fit* the State should do so, because the larger the Religious Society is, where there is an Equality in other Points, the better enabled it will be to answer the Ends of an Alliance; as having the greatest Number under its Influence. It is *scarce possible* it should do otherwise; because the two Societies being composed of the same Individuals, the greatly prevailing Religion must have a Majority of its Members in the Assemblies of State; who will naturally prefer their own Religion to any other.

WITH this Religion is the Alliance made; and a full TOLERATION given to the rest; Yet under the Restriction

of a TEST-LAW, to keep them from hurting that which is established.

FROM this Account of the Origin of a *Test-Law* may be deduced the following COROLLARIES concerning an *Establishment*. For,

1. FROM hence may be seen the Reason why the *Episcopal* is the *Established* Church, in *England*; and the *Presbyterian*, the *Established* Church in *Scotland*; and the Equity of that Conversion, which our Adversaries have represented to be so egregious an Absurdity, in Point of Right, as is sufficient to discredit the Reason of all *Establishments*.

2. HENCE we may see too the Reason of what we before observed, concerning the Duration of this *Alliance*: That it is *perpetual*, but not *irrevocable*, *i.e.* It subsists just so long as the Church, thereby *Established*, maintains its Superiority of Extent: Which when it loses to any considerable Degree, the Alliance becomes void. For the united Church being then no longer able to perform its Part of the Convention, which is formed on reciprocal Conditions, the State becomes disengaged. And a *new Alliance* is, of course, contracted with the now prevailing Church, for the Reasons which made the *Old*. Thus, formerly, the Alliance between the *Pagan Church* and the Empire of *Rome* was dissolved; and the *Christian* established, in its Place: And, of late, the Alliance between the *Popish* Church and the Kingdom of *England* was broken; and another made with the *Protestant*, in its stead.

II. IF these different Religions spring up *after* the Alliance hath been formed; then, whenever they become considerable, a *Test-Law* is necessary, for the Security of the *Established Church*. For amongst Diversities of Religions, where every one thinks itself the *only true*, or, at least, the *most pure*, every one aims at rising on the Ruins of the rest:[1] which it calls,

[1] See an Historical Narration of the Conduct of the early *Puritans* to make their Discipline National in spight of the Civil Magistrate, in a curious Account printed 1593, and intitled, *Dangerous Positions and Proceedings published and practised within this Island of Brytaine, under pretence of Reformation and for the Presbiterial Discipline.*

bringing into Conformity with itself. The Means of doing this when Reason fails, which is rarely at hand, and more rarely heard when it is, will be by getting into the public Administration, and applying the Civil Power to the Work. But, when one of these Religions is the *Established*, and the rest under a *Toleration*, then Envy at the Advantages of an *Establishment* will join the *Tolerated* Churches in confederacy against it, and unite them in one common attack to disturb its Quiet. In this imminent Danger, the *Allied* Church calls upon the State, for the Performance of its Contract; which thereupon gives her a TEST-LAW for her Security: whereby the Entrance into the Administration (the only way, the threatened Mischief is effected) is shut to all but Members of the established Church. So when the *Sectaries*, in the Time of Charles the First, had, for want of *this Law*, subverted the *Church* of *England*; as soon as the Government was restored and replaced on its old Foundations, the Legislature thought fit to make a *Test-Law*, (tho' with the latest, and, what was worse, with the narrowest Views) to prevent a Repetition of the like Disasters.

The Alliance between Church and State, Book II, chs. 3, 5; Book III, ch. 1.

6. ESTABLISHMENT TO BE JUSTIFIED BY ITS UTILITY

William Paley

[*See note on* pp. 36 f.]

"A Religious establishment is no part of Christianity; it is only the means of inculcating it." Amongst the Jews, the rights and offices, the order, family, and succession of the priesthood were marked out by the authority which declared the law itself. These, therefore, were *parts* of the Jewish religion, as well as the means of transmitting it. Not so with the new institution.—It cannot be proved that any form of

church government was laid down in the Christian, as it had been in the Jewish scriptures, with a view of fixing a constitution for succeeding ages; and which constitution, consequently, the disciples of Christianity would, every where, and at all times, by the very law of their religion, be obliged to adopt. Certainly no command for this purpose was delivered by Christ himself; and if it be shewn that the apostles ordained bishops and presbyters amongst their first converts, it must be remembered that deacons also and deaconesses were appointed by them, with functions very dissimilar to any which obtain in the church at present. The truth seems to have been, that such offices were at first erected in the Christian church, as the good order, the instruction, and the exigencies of the society at that time required, without any intention, at least without any declared design, of regulating the appointment, authority, or the distinction of Christian ministers under future circumstances. This reserve, if we may so call it, in the Christian Legislator, is sufficiently accounted for by two considerations: First, that no precise constitution could be framed, which would suit with the condition of Christianity in its primitive state, and with that which it was to assume, when it should be advanced into a national religion. Secondly, that a particular designation of office or authority amongst the ministers of the new religion might have so interfered with the arrangements of civil policy, as to have formed, in some countries, a considerable obstacle to the progress and reception of the religion itself.

The authority therefore of a church establishment is founded in its utility: and whenever, upon this principle, we deliberate concerning the form, propriety, or comparative excellency of different establishments, the single view, under which we ought to consider any one of them, is that of a "scheme of instruction": the single end we ought to propose by them is, "the preservation and communication of religious knowledge". Every other idea, and every other end that have been mixed with this, as the making of the church

an engine, or even *an ally* of the state; converting it into the means of strengthening or of diffusing influence; or regarding it as a support of regal in opposition to popular forms of government, have served only to debase the institution, and to introduce into it numerous corruptions and abuses.

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The argument, then, by which ecclesiastical establishments are defended, proceeds by these steps. The knowledge and profession of Christianity cannot be upheld without a clergy; a clergy cannot be supported without a legal provision; a legal provision for the clergy cannot be constituted without the preference of one sect of Christians to the rest: and the conclusion will be satisfactory in the degree in which the truth of these several propositions can be made out.

If it be deemed expedient to establish a national religion, that is to say, one sect in preference to all others, some test, by which the teachers of that sect may be distinguished from the teachers of different sects, appears to be an indispensable consequence. The existence of such an establishment supposes it: the very notion of a national religion includes that of a test. But this necessity, which is real, hath, according to the fashion of human affairs, furnished to almost every church a pretence for extending, multiplying and continuing such tests beyond what the occasion justified. For though some purposes of order and tranquillity may be answered by the establishment of creeds and confessions, yet they are at all times attended with serious inconveniences. They check enquiry; they violate liberty; they ensnare the consciences of the clergy by holding out temptations to prevarication; however they may express the persuasion, or be accommodated to the controversies, or to the fears of the age in which they are composed, in process of time, and by reason of the changes which are wont to take place in the judgment of mankind upon religious subjects, they come at length to contradict the actual opinions of the church, whose doctrines they profess to contain; and they often perpetuate the pro-

scription of sects and tenets, from which any danger has long ceased to be apprehended.

It may not follow from these objections that tests and subscriptions ought to be abolished, but it follows that they ought to be made as simple and easy as possible; that they should be adapted from time to time to the varying sentiments and circumstances of the church in which they are received; and that they should at no time advance one step farther than some subsisting necessity requires. If, for instance, promises of conformity to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the church, be sufficient to prevent confusion and disorder in the celebration of divine worship, then such promises ought to be accepted in the place of stricter subscriptions. If articles of *peace*, as they are called, that is, engagements not to preach certain doctrines, nor to revive certain controversies, would exclude indecent altercations amongst the national clergy, as well as secure to the public teaching of religion as much of uniformity and quiet as is necessary to edification; then confessions of *faith* ought to be converted into articles of peace. In a word, it ought to be held a sufficient reason for relaxing the terms of subscription, or for dropping any or all of the articles to be subscribed, that no *present* necessity requires the strictness which is complained of, or that it should be extended to so many points of doctrine.

The division of the country into districts, and the stationing in each district a teacher of religion, forms the substantial part of every church establishment. The varieties that have been introduced into the government and discipline of different churches are of inferior importance, when compared with this, in which they all agree. Of these oeconomical questions, none seems more material than that which has been long agitated in the reformed churches of Christendom, whether a parity amongst the clergy, or a distinction of orders in the ministry, be more conducive to the general ends of the institution? In favour of that system which the laws of this country have preferred, we may allege the following

reasons; that it secures tranquillity and subordination amongst the clergy themselves; that it corresponds with the gradations of rank in civil life, and provides for the edification of each rank, by stationing in each an order of clergy of their own class and quality; and lastly, that the same fund produces more effect, both as an allurement to men of talents to enter into the church, and as a stimulus to the industry of those who are already in it, when distributed into prizes of different value, than when divided into equal shares.

After the state has once established a particular system of faith as a national religion, a question will soon occur, concerning the treatment and toleration of those who *dissent* from it. This question is properly preceded by another, concerning the right which the civil magistrate possesses to interfere in matters of religion at all: for although this right be acknowledged whilst he is employed solely in providing means of public instruction, it will probably be disputed, indeed it ever has been, when he proceeds to inflict penalties, to impose restraints or incapacities, on the account of religious distinctions. They who acknowledge no other just original of civil government, than what is founded in some stipulation with its subjects, are at liberty to contend that the concerns of religion were excepted out of the social compact; that in an affair which can only be transacted between God and a man's own conscience, no commission or authority was ever delegated to the civil magistrate, or could indeed be transferred from the person himself to any other. We, however, who have rejected this theory, because we cannot discover any actual contract between the state and the people, and because we cannot allow an arbitrary fiction to be made the foundation of real rights and of real obligations, find ourselves precluded from this distinction. The reasoning which deduces the authority of civil government from the will of God, and which collects that will from public expediency alone, binds us to the unreserved conclusion, that the jurisdiction of the magistrate is limited by no consideration but that of general

utility: in plainer terms, that whatever be the subject to be regulated, it is lawful for him to interfere, whenever his interference, in its general tendency, appears to be conducive to the common interest. There is nothing in the nature of religion, as *such*, which exempts it from the authority of the legislator, when the safety or welfare of the community requires his interposition. It has been said, indeed, that religion, pertaining to the interests of a life to come, lies beyond the province of civil government, the office of which is confined to the affairs of this life. But in reply to this objection, it may be observed, that when the laws interfere even in religion, they interfere only with temporals: their effects terminate, their power operates only upon those rights and interests, which confessedly belong to their disposal. The acts of the legislature, the edicts of the prince, the sentence of the judge, cannot effect my salvation; nor do they, without the most absurd arrogance, pretend to any such power; but they may deprive me of liberty, of property, and even of life itself, on account of my religion; and however I may complain of the injustice of the sentence, by which I am condemned, I cannot allege, that the magistrate has transgressed the boundaries of his jurisdiction; because the property, the liberty, and the life of the subject, *may* be taken away by the authority of the laws, for any reason, which, in the judgment of the legislature, renders such a measure necessary to the common welfare. Moreover, as the precepts of religion may regulate all the offices of life, or may be so construed as to extend to all, the exemption of religion from the control of human laws might afford a plea, which would exclude civil government from every authority over the conduct of its subjects. Religious liberty is like civil liberty, not an immunity from restraint, but the being restrained by no law, but what in a greater degree conduces to the public welfare.

Still it is right "to obey God rather than man". Nothing that we have said encroaches upon the truth of this sacred and undisputed maxim: the right of the magistrate to ordain,

and the obligation of the subject to obey, in matters of religion, may be very different; and will be so as often as they flow from opposite apprehensions of the divine will. In affairs that are properly of a civil nature, in "the things that are Caesar's", this difference seldom happens. The law authorizes the act which it enjoins; revelation being either silent upon the subject, or referring to the laws of the country, or requiring only that men act by some fixed rule, and that this rule be established by competent authority. But when human laws interpose their direction in matters of religion, by dictating, for example, the object or the mode of divine worship; by prohibiting the profession of some articles of faith, and by exacting that of others, they are liable to clash with what private persons believe to be already settled by precepts of revelation, or to contradict what God himself, they think, hath declared to be true. In this case, on whichever side the mistake lies, or whatever plea the state may allege to justify its edict, the subject can have none to excuse his compliance. The same consideration also points out the distinction, as to the authority of the state, between temporals and spirituals. The magistrate is not to be obeyed in one, any more than in the other, where any repugnancy is perceived between his commands, and certain credited manifestations of the divine will; but such repugnancies are much less likely to arise in one case than the other.

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The justice and expediency of toleration we found primarily in its conduciveness to truth, and in the superior value of truth to that of any other quality which a religion can possess: this is the principal argument; but there are some auxiliary considerations too important to be omitted. The confining of the subject to the religion of the state, is a needless violation of natural liberty, and in an instance in which constraint is always grievous. Persecution produces no sincere conviction, nor any real change of opinion; on the contrary, it vitiates the public morals, by driving men to prevarication,

and commonly ends in a general though secret infidelity, by imposing, under the name of revealed religion, systems of doctrine which men cannot believe, and dare not examine: finally, it disgraces the character, and wounds the reputation of Christianity itself, by making it the author of oppression, cruelty, and bloodshed.

Under the idea of religious toleration I include the toleration of all books of serious argumentation; but I deem it no infringement of religious liberty to restrain the circulation of ridicule, invective, and mockery upon religious subjects; because this species of writing applies solely to the passions, weakens the judgment, and contaminates the imagination of its readers; has no tendency whatever to assist either the investigation or the impression of truth; on the contrary, whilst it stays not to distinguish the character or authority of different religions, it destroys alike the influence of all.

Concerning the admission of dissenters from the established religion to offices and employments in the public service, which is necessary to render toleration *complete*, doubts have been entertained with some appearance of reason. It is possible that such religious opinions may be holden as are utterly incompatible with the necessary functions of civil government; and which opinions consequently disqualify those who maintain them from exercising any share in its administration. There have been enthusiasts who held that Christianity has abolished all distinction of property, and that she enjoins upon her followers a community of goods. With what tolerable propriety could one of this sect be appointed a judge or a magistrate, whose office it is to decide upon questions of private right, and to protect men in the exclusive enjoyment of their property? It would be equally absurd to entrust a military command to a quaker, who believes it to be contrary to the Gospel to take up arms. This is possible; therefore it cannot be laid down as an universal truth, that religion is not in its nature a cause which will justify exclusion from public employments. When we ex-

amine, however, the sects of Christianity which actually prevail in the world, we must confess, that with the single exception of refusing to bear arms, we find no tenet in any of them, which incapacitates men for the service of the state. It has indeed been asserted that discordancy of religions, even supposing each religion to be free from any errors, that affect the safety or the conduct of government, is enough to render men unfit to act together in public stations. But upon what argument, or upon what experience is this assertion founded? I perceive no reason why men of different religious persuasions may not sit upon the same bench, deliberate in the same council, or fight in the same ranks, as well as men of various or opposite opinions upon any controverted topic of natural philosophy, history, or ethics.

There are two cases in which test laws are wont to be applied, and in which, if in any, they may be defended. One is, where two or more religions are contending for establishment; and where there appears no way of putting an end to the contest, but by giving to one religion such a decided superiority in the legislature and government of the country, as to secure it against danger from any other. I own that I should assent to this precaution with many scruples. If the dissenters from the establishment become a majority of the people, the establishment itself ought to be altered or qualified. If there exist amongst the different sects of the country such a parity of numbers, interest, and power, as to render the preference of one sect to the rest, and the choice of that sect, a matter of hazardous success, and of doubtful election; some plan similar to that which is meditated in North America, and which we have described in a preceding part of the present chapter, may perhaps suit better with this divided state of public opinions, than any constitution of a national church whatever. In all other situations, the establishment will be strong enough to maintain itself. However, if a test be applicable with justice upon this principle at all, it ought to be applied in regal governments to the chief

magistrate himself, whose power might otherwise overthrow or change the established religion of the country, in opposition to the will and sentiments of the people.

The second case of *exclusion*, and in which, I think, the measure is more easily vindicated, is that of a country, in which some disaffection to the subsisting government happens to be connected with certain religious distinctions. The state undoubtedly has a right to refuse its power and its confidence to those who seek its destruction. Wherefore, if the generality of any religious sect entertain dispositions hostile to the constitution; and if government have no other way of knowing its enemies than by the religion they profess, the professors of that religion may justly be excluded from offices of trust and authority. But even *here* it should be observed, that it is not against the religion that government shuts its doors, but against those political principles, which, however independent they may be of any article of religious faith, the members of that communion are found in fact to hold. Nor would the legislator make religious tenets the test of men's inclinations towards the state, if he could discover any other that was equally certain and notorious. Thus if the members of the Romish church, for the most part, adhere to the interests, or maintain the right of a foreign pretender to the crown of these kingdoms; and if there be no way of distinguishing those who do from those who do not retain such dangerous prejudices; government is well warranted in fencing out the whole sect from situations of trust and power. But even in this example, it is not to popery that the laws object, but to popery as the mark of jacobitism; an equivocal, indeed, and fallacious mark, but the best, and perhaps the only one that can be devised. But then it should be remembered, that as the connection between popery and jacobitism, which is the sole cause of suspicion, and the sole justification of those severe and jealous laws which have been enacted against the professors of that religion, was accidental in its origin, so probably it will be temporary in its duration;

and that these restrictions ought not to continue one day longer, than some visible danger renders them necessary to the preservation of public tranquillity.

* * * *

The result of our examination of those general tendencies, by which every interference of civil government in matters of religion ought to be tried, is this: "That a comprehensive national religion, guarded by a few articles of peace and conformity, together with a legal provision for the clergy of that religion; and with a *complete* toleration of all dissenters from the established church, without any other limitation or exception, than what arises from the conjunction of dangerous political dispositions with certain religious tenets, appears to be, not only the most just and liberal, but the wisest and safest system, which a state can adopt: in as much as it unites the several perfections which a religious constitution ought to aim at—liberty of conscience with means of instruction; the progress of truth with the peace of society; the right of private judgment with the care of the public safety".

The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Book VI, ch. 10, "Of Religious Establishments, and of Toleration".

7. RELIGION THE CONSECRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Edmund Burke

EDMUND BURKE (1729–1797). This and the following extract both date from the last period of Burke's career, when he was denouncing the French Revolution and its English defenders. Burke had been a consistent friend to Toleration and religious freedom. His warm attachment to the Church of England went along with a generous recognition of the merits of other Churches, both Catholic and Reformed. Infidelity in his eyes was the real enemy to be feared. The outbreak of the French Revolution with the accompanying spoliation of the French Church called out the conservative side of Burke's doctrine, and he vehemently attacked those English Dissenters, Dr Price and Dr Priestley, who constituted themselves its champions.

The *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was hailed throughout Europe by the antagonists of the Revolution. Those who agree with John Morley, that Burke's intervention in French affairs was "the most mischievous and indefensible that has ever been pressed by any statesman on any nation", will also recognise with Morley his amazing prescience, and the deep meaning which lies behind his fierce polemic; for "in the *Reflections* we have the first great sign that the ideas on government and philosophy which Locke had been the chief agent in setting into European circulation, and which had carried all triumphantly before them throughout the century, did not comprehend the whole truth, nor the deepest truth about human character—the relations of men and the union of men in society" (Morley, *Burke*, p. 249).

Formerly your affairs were your own concern only. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof from them, because we were not citizens of France. But when we see the model held up to ourselves, we must feel as Englishmen, and feeling, we must provide as Englishmen. Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague. If it be a panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary physick. If it be a plague; it is such a plague that the precautions of the most severe quarantine ought to be established against it.

I hear on all hands that a cabal, calling itself philosophick, receives the glory of many of the late proceedings; and that their opinions and systems are the true actuating spirit of the whole of them. I have heard of no party in England, literary or political, at any time, known by such a description. It is not with you composed of those men, is it? whom the vulgar, in their blunt, homely style, commonly call Atheists and Infidels? If it be, I admit that we too have had writers of that description, who made some noise in their day. At present they repose in lasting oblivion. Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world. In as few years

their few successors will go to the family vault of "all the Capulets". But whatever they were, or are, with us, they were and are wholly unconnected individuals. With us they kept the common nature of their kind, and were not gregarious. They never acted in corps, or were known as a faction in the state, nor presumed to influence in that name or character, or for the purposes of such a faction, on any of our publick concerns. Whether they ought so to exist, and so be permitted to act, is another question. As such cabals have not existed in England, so neither has the spirit of them had any influence in establishing the original frame of our constitution, or in any one of the several reparations and improvements it has undergone. The whole has been done under the auspices, and is confirmed by the sanctions, of religion and piety. The whole has emanated from the simplicity of our national character, and from a sort of native plainness and directness of understanding, which for a long time characterised those men who have successively obtained authority among us. This disposition still remains; at least in the great body of the people.

We know, and what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort. In England we are so convinced of this, that there is no rust of superstition, with which the accumulated absurdity of the human mind might have crusted it over in the course of ages, that ninety-nine in a hundred of the people of England would not prefer to impiety. We shall never be such fools as to call in an enemy to the substance of any system to remove its corruptions, to supply its defects, or to perfect its construction. If our religious tenets should ever want a further elucidation, we shall not call on atheism to explain them. We shall not light up our temple from that unhallowed fire. It will be illuminated with other lights. It will be perfumed with other incense, than the infectious stuff which is imported by the smugglers of adulterated metaphysicks. If our ecclesiastical establishment should want a

revision, it is not avarice or rapacity, publick or private, that we shall employ for the audit, or receipt, or application of its consecrated revenue. Violently condemning neither the Greek nor the Armenian, nor, since heats are subsided, the Roman system of religion, we prefer the Protestant; not because we think it has less of the Christian religion in it, but because, in our judgment, it has more. We are protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal.

We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts; and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in the moment of riot, and in a drunken delirium from the hot spirit drawn out of the alembick of hell, which in France is now so furiously boiling, we should uncover our nakedness, by throwing off that Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us, and among many other nations, we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious and degrading superstition might take place of it.

For that reason, before we take from our establishment the natural, human means of estimation, and give it up to contempt, as you have done, and in doing it have incurred the penalties you well deserve to suffer, we desire that some other may be presented to us in the place of it. We shall then form our judgment.

On these ideas, instead of quarrelling with establishments, as some do, who have made a philosophy and a religion of their hostility to such institutions, we cleave closely to them. We are resolved to keep an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater. I shall shew you presently how much of each of these we possess.

It has been the misfortune (not as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age, that every thing is to be discussed, as if the constitution of our country were to be always a subject

rather of altercation, than enjoyment. For this reason, as well as for the satisfaction of those among you (if any such you have among you) who may wish to profit of examples, I venture to trouble you with a few thoughts upon each of these establishments. I do not think they were unwise in ancient Rome, who, when they wished to new model their laws, set commissioners to examine the best constituted republicks within their reach.

First, I beg leave to speak of our church establishment, which is the first of our prejudices, not a prejudice destitute of reason, but involving in it profound and extensive wisdom. I speak of it first. It is first, and last, and midst in our minds. For, taking ground on that religious system, of which we are now in possession, we continue to act on the early received, and uniformly continued sense of mankind. That sense not only, like a wise architect, hath built up the august fabrick of states, but like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from profanation and ruin, as a sacred temple, purged from all the impurities of fraud, and violence, and injustice, and tyranny, hath solemnly and for ever consecrated the commonwealth, and all that officiate in it. This consecration is made, that all who administer in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination; that their hope should be full of immortality; that they should not look to the paltry pelf of the moment, nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar, but to a solid, permanent existence, in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory, in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.

Such sublime principles ought to be infused into persons of exalted situations; and religious establishments provided, that may continually revive and enforce them. Every sort of moral, every sort of civil, every sort of politick institution, aiding the rational and natural ties that connect the human understanding and affections to the divine, are not more than

necessary, in order to build up that wonderful structure, Man; whose prerogative it is, to be in a great degree a creature of his own making; and who, when made as he ought to be made, is destined to hold no trivial place in the creation. But whenever man is put over men, as the better nature ought ever to preside, in that case more particularly, he should as nearly as possible be approximated to his perfection.

The consecration of the state, by a state religious establishment, is necessary also to operate with a wholesome awe upon free citizens; because, in order to secure their freedom, they must enjoy some determinate portion of power. To them therefore a religion connected with the state, and with their duty towards it, becomes even more necessary than in such societies, where the people, by the terms of their subjection, are confined to private sentiments, and the management of their own family concerns. All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author and Founder of society.

Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in certain Societies in London relative to that Event.

8. THAT IN A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH CHURCH AND STATE ARE ONE THING

Edmund Burke

[*See note on* pp. 285 f.]

An alliance between Church and State in a Christian Commonwealth is, in my opinion, an idle and a fanciful speculation. An alliance is between two things, that are in their nature distinct and independent, such as between two sovereign States. But in a Christian Commonwealth the Church and the State are one and the same thing, being

different integral parts of the same whole. For the Church has been always divided into two parts, the Clergy and the Laity; of which the Laity is as much an essential integral part, and has as much its duties and privileges, as the Clerical member; and in the rule, order and government of the Church, has its share. Religion is so far, in my opinion, from being out of the province or the duty of a Christian Magistrate, that it is, and it ought to be, not only his care, but the principal thing in his care; because it is one of the great bonds of human society; and its object the supreme good, the ultimate end and object of man himself. The Magistrate, who is a man, and charged with the concerns of men, and to whom very specially nothing human is remote and indifferent, has a right and a duty to watch over it with an unceasing vigilance, to protect, to promote, to forward it by every rational, just, and prudent means. It is principally his duty to prevent the abuses, which grow out of every strong and efficient principle, that actuates the human mind. As religion is one of the bonds of society, he ought not to suffer it to be made the pretext of destroying its peace, order, liberty and its security. Above all, he ought strictly to look to it when men begin to form new combinations, to be distinguished by new names, and especially when they mingle a political system with their religious opinions, true or false, plausible or implausible.

* * * *

Formerly, when the superiority of two parties contending for dogmas and an Establishment was the question, we knew in such a contest the whole of the evil. We knew, for instance, that Calvinism would prevail according to the Westminster Catechism with regard to *tenets*. We knew, that Presbytery would prevail in *Church Government*. But we do not know what opinions would prevail, if the present Dissenters should become masters. They will not tell us their present opinions; and one principle of modern dissent is, not to discover them. Next, as their religion is in a continual fluctuation, and is so by principle, and in profession, it is impossible for us to know

what it will be. If religion only related to the individual, and was a question between God and the conscience, it would not be wise, nor in my opinion equitable, for human authority to step in. But when religion is embodied into faction, and factions have objects to pursue, it will, and must, more or less, become a question of power between them. If even, when embodied into congregations, they limited their principle to their own congregations, and were satisfied themselves to abstain from what they thought unlawful, it would be cruel in my opinion to molest them in that tenet, and a consequent practice. But we know, that they not only entertain these opinions, but entertain them with a zeal for propagating them by force, and employing the power of Law and place to destroy establishments, if ever they should come to power sufficient to effect their purpose: that is, in other words, they declare they would persecute the heads of our Church; and the question is, whether you should keep them within the bounds of toleration, or subject yourself to their persecution.

* * * *

The first question to be decided, when we talk of the Church's being in danger from any particular measure, is, whether the danger to the church is a publick evil; for to those, who think, that the national Church Establishment is itself a national grievance, to desire them to forward or to resist any measure upon account of its conducing to the safety of the Church, or averting its danger, would be to the last degree absurd. If you have reason to think thus of it, take the reformation instantly into your own hands, whilst you are yet cool, and can do it in measure and proportion, and not under the influence of election tests and popular fury. But here I assume, that by far the greater number of those, who compose the House, are of opinion, that this national Church Establishment is a great national benefit, a great publick blessing, and that its existence or its non-existence of course is a thing by no means indifferent to the publick welfare: then,

to them its danger or its safety must enter deeply into every question, which has a relation to it. It is not, because ungrounded alarms have been given, that there never can exist a real danger; perhaps the worst effect of an ungrounded alarm is to make people insensible to the approach of a real peril. Quakerism is strict, methodical, in its nature highly aristocratical, and so regular, that it has brought the whole community to the condition of one family; but it does not actually interfere with the Government. The principle of your Petitioners is no passive conscientious dissent on account of an overscrupulous habit of mind; the dissent on their part is fundamental, goes to the very root; and it is at issue not upon this rite or that ceremony, on this or that school opinion, but upon this one question of an establishment, as unchristian, unlawful, contrary to the Gospel, and to natural right, Popish and idolatrous. These are the principles violently and fanatically held and pursued—taught to their children, who are sworn at the altar like Hannibal. The war is with the Establishment itself, no quarter, no compromise. As a party, they are infinitely mischievous; see the declarations of Priestley and Price—declarations, you will say, of *hot* men. Likely enough—but who are the *cool* men, who have disclaimed them? not one,—no, not one. Which of them has ever told you, that they do not mean to *destroy the Church*, if ever it should be in their power? Which of them has told you, that this would not be the first and favourite use of any power they should get? not one,—no, not one. Declarations of hot men! The danger is thence, that they are under the *conduct* of hot men; *falsos in amore odia non fingere.*

They say, they are well affected to the State, and mean only to destroy the Church. If this be the utmost of their meaning, you must first consider whether you wish your Church Establishment to be destroyed; if you do, you had much better do it now in temper, in a grave, moderate, and parliamentary way. But if you think otherwise, and that you think it to be an invaluable blessing, a way fully sufficient

to nourish a manly, rational, solid, and at the same time humble piety; if you find it well fitted to the frame and pattern of your civil Constitution; if you find it a barrier against fanaticism, infidelity and atheism; if you find, that it furnishes support to the human mind in the afflictions and distresses of the world, consolation in sickness, pain, poverty, and death; if it dignifies our nature with the hope of immortality, leaves inquiry free, whilst it preserves an authority to teach, where authority only can teach, *communia altaria, aeque ac patriam, diligite, colite, fovete.*

Speech on the Petition of the Unitarians, May 11, 1792.

9. CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION AN INNOVATION AND AN EVIL

Joseph Priestley

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY (1733–1804), Unitarian Divine, Chemist, discoverer of oxygen.

The *Letters to Burke* (1791) were a direct reply to Burke's *Reflections* which had been published in the preceding year, and vindicated the principles of the French Revolution against Burke's polemic. They ran rapidly through three editions, and contributed powerfully to the exacerbation of popular feeling against their author which found expression in the disgraceful riots of 14 July 1791 (the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille), when Priestley's house and chapel at Birmingham, as well as most of his books, papers and apparatus, were destroyed.

Dear Sir,

If a civil establishment be so essential as you represent it, to the estimation and effect of christianity, you must, no doubt, imagine that it never existed without one, that it has *grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength.* Hence your apprehension that, if any thing affect the one, it must in proportion affect the other, and that they must both stand or fall together. Now, being yourself nothing more than a *Lay divine* (as you contemptuously characterise a person of eminence, who has presumed to *hint* at some improvements

in your favourite system, not calculated to overturn, but to strengthen it) I, whom, together with Dr Price, you will class among *political theologians*, and *theological politicians*, shall give you a little information on the subject. Your talents, no doubt, are great; but what are talents, or powers of reasoning, and combining particular facts into systems, if a man have no facts to combine, no proper knowledge of his subject? In this case his greater ingenuity will only serve to mislead him, and fix him in error. And it is very evident that, whatever has been the compass of your studies, *ecclesiastical history* has not been within its range; and facts, notorious facts, such as lie upon the very face and surface of it, unfortunately overturn your whole system.

You have not been pleased to give any definition of an *established church*, though you enlarge so much in your encomiums upon it; but in this we cannot much disagree. In its full extent, it is a church defended, and even regulated, by the state, which either wholly proscribes, tolerates, or barely connives at, other religions. Now, what was the situation of the christian church with respect to the State in the primitive times? You must know that, so far from being supported by the civil powers (which were then either Jewish or Heathen), it was frowned upon by them, and violently persecuted; itself being at that time nothing more than a *sect*, or a *heresy*, sometimes connived at, but never openly tolerated; and yet in these circumstances it existed, and flourished, gradually gaining ground by its own evidence, till it triumphed over all opposition, and the Roman empire itself became christian.

What was it that these christian emperors then did for their religion? They did little or nothing towards its *support*, because they found it sufficiently supported by the voluntary contributions and benefactions of its friends. They did, however, *what they ought not to have done*; they influenced the decisions of councils, and enforced them by temporal pains and penalties. The State also protected property given or be-

queathed to the church, as well as that which was appropriated to other uses; but there was nothing like a tax levied for the support of religion for many ages, nor is there any such thing at this day in a very great part of the christian world. Tithes are comparatively but a modern invention, the payment of them being first voluntary, and afterwards obligatory; and the compulsory payment of tithes did not take place in the whole of this country till the time of King John, of *glorious and immortal memory*, on that account. There are now no tithes paid in the ecclesiastical states of Italy, or in Sicily; and though, as I have been lately informed, there is what is called a tithe in some parts of Lombardy, it does not in general exceed one thirtieth part of the produce, and is never one tenth.

Another important article in *our* ecclesiastical establishment, is the right of our kings to the nomination of bishops.[1] But it is well known, that the right of chusing the bishops was originally, and for many centuries, in their respective churches, the metropolitans of a province shewing their approbation by joining in the ordination; and that even the emperors themselves, after they became christians, never assumed any such authority. It was first usurped by the popes, in the plenitude of their power, and by the feudal princes of Europe, in consequence of their investing bishops with their *temporalities*, and making them *lords of territory*. The National Assembly of France have, to their immortal honour (though they should be dissolved to-morrow, and never meet again) restored to all the christian churches in that country, their original right of appointing their own pastors, both the ordinary clergy and the bishops.

As to the claim of our princes to be the *heads of the church* (which is an usurpation from an usurper, the pope) and that of our parliament, to enact what shall be deemed *articles of*

[1] This is done in England by the king issuing a *Congé d'Elire* to the chapters of each cathedral, impowering them to chuse such persons only as are named to them; but in Ireland it is done without this form.

faith, and to give a form and constitution to the whole church, it is a thing not so much as pretended to by any other temporal power in the world, and a greater absurdity and abuse than any thing subsisting in the system of popery, where at least the judges in ecclesiastical affairs are ecclesiastical persons.

The whole system of the civil establishment of religion had its origin at a time when neither *religion* nor *civil government* was much understood. It was the consequence of the feudal states of Europe becoming christian in an age where we find little of christianity, besides the *name*; its genuine *doctrines* and its *spirit* being no longer.

Every article, therefore, within the compass of the civil establishment of christianity, is evidently an *innovation*; and as systems are reformed by reverting to their first principles, christianity can never be restored to its pristine state, and recover its real dignity and efficiency, till it be disengaged from all connexion with civil power. This establishment, therefore, may be compared to a *fungus*, or a *parasitical plant*, which is so far from being coeval with the tree on which it has fastened itself, that it seized upon it in its weak and languid state, and if it be not cut off in time, will exhaust all its juices, and destroy it.

Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France, etc., Letter VIII, "Of a civil Establishment being essential to Christianity".

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