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ISSN 0262 7612

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The University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Enlightenment and Dissent

Samuel Clarke: Special Issue

edited by

James Dybikowski

no. 16 1997



Enlightenment and Dissent

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Portrait of Samuel Clarke. Reproduced by kind permission of Professor Jorge Secada University of Virginia.

Editorial

Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) was widely acknowledged as the most important philosophical mind of his generation in Britain and his influence ranged well beyond. Voltaire admired him as a veritable thinking machine who ranked with Locke and Newton as the great thinkers and writers of the age; the Baron d'Holbach made him a special target of his arguments; and Leibniz crossed swords with him in a celebrated exchange of letters. Butler was stimulated and encouraged by him; Samuel Johnson drew comfort from his sermons, while Hume took dead aim at his central principles.

Clarke also exercised a major influence on religious dissent. The debate between Richard Price and Joseph Priestley on materialism and immaterialism, liberty and necessity, modeled itself after the seminal debates between Clarke and Anthony Collins. Dissent was also influenced by Clarke's controversial writing on the Trinity and his contribution to prayer book reform.

Clarke's seminal work, two sets of Boyle lectures, was published in 1704-5, when he was not yet 30. The first set of lectures, philosophically rich and dense, sets out to foil atheists, most notably Hobbes and Spinoza, by demonstrating God's existence and attributes, while the second set, which targets the deist, attempts to establish the objective basis of morality and the role of revelation. The result is a systematic Christian rationalist metaphysic which, Paul Russell argues, Hume aimed to demolish. One need not dip deeply into these lectures to see that Clarke probes foundational questions. These include the nature of causality, the relation between reasons and causes, the viability of libertarian conceptions of human freedom, the basis of personal identity, the nature of space and the defense of the Newtonian world-view. Quite apart from his overarching metaphysic, Clarke's individual positions and arguments are invariably interesting, and many have contemporary defenders.

It is a reflection on the contemporary state of the history of philosophical thought that Clarke is often viewed as a forgotten figure. It is his special misfortune that Newton's towering figure

overshadows his, and that his rationalism cuts him adrift from conventional wisdom about the opposition of British empiricism and continental rationalism. He may also be a victim of the success of Hume's critique of certain principles central to his general position.

The purpose of this issue of *Enlightenment and Dissent* is to demonstrate why the relative neglect of Clarke is misguided and to contribute to his restoration as a major enlightenment thinker.

J. Dybikowski

Please Note: the pagination of this electronic volume differs slightly from the number published in hard copy. References to this journal should indicate whether the reference is to the hard or electronic copy.

' The principal biographical sources on Clarke are the memoirs of four of his contemporaries:

(i) Thomas Emlyn, 'Memoirs of the life and sentiments of the Reverend Dr. Samuel Clarke', *Works* (4th ed., 3 vols., London, 1746), 2: 477-96;

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‘Commanded of God, because ’tis Holy and Good’:

**THE CHRISTIAN PLATONISM AND NATURAL LAW
OF SAMUEL CLARKE**

Martha K. Zebrowski

Samuel Clarke defended absolute, eternal, rational moral truth, the truth inherent in the very nature of things that is compelling to the reason of God and men and the truth from which flow rational moral duties to God, others, and self. Clarke took his theory of moral duty from the Stoic theory of imperfect duty for men of imperfect wisdom which Cicero offered in *De officiis*. More than this, he turned the theory of imperfect moral duty Cicero founded in the natural sociability of men into a theory of absolute moral duty founded in eternal reason. He Platonized Cicero’s theory by identifying absolute, eternal right, good, and justice, from which moral duty flows, with the conception of real, immaterial being Plato offered in the *Euthyphro*. More still, he identified the absolute, eternal, rational moral truth he took from Plato and Cicero with the truth of the Christian religion revealed in Scripture. In the relation between the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence encompassed within the divine unity of the God of Scripture, he located the problem Plato, in the *Timaeus*, located in the relation between real, immaterial being and the demiurge or creator. Clarke assured that God necessarily subordinates his exercise of infinite power to his perfect knowledge of the right, the good, and the just.

Clarke was a Newtonian natural philosopher and mathematician, a classical and Biblical scholar, and Rector of St. James’s, Westminster. He was at the centre of controversy throughout his life.¹ He engaged Spinoza, Hobbes, John Toland, and other so-

¹ The principal biographical sources on Clarke are the memoirs of four of his contemporaries:

(i) Thomas Emlyn, ‘Memoirs of the life and sentiments of the Reverend Dr. Samuel Clarke’, *Works* (4th ed., 3 vols., London, 1746), 2: 477-96;

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called modern atheists and argued against materialism and moral and legal voluntarism in his two series of Boyle Lectures, *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God* (1704) and *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion* (1705).² In an extended correspondence with Henry Dodwell and Anthony Collins (1706-8), which involved Locke by implication since Collins endorsed his suggestion that God could add the power of thinking to matter, Clarke expanded his objections to materialism and argued that only an immaterial soul is capable of thinking, acting independently, and exercising the

(ii) Benjamin Hoadley, 'The Preface, giving some account of the life, writings and character of the author', in *Works of Samuel Clarke*, (1738; rpt. New York, 1978), 1: i-xiv;

(iii) Arthur Ashley Sykes, 'Eulogium of the late truly learned, reverend and pious Samuel Clarke, D.D.', *Present state of the republick of letters* 4 (July, 1729), 5269;

(iv) William Whiston, *Historical memoirs of the life and writings of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (3rd ed., London, 1748).

(i) and (iii) are reprinted in Whiston, *Memoirs*, App., 1-32.

For modern biographical studies, see James P. Ferguson, *The philosophy of Dr. Samuel Clarke and its critics* (New York, 1974); *An eighteenth century heretic, Dr. Samuel Clarke* (Kineton, 1976).

² Almost all of Clarke's work is collected in *Works*. For his correspondence with John Jackson, which is not in works, see Larry R. Stewart, 'Samuel Clarke, Newtonianism, and the factions of post-revolutionary England', *Journal of the history of ideas* 42 (1981), 53-72. Clarke translated Jacques Rohault's textbook of Cartesian physics, *Jacobi Rohaulti physica* (London, 1697) and Newton's, *Optice* (London, 1706). He edited Homer's *Iliad* — *Homeri Ilias, graece et latine* (London, 1729) — and Caesar's *Commentaries* — *C. Julii Caesaris quae extant* (London, 1712).

References to items in *Works* are consolidated by title, volume and page. Original pagination is imperfect. When it is, page numbers are assigned in brackets. Untitled sermons are identified by date. Dual references are made to the Boyle lectures: the first, to a widely available edition, *A discourse concerning the being and attributes of God, the obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*, (9th ed. London, 1738) (henceforth the first series of Boyle lectures is cited as *Demonstration* and the second series, as *Discourse*); the second reference, in square brackets, to *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978). Unless noted, quotations retain Clarke's spelling, capitalization and italics. See also n.22 below.

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freedom of moral choice.³ In *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (1712), he engaged Bishop George Bull and the High Church clergy over the nature of the Trinity and the proper authority to be accorded the Church Fathers.⁴ He undertook a correspondence with Leibniz (1715-16) to answer Leibniz's charge that natural religion in England was in decay and to address several issues raised by Newton's system of natural philosophy, including the nature of the divine will and its ongoing relation to the created universe.⁵ Hume engaged Clarke's theology, science, and epistemology and transformed the philosophical landscape in the process.⁶

Of course, these theological and philosophical disputes had broad political and ideological dimensions. Clarke was a man apparently beset on all sides. On the one hand, the High Church clergy feared and attacked him and the republican and more

³ *Works*, 3: 719-913. For the Clarke-Collins debate, see Howard M. Ducharme, 'Personal identity in Samuel Clarke', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24 (1986), 359-83; William L. Rowe, 'Causality and free will in the controversy between Collins and Clarke', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987), 516-7. For the controversy over thinking matter, see John W. Yolton, *Thinking matter: materialism in eighteenth-century Britain* (Minneapolis, 1983).

⁴ For the Newtonian context and the significance of Clarke's views on the Trinity, see Stewart, 'Factions'. For Clarke's place in the broader and longer debate over the Church Fathers and the Trinity, see Gareth Vaughan Bennett, 'Patristic tradition in Anglican thought, 1660-1900', *Oecumenica*, 1971/72 (Strasburg, 1972), 63-85.

⁵ For Clarke and Leibniz, see Alexandre Koyré, *From the closed world to the infinite universe* (Baltimore, 1957), 235-72; F. E. L. Priestley, 'The Clarke-Leibniz controversy', in eds. Robert E. Butts and John W. Davis, *The methodological heritage of Newton* (Toronto, 1970), 34-56.

⁶ For Hume and Clarke, see James E. Force, 'The breakdown of the Newtonian synthesis of science and religion: Hume, Newton, and the Royal Society', in eds. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, *Essays on the context, nature, and influence of Isaac Newton's theology* (Dordrecht, 1990), 143-63; Robert H. Hurlbutt III, *Hume, Newton, and the design argument* (rev. ed., Lincoln, 1985); David Daiches Raphael, 'Hume's critique of ethical rationalism', in ed. William B. Todd, *Hume and the enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1974), 14-29; Paul Russell, 'Scepticism and natural religion in Hume's *Treatise*', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988), 247-65; 'Hume's *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins controversy', *Hume Studies*, 21 (1995), 95-115.

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extreme populist political ideas they thought were implicit in Newtonian natural philosophy. On the other hand, he was an apologist for the Court Whigs and monarchical power in the face of republicanism and extreme political radicalism he himself feared were implicit in the materialism of Toland and Collins.⁷ Since there is almost nothing of an overt political nature in his work, the niceties of Clarke's political philosophy remain an open question. There is no question that, throughout the eighteenth century, Clarke had a strong influence on British theology and radical politics.⁸

Yet there is little appreciation of the rich syncretism of Clarke's theology and only a partial understanding of the theory of rational morality or natural law it entails. Moreover, there is scant recognition of the Platonic element that has such a formative role in his thought.⁹ Interest in natural law theorizing in eighteenth-century Britain is certainly growing, with Clarke being variously labelled a Christian Stoic, a neo-Stoic, a moral and legal realist, and a moral and legal voluntarist.¹⁰ Of course, the Stoic element in

⁷ For religious disputes as surrogates for political disputes, see J. C. D. Clark, *English society 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985). For the High Church response to Newtonianism and Clarke, see Stewart, 'Factions'. For Clarke as an apologist for the court Whigs and monarchical power, see Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca, 1976); Steven Shapin, 'Of gods and kings, natural philosophy and politics in the Leibniz-Clarke disputes', *Isis*, 72 (1981), 187-215.

⁸ For Clarke's influence throughout the century, see John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989); 'Anglican latitudinarianism and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century'. in ed. Knud Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and religion* (Cambridge, 1996), 219-40; Peter N. Miller, *Defining the common good: empire, religion, and philosophy in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), 278-95.

⁹ Howard M. Ducharme calls Clarke's a Platonic philosophy of religion. See *The moral self, moral knowledge and God: an analysis of the theory of Samuel Clarke* (D.Phil thesis, Oxford University, 1984), 53-6. Stephen Darwall does not concentrate on Clarke, but he tentatively associates him with Plato in *The British moralists and the internal 'ought', 1640-1740* (Cambridge, 1995), 10.

¹⁰ For natural law theory in early eighteenth-century Britain and for Clarke as a moral and legal realist, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The sovereignty of reason: the defense of rationality in the early English enlightenment* (Princeton, 1996), 266-322. For the Stoic and Christian Stoic strain in eighteenth-century Scottish natural

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eighteenth-century British thought and in Clarke's theory of natural law is substantial.¹¹ And there is good reason why the Platonic element in Clarke has been so elusive, since the place of Plato and the nature of the Platonic strain in eighteenth-century British thought in general are so poorly understood.¹² Nonetheless, it is essential to recapture the Platonic strain, which is especially strong in rational theology, in order to have a more comprehensive view of the intellectual traditions and influences at work in this period. Clarke himself, who was religious through and through, found in Plato the key to the eternal and transcendent reason he wanted in his theology and theory of natural law. Clarke's successors, including those more inclined toward radical politics than theology, who did not always have the interest he had in the details of theory and who did not always recognize the origin of their

law theory, see Knud Haakonssen, *Natural law and moral philosophy: from Grotius to the Scottish enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1996). For the Stoic and Ciceronian element in Clarke, along with a certain ambivalence about his so-called moral and legal realism and/or voluntarism, see John Finnis, *Natural law and natural rights* (Oxford, 1980), 36-48; Miller, *Common good*, 278-95. For Clarke as a moral and legal voluntarist, see Shapin, 'Gods and kings'.

¹¹ The best treatment of the Stoic (and especially the Ciceronian Stoic) element in eighteenth-century British thought is Robert Denoon Cumming, *Human nature and history* (2 vols., Chicago, 1969).

¹² Bernard H. Baumrin claims that Plato's argument concerning piety in the *Euthyphro* is fundamental to English/British philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*British moralists*, ed. S. A. Selby-Bigge, new ed. with intro. by Bernard H. Baumrin, (Indianapolis, 1964), xvi-xvii. For tentative suggestions that point principally toward theology, see Frank B. Evans, 'Platonic scholarship in eighteenth-century England', *Modern Philology* 41 (1943), 103-10; Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton*; William Ralph Inge, *The platonic tradition in English religious thought* (New York, 1926); Aharon Lichtenstein, *Henry More: the rational theology of a Cambridge Platonist* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 156-205; John H. Muirhead, *The platonic tradition in Anglo-saxon philosophy* (1931; rept. New York, 1965). Ernst Cassirer is incorrect when he argues that the influence of the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists (and consequently of Plato) on eighteenth-century British thought was principally in aesthetics and ended with Shaftesbury (*The platonic renaissance in England*, tr. James P. Pettegrove (1953; rpt. New York, 1970)).

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ideas in complex theological issues, acted nonetheless within the framework his theology defined.¹³

This essay takes up Clarke's theology, with special regard to those aspects that entail his theory of rational morality or natural law, in order to bring the Platonic element to the fore and to demonstrate its formative role in his thought. Along the way the essay clarifies partial conceptions that are current regarding the substantial Stoic element in Clarke's thought and his alleged moral and legal voluntarism. Albeit implicitly, it may also establish Clarke as a benchmark for the study of the Platonic strain in eighteenth-century British thought.

Clarke's life was one of engagement with Christian texts and practice. He preached the Scripture in an active ministry to the parishioners of St. James's, Westminster: the *Old Testament* prophecies of Christ's coming, his miraculous birth and works, and his suffering, death, and resurrection for the redemption of mankind.¹⁴ He recognized the *Bible* as the revealed word of God and the Gospel of Christ as the sole rule of faith for Christians. Although he approved of an organized Church because it could provide forms for the public communion of Christians, he held up the Primitive Church as the standard for contemporary Christian practice and the reformation of manners. And because he insisted that everyone could and should read Scripture and determine its meaning without the mediation and imposition of any external

¹³ For the Platonic element in the radical political theory of Clarke's successors, see Martha K. Zebrowski, 'The corruption of politics and the dignity of human nature: the critical and constructive radicalism of James Burgh', *Enlightenment and Dissent* 10 (1991), 78-103; 'Richard Price: British Platonist of the eighteenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55 (1994), 17-35.

¹⁴ Clarke, 'The miraculous birth of Christ'; 'The prediction of the Messiah'; 'The character of the Messiah'; 'Of the fulness of time in which Christ appeared'; 'How Christ has enabled us to conquer sin'; 'How Christ has given us the victory over death'; 'The inexcusableness of rejecting the Gospel'; 'Of the resurrection of Christ' (*Works*, 1: 426-48; 476-96; 503 -9); 'Of suffering upon the account of religion; Of the nature and the sufferings of Christ'; 'Of the humiliation and sufferings of Christ'; 'The method of deliverance through Christ'; 'Of the fundamentals of Christianity' (*Works*, 2: 122-57; 176-82).

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authority, he thought of the clergy simply as living guides and instructors.¹⁵

Yet Clarke made little distinction between his Biblical and philosophical theology. He moved freely between the language of Scripture and the language of reason, using one to illustrate the other. In the *Discourse* he said that natural reason, the light of nature, is as sufficient to knowledge of eternal truth and the obligations of natural reason and morality as it is to knowledge of mathematical and geometrical truth. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Epictetus, and Antoninus, for example, were men 'raised up and designed by Providence, (the abundant Goodness of God having never *left it self* wholly *without Witness* . . .)'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, he continued, the light of nature has often been extinguished or diminished. Instead of using their natural faculties, men have followed their appetites and prejudices. There have been few philosophers, and sometimes even they have simply engaged in exercises of subtlety and wit, or been doubtful and uncertain, or expressed what truths they have known in scattered and unsystematic ways. They have certainly lacked enough authority over others to motivate them. Moreover, even the best of the pagan philosophers lacked complete knowledge of the soul's immortality and God's ultimate design. Plato and Cicero did not

¹⁵ For the defence of revelation, see Clarke, 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: i - ii; *Discourse*, 320-456 [*Works*, 2: 672-733]. For church rites and forms, see 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: viii; 'Of believing in God; Of the grace of God', *Works*, 1: 173-96; 'A letter written to the late Reverend Mr. R. M.', *Works*, 4: 386-98. For the Primitive Church as standard, see 'Three practical essays on baptism, confirmation, and repentance', *Works*, 3: 572, 603, 608; 'Some reflections on that part of a book called Amyntor', *Works*, 3: 920. For the reformation of manners, see Sermons of 8 March, 1709-10; 18 April, 1725, (*Works*, 2: 418-19; 507-12). For the clergy as living guides, see 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: viii. For Primitive Christianity, the reformation of manners, and Clarke's movement away from the more pietistic and doctrinaire movement associated with William Whiston, see Eamon Duffy, ' "Whiston's Affair": the trials of a Primitive Christian 1709-1714', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 129-50; 'Primitive Christianity revived: religious renewal in Augustan England', in ed. Derek Baker, *Renaissance and renewal in Christian history* (Oxford, 1977), 287-300.

¹⁶ Clarke, *Discourse*, 285 [*Works*, 2: 657].

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know the right way to worship God and fell into idolatry. As Socrates had before them, they spoke about the need for a revelation. For all these reasons, Clarke said, God revealed that the absolute, eternal, rational moral truth in the very nature of things is also His will and secures the obligation of men to conform to its dictates by attaching rewards and punishments. The Christian Revelation is a promulgation of the truth and obligation of natural morality, now expressed and sanctioned as the divine will, and also a promulgation of those additional things human reason can recognize and judge but not discover by itself: the nature of eternal life, the ends of divine providence, and the proper worship of God.¹⁷ And still, in *Scripture-doctrine*, his extended commentary on the God of Scripture, Clarke showed how little he claimed for revelation when he said that the Scripture revelation itself presupposes the first principle of natural religion, which is that one simple, uncompounded, undivided, intelligent agent is the author of all being.¹⁸

When he used Scripture and natural religion as complementary testimonies to a single religious and moral truth, Clarke was simply following the method the most philosophically penetrating of the Church Fathers used when they virtually invented Christian theology in response to the pagan argument that the way of philosophy, which seeks wisdom, is superior to the cult of Christ, which demands faith. Clarke may have wanted to restore the practices of the most Primitive Church, but he took his theological method from Greek Christianity of the second, third, and fourth-centuries, principally from that of the Christian Platonist Fathers, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and their successors Eusebius

¹⁷ *Discourse*, 241-320 [*Works*, 2: 637-72]. For the Gospel as a repromulgation of the law of nature and the law of Moses, see also 'Of the immutability of God', *Works*, 1: 41; 'Of the wisdom of God', *Works*, 1: 79-80; 'Of believing in God', *Works*, 1: 173-79; 'Different tempers judge differently of religion', *Works*, 1: 5001; 'Three practical essays', *Works*, 3: 575-80.

¹⁸ 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: 122; and the complementary statement in *Demonstration*, 48 [*Works*, 2: 542].

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of Caesarea and the Cappadocians.¹⁹ Of course, this entire theological enterprise had a Scriptural foundation in Paul's letter to the Romans: '[W]hen the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the work of the Law written in their Hearts'. However, where Paul went on to maintain the righteousness of Christian faith and justification by faith alone, Clarke, citing Paul in the *Discourse*, returned to the reason and philosophy of the ancients.²⁰

The question is how to identify the Platonic element in Clarke's work and justify calling him a Christian Platonist. Clarke could be remarkably obscure. In the *Discourse*, for example, he called absolute, eternal, rational moral truth by various names: the eternal differences of things; the eternal reason of things; the right and reason of things; the eternal rule of right; the eternal differences of good and evil; the eternal and invariable rules of justice, equity, goodness, and truth; the eternal, the unalterable rule of right and equity; and the eternal law of righteousness.²¹ Yet he was also quite helpful. He drew liberally from texts other than his own when he was composing his arguments and he was very considerate about crediting and commenting on his sources.²²

¹⁹ 'A letter to Mr. Dodwell', *Works*, 3: 724. For the Greek Fathers and their encounter with classical and Hellenistic philosophy, see Charles Bigg, *The Christian platonists of Alexandria* (repr. with add. and corr., Oxford, 1913); Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian thought and the classical tradition* (Oxford, 1966); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and classical culture* (New Haven, 1993); Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The philosophy of the Church Fathers*, (3rd ed. rev., Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

²⁰ Clarke, *Discourse*, 192 [*Works*, 2: 615]; *Romans* 2: 14-15; Clarke italicized the quoted text. Clarke wrote many sermons on texts from Romans. For the full force of his emphasis on reason and contrast to Paul, see especially 'Believing in God', *Works*, 1: 173-79.

²¹ *Discourse*, 176-99 [*Works*, 2: 606-18].

²² Clarke was quite accurate in reproducing the Greek and Latin texts of authors to whom he refers and quotes. His English translations vary from the quite accurate to the more general paraphrase. He used italics to indicate quotations and translations of quotations. Where he was only paraphrasing and not translating a quotation he cited, and where he was only referring to an author and text but not

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Clarke used sources in several ways. Sometimes he used them as authoritative testimony to his own points, as he did in the *Discourse* when he brought in Socrates, Plato, and Cicero on the desirability of a divine revelation and Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen on the wisdom of Socrates and the best of the ancient moralists.²³ At other times he used texts to illustrate ideas he thought were an aspect of the universal reason in the very nature of things that is virtually irresistible to the human mind. Throughout *Scripture-doctrine*, for example, he drew on text after text from the Church Fathers to illustrate the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, not because the Fathers themselves or the tradition of the Church brought any particular authority to the understanding of Scripture, but because the compelling nature of the truth contained in Scripture made it impossible for the Fathers, who could, of course, err or misspeak, to escape it entirely.²⁴ At still other times he incorporated material into the lines and margins of his own text in such a way that the passages he drew from others are not so

quoting or translating, he did not use italics. The authors and texts mentioned in this essay are by no means all of the sources Clarke credited.

Clarke's note and references are an integral part of his texts and arguments. In eighteenth-century British editions of the Boyle lectures other than *Works*, the notes are printed in the margins beside the text to which they refer. With this format the reader immediately sees how Clarke worked and composed his thoughts. In *Works*, the notes that accompany the Boyle lectures are printed in a small typeface at the bottom of the page. With this format the reader can easily miss the intimate connection between text and notes and can easily ignore the notes altogether.

²³ *Discourse*, 304-17 [*Works*, 2: 666-71]; *Discourse*, 285-86 [*Works*, 2: 657]; Plato, *Epinomis*, 985c-d, 989e; *Republic*, 427c; 493a; *Laws*, 641d; *Apology*, 31a; *Alcibiades II*, 150c-151b; *Phaedo*, 85c-d; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, III.xxxii.79; Justin Martyr, *Apologia*, I.46; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.5; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6.3. Clarke cited Plato's *Phaedo* and not the *Phaedrus*, as the abbreviation in the note in the text might suggest. He cited Justin Martyr's *First apology* and not the *Second*, as the note in the text indicates. *Epinomis* and *Alcibiades II* are no longer attributed to Plato.

²⁴ For the relation of reason, writers, and texts, see Clarke, 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: ix. For Clarke's comprehensive explanation of his method of interpreting texts and of the relation between the authority of Scripture and tradition, see 'Amyntor', *Works*, 3: 915-26; 'A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Wells', *Works*, 4: Sig. Ppp[223]-49.

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much illustrations of his argument as they simply *are* his argument. This is especially true in the section of the *Discourse* where he explained the law of nature in the greatest detail and wove Plato, Cicero, and Origen into the explanation.²⁵

Clarke did have substantial interest and critical skill in history and philology, but ultimately his concern was not the historicity of ideas and texts.²⁶ His great undertaking was to discover by reason the universal religious and moral truth that is grounded in reason alone. It is not always possible to credit Clarke with great interpretive acumen. However, it is both possible and essential to recognize and profit from his own understanding of how certain historical periods, authors, texts, and ideas were preparatory and crucial to his work. Clarke steeped himself in the theology of Greek Christianity and filled his books with it. He had a common apologetic purpose with Church Fathers who were Christian Platonists. There is some justification for calling him a Christian Platonist for these reasons, but it is weak. On the other hand, Clarke, who called himself a Christian, was straightforward about the theological importance of Plato, about the fact that he thought he and Plato were talking about the same, transcendent, moral first principles, and about the formative place of those principles in relation to the Stoic in his own syncretistic theory of natural law. For these reasons, it is appropriate to call Clarke a Christian Platonist.

The structure and principles of Clarke's theology and theory of natural law are clearest in his philosophical theology. The entire matter has three principal aspects: the absolute, eternal, rational

²⁵ *Discourse*, 217-18 [*Works*, 2: 626-27]; Plato, *Euthyphro*, 10b-c; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, III.xxxv.85; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.29.

²⁶ For Clarke's considerable philological interest and skill, see 'Amyntor', *Works*, 3: 915-26; 'Letter to Wells', *Works*, 4: Sig. Ppp[223]-49; 'A reply to the objections of Robert Nelson, Esq.', *Works*, 4: Sig. Yyy[251]-324; 'Letter to R. M.', *Works*, 4: 389; Clarke's Answer to the first letter, 'Three letters to Dr. Clarke, from a clergyman of the Church of England', *Works*, 4: 570; *C. Julii Caesaris; Homeri Ilias*. For philological and historical studies and controversies in Clarke's immediate background, see Joseph M. Levine, *The battle of the books* (Ithaca, 1991).

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moral truth itself; the nature and relation of divine wisdom and power; and the law of nature and human responsibility. With the *Demonstration* and the *Discourse* it is possible to take full advantage of Clarke's guidance when he indicated his sources. However, when he said that the revelation in Scripture presupposes the first principle of natural religion, that one intelligent agent is the author of all being, Clarke also offered the advantage of an indirect approach to his philosophical theology through the *Scripture-doctrine*. For in the background of the doctrine of the Trinity is a problem that is in the foreground of his philosophical theology. It is the fundamental problem which Plato identified of the relation between real being and creative power. Clarke's account of the one intelligent agent and the creating Logos of Scripture and his philosophical account of the one intelligent agent's attributes of omniscience and omnipotence show not only his consistent concern to subordinate creative power to a superior principle, but also his consistent association of his views with Plato's.

In *Scripture-doctrine* Clarke addressed the question of the nature of Christ the Logos and his relation to God the Father. He sought to recover the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, which he thought was the doctrine the early Church held through the Council of Nicaea of 325, after which metaphysical speculation about Tritheism, Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism introduced confusion.²⁷ The *Scripture-doctrine* is principally a compilation of *New Testament* passages that refer to the nature and relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit along with Clarke's own commentary and the observations of Church Fathers and modern theologians. The doctrine Clarke understood to be the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity holds that the Father alone is self-existent, is the first and supreme cause of all things, and is the sole origin of all power and authority. The Son and the Holy Spirit have existed with the Father from the beginning, but are not self-existent like the Father. Rather, they owe their being to an act of the Father's eternal will and power and are subordinate to Him. Christ the Logos is the

²⁷ Clarke, 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: xiii.

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firstborn of God, begotten and not created by the Father. He derives his wisdom and power from God, and they reflect God's wisdom and power as a mirror image reflects its subject. God does not surrender his own wisdom and power, which are undiminished. Christ the Logos employed his derived wisdom and power to create the world. Christ incarnate was Christ the Logos.²⁸

On the basis of this account Clarke was accused of Arianism and heresy.²⁹ The record needs to be set straight in this matter of alleged Arianism. The Council of Nicaea, which met to resolve the question of the nature of Christ the Logos and his relation to God the Father, formulated the orthodox doctrine: Christ is the Son of God, 'God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.'³⁰ Clarke, who always denied that he was an Arian, accepted this formulation. The Arian position on the same question was that there was a time when Christ the Logos did not exist, that Christ was created and not begotten by God, and that Christ was not divine. Clarke disagreed with this formulation on all points.³¹ Of course, Clarke was bound to have problems coming to terms with pre-Nicene ideas regarding the Trinity. The period before the Council of Nicaea was precisely the period in the history of Christianity when the Church Fathers were working out their ideas and theology was fluid. The Nicene Creed was the Church's first official codification of the doctrine of the Trinity.

²⁸ 'Scripture-doctrine', *Works*, 4: 124-32, 134-47, 151-78; 'Letter to Wells', *Works*, 4: 239; 'Reply to Nelson', *Works*, 4: 294, 311-12; 'Letter to R. M.', *Works*, 4: 385-86; 'A Letter to the author of a book', *Works*, 4: 424, 429-30, 433, 442-43; 'The modest plea, etc. continued', *Works*, 4: 458-65; 'Observations on Dr. Waterland's second defence of his Queries', *Works*, 4: 499-510; 'Three letters', *Works*, 4: 563-70; 'Of the power and authority of Christ'; 'Of the different gifts of the spirit', (*Works*, 1: 558-71); 'A paraphrase of the four evangelists', *Works*, 3: 393-94; *Discourse*, 338-41 [*Works*, 2: 680-82].

²⁹ For documents relating to Clarke's encounter with Convocation over his alleged Arianism, see *Works*, 4: 7B[539]-58. For the public and print debate the controversy generated, see Ferguson, *Heretic*, 47-105; 119-49.

³⁰ *Nicene Creed*.

³¹ Clarke, 'The modest plea', *Works*, 4: 475.

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The problem of the relation of God and Logos had its origin in the *Timaeus* of Plato, where it took the form of the relation between the demiurge and the model he used when he created the world. Timaeus said:

Now if this world is good and its maker is good, clearly he looked to the eternal[.] ... [F]or the world is the best of things that have become, and he is the best of causes. Having come to be, then, in this way the world has been fashioned on the model of that which is comprehensible by rational discourse and understanding and is always in the same state. ... Let us rather say that the world is like, above all things, to that Living Creature of which all other living creatures, severally and in their families, are parts. For that embraces and contains within itself all the intelligible living creatures.[.]³²

Plato was perfectly clear in this passage. The demiurge framed this world and everything in it after the model of the intelligible living creature that is separate and distinct from him, coexistent with him, available for his contemplation, compelling in and by its very nature, and not the product of his will. Nevertheless, it became a problem of philosophy and theology after Plato to explain, in terms of their origin, location, distinction, and priority, the relation between the rational and eternal model that is real, immaterial being and the demiurge or creator. Hellenistic Platonists, Neopythagoreans, Neoplatonists, Jews, and Christians proposed various solutions. The problem was more complex for Jews and Christians because they sought its solution in terms they could also reconcile with Scripture.³³ In fact, the Orthodox

³² Plato, *Timaeus*, tr. Francis M. Cornford (Indianapolis, 1959), 29a, 30c-d.

³³ For the relation of the Platonic ideas to the divine mind, see John Dillon, *The middle Platonists*, (rev. ed., Ithaca, 1996); Peter Kenney, *Mystical monotheism* (Hanover, 1991); Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'Extradeical and intradeical interpretations of Platonic ideas', in *Religious Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.,

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doctrine the Council of Nicaea formulated regarding the nature of Christ the Logos and his relation to God the Father and the Arian position on the same question are simply two different Christian solutions to the problem the *Timaeus* raised.³⁴

When Clarke sought to recover the pre-Nicene doctrine he thought was the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, what he actually did was go back to the problem of the *Timaeus*, but in its form in the theology of the Alexandrian Fathers, especially Origen. The Alexandrian Fathers had themselves come to the problem in its form in the Alexandrian Jewish theologian Philo. In order to reconcile the account of creation in *Genesis* with the account of the rational, eternal model and the demiurge in the *Timaeus*, Philo had framed the idea that the God of Scripture has the model which he used to create the world within his reason or Logos. And in order to reconcile Philo's idea with the Gospel of *John's* account of the Logos who was with God in the beginning, who was God, and who made all things, as well as with Christ's statement 'my Father is greater than I', Origen had framed the doctrine of the self-existent God and the eternally-generated, divine, creating, and subordinate Logos.³⁵

Clarke was not an Arian, but he was a subordinationist, and he characterized the God and Logos of Scripture in the subordinationist terms of Origen. In the *Scripture-doctrine*, he did not say he was working out his understanding of the Trinity in the terms of the *Timaeus* or other Platonic terms. Although he showed no interest in the historical relation between the *Timaeus* and the development of Christian doctrine, he made it clear that he thought Plato and Scripture were concerned with the same problem. In the *Demonstration*, in the course of a discussion of the impossibility of

1961), 27-68; *Philo* (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1947), 1: 200-94; *Church Fathers*, 141-286.

³⁴ For a discussion of these and other Christian solutions to the *Timaeus* problem, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'Philosophical implications of Arianism and Apollinarianism', in *Religious Philosophy*, 126-57.

³⁵ Wolfson, 'Platonic ideas'; *Church Fathers*, 141-286; Thomas C. Pfizenmeier, *The trinitarian theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729)* (Leiden, 1997), 102-28; *John* 1: 1, 3; 14: 28.

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the world's being self-existent and eternal, he said that Plato had declared that the world 'was composed and framed by an Intelligent and wise God', and that 'there is no one of all the Antient Philosophers, who does in all his Writings speak so excellently and worthily as He, concerning the Nature and Attributes of God.' He gave as an example the *Timaeus*' principle that '*The World must needs be an Eternal Resemblance of the Eternal Idea*', though he said that Plato was indefinite about precisely when the world began. In the *Discourse* he made an explicit link between the *Timaeus* and Scripture. He introduced the example of the demiurge, or the minister or workman by whom God framed all things, to illustrate his analysis of the Scriptural account of God's creation of the world by means of the Logos and to demonstrate that the Scriptural account is consistent with reason.³⁶

Clarke faced the issue of real being and creative and subordinate power squarely in his philosophical theology. In the *Demonstration* he set out *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments for the existence and attributes of a free, intelligent, purposeful, world-creating and world-sustaining God who is separate from his creation. He argued that God is self-existent (or necessarily existent) and eternal and that nothing is self-existent and eternal other than God. '*Necessity Absolute in it self, is Simple and Uniform and Universal, without any possible Difference, Difformity, or Variety whatsoever*'.³⁷ Nonetheless, in addition to self-existence and eternity, Clarke predicated infinity, omnipresence, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness of the divine unity. He was most concerned with omniscience and omnipotence and with the relation between them.³⁸

³⁶ Clarke, *Demonstration*, 34-35 [*Works*, 2: 536]; Plato, *Timaeus*, 29b; *Discourse*, 338-41 [*Works*, 2: 680-82].

³⁷ *Demonstration*, 47 [*Works*, 2: 541].

³⁸ *Demonstration*, 1-128 passim [*Works*, 2: 521-77 passim]. For God's greatest delight in His goodness, see 'Of the goodness of God', *Works*, 1: 90[86]-92. For a positive assessment of Clarke's argument, see Edward J. Khamara, 'Hume versus

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Clarke formulated and resolved this concern in terms of Plato's *Euthyphro*. The *Timaeus* problem of the relation between the demiurge and the model he used when he created the world takes another form in the *Euthyphro*. The *Euthyphro* problem is whether there is an eternal moral truth that exists in and of itself, that is not contingent on the unfettered will of the gods, and that, in fact, the gods themselves necessarily choose to make their own. Socrates asked Euthyphro: 'Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?'³⁹ This was Clarke's defining text. He returned to it again and again, always insisting 'that which is Holy and Good ... is not therefore Holy and Good, because 'tis commanded to be done; but is therefore commanded of God, because 'tis Holy and Good.'⁴⁰ In this he showed his great commitment to the principle of an intelligible moral reality that is compelling to God and to a Platonic explanation of that reality.

Clarke never denied the fact or importance of divine will or power. Divine power extends to everything that does not involve a contradiction. It is the power to create matter and human souls and to give those souls freedom of will or choice and their own power to initiate motion.⁴¹ Divine power is also a perpetual providence, for 'all those things which we commonly say are the Effects of the *Natural Powers of Matter, and Laws of Motion; of Gravitation, Attraction, or the like; are ... the Effects of God's acting upon Matter continually and every moment*'.⁴² Clarke's favourite

Clarke on the cosmological argument', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (1992), 34-55. For the historical and theological transformation of the Platonic ideas into divine attributes, see Wolfson, 'Platonic ideas'.

³⁹ Plato, *Euthyphro*, tr. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis, 1975), 10a.

⁴⁰ Clarke, *Discourse*, 218 [*Works*, 2: 626-27]; Plato, *Euthyphro*, 10b-c. See also 'Of the omnipotence of God', *Works*, 1: 54-55; 'Of the justice of God', *Works*, 1: 100-1. In the first edition of *Discourse* (1706), Clarke translated 'by God' rather than 'of God' and wrote out the contraction "tis".

⁴¹ Clarke, *Demonstration*, 73-87 [*Works*, 2: 553-59].

⁴² Clarke, *Discourse*, 377 [*Works*, 2: 697]. See also *Discourse*, 159-62 [*Works*, 2: 600-2]; *Discourse*, 342-43 [*Works*, 2: 682-83]; *Discourse*, 374-79 [*Works*, 2: 696-98]; 'Wisdom of God', *Works*, 1: 77; 'A defence of an argument made use of in a Letter to Mr. Dodwell', *Works*, 3: 760; 'Second defence', *Works*, 3: 792; 'Third

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Biblical proof text in support of God's perpetual providence was *Matthew* 10: 29: 'Him without whom not a Sparrow falls to the Ground, and with whom the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered.' His parallel proof text was from the tenth book of Plato's *Laws*: '[T]he gods care for small things no less than for things superlatively great.'⁴³

This characterization of divine power notwithstanding, Clarke distinguished between the infinite power and the moral perfection of God. 'God is both Perfectly *Free*, and also *Ininitely Powerful*, yet he cannot Possibly do anything that is *Evil*.'⁴⁴ In fact, within a very short space he made the distinction three different ways. He said God, who has attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, uses His power in accordance with His wisdom.⁴⁵ He said there is a moral truth or fitness eternally, necessarily, and unchangeably in the nature and reason of things to which God, who has infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom, necessarily has reference. 'He must of necessity, (meaning, not a *Necessity of Fate*, but such a *Moral Necessity* as I before said was consistent with the most perfect Liberty,) *Do* always what he *Knows* to be *Fittest to be*

defence', *Works*, 3: 846-49; 'A collection of papers, which passed between the late Learned Mr. Leibnitz, and Dr. Clarke', *Works*, 4: 7M[579]-10 passim.

⁴³ For *Matthew* 10: 29, see Clarke, *Discourse*, 161 [*Works*, 2: 601]; *Discourse*, 351 [*Works*, 2: 686]; 'Of faith in God', *Works*, 1: 6; 'Of the unity of God', *Works*, 1: 8; 'Of the omnipresence of God', *Works*, 1: 48; 'Of the omniscience of God', *Works*, 1: 67; 'Providential deliverances from slavery', *Works*, 1: 640; Sermon of 16 December 1720, *Works*, 2: 438. For Plato, *Laws*, X.900c and this section of the *Laws* generally, see *Discourse*, 163 [*Works*, 2: 602]; 'Omnipresence of God', *Works*, 1: 48; 'Leibnitz-Clarke', Clarke's first reply, *Works*, 4: 590. For God's providential role in human affairs, see 'The event of things not always answerable to second causes'; 'Providential deliverances', (*Works*, 1: 617-23; 635-43); Sermons of 22 November, 1709; 8 March, 1709-10; 7 November, 1710; 16 December 1720; 26 April 1723, (*Works*, 2: 401-26; 434-40; 447-53). For Clarke's strongest expression of the omnipotence and sovereignty of God, see 'Observations on Dr. Waterland's second defense of his Queries', *Works*, 4: 490, 492.

⁴⁴ Clarke, *Demonstration*, 122 [*Works*, 2: 574]. For a full discussion of the relation between the infinite power and moral perfection of God, see *Demonstration*, 73-128 [*Works*, 2: 553-77].

⁴⁵ *Demonstration*, 109-10 [*Works*, 2: 569].

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done; That is, He must act always according to the strictest Rules of Infinite *Goodness, Justice, and Truth*, and all other *Moral Perfections*.⁴⁶ And he simply called the Supreme Being 'Infinite *Mind or Intelligence*'.⁴⁷ In each case Clarke clearly subordinated divine power to divine wisdom.

Clarke believed in the transcendent God of Scripture and said it was this God he was writing about in both his Biblical and philosophical theology. Therefore, there is no reason to think he considered the eternal moral truth to be superior to, and separate from God himself, although his bold second characterization of the relation between divine wisdom and divine power suggests as much. He incorporated goodness, justice, truth, and all other moral perfections into the wisdom of God or, as his third characterization suggests, into God understood as mind. The rational and eternal model Plato described in the *Timaeus* and the eternal moral truth he called the pious or the holy and good in the *Euthyphro* were, for Clarke, the eternal, self-existent, and unitary God understood in His attribute of omniscience. The demiurge Plato discussed in the *Timaeus* and the gods he mentioned in the *Euthyphro* were, for Clarke, God understood in His attribute of omnipotence, itself understood as necessarily having reference to divine wisdom. In short, Clarke was a Christian Platonist.

The answer to the question of whether Clarke was a moral and legal realist or voluntarist should now be clear. It is quite appropriate to call him a voluntarist so far as his understanding of God's creation and maintenance of the physical universe are concerned. But if any doubt remains that Clarke strongly held a realist conception of moral truth superior to will and power, consider his clearest and most forceful statement of his position. In his sermon *Of the omnipotence of God* he moved immediately from Scriptural language that expresses the sublime beauty of the divine power in nature to this philosophical language and then immediately to the problem the *Euthyphro* posed:

⁴⁶ *Demonstration*, 115-16 [*Works*, 2: 571-72].

⁴⁷ *Demonstration*, 109 [*Works*, 2: 569].

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[I]n *God*, arbitrary or irresistible Power, tho it *is* indeed a Power of doing all things absolutely without controul, yet it is *so* a Power of doing them, as that at the same time there is always with the notion of That Power, necessarily and inseparably connected, an Idea of infinite Reason, Wisdom, and Goodness. ... [I]n *Him*, Acting according to his supreme *Will and Pleasure*, does not signify, as it does among corrupt *men*, acting according to Will and Inclination without reason, but on the contrary it signifies always, acting according to *That Will*, which is influenced by *nothing* but the most perfect *Reason* only; which is the same thing, as if Will and Pleasure could be supposed to have no place at all, and the Universe were governed by mere abstract Reason and the Right of Things. For in *God*, Will and Reason are *one and the same* thing; or at least go always so together, *as if they* were but one thing[.]⁴⁸

In the *Discourse* Clarke said human beings can have full knowledge of goodness, justice, and the other moral perfections God has in His wisdom. From this eternal moral truth it is possible to deduce human duties. And, just as God uses His power in accordance with His wisdom, humans ought to act in accordance with their knowledge of eternal moral truth. As he worked his way through these points, that is, as he moved from the transcendent moral truth in the wisdom of God to the natural law that directs men on earth, Clarke introduced Stoic principles into his thinking. Moreover, he Platonized these principles and the natural law according to the first principles of his Christian Platonist theology.

Clarke's statement that human knowledge and divine knowledge of eternal moral truth are the same is particularly bold. However, his grasp of epistemology was weak. Into a single mental act he fused perception of eternal moral truth, knowledge of eternal moral

⁴⁸ 'Omnipotence of God', *Works*, 1: 54. See, also, *Demonstration*, 73-74 [*Works*, 2: 553-54]; 'The great duty of universal love and charity', *Works*, 2: 392.

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truth, assent to eternal moral truth, and recognition and acceptance of the formal obligation to act in accordance with eternal moral truth as to a rule or law.⁴⁹ Further, he scarcely deduced duties from eternal moral truth, but simply pronounced them. Further still, when he began his discussion of human knowledge and moral responsibility in the *Discourse*, along with the terms ‘goodness’ and ‘justice’ he began to use new and initially quite obscure terms about the wisdom of God.

Clarke included several references in the *Discourse* that illustrate the source of his otherwise undeveloped epistemological assumptions and begin to reveal how he moved easily and uncritically between the transcendent and the human sphere and Platonized the law of nature. When he said human and divine ideas of justice and goodness are the same, Clarke introduced a Stoic commonplace from the *Contra Celsum* of Origen that says virtue is the same in man and God.⁵⁰ He used the passage a second time, in conjunction with passages from the *Euthyphro* about the holy and good and from Cicero’s *De natura deorum* about the directing force of human conscience, all to support his point that as God conforms His will to the eternal moral truth so, too, the obligation of men to obey the law of nature is prior to its being the positive command of God.⁵¹ In addition, when he said men recognize and accept the formal obligation to act in accordance with eternal moral truth in the same instant they perceive and assent to that truth, he used Plato’s *Meno* to show not only what he thought the mental act involves, but also that he considered moral and geometrical truth to have the same status as truth and to be identically accessible to reason.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Discourse*, 193 [Works, 2: 615]; *Discourse*, 199 [Works, 2: 618]. For a sympathetic and comprehensive recovery of Clarke’s moral epistemology that looks principally at the correspondence with Dodwell and Collins, see Ducharme, ‘Personal identity’.

⁵⁰ Clarke, *Discourse*, 168 [Works, 2: 604]; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.29.

⁵¹ Clarke, *Discourse*, 217-18 [Works, 2: 626-27]; Plato, *Euthyphro*, 10b-c; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, III.xxxv.85.

⁵² Clarke, *Discourse*, 192 [Works, 2: 615]. Clarke joined moral to geometrical truth in his use of the *Meno* after the first edition of the *Discourse* (1706).

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The first impression Clarke's use of these illustrations gives is that he fairly indiscriminately lumped not only discrete mental acts, but also discrete concepts and entire philosophical systems. It is more important to recognize that as Clarke associated Stoic with Platonic concepts, he associated both with geometrical concepts and consolidated everything within a framework he now cast in Platonic epistemological as well as theological terms. Appreciation of Clarke's complicated manoeuvre makes it somewhat easier to understand what he meant to convey with the new terms he introduced to describe the wisdom of God and how he moved from these terms to the law of nature and human responsibility.

When he began to explain the relation between the wisdom of God and the natural law that directs men, Clarke said about eternal truth that there are real differences between things, that is, absolutes of right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice. In addition, he said that different things stand in different relations, respects or proportions to each other. From the different relations of different things to each other, it necessarily follows that there is an agreement or disagreement of some things with others, a fitness or unfitness in the application of different things or relations to each other. He said about men that to certain individuals there is a fitness or suitableness of certain circumstances and an unsuitableness of others. Different individuals also stand in different relations to each other. From the different relations different individuals have to each other, a fitness or unfitness of certain manners of behaviour of some individuals towards others necessarily follows.⁵³ Clarke said it is possible to deduce all the duties of natural religion and morality from these facts. He indicated the three principal branches of duty: the duty to God; the duty to others, which has two parts, the duty of equity and that of benevolence; and the duty to self.⁵⁴

Clarke's cumbersome explanation contains a slight of hand. He used the pseudo-mathematical and pseudo-geometrical concepts of relation, proportion, agreement, and difference not only to charac-

⁵³ *Discourse*, 176-77 [*Works*, 2: 608]; *Discourse*, 185-86 [*Works*, 2: 612].

⁵⁴ *Discourse*, 199-213 [*Works*, 2: 618-24].

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terize eternal truth and human relations, but also to conflate human relations and eternal geometrical relations. The particular principles of duty he claimed to deduce are actually Stoic principles which he took from *De officiis* of Cicero.⁵⁵ In fact, Clarke took three Stoic elements from Cicero: the theory of natural human sociability, the theory of duties, and the theory of natural law. He joined them within his own scheme and called the entirety the law of nature.

Clarke was straightforward about the natural sociability of humans. Everyone has a concern for self-preservation. But everyone also has a natural affection for others and needs others for mutual assistance. Through mutual good offices and the communication of arts and labour, individuals progressively extend their affections, friendships, and relations so that they build up families, towns, cities, nations, and ultimately the ‘agreeing Community of all Mankind.’ ‘This is the Argumentation of that great Master, Cicero’, Clarke said, and quoted from *De finibus*, *De legibus*, *Academica*, and *De officiis* to support the point.⁵⁶ He also said it is possible to deduce the duty of benevolence from natural human sociability: ‘[E]very rational Creature ought in its Sphere and Station, according to all its respective powers and faculties, to do all the Good it can to its Fellow-Creatures.’ That is, he added, with reference to *De officiis*, he ought ‘to think himself born to promote the publick good and welfare of all his Fellow-creatures’.⁵⁷

Clarke’s derivation of the duty of benevolence from natural human sociability was actually his second derivation of it. He had already said that it is possible to deduce the duties to God, others, and self from eternal truth. The duty to God requires men to honour and worship God and to use their powers and faculties in

⁵⁵ Cicero, *De officiis*, I.xlv.160.

⁵⁶ Clarke, *Discourse*, 207-9 [*Works*, 2: 621-22]; Cicero, *De finibus*, V.xxiii.65; III.xx.65; III.xx.68; *De legibus*, I.x.29; I.xiii.35; I.xii.34; *Academica*, I.v.21; *De officiis*, I.vii.22; III.v.25.

⁵⁷ Clarke, *Discourse*, 206 [*Works*, 2: 621]; *Discourse*, 208 [*Works*, 2: 622]; Cicero, *De officiis*, I.vii.22.

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his service. The duty of equity requires them to deal with others as they would expect others in like circumstances to deal with them. Though the circumstances of individuals and actions differ, the duty of equity is no less a duty in social relations of superiority and inferiority such as those of parents and children, masters and servants, governors and subjects, and citizens and foreigners. The duty to self requires men to preserve themselves and to manage their appetites, faculties, tempers, and dispositions so that they are able to fulfil their other duties.⁵⁸

Although Clarke took these duties from Cicero, there is a great and important difference between Cicero's system of duties and his own. Cicero expanded the Middle Stoic Panaetius's analysis and system of moral duty. Before Panaetius, Stoics sought to explain the perfect moral acts of wise men and to understand them in terms of men's intellectual nature and in relation to the universal reason immanent in nature. Panaetius and Cicero sought to explain the so-called second best or intermediate acts appropriate to ordinary men of imperfect wisdom and to understand them in relation to men's social nature and as appropriate for their social result quite apart from universal reason.⁵⁹ Clarke also sought to explain the acts of ordinary men and to understand them in relation to men's social nature and as appropriate for their social result. But he derived duties from absolute, eternal truth or universal reason as well as from the social nature of men. He retained Cicero's notion that there are particular acts appropriate to individuals in particular social relations. But he assimilated Cicero's language of social

⁵⁸ Clarke, *Discourse*, 199-213 [*Works*, 2: 618-24]. See, also, 'Great duty', *Works*, 2: 385-93. For a synthesis of Cicero and Scripture, see 'The nature of relative duties'; 'Every man is principally to regard his own proper duty' (*Works*, 1: 302-7; 672-76); Sermon of 22 December 1723, *Works*, 2: 484.

⁵⁹ For the Middle Stoic and Ciceronian doctrine of second best or intermediate acts, see G. B. Kerferd, 'Cicero and Stoic ethics', in *Cicero and Virgil*, ed. John R. C. Martyn (Amsterdam, 1972), 60-74; I. G. Kidd, 'Moral actions and rules in Stoic ethics', in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley, 1978), 247-58; 'Stoic intermediates and the end for man', in ed. A. A. Long, *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1972), 150-72; John M. Rist, *Stoic philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 173-200; R. G. Tanner, 'Cicero on conscience and morality', in *Cicero and Virgil*, 861-12.

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relations to his own language in which social relations are assimilated to geometrical ones. Of course, geometrical relations are part of absolute, eternal truth and accessible to human reason. Clarke transformed Cicero's theory of moral duty back into a theory of moral acts understood in terms of men's intellectual nature and in relation to universal reason.

Nonetheless, Clarke did not transform Cicero's Stoic theory of moral duty back into its form before Panaetius. Rather, he Platonized it. His example of a man acting to promote the public good, acting in a way that does not hurt others even if they have hurt him, uses a Socratic principle from Plato's *Crito*.⁶⁰ The example he gave of the result of the regular and universal practice of moral duty is universal justice as he said it appears in Plato's *Phaedrus*, though at this point in the *Phaedrus* Plato is actually talking about wisdom and not justice.⁶¹ All in all, Clarke drew Cicero's Stoic principles of moral duty into the moral first principles of his own Platonic theology, which he set out in terms of Plato's *Euthyphro*, and, with this, upward into the goodness, justice, and other absolute, eternal, and rational moral perfections in the wisdom of the transcendent God of Scripture.

Clarke constructed a Christian Platonist theology, and he Platonized, by assimilation and rationalization, the Stoic system of natural law and human responsibility it entailed. He accomplished this boldly, with frank acknowledgment of his intellectual debts, and in complete ignorance of the philosophical assumptions, confections, and elisions that made it possible. Of course, and not least, he also handed along the principle that the moral wisdom of the God of natural religion and Scripture, that is, the Supreme

⁶⁰ Clarke, *Discourse*, 209 [*Works*, 2: 622]; Plato, *Crito*, 49c-d.

⁶¹ Clarke, *Discourse*, 203-4 [*Works*, 2: 620]; Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250d. Clarke also cited Cicero on moral goodness, *De officiis*, I.v.15; Cicero on all of the virtues, *De finibus* II.xvi.52; and Aristotle on virtue, justice and society, *Nicomachean ethics*, 1129b. Clarke added the quotations from the *Phaedrus* and *De finibus* in the 3rd edition of *Discourse* (1711).

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Being under-stood as mind, is the absolute, eternal, and rational standard for the subordinate exercise of power and will.⁶²

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⁶² Thanks to Jody Armstrong, Lynne Farrington, Andrew G. Kadel, Eileen McIlvaine, and Robert H. Scott for assistance with early editions of the work of Clarke and his associates; to David Armitage, Jim Dybikowski, Irwin Primer, and Pheroze Wadia for generous comments on earlier drafts of this essay. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities provided an opportunity for concentrated research and writing.

**THE ARGUMENT FROM THE NEED FOR SIMILAR
OR 'HIGHER' QUALITIES:
CUDWORTH, LOCKE, AND CLARKE ON GOD'S
EXISTENCE¹**

J. J. MacIntosh

The seventeenth-century is notable not only for the number, but also for the variety of arguments to prove God's existence. Although writers such as Pascal and Bayle believed them to be unnecessary and unavailable, proofs were felt by a large number of writers to be not only possible but desirable. In this area, as in so many others, the influence of Descartes is clear. In addition to his version of the ontological argument in Meditation V, he offered in Meditation III a somewhat convoluted proof involving our idea of God. In the course of it, he noted the possibility of a proof based on the need for a *sustaining* cause of contingently existing entities and further noted, in passing, the proof I shall discuss here.²

Subsequent seventeenth-century writers returned constantly to these arguments of Descartes, but although Cudworth, Leibniz, and others offered similar proofs, most were dubious, not so much about the validity of the proofs, as about their utility. The 'subtil Arguings' of 'many Learned Men ... upon this Head,' said Clarke, 'are sufficient to raise a Cloud not very easy to be seen through.'³ Descartes' speculations had received almost immediately an explicitly Thomistic response from Caterus, and Clarke pointed out that 'That which is Self-existent, must *therefore* have all possible Perfections ... though most certainly true in it self ... cannot be so easily demonstrated *a priori*'.⁴ Even Cudworth, though allowing

¹ I am grateful to Jim Dybikowski for a number of helpful suggestions concerning this paper.

² R. Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy*, in eds. Ch. Adam and P. Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes* (11 vols., Paris, 1964-76), vol. 7.

³ *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, in *The works of Samuel Clarke, D.D.* (henceforth *Works*.) (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978), 2: 530.

⁴ Adam and Tannery, 7: 96-7; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a 2.1; Clarke, *Works*, 2: 543.

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the worth of the ontological argument, recognized that most would 'Distrust, the *Firmness* and *Solidity*, of such *Thin* and *Subtle Cobwebs*'. The result was a felt need for an argument which would, as Cudworth put it, prove more 'Convictive of the *Existence* of a God to the Generality'.⁵

The argument type Cudworth decided upon was based on the need, or supposed need, for a cause to have qualities similar to, or higher in perfection than, those found in its effect: typically, such arguments concentrate on consciousness or free will, but the important premise in each case is the more general one, for without it the more specific arguments fail.

The argument has classical antecedents, but it received its fullest development at the hands of four major proponents, Cudworth, Locke, Bentley, and Clarke.⁶ Cudworth provided the most fully argued version; Locke, the least convincing; while Bentley and Clarke shored up its premises, as Locke and Cudworth had not, with considerations drawn from the new corpuscularian world view, and, on occasion, with points taken more or less directly from Locke's philosophy, which he himself did not use in this context.

The argument's essential *ex nihilo* assumption was shortly to receive its death blow from Hume, so the quarter century period in question (1678-1704) represents the last time the argument could be taken as decisive.⁷ That does not mean that it has never reappeared, but subsequent attempts to use it must be given considerably more support than the late seventeenth-century thinkers thought necessary.

Nonetheless, some writers still do not even attempt an argument in support of the maxim. William Craig, for example, is content

⁵ Ralph Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe*, (henceforth *TIS*), (1678, rpt. Stuttgart, 1964), 725.

⁶ Space limitations will not allow any detailed treatment of Bentley's version of the argument, but it is an interesting and important link connecting Cudworth and Clarke.

⁷ David Hume, *A treatise of human nature* (henceforth *Treatise*), eds. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1978), 80.

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merely to assert that Hume's position is 'counter-intuitive' since 'the old principle *ex nihilo nihil fit* appears to be so manifestly true that a sincere denial of this axiom is well-nigh impossible.' Locke too held that we know 'by an intuitive Certainty, that bare *nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles*', but the 'intuitive certainties' of the late seventeenth-century demand more reasoned support in the late twentieth.⁸

The seventeenth-century version of the argument is of historical interest, not only as showing Cudworth's clear but often ignored influence on a number of his younger contemporaries such as Locke, Bentley, and Clarke, but also as showing the way elements of the new world view were pressed into the service of theology. It is also of philosophical interest, for though the argument presented itself as straightforward to its adherents, they nonetheless argued for, and in Cudworth's case clarified, its premises and underlying assumptions, and their arguments are intrinsically interesting. Additionally, there is an exegetical point of interest, for recently some writers have suggested that Clarke at least did not use this argument, but offered instead a 'modern' version which eschews the argument from similar or higher qualities. This is simply false.

In the argument type common to Cudworth, Locke, Bentley, and Clarke, much attention is paid to the claim that certain properties can only be caused by certain other properties - typically by the same property or by one which is in some way similar but 'higher', a property which some other entity has 'eminently'.⁹

The seventeenth-century application of this point to consciousness was not new, an early version is Zeno of Citium's 'Nothing lacking consciousness and reason can produce out of itself beings with consciousness and reason',¹⁰ but what is new in these late seventeenth-century proofs is the growing recognition of

⁸ W. L. Craig, *The Kalam cosmological argument* (London, 1979), 143; John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding* (henceforth *Essay*), ed. P. H. Niddich (Oxford, 1975), 4.10.3. References by book, chapter, and section.

⁹ Cudworth, *TIS*, 729, and elsewhere.

¹⁰ 'Nihil quod animi quodque rationis est expers, id generare ex se potest animantem compotemque rationis', quoted from Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, ii.22.

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the need to justify each and every step in the argument, even if the *ex nihilo* premise was often taken to require little more than clarification. Previous thinkers had taken one or more of the premises as self-evident, but Cudworth provided a detailed attempt to show that the argument as a whole is sustainable.

Despite their common acceptance of the argument from the necessity for similar qualities, there are a number of relevant differences to be found among these philosophers. Cudworth, though he accepted the truth of atomism, was a Platonist who believed that the phenomena were insufficiently explained unless we also accept an incorporeal plastic principle acting in nature, while Locke, Bentley and Clarke were more aseptic in their atomism, with Bentley and Clarke offering a version of Newton's argument against the plenists. Both Bentley and Clarke put Newton's point to theological use, arguing that the *possibility* of a vacuum shows the non-necessity of matter. Hence, if their argument for a *necessary* being is granted, matter cannot be it.¹¹

On the other hand, Locke held that it was, for all we know, *possible* for (suitably organized) matter to think, Cudworth and Bentley held that this was *not* a possibility, while Clarke, though agreeing that it was indeed impossible, felt that the argument would go through even if this possibility were allowed. All that was needed, Clarke suggested, was that 'Perception or Intelligence be supposed to be a *distinct Quality* or Perfection, (though even but of *Matter* only, if the Atheist pleases)'.¹²

Unlike the other three, Locke, whose commitment to orthodox Christianity was felt by some of his contemporaries to be suspect,

¹¹ Newton's compressed, but clear argument is in definition I and in book III, proposition VI, corollaries III and IV of *Principia* (I. Newton, *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica*, eds. Alexander Koyré and I. Bernard Cohen (Cambridge, Mass, 1972), 1: 39-41, 2: 575). For Bentley, see *The works of Richard Bentley, D.D.* (henceforth Dyce), ed. A. Dyce, (3 vols., 1838; rpt. New York, 1966), 3: 150-51. (Dyce's edition incorporates Bentley's various fourth edition (1699) changes and corrections to his *Eight Boyle lectures on atheism*). For Clarke, see *Works*, 2: 531-32.

¹² Clarke, *Works*, 2: 545.

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seems to have offered his demonstration merely to show that such a demonstration could be given.¹³ For Locke it was simply an example of one of the three ways in which we can acquire knowledge: intuitive, e.g. of our own existence; demonstrative, e.g. of God's existence; and sensitive, e.g. of the existence of other spatio-temporal objects.¹⁴ The other three, by contrast, were writing explicitly against atheists. Bentley in particular was pressed for time, and might well have looked with favour on an easily adaptable argument.¹⁵ Despite their differences, however, they all agreed on the acceptability of the argument, differing chiefly in the degree of support they felt necessary to offer the premises.

Cudworth

Cudworth produced his version of the similar or higher qualities argument in the course of his attempt to rout the various kinds of atheist he thought were currently active. In *The true intellectual system (wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted; and its impossibility demonstrated)*, it was against 'Absolute and Downright Atheists' that Cudworth's arguments were marshalled and not against the 'Imperfect, Mungrel, and Spurious Theists' such as, for example, he took Plutarch and the Stoics to be. Nor did he expect his arguments to convert the atheists ('*they being sunk into so great a degree of Sottishness*');

¹³ See, e.g., Thomas Burnet's attacks in the various *Remarks upon an essay concerning humane understanding*, in Thomas Burnet, John Locke, Noah Porter, *Remarks upon an essay concerning humane understanding: five tracts* (New York, 1984).

¹⁴ Locke, *Essay*, 4.3.21.

¹⁵ Boyle in his will had left 'the Summe of Fifty pounds per Annum ... for some Learned divine ... To Preach Eight Sermons in the yeare for proveing the Christian Religion.' Two months and one week later Bentley, the first Boyle lecturer, was in the pulpit ready to show that the new experimental philosophy and sound theology between them could confute 'the *folly and sottishness of Atheism*' despite the fact that atheists make 'such a noisy pretence to wit and sagacity' (Dyce, 3: 23).

rather they were intended 'for the Confirmation of Weak, Staggering, and Scepticall Theists.'¹⁶

Cudworth's argument in *TIS* is important but understandably neglected, consisting, as it does, of roughly equal parts of polemics, philosophy, and acute but somewhat heavy handed scholarship, presented in repetitive and relentlessly italicized prose spread out over a dishearteningly large number of pages.¹⁷ The following are the important steps:

1. Nothing can come from nothing. [This is a maxim which Cudworth thinks importantly true, but liable to misunderstanding.¹⁸ Perhaps needless to say, the maxim will not be allowed to tell against *God's* ability to create *ex nihilo*.
2. Something exists now.]
3. Therefore at every past time something must have existed. [This is a result agreed upon by atheists and believers alike.]
4. Among the things which exist now are conscious beings.
5. But consciousness is something *additional* to matter, and could only be produced by something which was itself conscious. [Cudworth is as impatient as Clarke was later to be about the possibility of emergent qualities. Material-ists believe 'all *Higher Degrees of Perfections*, that are in the world, to have *Clombe up*, or *Emerge...* from that which is altogether *Dead* and *Senseless*', but

¹⁶ Cudworth, *TIS*, 741; Preface.

¹⁷ Neglected in general, but Michael Ayers has discussed Cudworth's contribution, both in 'Mechanism, superaddition, and the proof of God's existence in Locke's *Essay*', *Philosophical review* 90 (1981), 210-251, and in *Locke* (2 vols., London, 1991), 2: ch. 14). In this paper I am concentrating on the similarities between Cudworth and Locke; Ayers emphasizes the undeniable differences.

¹⁸ In the *Physics* Aristotle pointed out one type of exception to the principle: a privation — which, strictly, is not-being — may function causally, and the privation does not survive in the result. Thus 'a thing may "come to be from what is not" ... in a qualified sense' (191b13-15).

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this view Cudworth finds not only indefensible, but barely comprehensible.¹⁹]

6. Hence, although existent material things could cause the *material* part of conscious beings, there would, in the absence of a conscious being, be some part of a conscious being which the material things could not have caused. But then, the conscious beings would have some part which is uncaused, thus contradicting the maxim *ex nihilo, nihil fit*.²⁰

7. This argument, however, applies at every past moment. Hence there has never been a time when the universe did not contain at least one conscious being.

8. But the observable results are not consistent with a mere series of *finite* conscious beings in the past. Hence there is, and has always been, a conscious being of extreme power and wisdom. [I defer discussion of this point until Locke's version of the argument is considered, but it should be noted at once that this is really a way of smuggling in a standard design argument which, if it worked, would seem to show the rest of the argument to be unnecessary.]

9. Moreover this being exists necessarily. For if it existed contingently it could never have come into existence. But then it would not exist now. QED.

Cudworth's actual statement of his argument assumes that time is past infinite - 'Extreme *Sottishness* and *Stupidity*' are required to believe that 'neither God, nor Matter, nor Any Thing, [has] Existed *Infinitely* from *Eternity* without *Beginning*' - but since this

¹⁹ Cudworth, *TIS*, 727. For Clarke see, e.g., *Works*, 3: 787-8.

²⁰ The general point was familiar. Thus Aquinas: 'nothing can by its operation bring about an effect which exceeds its active power' (*Summa theologiae* 1a2ae 109.5 c.), and more specifically: 'It is impossible for the action of a material force to rise to the production of a force that is wholly spiritual and immaterial.' (*De potentia dei*, 3.9 c.)

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is not necessary to the argument I have omitted it. In what follows I have compressed and slightly reordered Cudworth's discussion.²¹

Cudworth takes premise (1) to be commonly granted. It is accepted by believers and is the '*Achilles* of the *Atheists*; their *Invincible Argument*, against a *Divine Creation* and *Omnipotence*; because *Nothing could come from Nothing*. It being concluded from hence, that whatsoever *Substantially* or *Really Is*, was from all Eternity Of It Self, Unmade or *Uncreated by any Deity*.'²² But an examination of this claim and, in particular, the senses in which the principle is true, would, Cudworth thought, open up the possibility of a demonstration of God's existence. The acceptable senses are:

First, *That Nothing which was Not, could ever bring it self into Being...* Secondly, that *Nothing which was Not, could be Produced or brought into Being, by any other Efficient Cause, then such, as hath at least, Equal Perfection in it, and a Sufficient Active or Productive Power*. For if any thing were made by that, which hath not *Equal Perfection*, then must so much of the Effect as Transcendeth the Cause, be indeed *Made without a Cause, ... the Third and Last Sense is this; That Nothing which is Materially Made out of things Præ-Existing*, (as some are) *can have any other Real Entity*, then what was *either before contained in, or resulteth from the Things themselves so Modified*.

These ... may be all reduced to this *One General Sense...* That *Nothing cannot Cause Any thing, either Efficiently or Materially*. Which as it is undeniably True; So is it so far from making any thing, against a *Divine Creation*, or the *Existence of a God*, that the same may be *Demonstratively Proved*, and *Evinced* from it, as shall be shewed.²³

²¹ Cudworth, *TIS*, 642-3.

²² Cudworth, *TIS*, 738.

²³ Cudworth, *TIS*, 745-6.

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Cudworth is walking a fairly fine line here. To allow creation *ex nihilo* he wants to show that ‘though it be *Contradictious*, for a Thing to Be and Not Be, at the same time; yet is there no manner of *Contradiction* at all in this, for any *Imperfect Contingent Being* which before was not, afterwards to be’, even if it is not made out of some pre-existing thing.²⁴ However, he also wants to hold that such coming into existence must have a *cause*. It must be allowed as a possibility, but not as an uncaused possibility. As Hume was to point out in the next century, this is a line which cannot be held. For if, as Cudworth claims, ‘nothing is in it self *Absolutely Impossible*, but what implies a *Contradiction*’, it is not clear why coming to be from nothing, with or without a creator, should be ruled out. As Hume noted, ‘the necessity of a cause to every beginning of existence is not founded on any arguments either demonstrative or intuitive. If we define a cause to be, *an object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac’d in a like relation of priority and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter*; we may easily conceive, that there is no absolute nor metaphysical necessity, that every beginning of existence shou’d be attended with such an object.’²⁵ Indeed:

THAT impious maxim of the ancient philosophy, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, by which the creation of matter was excluded, ceases to be a maxim, according to this philosophy. Not only the will of the supreme Being may create matter; but, for aught we know a priori, the will of any other being might create it, or any other cause, that the most whimsical imagination can assign.²⁶

Thus, for Hume there are two weaknesses in the Cudworth position: we have no arguments to show either that God is the only being who could create *ex nihilo*, nor even indeed that such

²⁴ Cudworth, *TIS*, 748.

²⁵ Hume, *Treatise*, 172.

²⁶ Hume, *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), 164n.

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'creation' needs a creator. But what follows if Cudworth's point is allowed?

Since nothing from nothing comes, and there is currently something, 'we shall fetch our Beginning,' says Cudworth, 'from what hath been already often declared, That it is *Mathematically Certain*, that *Something or other, did Exist of It Self from all Eternity, or without beginning, and Unmade by any thing else ...* we shall in the next place make this further Superstructure, that because Something did certainly *Exist* of it Self from *Eternity Unmade*, therefore is there also *Actually*, a *Necessarily Existent Being*.' Why '*necessarily* existent'? Because it makes no sense to suppose that it existed *contingently*, that is, by 'its own *Free Will* and *Choice*,' for in that case it would have had to exist *before* it existed, in order to *decide* to exist.²⁷

Cudworth is going a bit quickly here. I think the point of this rather strange argument is something like this: restricting our attention, for the moment, to the first, or primary, being, suppose there was a time when *nothing* existed, including that being. Now, what could *cause* the existence of such a being? Not some prior being, since *ex hypothesi* there is no prior being. But *contingent* existence requires an outside creator. Therefore, this being exists necessarily. But what, unless Cudworth is begging the question about the nature of this eternal being, is the point of the claim that it would have to exist of 'its own *Free Will*' if it were to exist contingently?

Here is one possibility. Since at some time such putative coming to be must have been both future and contingent it must depend on the freewill of some agent. Otherwise it would, as St. Thomas had noted, be already present in its causes.²⁸ But the only

²⁷ Cudworth, *TIS*, 764.

²⁸ St. Thomas, following Aristotle, allowed two kinds of future contingency: those depending of the free activity of some created spirit, and 'casual and chance events' which are equally unforeseeable, save by God. (See, e.g., *Summa theologiae* 1a 57.3 c. and 2a 2ae 95.1 c., and Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's metaphysics*, VI, L 3, 1210-22.) In the next century William of Ockham dispensed with the second category (*In perihermenias*, ed. A. Gambatese and S.

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agent in our universe of discourse is the as yet non-existent first being. However *it* cannot come to exist because of *its* decision, and no other alternative is available. Therefore the first being exists necessarily. It is worth noting explicitly that this sense of 'necessarily' is far removed from the twentieth century's 'It is true in all possible worlds that this being exists.' In the scholastic tradition to which Cudworth clearly had access there were a variety of senses of *necessity* in active use, and it is wrong to read his 'necessary' as being identical with our preferred philosophical sense of that term.

Now, why is it said to be the 'cause of itself'? To say that something is the cause of itself, Cudworth explains, is either to say merely that nothing *else* is the cause of it - the claim 'is to be understood no otherwise, than ... in a *Negative Sense*' - or else to say that 'its *Necessary Eternal Existence*, is *Essential* to the Perfection of its own Nature.'²⁹ Since we already have this eternal being existing non-contingently, we are, Cudworth argues, entitled to adopt the positive sense. However, nothing 'includes *Necessity of Existence* in its very *Nature* and *Essence*, but only an *Absolutely Perfect Being*. The Result of all which is, that God or a Perfect Being, doth certainly *Exist*'.³⁰

How does Cudworth justify his beginning: that something or other has existed without beginning? Well,

it is certain that Every thing could not be *Made*, because *Nothing* could come from *Nothing*, or be Made by It self, and therefore if once there had been *Nothing*, there could never have been *Any thing*. Whence it is undeniable, that there was always *Something*, of *It self* from all Eternity. Now all the Question is, and indeed this is the only Question betwixt *Theists* and *Atheists*; since Something

Brown, *Opera philosophica* (St Bonaventure, N.Y., 1978), 2: I.6.15, 422). Whether or not Cudworth would have agreed with Ockham's refinement, 'casual and chance events' are clearly irrelevant here.

²⁹ Cudworth, *TIS*, 764.

³⁰ Cudworth, *TIS*, 765.

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did certainly Exist of It self from all Eternity, What that thing is, whether it be a *Perfect* or an *Imperfect* Being?³¹

This being, Cudworth continues, cannot be a *collection*, a mere *succession* of entities. Therefore there must, have been one single eternal mind:

[I]f once there had been no *Life*, in the whole Universe ... then could there never have been any *Life* or *Motion* in it; and If once there had been no *Mind*, *Understanding* or *Knowledge*, then could there never have been any *Mind* or *Understanding* produced. Because to suppose *Life* and *Understanding*, to rise ... up, out of that which is altogether *Dead & Sensless* ... is plainly to Suppose, *Something* to come *out of Nothing*. It cannot be said ... of the Corporeal World and Matter, that *If* once they had not been, they could never Possibly have been; because though there had been no World nor Matter, yet might these have been produced, from a *Perfect Omnipotent Incorporeal Being*, which in it self *Eminently* containeth all things. *Dead* and *Sensless Matter* could never have *Created* or *Generated Mind* and *Understanding*, but a *Perfect Omnipotent Mind*, could *Create Matter*.... Now ... since no *Mind* could spring out of *Dead* and *Sensless Matter*, and all *Minds* could not Possibly be *Made*, nor one produced from another Infinitely; there must of necessity be an *Eternal Unmade Mind*, from whence those *Imperfect Minds* of ours were derived. Which *Perfect Omnipotent Mind*, was as well the *Cause* of all other things, as of humane *Souls*.³²

Thus Cudworth takes himself to have shown that something with mental powers must not only have existed from all eternity, but that that (single) thing must have existed *necessarily* from

³¹ Cudworth, *TIS*, 726.

³² Cudworth, *TIS*, 729-30.

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eternity.³³ Needless to say, the argument has its problems, not least among them being his truly startling leap from the 'Eternal Unmade Mind' of the penultimate sentence to the 'Perfect Omnipotent Mind' of the final sentence, but this is not the place to consider them.

The argument centres around Cudworth's interpretation of the sufficient reason maxim that 'nothing can come from nothing', with its extension to include the suggestion that even when there is a cause, it must be in some sense powerful enough to account for the entire effect in question. Otherwise the maxim will be violated for the portion of the effect that is left, as it were, uncovered. Given that, we are then invited to consider the likelihood that the material could give rise to the mental and, having seen the implausibility of *that*, we are offered the conclusion that since there is something mental now (for example, human minds) there can never have been a time when there was not something mental. Like most if not all of his seventeenth-century philosophical compatriots, Cudworth does not seriously entertain the notion that God might be non-temporal, and that, *qua* eternal deity, he might have created a temporally infinite world. For Cudworth, as for Boyle and Locke, Bentley and Clarke, God's eternity is sempiternity.

Sidestepping what looked like the beginning of a scope fallacy, Cudworth pointed out the unsatisfactoriness of claiming that there was 'at least one' such being in existence at any given time to arrive at the claim that there was 'precisely one' and then offered a reason for thinking this being to exist necessarily. The argument for necessity is not compelling, turning as it does on the notion that the contradictory of 'exists necessarily' is 'exists contingently' where that in turn is cashed out in terms of the notion that the existence of *this* being is contingent if it exists by 'its own *Free Will and Choice*'.

³³ Cudworth offers a number of other arguments for this claim, including his own version of the ontological argument, in the course of which he points out, as did Leibniz at about the same time, that a proof of the compossibility of perfections is required as a lemma for the ontological argument (*TIS*, 724).

Cudworth, Locke and Clarke

Cudworth's argument is far from decisive on the issue of God's existence, but it served as a template for the arguments of a number of other very clever thinkers in the next quarter century, and was clearly found convincing by them. It is, moreover, recognizably an argument: it proceeds from premises to conclusion, and *most* of the steps receive an attempted justification.

Locke

By contrast, Locke's argument for God's existence in the *Essay* is weak, unoriginal, and, in part at least, superfluous. Summing up his detailed examination of Locke's argument, and its relation to that of Cudworth, Ayers remarks, 'Philosophical criticism of Locke's proof can be brief... Crudely, it is either invalid or circular.'³⁴ Locke drew a conclusion much stronger than his premises allow and, following Cudworth, found it necessary at a crucial point in his argument to rely on a straightforward design argument that would, if acceptable, render the earlier steps of his argument unnecessary.

Equating corporeal thinking with the having of 'sensible ideas', or 'phantasms', which were thought of as being straightforward representations of things sensory, Cudworth had taken it as a matter almost too obvious to need argument that there were certain kinds of thinking to which matter could not aspire. That there were ideas other than sensible ones followed at once from the 'very *Idea* or *Description* of God; *A Substance, Absolutely Perfect, Infinitely Good, Wise and Powerful, Necessarily Self-existent, and the Cause of all other things*. Where there is not One Word unintelligible ... and yet no Considerative and Ingenuous Person can pretend, that he hath a *Genuine Phantasm* or *Sensible Idea*, answering to any one of those words.'³⁵

To make all thinking corporeal ('a Doctrine highly favourable to *Atheism*') requires a 'want of *Meditation*, together with a *Fond and Sottish Dotage* upon *Corporeal Sense*'.³⁶ At about the same time

³⁴ Ayers, *Locke*, 2: 182.

³⁵ Cudworth, *TIS*, 636.

³⁶ Cudworth, *TIS*, 636.

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Boyle suggested various mathematical abilities as corporeally inexplicable, and also instanced, as did More, ecstasies as evidence of incorporeality.³⁷ More and Boyle were taking the etymology of ‘ecstasy’ literally, and used the case not only to show the soul’s incorporeality but thereby to refute the Aristotelian doctrine that ‘the soul never thinks without an image’, since the images in question were taken to be neuro-physiological.³⁸ Boyle interjects a note of caution, remarking (my emphasis) that ‘in ecstasies, the mind does (*at least sometimes*) act without turning her self to corporeal phantasms’. In the *Essay* Locke is more cautious still: ‘whether that, which we call *Extasy*, be not dreaming with the Eyes open, I leave to be examined.’³⁹

Slightly later Leibniz agreed that not even God could make matter think, and offered a thought experiment to persuade us:

perception and what depends on it are *inexplicable by mechanical reasons*, that is, by figures and motions. If we pretend that there is a machine whose structure enables it to think, feel, and have perception, one could think of it as enlarged yet preserving its same proportions, so that one could enter it as one does a mill. If we did this, we should find nothing within but parts which push upon each other; we should never see anything which would explain a perception.⁴⁰

It remained for Clarke, however to offer a detailed and rigorous *argument* for this conclusion.⁴¹ Locke on the other hand was committed to the notion that however we explained thinking there would be an inexplicable element:

³⁷ Henry More, *An antidote against atheism*, in *A collection of several philosophical writings*, (2 vols., 2nd ed., 1662; rpt. New York, 1978), 1: 121; Robert Boyle, *The Works of the honourable Robert Boyle* (henceforth *Works*), ed. Thomas Birch (6 vols., 1772; rpt. Hildesheim, 1966) 6.689.

³⁸ Aristotle, *De anima*, 431a15-17.

³⁹ Locke, *Essay*, 2.19.1.

⁴⁰ ‘Monadology’ §17, Gerhardt, *Philosophische schriften*, 6: 608, trans. L. E. Loemker, in *Leibniz: philosophical papers and letters* (2nd ed., Chicago, 1969).

⁴¹ *Works*, 3: 795-99.

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it being impossible for us ... without revelation, to discover, whether Omnipotency has not given to some Systems of Matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think ... It being ... not much more remote from our Comprehension to conceive, that GOD can, if he pleases, superadd to Matter a Faculty of Thinking, than that he should superadd to it another Substance, with a Faculty of Thinking; since we know not wherein Thinking consists, nor to what sort of Substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that Power.⁴²

Locke felt that we did not have, and could not have, a coherent account of thinking in either case: neither would be, from our point of view, understandable. In either case God would have to 'superadd' the power of thinking to the entity in question: 'Pray tell us', Locke wrote in the margin of Burnet's *Third remarks*, 'how you conceive cogitation in an unsolid created substance. It is as hard, I confess, to me to be conceived in an unsolid as in a solid substance'.⁴³ As for those who suggested that thinking matter was a conceptual impossibility, Locke had a tempier-like response: our inability to conceive thinking matter may simply result from a 'weakness of our apprehensions [which] reaches not the power of God'.⁴⁴ Locke's point here is as telling now as it was then, and shows up the difficulty of all proofs that move directly to incorporeality from the incomprehensibility of thinking matter: the alternative is equally unenlightening. Locke did not think that Hume's 'little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*' could be a brain process *without* divine superaddition, but allowing even the possibility affected his presentation of the Cudworth argument.⁴⁵

⁴² Locke, *Essay*, 4.3.6.

⁴³ Quoted in Noah Porter, 'Marginalia Locke-a-na,' in Burnet, Locke, and Porter, *Remarks upon an essay*, 48.

⁴⁴ *Works of John Locke*, (10 vols., 1823; rpt. Aalen, 1963), 4: 468.

⁴⁵ Hume, *Dialogues concerning natural religion*, ed. N. Kemp Smith (Oxford, 1935), 148.

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Locke began his proof by noting that some cogitative thing (for example, himself) exists, and continued, we know 'by an intuitive Certainty, that bare *nothing can* [not] *produce any real Being* ... If therefore ... there is some real Being, ... it is ... evident ... 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.'⁴⁶

Though the point was rarely taken in the seventeenth-century (with Leibniz, as so often, providing an exception) the great mediæval thinkers from the time of Augustine and Boethius had standardly distinguished eternal being from sempiternal being, and it was common to hold that God created time and the world together. As Ibn Rushd (Averroës) pointed out, 'Most people who accept a temporal creation of the world believe time to have been created with it.' Aquinas agreed, holding that the earth, the heavens, the angels, and time were co-created.⁴⁷ However, the notion of a created universe which was infinite in past time was not accepted as a possible alternative by Locke. Locke's greatly admired friend and slightly older contemporary Robert Boyle took the doctrine to be liable to lead to atheism:

let me tell you freely, that though I will not say, that *Aristotle* meant the mischief his doctrine did, yet I am apt to think, that the grand enemy of God's glory made great use of *Aristotle's* authority and errors, to detract from it.

For as *Aristotle*, by introducing the opinion of the eternity of the world, (whereof he owns himself to have been the first broacher) did at least, in almost all men's opinions, openly deny God the production of the world; so, by ascribing the admirable works of God to what he calls nature, he tacitly denies him the government of the world.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Locke, *Essay*, 4.10.2-3.

⁴⁷ Ibn Rushd, *Taha-fut al-taha-fut (The incoherence of the 'incoherence')*, trans. Simon Van Den Bergh, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1954), 1: 17; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a 46.3 c.

⁴⁸ Boyle, *Works*, 5: 163.

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Boyle was aware that Aristotle felt his ‘concept of the Eternity (not of Matter only but) of the world’ to be compatible with the existence of a God, but found that ‘whatever may be the meaning of those dark & puzzling Expressions wherein Aristotle has deliver’d his Doctrine about the first mover’, most people would take it to be an atheistic doctrine.⁴⁹ Clarke, on the other hand, clearly finds the issue unworrying and, while holding that ‘*an Eternal Duration is now actually past*’ is necessarily true, notes explicitly that the question of the material world’s finite or infinite past is irrelevant here.⁵⁰

Like Cudworth’s, Locke’s argument does not really succeed in showing either that there was a *single* thing which has existed ‘*from Eternity*’, nor even that some single *kind* of thing has always had members in existence. Assuming that, however, Locke goes on to argue that a ‘*knowing Being*’ cannot have been produced by ‘Things wholly void of Knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any Perception’. Initially, this looks like the already mentioned claim of the Stoic Zeno that ‘Nothing destitute of consciousness and reason can produce out of itself beings endowed with consciousness and reason.’ However it becomes clear that whether or not this is the argument that Locke intends himself to be using, he does not need to use it since he has another, stronger, claim operating in the background: that it is *conceptually* impossible for *matter* to give rise to sentience. This claim does not directly entail that *nothing* non-sentient could give rise to sentience, but since Locke limits the possibilities to ‘two sorts of Beings in the World, that Man knows or conceives’, the ‘purely material’ and the ‘Sensible, thinking, perceiving Beings, such as we find our selves to be’, or, in short, ‘*cogitative and incogitative Beings*’, it yields that result by a disjunctive syllogism, provided that we allow (as Locke, however, was not on other occasions

⁴⁹ *Letters and papers of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter (Bethesda, Md., 1990), reference by volume number and folio, 2: 2. For Aristotle’s argument in favour of his position see *de Caelo*, 270a13-27.

⁵⁰ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 525, 534ff.

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willing to do), that what ‘Man knows or conceives’ exhausts the possibilities.⁵¹

It is, then, ‘repugnant to the *Idea* of senseless Matter that it should put into it self Sense, Perception, and Knowledge.’⁵² At this stage, each version of the argument notes that ‘all rational Creatures’, theist and atheist alike, accept the point that *something* has ‘existed from Eternity’, and the main issue centres around the nature of this ‘Being’. Considering (and rejecting) the possibility that this ‘Being’ might be ‘matter’, Locke noted that

though our general or specifick conception of Matter makes us speak of it as one thing, yet really all Matter is not one individual thing, neither is there any such thing existing as one material Being or one single Body that we know or can conceive. And therefore if Matter were the eternal first cogitative Being, there would not be one eternal infinite cogitative Being, but an infinite number of eternal finite cogitative Beings, independent one of another, of limited force, and distinct thoughts, which could never produce that order, harmony, and beauty which is to be found in Nature.⁵³

As I have argued elsewhere, Locke’s argument only works if this somewhat casual final move is acceptable.⁵⁴ But if *it* is acceptable, the earlier part of the argument is unnecessary: we can go straight from the ‘order, harmony, and beauty ... in Nature’ to the Deity in the standard way. And if we can do that, we can dispense with the earlier, main, part of Locke’s argument. This difficulty was pointed out in passing when Cudworth was discussed, but the difficulty is more striking in Locke’s case. For Cudworth takes himself already to have, at this stage of the argument, the

⁵¹ Locke, *Essay*, 4.10.5; 4.10.9.

⁵² Locke, *Essay*, 4.10.5.

⁵³ Locke, *Essay*, 4.10.10.

⁵⁴ J. J. MacIntosh, ‘Locke and Boyle on miracles and God’s existence’, in ed. M. Hunter, *Robert Boyle reconsidered* (Cambridge, 1994), 193-214.

conclusion that there must have been *immaterial* thinking things from eternity, while Locke merely has thinking things, and though he elsewhere suggests that God must *superadd* thinking to matter, the logical possibility of bare matter thinking leads him to interject the design lemma to get from a set of finite, possibly *material*, beings to an infinite *immaterial* being. For Locke the design lemma has even more work to do than it had in Cudworth. The difficulty is that the lemma is too weak to convince, but too strong to be a mere adjunct. Little wonder that Boyle held that trying to refute Epicurean atheists is a 'Taske much harder to be well performed than perhaps any ... that has not tried will imagine.'⁵⁵

Like Cudworth, Locke wanted not only existence but necessary existence for God, and offers a somewhat different manoeuvre to achieve this result. In essence, Locke relies on a fallacy of scope, moving from the necessity of the conditional: 'If there is a cogitative being now, then there has always been a cogitative being', which he takes himself to have established, to the necessity of the conditional's consequent and, given the antecedent, takes himself to have established thereby the '*necessary Existence of an eternal Mind*'.⁵⁶

It is worth noting that none of the writers here considered argues for *logical* necessity (in the twentieth century all-possible-worlds sense). For the argument in each case relies on the world being ordered, harmonious, beautiful, and containing cogitative entities. But this argument would not apply, for example, in a world which was not well-ordered, was not harmonious, and was lacking in both beauty and sentient entities. It is not an argument across possible worlds. It was, indeed, commonly believed in the seventeenth-century that *our* world had been precisely like that at one time: God *imposed* order on an initial unharmonious chaos. Leibniz pointed out at length that if God is to have *logically* necessary

⁵⁵ *Letters and papers of Robert Boyle*, 2: 63.

⁵⁶ Locke, *Essay*, 4.10.11-12.

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existence something considerably stronger than this type of argument is required.⁵⁷

Clarke

As with Locke, Clarke's orthodoxy was suspect; perhaps unlike Locke, his beliefs were not. He was generally taken to be an Arian, but his religious sincerity was not in doubt. He was, Voltaire remarked, a man 'd'une vertu rigide et d'un caractère doux, ... une vraie machine à raisonnements', the author of 'un livre assez peu entendu, mais estimé, sur l'existence de DIEU'.⁵⁸

His version of the proof is of interest as being perhaps the last serious attempt to prove God's existence using the 'at least as much perfection' principle. Indeed, there is a view in some quarters that Clarke did not use this argument at all, and that it was he who saw through it. Thus Wainwright has written:

These causal arguments [such as those of Aquinas] are historically important. Their plausibility, however, depends on assumptions that are no longer widely held... Ancient and medieval metaphysics ... assumed that the less perfect can only be explained by the more perfect.

... Modern versions of the cosmological argument attempt to show that the activity of a logically necessary being (a being that exists in all possible worlds) is the only thing that can explain the existence of contingent being. For example, Samuel Clarke ... argued that 'an infinite succession ... of merely dependent beings, without any original independent cause, is a series of beings, that has neither necessity nor cause, nor any reason at all of its existence, neither within itself nor from without.' There must therefore 'of necessity have existed from eternity,

⁵⁷ G. W. Leibniz, *New essays on human understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge, 1981), 4.10.6-7, 435-38.

⁵⁸ Voltaire, *Lettres sur les Anglais*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, eds. J-A-N de C. Condorcet (14 vols., Paris, 1846), 5: 40.

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some one immutable and independent being' that is the cause of the others.⁵⁹

This anachronistic version of contingent existence does not even approximate to Aquinas's notion of contingent being. For Aquinas a being exists contingently if it is in its nature corruptible. When this is not so, the being has necessary existence. Thus God, angels, human souls, and the heavenly bodies all have necessary existence in Aquinas's system. There is, however, only one necessary being which does not 'have its necessity from another'; all the rest can be annihilated, and need not have been created.⁶⁰

Nor does this characterization represent Clarke's position on necessary existence accurately. For Clarke, an existent thing has 'a Ground or Reason why it doth *exist* ... either in the Necessity of its own Nature ... Or in the Will of some Other Being'.⁶¹ But this 'Necessity of its own Nature' does not get us to Wainwright's 'exists in all possible worlds'; rather it concerns, as Clarke stresses, the causal independence of such a being from others, which is a very different matter. Necessary existence is 'an *inward and essential* Property of the Nature of the Thing which so Exists.'⁶² Clarke's position on modality is complicated and not, I think, particularly clear to Clarke himself, but possible worlds semantics is not really an appropriate exegetical tool here.

Modality apart, this is a correct account of Clarke's position, as far as it goes, but it does not, *pace* Wainwright, reveal Clarke as someone who has seen through an old fashioned argument. For the argument thus far merely gets Clarke to the position that he, like his predecessors, believed to be common ground between atheist and believer. It is what comes after this that constitutes Clarke's argument for *God's* existence, as opposed merely to the existence of some necessary being or other, for what is required, *inter alia*, is

⁵⁹ W. J. Wainwright, *Philosophy of religion* (Belmont, 1988), 40. The quotation is from Clarke, *Works*, 2: 526-7.

⁶⁰ See further J. J. MacIntosh, 'Aquinas on necessity', forthcoming, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*.

⁶¹ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 524.

⁶² Clarke, *Works*, 2: 526.

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a proof that this necessary being is not matter. The mistake is not Wainwright's alone. For example, in his *Argument and analysis: an introduction to philosophy*, Martin Curd, reprinting segments of Clarke's Propositions I and II, titles the selection 'A Modern Version of the Cosmological Argument', but ends with Clarke's 'there must on the contrary, of Necessity have existed from Eternity, *some One* Immutable and *Independent* Being. Which, *what* it is, remains in the next place to be inquired.'⁶³ However, this is the place where the argument begins, not the place where it ends. Is the necessary being God, or not? And how is *that* to be proved? Clarke himself, after claiming that 'The *Self-existent and Original Cause of all things, must be an Intelligent Being*', notes that: 'In this Proposition lies the main Question between us and the Atheists. For that something must be Self-existent ... Eternal and Infinite and the Original Cause of all things; will not bear much Dispute. But all Atheists ... maintain ... that the Self-existent Being is not an *Intelligent Being*'.⁶⁴

Clarke starts his argument off briskly by remarking that

All Men that are *Atheists* ... must be so upon one or other of these three Accounts.

Either, *First*, BECAUSE being extremely ignorant and stupid, they have *never duly considered* any thing at all; nor made any just use of their natural Reason, to discover even the plainest and most obvious Truths; but have spent their Time in a manner of Life very little Superiour to that of Beasts.

Or, *Secondly*, BECAUSE being totally debauched and corrupted in their *Practice*, they have, by a vicious and degenerate Life, corrupted the Principles of their Nature, and defaced the Reason of their own Minds; and, instead of fairly and impartially enquiring into the Rules and Obligations of Nature, and the Reason and Fitness of

⁶³ Martin Curd, *Argument and analysis: an introduction to philosophy* (St Paul, 1992). The Clarke quotation is from *Works*, 2: 527.

⁶⁴ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 521.

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Things, have accustomed themselves only to mock and scoff at Religion; and, being under the Power of Evil Habits, and the Slavery of Unreasonable and Indulged Lusts, are resolved not to hearken to any Reasoning which would oblige them to forsake their beloved Vices.

Or, *Thirdly*, BECAUSE in the way of *Speculative Reasoning*, and upon the Principles of Philosophy, they pretend that the Arguments used Against the Being or Attributes of God, seem to them, after the strictest and fullest inquiry, to be more strong and conclusive, than those by which we endeavour to prove these great Truths.⁶⁵

Noticeable here is the continuity as well as the shift between the second reason and the third. In the third, somewhat abruptly, we find that some atheists need be neither ‘extremely stupid’ nor yet ‘totally debauched’, but there is a continuity as well, for in the second as well as in the third point the power and importance of rational argument is taken as something uncontroversial.⁶⁶ We are a long way from enthusiasm here, as well as from the more tempered fideism of Pascal or Bayle.⁶⁷ For Clarke, it is important that believers are able to produce *sound arguments* for their belief in God. And like Cudworth and Locke before him, he feels that

⁶⁵ That ‘the Slavery of ... Indulged Lusts’ provided the psychological basis of atheism was a common claim at the time. David Berman’s *A history of atheism in Britain: from Hobbes to Russell* (London, 1988) provides a revealing discussion of the issue.

⁶⁶ In his sermon on I *Cor.* 1.21, ‘Men have natural abilities of knowing God’, Clarke emphasized that, as well as combatting ‘*That General* viciousness and corruption of mankind, which made them averse to entertain a Doctrine of such Purity and Holiness, as the Gospel is’, Christians needed to defend ‘the credibility and *reasonableness*’ of their views against philosophical objections (*Works*, 2: 158-9). The same point occurs in the 1705 Boyle Lectures (*Discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*) in which Clarke so favours natural theology as to need almost to defend the necessity for revelation.

⁶⁷ In his sermon on *Revelations*, 22.14 (*Works*, 2: 122-28) Clarke offers a number of interpolations in his chosen text, including: ‘*Blessed therefore are they*, (not who fancy they converse with Christ by enthusiastick imaginations, but) *who Do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree ofLife*’ (*Works*, 2: 127).

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this desire can be fulfilled by an argument based on the “at least as much perfection” principle. He expresses it in straightforwardly Cud-worthian terms:

SINCE in general there are manifestly in Things, *various kinds of Powers*, and very *different Excellencies* and Degrees of Perfection; it must needs be, that, in the Order of Causes and Effects, the Cause must always be more Excellent than the Effect: And consequently the Self-existent Being ... must of necessity ... contain in itself the Sum and highest Degree of all the Perfections of all things. ... because ‘tis impossible that any Effect should have any Perfection, which was not in the Cause. For if it had, then That Perfection would be caused by nothing; which is a plain Contradiction.

Clarke continues: ‘Now an *Unintelligent* Being ... cannot be endued with all the Perfections ... because *Intelligence* is one of those Perfections. All things therefore cannot arise from an Unintelligent Original: And consequently the Self-existent Being, must of necessity be *Intelligent*.’⁶⁸ How can the atheist avoid this conclusion? The only possibility, Clarke argues, is for the atheist to claim that ‘*Intelligence* is *no distinct Perfection*, but merely a Composition of Figure and Motion, as Colour and Sounds are vulgarly supposed to be.’⁶⁹ That colour and sound are ‘merely a Composition of Figure and Motion’ has become a common supposition, and Clarke will make use of the new corpuscular world view to show that thinking could not arise from ‘mere’ matter.

As a first step, Clarke deals with an objection of Gildon’s, that just as ‘*Colours, Sounds, Tastes*, and the like arise from Figure and Motion, which have no such Qualities in themselves; or that *Figure, Divisibility, Mobility* ... are ... given from God, who yet, cannot ... be said to have any such Qualities himself’, and that

⁶⁸ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 543.

⁶⁹ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 544.

therefore '*Perception or Intelligence* may arise out of that which has no Intelligence itself'.⁷⁰

There are two problems encapsulated here. One is the suggestion that just as colours, say, arise from uncoloured corpuscles, so intelligence may arise from unintelligent matter. The second is that the theist admits a relevantly similar case, namely the creation of the corporeal by the incorporeal - a clear case of qualities caused by unlike qualities. Why might the rise of intelligence not be like one of these cases?

'The Answer', to this, 'is very easy', says Clarke, for 'Colours, Sounds, and the like ... are not Qualities of Unintelligent Bodies, but Perceptions of Mind'. So far so good, and Clarke's answer, like Gildon's objection, is completely in accord with the new philosophy's doctrine concerning perceptual qualities, but Clarke's answer to 'the *other* Part of the Objection' is considerably stranger. 'Figure, Divisibility, Mobility, and other such like Qualities of Matter,' he suggests, 'are not real, proper, distinct and *Positive Powers*, but only *Negative Qualities*, Deficiencies or Imperfections.' Hence 'though no Cause can communicate to its Effect any real Perfection which it has not itself, yet the Effect may easily have many Imperfections, Deficiencies, or Negative Qualities, which are not in the Cause.'

This rather gives the impression of grasping at straws: for if 'Figure, Divisibility, Mobility, and other such like Qualities of Matter' are not positive, what material quality is? Well, Clarke is committed, in addition to bare extension, to matter's being tangible and having resistance. But (a) if *they* are allowed, why not allow figure, divisibility and motion?⁷¹ More importantly, (b) if matter *is* allowed extension, resistance, and tangibility, where do *those* qualities come from? Extension is presumably allowable, since God is extended, in virtue of being '*of necessity ... Infinite and Omnipresent*.'⁷² Clarke at once grants that 'as to the *particular*

⁷⁰ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 544-45.

⁷¹ Fourth reply, §§7, 9, Clarke, *Works*, 4: 622-3.

⁷² Clarke, *Works*, 2: 540.

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Manner of his being Infinite or every where present ... This is as impossible for our finite Understandings to comprehend or explain, as it is for us to form an adæquate Idea of Infinity.⁷³ His deity is not present at every point merely *operationally*, but is there, as Ezio Vailati has recently pointed out, ‘essentially and substantially’. Clarke calls upon Newton’s General Scholium for support in this point: ‘Deus ... omnipræsens est non per *virtutem* solam, sed etiam per *substantiam*: nam virtus sine substantia subsistere non potest’ - God’s being present everywhere is not merely a matter of being able to act in every place, God is present in every place substantially, for powers can only subsist in substances.⁷⁴ Presumably, then, extension could be a property of matter, but all the others - including tangibility and resistance - must somehow be derived from it. How, Clarke unsurprisingly does not tell us. Significantly, this argument does not appear when Clarke turns his attention to the issue in the *Second* and *Third defence of an argument made use of in a Letter to Mr. Dodwell*.⁷⁵

Supposing this point to be granted, however, Clarke now proceeds to demonstrate that intelligence is *not* a negative quality, and that therefore it must have a cause which contains that perfection. There is, he says, a ‘plain Reason’ why ‘*Perception or Intelligence Is really ... a distinct Quality or Perfection, and not possibly a mere Effect or Composition of Unintelligent Figure and Motion*’, namely that

Intelligence *is not* Figure, and Consciousness *is not* Motion. For whatever can arise from, or be compounded of any Things; is still only those very Things, of which it was compounded. ... And all their possible Effects, can never be any thing but Repetitions of the same. For Instance: All possible Changes, Compositions, or

⁷³ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 541.

⁷⁴ Ezio Vailati, ‘Clarke’s extended soul’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31 (1993), 389, and see further 396 ff.; Clarke to Leibniz, Third Reply, §12, *Works*, 4: 610, and fourth reply, §9, 4: 625; Newton, *Principia*, Book III, General Scholium, 2: 762.

⁷⁵ Clarke, *Works*, 3: 796-99; 825-41.

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Divisions of *Figure*, are still nothing but *Figure*: And all possible Compositions or Effects of *Motion*, can eternally be nothing but mere *Motion*.⁷⁶

This is a very Lockean passage, and in his *Third defence*, Clarke refers directly to the arguments of Locke and Bentley on this issue.⁷⁷ Earlier Cudworth had also suggested that the result that ‘all possible Compositions or Effects of *Motion*, can eternally be nothing but mere *Motion*’, was one of the advantageous consequences of atomism:

we can never sufficiently applaud that antient atomical Philosophy, so successfully revived of late by *Cartesius*, in that it shews distinctly what Matter is, and what it can amount unto, namely, nothing else but what may be produced from meer Magnitude, Figure, Site, local Motion, and Rest; from whence it is demonstrably evident and mathematically certain, that no Cogitation can possibly arise out of the Power of Matter.⁷⁸

At this stage Clarke, invoking like the others a final design clause, goes on immediately to remark ‘THAT the Self-Existent and Original Cause of all things, is an *Intelligent Being*; appears abundantly from the excellent *Variety, Order, Beauty, and Wonderful Contrivance, and Fitness of all Things in the World, to their proper and respective Ends*.’⁷⁹

Conclusion

The structure of the argument throughout this period is clear: a perfection is found in humans, namely intelligence (or consciousness, or perception) which cannot be explained save by positing a cause which has the same or some higher but relevantly similar perfection. But the single being which has this perfection must be eternal. Moreover, in view of *other* observed features of the

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 545.

⁷⁷ Clarke, *Works*, 3: 837-8.

⁷⁸ Cudworth, *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (1731; rpt. New York, 1976), 301-2.

⁷⁹ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 546.

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universe such as beauty and harmony, this being must be endowed with the other attributes of a traditional deity.

The argument, though classical in its essence, was greatly expanded and clarified by Cudworth, and attracted the attention and adherence of three clever and thoughtful writers, with Clarke being the last major figure to adopt it. Though clearly popular, its effective lifetime was short, in large part because of Hume's destruction of the argument's central component. The key premise in all four versions of the argument is 'a perfection can only be caused by a similar (or higher) perfection', and that in turn, as Cudworth very clearly argued, is only justifiable if we accept a particular reading of the principle of sufficient reason. But as Hume was soon to demonstrate, that principle remains quite unjustified.

Additionally, the *further* move, via standard design arguments to a traditional deity renders the main argument otiose: for if the general design observation of beauty and harmony requires God, what need was there for the concentration on intelligence? Finally, as Hume again was to point out, what *is* the case cannot yield what *must* be the case: a necessary being can never be deduced from any sort of design argument. Thus to the extent that the design lemma is flawed, the argument also falters.

However, while there is no *logical* inconsistency in accepting a designer of the universe while rejecting a deity, this is a position that is unlikely to appeal to the non-believer, so it is worth noting the flaws that design arguments in fact contain. While it is true that even if they succeeded, a deity would still not have been demonstrated, it is worth pointing out, as Hume did, that they do not, in fact, even demonstrate a designer.

These four writers were not the only ones offering arguments of this sort. Boyle, for example, also touches on the relevant points, though with characteristic caution he does not aim to show that God exists, but rather that an existent God *could* have made both human souls and inanimate objects:

Cudworth, Locke and Clarke

the human soul being immaterial, and there being no proof, but a great improbability, that it has been from all eternity; it must have had a beginning of existence, which being incorporeal, it cannot have received from anything that is a body; and therefore must have been created by some spirit. And if that spirit be acknowledged to be God, I have what we contend for: and if it be said to be any other spirit, which must be of an inferior order, it is plain, that there is yet more reason to believe it possible for God to have produced it. And if God be granted to have the power to create an immaterial being, and that so excellent an one as the mind is, why should he be denied the power of producing a senseless being; which is so ignoble, and so far inferior to a rational spirit as stupid matter is?⁸⁰

There is, however, a marked similarity between the arguments offered by Cudworth, Locke, Bentley, and Clarke; and the argument produced by the last of the four, like that offered by the Platonizing first, does depend, despite recent claims to the contrary, on the notion that ‘in the Order of Causes and Effects, the Cause must always be more Excellent than the Effect: And consequently the Self-existent Being ... must of necessity ... contain in itself the Sum and highest Degree of all the Perfections of all things.’⁸¹

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⁸⁰ Boyle, *Works*, 6: 753.

⁸¹ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 543.

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CLARKE AND LEIBNIZ ON DIVINE PERFECTION AND FREEDOM

William L. Rowe

In 1715 a series of written exchanges began between Gottfried Leibniz and Samuel Clarke. Halted by Leibniz's death in 1716, the series was edited and published by Clarke in 1717.¹ From these exchanges, and their other writings, much can be learned about the philosophical similarities and differences between these two great exponents of theological rationalism.² Clarke and Leibniz agreed that human reason can demonstrate that there necessarily exists an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being who has freely created the world.³ But their accounts of divine freedom were profoundly different. My concern here is to highlight their differences over divine freedom and to consider whether either conception of divine freedom can be reconciled with the absolute perfection of the creator. I will argue that neither conception can be fully reconciled with the requirement imposed by God's perfect goodness, 'the Necessity of ... doing always what is Best'.⁴

I

In addition to Leibniz's attacks on Newton's natural philosophy and Clarke's replies on Newton's behalf, an important issue in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence concerns the principle of sufficient reason (henceforth PSR), particularly its implications for how we must understand divine and human freedom. In his second letter

¹ *A collection of papers, which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibnitz, and Dr. Clarke, in the years 1715 and 1716* (London, 1717). References are to: H. G. Alexander, ed., *The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence* (Manchester, 1956). Cited as *LC*.

² By 'theological rationalism' I mean the view that unaided human reason is capable of demonstrating the existence and nature of God, as God is traditionally conceived within the major theistic religions of the West.

³ Leibniz made use of both the ontological and cosmological arguments. Clarke had doubts about the ontological argument, but he developed a strong version of the cosmological argument for this purpose. References to Clarke's writings other than his correspondence with Leibniz are to *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978).

⁴ *Works*, 2: 574.

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Leibniz advances the principle and pronounces on its implications for theology and metaphysics: 'Now, by that single principle, viz. that there ought to be a sufficient reason why things should be so, and not otherwise, one may demonstrate the being of a God, and all the other parts of metaphysics or natural theology'.⁵ He illustrates PSR by citing the example of Archimedes who observed that if there were a perfect balance, and if equal weights were hung on the two ends of that balance, the balance would not move. Why? Leibniz answers: "Tis because no reason can be given, why one side should weigh down, rather than the other."⁶ It was perhaps unfortunate that Leibniz used this example.⁷ For it enabled Clarke to charge him with treating an agent no differently from a balance: just as the balance cannot move without a greater weight on one side, and must move downward on the side with the greater weight, so the agent cannot choose without some motive to choose, and must choose in accordance with the strongest motive. But, Clarke argues, this is to deny the agent any power to act in the absence of a motive, and to deny the agent any power to act in opposition to the strongest motive. It is, in Clarke's view, to deny that there are any genuine agents at all. For it is the nature of an agent to have the power to act or not act. A balance has no such power; it is simply acted upon by whatever weights are placed upon it. As Clarke concludes in his fifth and final reply:

There is no similitude between a balance being moved by weights or impulse, and a mind moving itself, or acting upon the view of certain motives. The difference is, that the one is entirely passive; which is being subject to absolute necessity: the other not only is acted upon, but acts also; which is the essence of liberty.⁸

⁵ *LC*, 16. Leibniz elsewhere expresses PSR more fully as the principle 'that no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise' (Philip P. Wiener, ed., *Leibniz selections* (New York, 1951), 'Monadology', para. 32).

⁶ *LC*, 16.

⁷ Leibniz borrows the example from Bayle. See Austin Farrer, ed., *Theodicy* (LaSalle, Ill., 1985), 321-22. Cited hereafter as *T*.

⁸ *LC*, 97.

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Clarke's rejection of any 'similitude' between the movements of a balance and the acts of an agent is closely connected to his disagreement with Leibniz over PSR. In his response to the second letter Clarke *appears* to accept PSR. Thus he says: "Tis very true, that nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is thus rather than otherwise."⁹ Clearly, if when writing 'nothing is' Clarke means to include any fact or truth whatever, then he cannot consistently go on, as he does, to exempt certain facts or truths from the necessity of having a sufficient reason. Leibniz may have read Clarke's 'nothing is' as encompassing any fact or truth whatever, which would approach Leibniz's own understanding of PSR. If so, this would explain why in his third letter Leibniz complains that although Clarke grants him this important principle, 'he grants it only in words, and in reality denies it. Which shows that he does not fully perceive the strength of it.'¹⁰ However, despite his statement 'nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is', it is clear that Clarke cannot have intended to agree with Leibniz that *every* fact or truth has a sufficient reason. Nor could he have agreed that every *contingent* fact or truth has a sufficient reason. For he immediately goes on to say that 'this sufficient reason is oft-times no other, than the mere will of God',¹¹ citing as an example God's volition to create this system of matter in one particular place within absolute space, rather than in some other. There is simply nothing to recommend one particular place in absolute space over another. Hence, in this case there can be no other reason than the mere will of God.¹² In his third letter Leibniz cites this case as just the sort of thing that PSR rules out as impossible. On his understanding of PSR, there can be no situations at all in which a choice has been made without a sufficient reason for making *that particular choice*.¹³ To think

⁹ *LC*, 20.

¹⁰ *LC*, 25.

¹¹ *LC*, 20.

¹² Presumably Clarke would say that God had a sufficient reason to create this system of matter in *some place* or *other* in absolute space, but He did not have a sufficient reason to create it in this *particular place*.

¹³ Leibniz does allow that there are many human acts that *appear* to lack a sufficient reason. There are acts for which we cannot find a sufficient motive. For

otherwise is to suppose an exception to PSR. It is clear that Clarke allows for such exceptions.

A deeper and more important disagreement concerning PSR is also reflected in Clarke's reaction to Leibniz's analogy between the sufficient reason for the balance to move and the sufficient reason for an agent to do one thing rather than another. For Clarke agrees with Leibniz that often enough the agent has a sufficient reason for her action. Thus he allows that PSR is satisfied for a vast array of human and divine acts. What he denies is that the sufficient reason for the agent doing one thing rather than another operates on the agent in the way in which the heavier weight operates on the balance. Clearly the heavier weight on one side of the balance is a *determining cause* of the movement of the balance. Given the circumstances and the placement of that weight on one side of the balance, nothing else could happen than what did happen. It was *necessary* that the balance move as it did. But to suppose that the reason or motive that is the sufficient reason for the agent to do one thing rather than another is a *determining cause* of the agent's act is to deny any power to the agent to perform or not perform that particular act. It is to render the agent's act *necessary* and to deny the agent's freedom of will. Thus, for Clarke, a reason or motive may be the sufficient reason for the agent's action. But, unlike the weight in the balance that is the determining cause of the movement of the balance, the reason or motive is not the determining cause of the agent's act. As he puts it in a reply to Anthony Collins:

Occasions indeed they [i.e. reasons and motives] may be, and are, upon which That Substance in Man, wherein the *Self-moving Principle* resides, *freely exerts its Active Power*. But it is the *Self-moving Principle*, and not at all the *Reason* or *Motive*, which is the *physical* or *efficient CAUSE* of *Action*. When we say, in *vulgar Speech*, that *Motives* or *Reason DETERMINE* a Man; it is nothing but

~~example, no motive is apparent for why an agent stepped over the threshold with~~
his left foot rather than his right. But he supposed in all such cases there is some unconscious perception or passion that provides the sufficient reason.

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a *Figure* or *Metaphor*. It is the *Man* that freely *determines himself* to act.¹⁴

What we've seen is that Clarke's conception of what it is to be a free agent requires first that the agent may act in some *particular way* even in the absence of his having a sufficient reason to act in that way. Thus, there are exceptions to PSR. Second, we've seen that when the agent has a sufficient reason to do a particular act and *freely* does that act, the sufficient reason or motive is not a *determining cause* of the agent's act. At the time of the act, the agent had the power not to perform it. So, on Clarke's view, there is a profound difference between the sufficient reason for the balance moving in a particular way and the sufficient reason for an agent's free act. In the first case, the sufficient reason is a determining cause; in the second, it is not. Leibniz, however, sees no need to suppose that there are exceptions to PSR and no need to treat the motive for the agent's free act as anything other than a *determining cause* of that act.

With this background in place, we can now look at the problem of divine perfection and freedom and then consider the very different solutions proposed by Clarke and Leibniz to that problem.

II

Following Leibniz, we can imagine God considering a variety of worlds he might create. One might be a world in which there are no conscious creatures at all, a world composed solely of dead matter.¹⁵ Another might be a world composed (at some stage in its history) of living, conscious creatures whose lives are meaningful, morally good, and happy. If we imagine God making a choice between these two worlds, it seems evident that he would create the latter. Surely, a world with conscious creatures living morally good, satisfying lives is, other things being equal, a very good world, and *better than* a world consisting of nothing but dull bits of matter swirling endlessly in a void. And isn't it absolutely certain

¹⁴ *Works*, 4: 723.

¹⁵ Of course, given that the actual world includes everything that exists, including God, the world in question is here being considered *apart from God*.

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that an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being would create the *better* world if he could? But if we pursue this line of thought, problems begin to emerge. Assume, as seems evident, that the second world is the better world. If God were limited to these two worlds, he would face three choices: creating the inferior world, creating the superior world, or creating no world at all. For God to decide to create no world over creating a world that is, all things considered, a very good world, would be for God to do less than the best that he can do. If so, it seems that God's perfect goodness would *require* him to create the very good world. But if God's perfect goodness requires him to create the very good world, rather than creating the inferior world or not creating a world at all, what are we to make of that part of the idea of God that declares that he created the world *freely*? To say that God *freely* created the good world seems to imply that he was free not to do so, that he could have created the inferior world, or refrained from creating either world. But if his perfect goodness *requires* him to create the good world, how is it possible that he was free to create the inferior world or not to create any world? This is a simple way of picturing the problem of divine perfection and divine freedom.

Initially, one may be tempted to solve this problem by viewing God's perfect goodness (which includes his absolute moral perfection) as analogous to our goodness. A morally good person may actually do the very best action available to her while being free not to do it, or free to do something bad instead. Of course, had she freely done the bad thing, she would have exhibited some sort of moral failing. But the mere fact that she was *free* to have done the bad thing doesn't impugn whatever degree of moral goodness she possesses. So why should God's perfect goodness preclude his being free to create a less good world, or even a bad world? Had he done that, he would have ceased being the morally perfect being he is, just as the morally good person would have diminished somewhat her moral goodness had she freely done the wrong thing.

This solution fails because, although a human person *can* become less good or even bad, God *cannot* become less than absolutely perfect. Although we may achieve a certain degree of moral virtue in our lives, we can lose it and sink back into being

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the morally mediocre persons we perhaps once were. This is because it is not part of our very nature to be at a certain level of goodness. According to the historically dominant view in Western religions, however, God, *by his very nature*, is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. He *cannot* become weak, ignorant, or ignoble. Just as the number two is necessarily even, God is necessarily supreme in power, goodness, and knowledge. He is not some infant deity who by earnest striving slowly acquired these perfections and, like us, can diminish his goodness by intentionally acting badly. He necessarily has these perfections from all eternity, and he cannot divest himself of them anymore than the number two can cease to be even. God's perfections are constituents of his nature, not acquired characteristics. So, while we may be free to lose our degree of goodness by using our freedom to pursue the bad, God is not free to lose his perfections by using his freedom to pursue the bad. Indeed, he is *not* free to pursue the bad. For if he were, then he could become less perfect than he is. And that is simply impossible.

III

The problem of divine perfection and freedom was particularly acute for Leibniz. Since God necessarily exists and is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, it seems he would necessarily be drawn to create the best. If this be so, then when God surveyed all the possible worlds, he must have chosen the best, with the result that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz embraced the conclusion of this reasoning: the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. But how then could God be free in choosing to create the best? As a first step in answering this question, we should note that two different views of divine freedom have emerged in western thought. According to the first view, God is free in creating a world or in acting within the world he has created, provided nothing outside of him determines him to create the world he creates or determines him to act in a particular way in the world he has created. According to the second view, God is free in creating or acting within his creation,

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provided it was in his power not to create what he did or not to act within his creation as he did.

The first of these two views has the advantage of establishing beyond question that God possesses freedom from external forces with respect to his selection of a world to create. For given that he is omnipotent and the creator of all things other than himself, it is evident that nothing *outside* of him determines him to create whatever he does create. And given that whatever he creates is within his control, it would seem that he is completely at liberty to act as he sees fit within the world he has created. So, the fact that nothing outside of God determines him to create or act as he does clearly shows that God is an autonomous agent; he is self-determining in the sense that his actions are the result of decisions that are determined only by his own nature. But is this sufficient to establish that God is genuinely free? We believe that a human being may not be free in performing a certain action even when it is clear that the person was not determined to perform that action by external forces. Perhaps that person was in the grip of some internal passion or irresistible impulse that necessitated the performance of that action, overcoming the person's judgment that the action was wrong or unwise. With respect to human beings, the defender of the first view of divine freedom can agree that the mere absence of determining external agents or forces is not sufficient for an individual's action to be free. But in the case of God, as opposed to humans, the defender can argue that it is sufficient. For in God there is no possibility of his passions overcoming the judgment of reason. As Leibniz remarks:

the Stoics said that only the wise man is free; and one's mind is indeed not free when it is possessed by a great passion, for then one cannot will as one should, i.e. with proper deliberation. It is in that way that God alone is perfectly free, and the created minds are free only in proportion as they are above passion.¹⁶

¹⁶ P. Remnant and J. Bennett, trans and eds., *New essays on human understanding* (Cambridge, 1982), 175.

The chief objection to this view of divine freedom is that it doesn't sufficiently recognize the importance of agents having *control* over their free acts. An action was performed freely only if the agent was free to perform the action and free not to perform it. It must have been up to the agent whether to perform or not perform that act. If some external force or internal passion was beyond the control of the agent, and the agent's action was inevitable given that external force or internal passion, then the agent did not act freely in performing that action. Since God is a purely rational being and not subject to uncontrollable passions that sometimes compel human agents to act, it is tempting to conclude that God enjoys perfect free-dom of action. But this will be so only if there are no other features of God that both necessitate his actions and are not within his control. Because human agents are generally thought to have the power to act against the counsel of reason, we credit their acts due to reason - as opposed to those acts due to irresistible impulses - as acts they perform freely. For we believe they were free to reject the counsel of reason and act otherwise. But what if God cannot reject the counsel of his reason as to what action to perform? A human agent who is morally good and rational may yet have the power to refrain from acting as his goodness and reason direct. But can this be true of God? And, if it cannot be, how can we then say that God acts freely?

Leibniz was well aware of the problem posed by the fact that God's choice of the best is *necessary*, given that he is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. In fact, his best known solution to the problem of divine perfection and freedom recognizes that if God's choice of the best is *absolutely necessary*, then God is not free with respect to creation. In his *Theodicy* and his correspondence with Clarke, he is careful to distinguish *absolute necessity*, *hypothetical necessity*, and *moral necessity*, arguing that it is morally necessary but not absolutely necessary that God chose to create the best world. To determine whether Leibniz can solve the problem of divine perfection and freedom, we need to examine his distinction between moral and absolute necessity and see whether he succeeds in escaping the charge that

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on his view of things it is absolutely necessary that God chooses to create the best. I shall argue that he cannot escape the charge.

In discussing this matter it will be helpful to consider the following argument:

1. If God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise and good, then he chooses to create the best of all possible worlds. [That Leibniz is committed to (1) follows from (a) his view that God's perfect goodness morally requires him to choose the best, and (b) his view that among possible worlds there is a unique best world.]
2. God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise, and perfectly good. [Leibniz endorses the ontological argument which purports to be a proof of (2).]
3. Therefore, God chooses to create the best of all possible worlds.

As we've noted, it is of crucial importance for Leibniz to deny that (3) is absolutely necessary. For whatever is absolutely necessary cannot logically be otherwise. Hence, if (3) is absolutely necessary, it would be logically impossible for God to choose to create any world other than the best. It would not be a contingent matter that God chooses to create the best. Nor, of course, could God be free in choosing to create the best.

Leibniz contends that God's choosing to create the best is morally necessary, not absolutely necessary:

God is bound by a moral necessity, to make things in such a manner that there can be nothing better: otherwise ... he would not himself be satisfied with his work, he would blame himself for its imperfection; and that conflicts with the supreme felicity of the divine nature.¹⁷

What is it for it to be *morally necessary* for God to choose to create the best of all possible worlds? It seems clear that its meaning is such that if we suppose God chooses to create less than the

¹⁷ T, 201.

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best, it would logically follow that he is lacking in wisdom, goodness or power. Indeed, Leibniz says that ‘to do less good than one could is to be lacking in wisdom or in goodness’, that the most perfect understanding ‘cannot fail to act in the most perfect way, and consequently to choose the best.’¹⁸

Consider again proposition (1) in the above argument. What Leibniz says about moral necessity implies that (1) is itself absolutely necessary. For he clearly holds that from the fact that a being does less good than it could, it *logically follows* that the being in question is lacking in wisdom or goodness. And one cannot hold this without being committed to holding that the consequent of (1) [he chooses to create the best of all possible worlds] *logically follows from* the antecedent of (1) [God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise and good].¹⁹ That is, Leibniz is committed to holding that (1) is a *hypothetical necessity*. An ‘if-then’ proposition is a hypothetical necessity provided the consequent logically follows from the antecedent.²⁰ One might also say, with some loss of clarity, that the consequent is necessary on the hypothesis of the antecedent. Of course, the mere fact that a particular consequent logically follows from a certain antecedent - as, for example, ‘John is unmarried’ logically follows from ‘John is a bachelor’ - is insufficient to render the consequent *absolutely necessary*. It is not logically impossible for ‘John is unmarried’ to be false. So, although his asserting the moral necessity of God’s choosing to create the best commits Leibniz to the absolute necessity of the hypothetical proposition (1), this commitment in itself leaves him free to deny that God’s choosing to create the best is absolutely necessary.

Two further points show that he cannot escape the conclusion that God’s choosing to create the best is absolutely necessary.

¹⁸ T, 201.

¹⁹ Actually, the consequent of (1) logically follows from the antecedent of (1) only if it is absolutely necessary that there is a best possible world. Leibniz does think it is absolutely necessary that there is a unique best among possible worlds.

²⁰ It is also true that a proposition q logically follows from another proposition p just in case the hypothetical proposition, if p then q, is absolutely necessary.

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First, proposition (2) [God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise, and perfectly good.], the antecedent of (1), is itself absolutely necessary. We've already noted that both Clarke and Leibniz are committed to the view that (2) is not a contingent truth; it is absolutely necessary. Second, it is a rule of logic that if a hypothetical proposition is itself absolutely necessary, and its antecedent is also absolutely necessary, then its consequent must be absolutely necessary as well. Thus, if both (1) and (2) are absolutely necessary, (3) must be absolutely necessary as well. Since Leibniz is committed to the view that both (1) and (2) are absolutely necessary, we are bound to conclude that his view commits him to the absolute necessity of (3).²¹

Before turning to Clarke's attempt to solve the problem of divine perfection and freedom, we should note that Leibniz often insists that the act of will must be free in the sense of not being necessitated by the motives that give rise to it. His remark on this matter - often repeated - is that a motive 'inclines without necessitating'.²² This view *appears* to conflict with the one I have ascribed to him: that the strongest motive in the agent *determines* the agent to choose as he does. It suggests instead that the agent had the power to will other-wise even if the motive and circumstances were unchanged. For, as he says, motives don't necessitate, but only incline the agent to will as he does. But this is not what he means by his remark. On his view, motives and circumstances necessitate the act of will in the sense that it is logically or causally impossible that those motives and circumstances should obtain and the act of will not occur. Leibniz's claim that they don't necessitate the act of will means only that the act of will *itself* is not thereby rendered absolutely

²¹ The early Leibniz toyed with denying the logical rule that what logically follows from what is absolutely necessary is itself absolutely necessary. For a scholarly and philosophically illuminating account of Leibniz's various efforts to avoid the conclusion we've reached, see Robert Adams, *Leibniz: determinist, theist, idealist* (Oxford, 1994), chap. 1.

²² *LC*, 57.

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necessary.²³ That is, he is simply noting that even if there were a necessary connection between the motive and the act of will, this does not mean that the act of will cannot *itself* be *contingent*. As we saw above, God's being omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good *necessitating* his choice of the best does not imply that his choice of the best is itself absolutely necessary. Leibniz registers this point - in a somewhat misleading fashion - by saying that God's motives 'incline without necessitating' his choice of the best. We must not be misled into thinking that he holds that the *connection* between his perfection and his choice of the best is anything less than absolutely necessary. And when we then note, as we have, that God's being perfect is absolutely necessary, the logical rule dictates the conclusion that his choice of the best is itself absolutely necessary. This being so, we can conclude that God's choice to create the best is not free; it is absolutely necessary.

IV

By contrast to Locke, who characterized freedom as the power to carry out the *action* that we choose (will) to do, leaving the choice (volition) itself to be causally necessitated by the agent's motives,²⁴ Clarke locates freedom squarely at the level of the choice to act or not act: 'the Essence of *Liberty* consists ... in [an agent's] having a continual Power of *choosing*, whether he shall *Act*, or whether he shall *forbear Acting*'.²⁵ The implication of Clarke's view is that freedom (liberty) would be impossible should a person's choices be causally necessitated by his motives or desires. For if a person's choice to act is causally necessitated by earlier states of his body or mind, then at the time of that choice it was not in the agent's power to choose to not act. It is for Clarke a secondary matter whether the agent is able to carry out his choice.²⁶ Of

²³ For a more extended account of this interpretation of Leibniz's dictum, see G. H. R. Parkison, *Leibniz on human freedom* (Wiesbaden, 1970), 50-53.

²⁴ See Peter H. Nidditch, ed., *An essay concerning human understanding* (Oxford, 1979), bk. 2, chap. 21.

²⁵ *Works*, 2: 565-66.

²⁶ Clarke goes so far as to declare that a prisoner in chains is free to will to leave or will to stay. That he cannot successfully execute his choice doesn't rob him of

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course, since God is omni-potent, his power to carry out the action he chooses to do is unlimited. But our question is whether God has it in his power to *choose to refrain* from following what he knows to be the best course of action. Should he lack that power, it follows from Clarke's conception of freedom that God does not *freely choose* the best course of action. In fact, it would follow for Clarke that in this instance God is totally passive and not an agent at all. It would also follow for Clarke that it would make no sense to praise or thank God for choosing the best course of action. We must now see how Clarke endeavors to avoid the absolute necessity of God's choosing in accordance with his knowledge of what is the best course of action.

Clarke's overall view is clear enough. He distinguishes between the intellect (understanding) and the will. It is the function of the understanding to determine what course of action to pursue. It is the function of the will (the power we have to will this or that) to initiate the action specified by the understanding. It is one thing, however, to arrive (through deliberation) at the judgment that doing a certain thing is best,²⁷ and quite another thing to choose (will) to do that thing. Often enough, our motives and desires are sufficiently clear and strong to causally necessitate the judgment as to what to do. No other judgment is possible in the circumstances. In short, there may be no freedom at all with respect to the *judgment* as to what action to perform. On Clarke's view, freedom enters only when the will chooses to act or not act in accordance with the judgment of the understanding. Thus, when there is a best course of action for God to perform, his judgment that it is the best course to pursue is, Clarke tells us, *absolutely necessary*.²⁸ But

the power to choose (*Works*, 2: 565). Of course, he would allow that one who knows he is in chains may well see the pointlessness of choosing to leave and, therefore, not exercise his power so to choose.

²⁷ Since such a judgment terminates the process of deliberation about what to do, Clarke and others referred to it as 'the last judgment of the understanding'. It is the judgment that terminates deliberation and is followed by the act of will to perform (or not perform) the action specified in the judgment.

²⁸ Clarke uses several different expressions to designate the sort of necessity that precludes freedom to do otherwise. His favourite expressions are 'physical necessity' and 'natural necessity'. But he also uses 'absolute necessity' on

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God's choice to act in accordance with what his understanding approves is completely free; he always has the power to choose otherwise:

*God always discerns and approves what is Just and Good, necessarily, and cannot do otherwise: But he always acts or does what is Just and Good freely; that is, having at the same Time a full natural or physical Power of acting differently.*²⁹

It is instructive to contrast Clarke's view of freedom with a stream of thought in Christian theology, dating back at least to Augustine, according to which the saints in heaven are perfected to the degree that they not only do not, but are no longer *able* to sin, a perfection found in God and the angels. In our earthly state we have the freedom to turn from the good and do evil, but in the life to come we shall have a superior sort of freedom, a freedom that does not include the *ability* to do evil.³⁰ Thus Augustine says:

For the first freedom of will which man received when he was created upright consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin; whereas this last freedom of will shall be superior, inasmuch as it shall not be able to sin. This, indeed, shall not be a natural ability, but the gift of God. For it is one thing to be God, another thing to be a partaker of God. God by nature cannot sin, but the partaker of God receives this inability from God.³¹

In his *Philosophical inquiry concerning human liberty*, Anthony Collins had appealed to this stream of thought in support of his view that freedom does not require any power to choose or do

occasion. And in his fifth letter to Leibniz he says: '*Necessity*, in philosophical questions, always signifies absolute necessity'. (*LC*, 99).

²⁹ In his answer to the third letter from the 'Gentleman from Cambridge', 12 January 1717. See *Works*, 4: 717.

³⁰ Not all of us, of course. Only those who have seen the light and have been granted eternal salvation.

³¹ M. Dods, trans., *The city of God* (New York, 1993), bk.XXII, ch.XXX, p.865.

otherwise. Clarke wrote a rather devastating response to Collins' book.³² In it we find the following remark:

Neither *Saints*, nor *Angels*, nor *God* himself, have in any Degree the less *Liberty*, upon Account of the *Perfection* of their Nature: Because, between the *physical Power of Action*, and the *Perfection of Judgment* which is *not Action*, (which two things this Author constantly confounds,) there is *no Connexion*. God *judges* what is right, and *approves* what is good, by a *physical Necessity of Nature*; in which *physical Necessity*, all Notion of *Action* is necessarily excluded: But *doing* what is good, is wholly owing to an *Active Principle*, in which is *essentially* included the Notion of *Liberty*.³³

Clearly Clarke rejects this stream of thought in Christian theology. He allows that the saints in heaven no longer have any desire to sin and take no delight in it. Indeed, it may be absolutely certain that with purified desires and a perfected judgment they will always *freely* do what is right.³⁴ And this will be an enormous difference from life on earth where we are often tempted to sin by bad desires and faulty judgment. But what cannot be is that the saints or the angels, or God for that matter, cease to have the *ability* or *power* to choose to do other than what is right. For then they would not be free in choosing and doing what is right. To lose the power to choose otherwise is to lose the power to choose freely. And if one loses that power, one ceases to be an agent at all.

We can begin to get at the difficulty in Clarke's view of divine freedom by considering God's perfections and their implications for whether he *can* freely choose to do *evil*. Clarke readily sees that were a perfectly good, omniscient being freely to choose to do some evil deed, it would thereby cease to be perfectly good. And it

³² Anthony Collins, *A philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty* (London, 1717). For a discussion of Collins' book and Clarke's critical response, see my *Thomas Reid on freedom and morality* (Ithaca, 1991), ch. 3.

³³ *Remarks upon a book entituled, A philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty* (London, 1717). See *Works*, 4: 731.

³⁴ See *Works*, 2: 575 for his clear statement of this view.

would cease to be perfectly good even if, as could not happen in God's case, it were prevented from carrying out the evil deed it chose to do. For the free choice to do evil is *itself* inconsistent with continuing to be a perfectly good, omniscient being. A being who freely chooses to do what it *knows* to be an evil deed thereby ceases to be a perfectly good being. So, if God were freely to choose to do an evil deed, he would cease to be perfectly good. In short, it is not logically possible for God both freely to choose to do evil *and* to continue to be perfectly good. Since Clarke holds with Leibniz that God *necessarily* exists and *necessarily* is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, we can advance to the simpler conclusion that it is not logically possible for God freely to choose to do evil.³⁵ It is not logically possible because it is inconsistent with what is logically necessary: the existence of a being (God) who is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good.

Consider the question: Does God ever freely choose *not* to do evil? I think we can see that Clarke's own views commit him to a negative answer to this question. For God chooses freely *not* to do something only if it is in his power to choose to do that thing - choosing freely, Clarke insists, logically requires the power to choose otherwise. But it cannot be in anyone's power to make a certain choice, if it is logically impossible that the person should make it.³⁶ Therefore, since it is logically impossible for God to choose to do evil, it is not in God's power to choose to do evil. And since it is not in God's power to choose to do evil, it cannot be that God's choice not to do evil is a *free* choice. If God chooses not to do evil, he so chooses of necessity, not freely. And this being so, it makes no sense for us to thank God, or to be grateful to

³⁵ ~~An essential attribute of a being is an attribute that the being necessarily possesses.~~ Clarke holds that the moral perfections of the deity are *essential* aspects of the divine nature: 'Justice, Goodness, and all the other Moral Attributes of God, are as *Essential* to the Divine Nature, as the Natural Attributes of Eternity, Infinity, and the like.' (*Works*, 2: 574)

³⁶ If there is no possible world in which a person makes a certain choice, it cannot be that the person nevertheless has it within his power to make that choice.

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him, for choosing not to do evil. He could not have chosen otherwise.

Before turning to what I regard as two attempts by Clarke to avoid any limitations on the scope of divine liberty, we should consider whether it is in God's power to choose contrary to what he judges to be best. We've concluded that God cannot choose to do evil. But to choose contrary to what is judged to be best is evil or morally wrong only if choosing to do what is judged to be best is morally obligatory. To claim that it is morally obligatory ignores the real possibility that choosing what is best is supererogatory, beyond the call of duty. There are choices which are good to make, but not required as our duty. It would be a mistake, therefore, to infer God's inability to choose to act contrary to what he judges to be best from his inability to choose to do evil. Nevertheless, it does seem to be logically impossible for perfect goodness to choose to act contrary to what is best. And this seems to be Clarke's own view of the matter. Thus he declares 'that though God is a most perfectly *free* Agent, yet he cannot but do always what is *Best* and *Wisest* in the whole.'³⁷ To choose otherwise, he thinks, is to act contrary to perfect wisdom and goodness.

How does Clarke endeavour to avoid the conclusion that God's perfect goodness precludes his being free in many of his choices? His general approach to this difficulty is to distinguish two sorts of necessity: *moral* and *physical*. If one state or event physically necessitates another state or event, then the other cannot occur freely. Thus he would say that hanging a greater weight on the left end of an accurate balance physically necessitates the downward movement on the left side of the balance. Here, even if the balance were endowed with consciousness, there would be no possibility of the balance freely moving downward on the left. For the balance has no power to do other than move downwards on the left side. To illustrate the other sort of necessity, he offers the example of God's promising that on a given day he will not destroy the world.

³⁷ *Works*, 2: 574.

This promise morally necessitates God's refraining from destroying the world on that particular day. But, says Clarke, it would be absurd to think that God therefore lacked the physical power on that day to destroy the world.³⁸ God's refraining from destroying the world on that day is both morally necessary and free. For he both retains the physical power to destroy the world on that day and also cannot (morally speaking) break his promise.³⁹

The trouble with this solution is that it doesn't focus on the particular act of choosing to break his promise. If we accept, as it seems we must in God's case, that it is logically impossible for God to choose to break his solemn promise, then it follows that it is not in God's power to break his solemn promise. Indeed, for God to choose to break his solemn promise is for God to divest himself of his absolute perfection. Clearly it is not logically possible for God to cease to be absolutely perfect.

In a revealing passage, Clarke appears to recognize that there are some choices that do not lie within God's power because they

³⁸ ~~'God's performing his Promise, is ALWAYS consequent upon his making it:~~ Yet there is *no Connexion* between them, as between *Cause* and *Effect*: For, not the *Promise* of God, but his *Active Power*, is the alone *Physical* or efficient *Cause* of the *Performance*.' (*Works*, 4: 723)

³⁹ Clarke may well be right in holding that God had the *physical power* on that day to destroy the world. But it doesn't follow that it was in God's power to destroy the world on that day. For having the physical power to do something is consistent with not being able to do that thing. I have the physical power to murder my grandchild tomorrow. But it is not in my power to murder her tomorrow, for I am unable to choose to murder her. Intentional acts can be done only if we are able to choose to do them and possess the physical strength or power to do them. And given that in the past God has solemnly promised not to destroy the world tomorrow, he does not *now* have it in his power to choose to destroy it tomorrow. Prior to his promising, he may have had it in his power to so arrange things that he chooses to and does destroy the world tomorrow. But ever since he promised, it has not been in his power to choose to destroy the world tomorrow. For he cannot change the past, he cannot bring it about that he did not so promise then. And since his choosing to destroy the world tomorrow entails that he did not promise in the past not to destroy it tomorrow, it is in his power to destroy it only if it is in his power to bring it about that he did not promise to destroy it. But the latter is a power God does not possess, since it involves making it the case that something that took place in the past did not take place.

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logically imply the destruction of his essential perfections. He begins the passage by noting that there are necessary relations among things, relations that God eternally knows. By this he means that some states of things are *necessarily better than* other states of things. For example, *there being innocent beings who do not suffer eternally* is necessarily better than *there being innocent beings who do suffer eternally*. By knowing these necessary relations, God knows the choices required by his perfect wisdom and goodness. Noting that God cannot but choose to act always according to this knowledge, he continues:

It being as truly impossible for such a *Free Agent*, who is absolutely incapable of being Deceived or Depraved, to *Choose*, by acting contrary to these Laws, to destroy its own *Perfections*; as for *Necessary Existence* to be able to destroy its own Being.⁴⁰

He then draws the obvious conclusion:

From hence it follows, that though God is both Perfectly *Free*, and also Infinitely *Powerful*, yet he cannot Possibly do any thing that is *Evil*. The Reason of this also, is Evident. Because, as 'tis manifest Infinite Power cannot extend to Natural Contradictions, which imply a Destruction of that very Power by which they must be supposed to be effected; so neither can it extend to Moral Contradictions, which imply a Destruction of some other Attributes, as necessarily belonging to the Divine Nature as Power. I have already shown, that Justice, Goodness and Truth are necessarily in God; even as necessarily, as Power and Understanding, and Knowledge of the Nature of Things. 'Tis therefore as Impossible and Contradictory, to suppose *his Will* should *Choose* to do any thing contrary, to Justice, Goodness or Truth; as that *his Power* should be able, to do any thing inconsistent with Power.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Works*, 2: 574.

⁴¹ *Works*, 2: 574.

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The conclusion I draw from these remarks is that God's liberty is curtailed by his perfect goodness. If choosing to do something rules out his being perfectly good, then it is not in his power to choose to do that thing. He necessarily, not freely, chooses *not* to do that thing. This is the conclusion we argued for above. Clarke, however, rejects it, insisting instead that God's liberty is not in the least diminished:

'Tis no Diminution of Power, not to be able to *Do* things which are no Object of Power: And 'tis in like manner no Diminution either of Power or Liberty, to have such a Perfect and Unalterable Rectitude of Will, as never Possibly to *Choose* to do anything inconsistent with that Rectitude.⁴²

Perhaps his reasoning here can be understood as follows. There are some things God cannot do. He cannot make a square circle. Nor can he choose to do evil. But in neither case is his inability due to his power being limited. For it isn't true that there is some degree of power he is lacking such that, were he to have possessed that extra degree, he could have done these things. There is no degree of power sufficient for a being to make a square circle. And there is no degree of power sufficient for an essentially perfect being to choose to do evil.⁴³ So, the fact that God is unable to make a square circle or choose to do evil is consistent with his possession of perfect power. Hence, that fact does not imply any diminution of power. And, by analogy, Clarke infers that it does not imply any diminution of liberty in God.

Suppose we agree with Clarke that God's inability to choose to do evil is not a diminution of power. And suppose we grant him the inference that it is also not a diminution of freedom. We will agree, that is, that there is no degree of freedom that God lacks such that, were he to possess it, he would be free to choose to do

⁴² *Works*, 2: 574-75.

⁴³ It is worth noting that although no being has the power to make a square circle, many beings have the power to choose to do evil. It might be claimed that the latter fact implies that there is a possible power God lacks. Although this point is worthy of consideration, nothing I say depends on it.

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evil. Will this solve the problem before us? No. Remember, on Clarke's account of the nature of freedom, the power to choose otherwise is *necessary* for a choice to be free. Therefore, since, as Clarke agrees, it is not in God's power to choose to do evil, God does not freely choose not to do evil. And if it is not in God's power to act contrary to what is best, God does not freely choose to do what is best. So long as he lacks the power to choose to do evil, he lacks freedom in choosing not to do evil. And so long as he lacks the power to choose contrary to what is best, he lacks freedom in choosing to do what is best. It doesn't matter whether this lack of power results from a deficiency in his power or from the fact that his perfect power does not extend to such choices. For, since God's choosing to do what is best is *absolutely necessary*, it follows that God chooses to do what is best of necessity, not freely. And this means that we are left with no reason whatever to thank God or be grateful to him for choosing and acting in accordance with his knowledge of what is best. I conclude that Clarke's valiant effort to reconcile God's perfect liberty with his perfect goodness is unsuccessful. For his perfect goodness renders his choice of the best unfree and renders it senseless for us to thank him, or to be grateful to him, for choosing and doing what is best.

V

In this essay we have explored the problem of divine perfection and freedom with special reference to the views of Leibniz and Clarke. In each case we've examined imaginative, insightful efforts to solve this problem in a manner that allows for the consistency of perfect goodness and perfect freedom in God. I have argued that neither solution succeeds in reaching that goal. If my arguments are successful, this failure should be seen more as an indication of the intractable nature of the problem of divine perfection and freedom than as a reflection on the philosophical brilliance of either Clarke or Leibniz.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Robert Audi, Jan Cover, William Hasker, Norman Kretzmann, and Eleonore Stump for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. I'm

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also indebted to the editor, Jim Dybikowski, for many helpful comments and suggestions.

CLARKE'S 'ALMIGHTY SPACE' AND HUME'S *TREATISE*

Paul Russell

Others, whose Heads sublimer Notions trace,
Cunningly prove that thou'rt Almighty Space;
And Space w'are sure is nothing, ergo Thou:
These Men slip into Truth they know not how.

John Toland, *Letters to Serena*¹

The philosophy of Samuel Clarke is of central importance for an adequate understanding of Hume's *Treatise*.² Despite this, most Hume scholars have either entirely overlooked Clarke's work, or referred to it in a casual manner that fails to do justice to the significance of the Clarke-Hume relationship. This tendency is particularly apparent in accounts of Hume's views on space in *Treatise* I.ii. In this paper, I argue that one of Hume's principal objectives in his discussion of space is to discredit Clarke's Newtonian doctrine of absolute space and, more deeply, the 'argument *a priori*' that Clarke constructs around it. On the basis of this interpretation, I argue that Hume's 'system' of space constitutes an important part of his more fundamental 'atheistic' or anti-Christian objectives in the *Treatise*.³

I. Space, God and Clarke's 'easy way with the Atheists'

Clarke is now remembered primarily for his famous correspondence with Leibniz.⁴ The *Correspondence*, which was a particularly significant exchange in the wider 'war' between

¹ John Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704), 220 .

² David Hume, *A treatise of human nature*, eds. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (2nd. rev. ed., Oxford, 1978). Cited as *T*.

³ I do not examine the related issue of time, but my observations on Hume's opposition to Clarke on space apply to it by parity of reasoning.

⁴ *A collection of papers, which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibnitz, and Dr. Clarke, in the years 1715 and 1716. Relating to the principles of natural philosophy and religion* (London, 1717). References are to: H. G. Alexander, ed., *The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence* (Manchester, 1956). Cited as *Correspondence* in the text; *LC*, in the notes.

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Leibniz and Newton, is generally regarded as 'one of the most interesting and most important documents of eighteenth century intellectual history.'⁵ Clarke was a close friend and well-known follower of Newton's, and his replies to Leibniz provide a vigorous defense of Newtonian philosophy. Among the major topics of the debate was the issue of space, with Clarke taking the position of 'the great champion of void space'.⁶

Among his own contemporaries Clarke's reputation was based on a number of works that were published long before the *Correspondence* came into print. Of these works the most important was *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, based on Clarke's Boyle lectures of 1704.⁷ Clarke's concerns in the *Demonstration* and the *Correspondence* are intimately connected. There is, in particular, a close relation between Clarke's defence of the (Newtonian) doctrine of absolute space in the *Correspondence* and the general argument of the *Demonstration*. Clarke's own contemporaries were certainly well aware that the doctrine of absolute space was not only an integral part of Newtonian natural philosophy, but also a key element of Clarke's attempt to confute 'atheism' and (dogmatically) defend the Christian religion. They would well understand, therefore, that rejecting the doctrine of absolute space involves rejecting the influential theological 'argument *a priori*' that Clarke built around it.

Clarke's defence of absolute space belongs to a tradition of thought that had great influence in late seventeenth-century England. The work of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More was of

⁵ Alexander Koyré and Bernard Cohen, 'Newton and the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence', *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences*, 15 (1962), 63. On the Newton-Leibniz 'war', see A. Rupert Hall, *Philosophers at war* (Cambridge, 1980).

⁶ Edward Grant, *Much ado about nothing* (Cambridge, 1981), 247-48. Grant observes that Clarke 'was ... the storm center of disputes about the existence of God and space in the first half of the eighteenth century.' (*Much ado*, 416, n.425)

⁷ *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God. More particularly in answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza and their followers* (London, 1705). References are to: *Works of Samuel Clarke* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978). Cited as *Works*.

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particular importance in this regard.⁸ More's views on absolute space developed in criticism of Cartesian metaphysics. Descartes distinguishes between matter and mind in terms of extended and unextended substance, a fundamental claim that More rejects. If we accept the Cartesian identification of matter with extension, says More, it follows that matter would be an infinite and necessary being - an implication which leads directly to (Hobbist) materialist atheism.⁹ According to More, all substance, spiritual as well as material, is extended. Matter is distinguished from mere extension by the further properties of being impenetrable, or solid, and 'discernible', or divisible into separable parts. We can conceive, therefore, of extension void of all body. This extension is not *nothing*, but a real existent with its own qualities. So conceived, space is an infinite attribute that requires an infinite immaterial substance to support its existence, and this substance is God. More's general account of the space-matter-God relationship was enormously influential on the generation of English thinkers that followed. This included Newton, Locke and, most notably, Clarke, who provided the clearest and most explicit account of the theological significance of More's doctrine.¹⁰

Clarke employs the doctrine of absolute space early in the *Demonstration* to refute the atheistic materialism of Hobbes, Spinoza and their followers. He argues that there has existed from

⁸ For relevant background, see Alexander Koyré, *From the closed world to the infinite universe* (Baltimore, 1957), esp. ch. 5-6; Grant, *Much ado*, ch. 8; John T. Baker, *An historical and critical examination of English space and time theories from Henry More to Bishop Berkeley* (Bronxville, N. Y., 1930).

⁹ See Samuel Mintz, *The hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1962), 90: 'We must remember however that behind More's dispute with Descartes over the nature of space lies the spectre of Hobbist materialism'.

¹⁰ Newton was famously evasive and secretive about his theological views, and left the public defense of doctrines to which he privately subscribed to Clarke and other disciples. In Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* (cited as *Essay*), ed. P. H. Niddich (Oxford, 1975), 2.13-17, he accepts most of More's critique of the Cartesian view of matter and space, including the identification of space with God's immensity (2.13.26; 2.15.2-4; 12). He is unwilling, however, to declare whether 'space void of Body, be substance or accident' (2.13.17) and, to this extent, leaves the status of infinite void space uncertain. See Baker, *English space*, ch. 5; Grant, *Much ado*, 238-39.

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eternity an unchangeable and independent being, that *necessarily*-exists (props.I-III). The atheistic thesis that he seeks to refute is that this necessary-existing being is the 'Material World'.¹¹ The basic structure of Clarke's argument is: (i) matter is not a necessary-being; (ii) there exists some necessary-being; therefore, (iii) this necessarily-existing being is *immaterial*.¹²

In respect of (i), Clarke argues that if the material world 'Exists Necessarily by an Absolute Necessity in its own Nature', then it must be 'an Express Contradiction to suppose it not to Exist'.¹³ It is manifest, however, that we can conceive that the material world does not exist without contradiction.¹⁴ This can be demonstrated, Clarke says, by showing that there must be a *vacuum*, which we know from considerations concerning motion and experiments with falling bodies and pendulums.¹⁵ 'Now if there be a *Vacuum*,' says Clarke, 'it follows plainly, that *Matter* is *not* a *Necessary Being*. For if a *Vacuum* actually be, then 'tis evidently more than possible for *Matter not to Be*.'¹⁶

To prove that there is some being in the universe that exists necessarily, Clarke argues:

When we are endeavouring to suppose, that there is *no Being* in the Universe that exists Necessarily; we always find in our Minds... some Ideas, as of *Infinity* and *Eternity*; which to remove, that is, to suppose that there is no Being, no Substance in the Universe, to which these Attributes or Modes of Existence are necessarily inherent, is a Contradiction in the very Terms. For

¹¹ *Works*, 2: 532-33; 537; 585.

¹² The classical statement of the 'atheistic' doctrine of the eternal existence of matter is Lucretius, *On the nature of the universe*, trans. R.E. Latham (Harmondsworth, 1951), bk. 1.

¹³ *Works*, 2: 530.

¹⁴ *Works*, 2: 531.

¹⁵ *Works*, 2: 532. The debate about the vacuum and the role of the experimental method in proving its existence was a major theme of seventeenth century science. Two of the major protagonists were Hobbes and Robert Boyle. See Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the air-pump* (Princeton, 1985).

¹⁶ *Works*, 2: 532.

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Modes and Attributes exist only by the Existence of the Substance to which they belong. Now he that can suppose Eternity and Immensity (and consequently the Substance by whose Existence these Modes and Attributes exist) removed out of the Universe; may, if he please, as easily remove the Relation of Equality between twice two and four.¹⁷

While we can conceive of the material world as not existing, we cannot conceive of immensity or eternity as not existing.¹⁸ This shows that infinite space and time necessarily exist, and these necessary attributes ‘do *necessarily* and *inseparably infer*, or *show* to us a *Necessary Substance*’.¹⁹ Since this substance is not matter, it is an immaterial being, that is God.²⁰

Clarke agrees with Locke that the essence of all substances is unknown to us, but ‘this does not in the least diminish the Certainty of the Demonstration of the Existence’ of necessarily-existing substance, nor our knowledge that this substance is not matter.²¹ In the first place, he argues, space cannot be *nothing*, since it is absurd to suppose that nothing can nevertheless ‘have real qualities’, such as dimension, figure, etc.²² Although space is something, however, it is not substance, but a ‘*Property or Mode of... Self-existent Substance*’.²³ Self-existent substance, therefore, is ‘the *Substratum of Space*, the *Ground of the Existence of Space and Duration itself*’.²⁴ In response to Clarke, Joseph Butler grants that if it were evident that space is a *property of a substance*, then

¹⁷ *Works*, 2: 527; cp. 2: 753. Clarke and Newton generally avoid the term ‘attribute’ to describe space because of its Spinozistic connotations. See Koyré and Cohen, ‘Newton and the Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence’, 93, n. 70; Grant, *Much ado*, 413, n. 94; and the passage from Desmaizeaux’s edition of the correspondence cited at *LC*, xxviii-xxix.

¹⁸ Cp. *Works*, 3: 908.

¹⁹ *Works*, 2: 753.

²⁰ *Works*, 2: 753; cp. 2: 538; 541. Compare Locke’s more cautious remarks at *Essay*, 2.13.16-17.

²¹ *Works*, 2: 537-38; cp. 2: 525-26; 582.

²² *Works*, 2: 752; cp. 2: 528.

²³ *Works*, 2: 743.

²⁴ *Works*, 2: 745.

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'we should have an *easy way* with the Atheists'.²⁵ He is nevertheless unable to accept Clarke's '*easy way*' because he finds the claim that space is a property or mode, and not a substance, to be unargued and doubtful.

In the *Correspondence*, Clarke returns to these problems. 'Space is not a being, an eternal and infinite being,' Clarke says, 'but a property, or a consequence of the existence of a being infinite and eternal. Infinite space, is immensity: but immensity is not God: and therefore infinite space, is not God.'²⁶ He goes on to clarify this view:

Space is immense, and immutable, and eternal; and so also is duration. Yet it does not at all from hence follow, that any thing is eternal *hors de Dieu*. For space and duration are not *hors de Dieu*, but are caused by, and are immediate and necessary consequences of his existence. And without them, his eternity and ubiquity (or omnipresence) would be taken away.²⁷

God, says Clarke, 'does not exist in space, and in time; but his existence causes space and time' and in that 'space [and time] all other things exist.'²⁸

Clarke's general position is, then, that space is a 'property' or 'mode' of God, and thus God must be an infinitely extended

²⁵ *Works*, 2: 749.

²⁶ *LC*, 31. Clarke closely follows Newton's General Scholium (*LC*, 167).

²⁷ *LC*, 47; cp. *LC*, 34; *Works*, 2: 539-41; 569; 756-58. Berkeley argued that if we accept the doctrine of 'real space', we face a 'dangerous dilemma': either 'Real Space is God, or else there is something beside God which is eternal, uncreated, infinite, indivisible, immutable.' (George Berkeley, *Principles, dialogues and philosophical correspondence*, ed. C. M. Turbayne (Indianapolis, 1965), 'Principles of human knowledge', #117). The same dilemma is presented by Bayle, *Historical and critical dictionary*, ed. Richard Popkin (Indianapolis, 1965), art. 'Zeno of Elea', 380, note I. Clarke tries to find a way between the horns of this dilemma.

²⁸ *LC*, 104; 108; cp. *Works*, 2: 740, 745.

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(spiritual) being.²⁹ Leibniz, however, pressed an obvious objection: 'since space consists of parts, it is not a thing which can belong to God.'³⁰ Clarke, however, rejects the assumption that space is divisible into parts. In the *Demonstration* he emphasized the point that it is '*absolutely* indivisible and inseparable either really or mentally'.³¹ Matter, by contrast, is 'a *solid Substance*, capable only of Division, Figure and Motion'.³² Divisibility, therefore, distinguishes matter from space. For Clarke, while God cannot be conceived as extended *material* substance, which is atheism, as that *would* make God divisible into parts, no implication of this kind follows if *space* is a property or mode of God.

In the *Correspondence* Leibniz criticizes not only Clarke's 'hypothesis' of 'real absolute space' as 'an impossible fiction', he also provides a clear alternative to it.³³ His alternative view is a 'relational' account of space, which holds that space is 'nothing at all without bodies'.³⁴ Space is 'neither substance, nor an accident', Leibniz claims, so 'it must be a mere ideal thing'.³⁵

As for my own opinion, I have said more than once, that I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is; that I hold it to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, *an order of things which exist at the same time, considered as existing together*.³⁶

²⁹Although Clarke variously describes space as an 'attribute', 'property', 'consequence' and so on, these terms should not be taken as equivalent (James Ferguson, *The philosophy of Samuel Clarke and its critics* (New York, 1974), 99.

³⁰LC, 25; 38; 68.

³¹*Works*, 2: 540-41.

³²*Works*, 2: 563; cp. 2: 541; 561; and Newton's view at LC, 162-64.

³³LC, 39.

³⁴LC, 26; cp. 63.

³⁵LC, 71; cp. 64; 70.

³⁶LC, 25-26; my emphasis. Cp. 42; 64; 69-71.

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Clearly Leibniz holds there is a 'third way' to account for space,³⁷ whereby space is understood not as a property, nor as a substance, but rather as 'an ideal thing; containing a certain order, wherein the mind conceives the application of relations.'³⁸ Clarke had already dismissed such a view in his reply to an anonymous 'Gentleman'. To accept a view of this kind, says Clarke, is to be 'guilty of the *Absurdity* of supposing That, which is *Nothing*, to have *real Qualities*.'³⁹ Clarke repeats this point in his reply to Leibniz,⁴⁰ and makes the further point that the very possibility that the material universe can be finite proves that 'space ... is manifestly independent upon matter.'⁴¹

It is evident that Clarke and Leibniz disagree over a wide range of issues in respect of space (including some important issues not mentioned in this brief account).⁴² Nevertheless, their general disagreement can be characterized succinctly in terms of their diverging attitude on the issue of the 'reality' or 'ideality' of space. Clarke claims that space has a *real* existence distinct from (all) matter or body, and that it should be understood as an infinite (boundless) and indivisible *property* or *mode* that is *grounded* in self-existing substance, or God. Leibniz maintains that space is not real but 'ideal', and should be understood in terms of the *order* or *relations* among coexisting bodies. So conceived, Leibniz argues, space has parts and is divisible, and cannot be identified with God's being or attributes. For Clarke, the ontology of real space is an essential foundation for establishing God's omnipresence, unity and simplicity.⁴³ Leibniz maintains that all arguments for natural religion built on these illusory foundations are worthless. In short,

³⁷ *LC*, 71.

³⁸ *LC*, 70.

³⁹ *Works*, 2: 752; cp. 2: 528. See Bayle, *Dictionary*, art. 'Zeno of Elea', 381, note I: 'But if it is contradictory that nothing, or nonentity, have extension or any other quality'.

⁴⁰ *LC*, 48; 52; 120.

⁴¹ *LC*, 108; cp. 104; 120n; *Works*, 2: 753

⁴² An important part of Leibniz's criticism of Clarke is based on the principles of sufficient reason and the identity of indiscernibles (*LC*, 15-16; 26-27; 38-39). I do not discuss this aspect of the debate here.

⁴³ *Works*, 2: 756-57

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the fundamental issue between Clarke and Leibniz concerns the doctrine of the *vacuum* or 'real space', an essential ontological commitment of Newtonian science and its associated theology.

II. Clarke's space in Hume's *Treatise*

A number of influential accounts of Hume's discussion of space ignore or overlook Clarke's philosophy, and argue that Hume's primary concerns lie with the arguments of other figures such as Bayle.⁴⁴ Moreover, even those commentators who recognize the general relevance of Clarke's views on space have said little or nothing about the specific theological significance for Hume's philosophy.⁴⁵ It is necessary, therefore, to indicate in more detail why Clarke's philosophy cannot be regarded as peripheral to Hume's concerns, and how its wider *theological* significance should be understood.

There are a number of points that establish that Clarke's philosophy is central to Hume's concerns:

(i) Clarke was universally recognized by Hume's contemporaries as one of Newton's most able and eminent defenders, and his close association with Newton was especially apparent in the specific context of the debate about space, where the *Correspondence* enjoyed such a high profile. Considered from this perspective, what is at stake in respect of Clarke's defence of

⁴⁴ See Norman Kemp Smith, *The philosophy of David Hume* (London and New York, 1941), ch. 14; and Robert Fogelin, *Hume's skepticism in the Treatise of human nature* (London, 1985), ch. 3. Both emphasize Bayle's relevance to Hume's discussion of space, but neither refers to Clarke (or Leibniz).

⁴⁵ Charles Hendel, *Studies in the philosophy of David Hume* (Princeton, 1925), ch. 5; and John Laird, *Hume's philosophy of human nature* (London, 1932), ch. 3. Hendel and Laird point out that Clarke's views on space are important background to Hume's discussion, but they give no account of its relation to the detail of Clarke's argument for God's existence. Ferguson, however, gives a sketch of this in *Philosophy of Clarke*, 112-13.

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absolute space is nothing less than the prestige of Newton's natural philosophy *and* the theology constructed around it.⁴⁶

(ii) Although Leibniz suggested that the doctrine of 'real absolute space' was 'an idol of some modern Englishmen',⁴⁷ there were nevertheless many distinguished English/British critics of this doctrine in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries, the most obvious being Berkeley. Indeed, during the 1730s, while Hume was working on the *Treatise*, the British debate on space became especially active, and it centred very firmly around Clarke's views on this subject. Most of the principal figures involved at this time can be classified as either defenders of Clarke, such as John Jackson and John Clarke (Samuel's brother), or critics of Clarke, such as Edmund Law, Daniel Waterland and Joseph Clarke (no relation).⁴⁸ In general, the relevant literature produced in Britain during the 1730s shows that Clarke's doctrines are the very pivot around which the British debate on space (and related theological issues) was turning.⁴⁹

(iii) The details of Hume's Scottish context are by no means irrelevant to understanding his intentions in the *Treatise*. It should be noted, for example, that when Hume was a student at Edinburgh University in the 1720s, it was a leading centre of Newtonian thought, and this was reflected in Hume's education.⁵⁰ There is

⁴⁶ Hume's contemporaries would be well aware of these related considerations through 'popular' accounts of Newton's philosophy, such as Voltaire's *The elements of Sir Issac Newton's philosophy* (London, 1738): '[He] who maintains the Impossibility of a Void, ought not, if he reasons consequentially, to admit any other God than Matter. On the contrary, if there be a Void, then Matter is not a necessary self-existing Being, consequently, it was created; consequently, there is a God.' (184)

⁴⁷ *LC*, 25.

⁴⁸ Accounts of these debates are in Ferguson, *Philosophy of Clarke*, 22-121; Baker, *English space*, 58-67; Grant, *Much ado*, 416-17, n. 425; and John Yolton, *Thinking matter* (Oxford, 1983), ch. 4.

⁴⁹ Baker, *English space*, ch. 6; see esp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ On Hume's education in natural philosophy at Edinburgh during 1724-25, see Michael Barfoot, 'Hume and the culture of science', in ed. M. A. Stewart, *Studies in the Scottish enlightenment* (Oxford, 1990). Barfoot argues that Hume's scientific education was more substantial than has generally been recognized. He

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also substantial evidence of a lively interest in Clarke's philosophy and theology in university and clerical circles in Scotland between 1720 and 1740.⁵¹ This lively interest in Clarke's philosophy was especially strong among a group of active philosophers that lived near Hume in Berwickshire while the project of the *Treatise* was taking shape. Hume had contacts of various kinds with Henry Home (Lord Kames), Andrew Baxter and William Dudgeon, and all of them were engaged in related ways in Clarkean controversy.⁵² The philosophical activities of this group are obviously relevant when accounting for Hume's concerns in the *Treatise*.

(iv) The textual detail of the *Treatise*, as well as contemporary comment and criticism, makes evident that Clarke's philosophy was an especially prominent target of Hume's sceptical arguments throughout the *Treatise*.⁵³ In general, a critical interest in the doctrine of absolute space championed by Clarke is consistent with Hume's wider critical interest in the principles of Clarke's philosophy.

supports this claim on the basis of a close examination of how Hume's discussion of space/time was shaped by textbooks in natural philosophy, including Clarke's edition of Rohault's *Jacobi Rohaulti physica* (London, 1697) and John Keill's *Introductio ad veram physicam* (Oxford, 1702). For the relevance of Hume's scientific interests to the wider theological context, see James Force, 'Hume's Interest in Newton and Science', in eds. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, *Essays on the context, nature, and influence of Isaac Newton's theology* (Dordrecht, 1990), 143-63.

⁵¹ Perhaps the most striking evidence of the importance and influence of Clarke's philosophy in Scotland during the 1720s relates to the church prosecution of John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University. Simson's allegiance to Clarke's philosophy led to charges of teaching heretical Arianism. Clarke's rationalist theology was closely associated with his controversial views in *The scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1712), and the resulting controversy was strongly felt in Scotland.

⁵² See my 'Skepticism and natural religion in Hume's *Treatise*' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (1988), 247-65; and 'Wishart, Baxter & Hume's *Letter from a gentleman*', *Hume Studies*, 23 (1997), forthcoming.

⁵³ On this, see the papers cited in n. 51, as well as my 'Hume's *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins controversy', *Hume Studies*, 21 (1995), 95-115.

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(v) In Hume's *Dialogues* pt. IX, which were written during the early 1750s and published posthumously in 1779, the character Demea presents a brief statement of the 'argument *a priori*'. Hume presents the following criticism of this argument through Cleanthes:

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', it is said, 'may be *conceived* to be annihilated; and any form may be *conceived* to be altered. Such an annihilation or alteration, therefore, is not impossible.' [In a footnote Hume cites 'Dr. Clarke'.]⁵⁴ 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 [conceive] him to be non-existent, or his attributes to be altered.⁵⁵

Hume's discussion of this argument shows that he regarded Clarke's 'argument *a priori*' as philosophically important. The ontology of absolute space and time is a key component of Clarke's argument. When Hume wrote the *Treatise*, he was entirely familiar with the details of Clarke's philosophy, and would understand the significance of his own account of space for the 'argument *a priori*'.⁵⁶

(vi) Finally, before leaving London for Scotland in February 1739, Hume distributed several copies of the *Treatise* (i.e. bks. I and II), which had been published just a few weeks before, to various individuals, including Joseph Butler and Pierre

⁵⁴ Although he gives no specific reference, the relevant passages are *Works*, 2: 530-35; 3: 908.

⁵⁵ Hume, *Dialogues concerning natural religion*, ed. N. K. Smith (2nd. ed., Edinburgh, 1947), 190; my emphasis.

⁵⁶ Although it is widely recognized that Demea represents Clarke's position in *Dialogues* ix, few (if any) commentators have noted the relevance of *T*, I,ii for it.

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Desmaizeaux.⁵⁷ Butler and Desmaizeaux both played prominent roles in the debate over Clarke's doctrine of space. Desmaizeaux was a very active and well-connected translator and editor of philosophical books. Among his most important projects was his 1720 edition of the *Correspondence*.⁵⁸ It is not credible that Hume would be unaware that Desmaizeaux and Butler would examine his own substantial discussion of space and time with a keen eye to its obvious significance for the controversy arising out of the *Correspondence* and related doctrines in Clarke's *Demonstration*.

When these points are taken into proper consideration, it is clear that Clarke's views on space lie at the *heart* of the debate about space that Hume participated in and contributed to. We have every reason to suppose, therefore, that Hume was well aware of the relevance and significance of his own position for Clarke's defence of Newtonian absolute space *viewed as a property or mode of God* - and, indeed, as it relates to the entire 'God-filled space' tradition of thought from Henry More to John Jackson and John Clarke. Any commentary that fails to take this into full account simply fails to locate Hume's discussion in its relevant historical context.

III. Hume's godless space

The argument of *Treatise* I, ii is intricate and divides into several separate streams, making it easy to lose a sense of its main drift. In *Treatise* I, iv, however, Hume provides a summary of the salient points of his position. His 'system concerning space and time', he says, 'consists of two parts, which are intimately connected'.⁵⁹ These parts correspond to two questions: (i) Is extension (or matter) finitely or infinitely divisible?; and (ii) Is it possible to

⁵⁷ Ernest Mossner, *The life of David Hume*, (2nd. ed., Oxford, 1980), 118-20.

⁵⁸ *Recueil de diverses pièces sur la philosophie, la religion naturelle, l'histoire, les mathématiques, &c. Par Mrs. Leibniz, Clarke, Newton, & autres auteurs célèbres* (2 vols., Amsterdam, 1720).

⁵⁹ *T*, 39.

conceive of a real vacuum or space without matter? On both issues, Hume stands in direct opposition to Clarke.

Hume summarizes his position on the first issue as follows:

The capacity of the mind is not infinite; consequently no idea of extension or duration consists of an infinite number of parts or inferior ideas, but of a finite number, and these simple and indivisible: 'Tis therefore possible for space and time to exist conformable to this idea: And if it be possible, 'tis certain they actually do exist conformable to it; since their infinite divisibility is utterly impossible and contradictory.⁶⁰

Hume's refutation of the doctrine of infinite divisibility is unpacked in I.ii.1-2. The human mind, Hume points out, is finite and we exceed the bounds of the imagination (and thus human understanding) when we reason about the infinite, since we 'can never attain a full and adequate conception' of it.⁶¹ If a finite extension is infinitely divisible, then a finite extension 'must consist of an infinite number of parts'.⁶² We know, however, that the mind is finite and thus *incapable* of any such idea. In accounting for our *idea* of extension, therefore, we must reach some *minimum* parts 'which will be perfectly simple and indivisible.'⁶³ We have 'an idea of extension, which consists of parts or inferior ideas, that are perfectly indivisible: consequently this idea implies no contradiction: consequently 'tis possible for extension really to exist conformable to it'.⁶⁴ The idea of infinite divisibility of extension, however, '*appears* impossible and contradictory upon the comparison of these ideas, [and must therefore] be *really* impossible and contradictory'.⁶⁵ It is impossible because 'the idea of an infinite number of parts is

⁶⁰ T, 39.

⁶¹ T, 26; 64; 67-68; 639.

⁶² T, 26

⁶³ T, 27-28. See Locke, *Essay*, 2.15.9; Berkeley, 'Principles of human knowledge', #132.

⁶⁴ T, 32.

⁶⁵ T, 29.

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individually the same idea with that of an infinite extension' and since 'no finite extension is capable of containing an infinite number of parts', it follows that 'no finite extension is infinitely divisible.'⁶⁶ Hume returns to the issue of infinite divisibility in I.ii.4 in order to refute a series of objections that have been raised against 'the finite divisibility of matter'.⁶⁷

Hume's argument against the doctrine of infinite indivisibility is the first part of his system of space. 'The other part of our system', he says, 'is a consequence of this.'⁶⁸ He continues:

The parts, into which the ideas of space and time resolve themselves, become at last indivisible; and these indivisible parts, being nothing in themselves, are inconceivable when not fill'd with something real and existent. The ideas of space and time are therefore no separate or distinct ideas, but merely those of the manner or order, in which objects exist; Or, in other words, 'tis impossible to conceive either a vacuum and extension without matter, or a time, when there was no succession or change in any real existence.⁶⁹

Hume's thesis is that our idea of space consists of coloured or solid 'indivisible points'. Nothing ever appears extended, that is not either visible or tangible. The 'compound impression, which represents extension', he says, 'consists of several lesser impressions, that are indivisible to the eye or feeling, and may be call'd impressions of atoms or corpuscles endow'd with colour and solidity.'⁷⁰ If we remove the sensible qualities of colour or tangibility, then these 'atoms' are 'utterly annihilated to the thought or imagination', and thus we remove all idea of space or extension.⁷¹ On this view, we have no separate or independent idea of space distinct from our ideas of body (i.e. visible or tangible

⁶⁶ *T*, 30.

⁶⁷ *T*, 40-53.

⁶⁸ *T*, 39.

⁶⁹ *T*, 39-40.

⁷⁰ *T*, 38.

⁷¹ *T*, 38-39

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objects). When all idea of body is removed, so too is all idea of space.

The second part of Hume's system of space has a constructive and destructive aspects. The constructive aspect is his account of how our idea of *space* arises and what its elements are. The destructive aspect is his refutation of the *mistaken* view that we have some idea of a vacuum, understood as space without body. Hume's constructive theory of space is essentially 'relational' and 'ideal' in character, similar to Leibniz's view. For Hume, 'the idea of space or extension is nothing but the idea of *visible* or *tangible points distributed* in a *certain order*'.⁷² Hume also describes the important role that *abstraction* plays in forming this idea.⁷³ When we observe situations where bodies coexist and there is some 'resemblance in the distribution of colour'd points, of which they are compos'd', we can abstract from the 'particularities of colour, as far as possible, and found an abstract idea merely on that disposition of points, or manner of appearance, in which they agree.'⁷⁴ So conceived, however, the abstract idea of space or extension always involves particular visible or tangible ideas, and cannot arise in our thoughts in any other way.⁷⁵

Although Hume provides an account of our idea of space, he argues that we have 'no idea of a *vacuum*, or space, where there is nothing visible or tangible [i.e. no body].'⁷⁶ There is, he acknowledges, a natural tendency for us to 'falsely imagine we can form such an idea',⁷⁷ but we nevertheless have no idea of a vacuum or extension without matter.⁷⁸ Hume's basic position is that we have an *idea* of *space*, but *no idea* of a *vacuum* or of 'any real extension without filling it with sensible objects, and conceiving its parts as visible and tangible.'⁷⁹ He does not claim that a *real*

⁷² *T*, 53; my emphasis.

⁷³ *T*, 33-35.

⁷⁴ *T*, 34.

⁷⁵ *T*, 35; and cp. I.i.7.

⁷⁶ *T*, 53; my emphasis.

⁷⁷ *T*, 58. This is something Hume explains in the context of I.i.5.

⁷⁸ *T*, 56.

⁷⁹ *T*, 64.

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vacuum is impossible because it implies some absurdity or contradiction in its very *idea*, but rather that there is no such idea. Thus the notion of *real space* (void of all body) is without significance, and thus *nothing*. Hume explicitly states the more general point when he says that ‘we can never have *reason to believe* that any object exists, of which we cannot form an idea.’⁸⁰ The obvious corollary is that we have *no reason to believe* in the existence of a ‘vacuum’ or ‘real space’.

The implications of the second part of Hume’s system of space for Clarke’s philosophy are obvious, so I review them briefly:

(i) Clarke maintains that space and time are necessary-existing properties or modes, and that they demonstrably imply the necessary-existence of an infinite, immaterial substance. This argument depends on the assumption that we can form some *idea* (or ‘conceive’) of *space without body*. It is argued, more specifically, that we can establish God’s necessary-existence by showing that we have an *idea of real space*, which it is an ‘express contradiction’ to conceive as not really existing.⁸¹ Hume’s account of our *idea* of space plainly undermines this line of reasoning. If we deny that we have any *idea* of extension without matter or body, then we cannot reason to the *existence* of *real space* from such an idea. Since we cannot establish the (necessary) existence of *real space*, it follows that we cannot prove the existence of some necessary-existing being that supports this (real) infinite property or mode. Clearly, then, Hume’s view discredits Clarke’s *proof* of

⁸⁰ *T*, 172; my emphasis.

⁸¹ Although there are important resemblances between Clarke’s effort to prove God’s existence from our *ideas* of space & time and Descartes’s effort to prove his existence from our *idea* of God (infinite substance) (*Meditations*, III), there are also significant differences. Descartes, for example, claims our idea of God ‘is utterly clear and distinct’. Clarke argues, by contrast, that we know space is ‘not a mere idea’ because ‘no idea of space, can possibly be framed larger than finite; and yet reason demonstrates that ’tis a contradiction for space itself not to be *actually infinite*’ (*LC*, 120n; my emphasis). For Clarke, it seems, the *inadequacy* of our *idea* of space constitutes evidence of its *real existence*, (i.e. we know space is infinite and all our ideas are finite, hence space is not a mere idea). Hume’s views, obviously, stand opposed to Descartes’s and Clarke’s.

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the existence, unity and omnipresence of God from the ontology of absolute space.⁸²

(ii) Hume holds that our idea of space is 'compounded of parts' and 'divisible' (although the ultimate constituent parts of this complex idea are themselves indivisible). He therefore rejects Clarke's claim that space is 'absolutely uniform and essentially indivisible'.⁸³ The obvious theological implication of this is that we cannot infer the existence of any 'absolutely indivisible' being on the basis of our idea of space.

(iii) We have, according to Hume, no idea of any *extended* being or existence that is not either visible or tangible.⁸⁴ It follows that we know of no objects other than *bodies* that are *extended* beings. Hume therefore rejects the whole supposition of *extended immaterial* beings as lacking any foundation in experience. A more extensive criticism of the doctrine of immaterial substance, whether extended or unextended, is provided later at *Treatise* I.iv.5-6, but the claim that everything extended is manifest in sight or touch evidently rules out any conception of God or souls as extended immaterial beings.

(iv) Clarke maintains that the finite nature of human understanding, and its inability to 'form an adequate Idea of Infinity', is no obstacle to natural religion in general, much less to the certainty of the specific propositions that he claims to have *proved*.⁸⁵ It is significant, therefore, that Hume opens his discussion of space and

⁸² Ferguson rightly observes that, for Hume, any argument for God's existence based on speculation about absolute space is as uncertain and inconclusive as its basis and, for this reason, Ferguson says, Hume does not discuss, or even mention, Clarke's proof (*Philosophy of Clarke*, 113). While this is true, it may mislead. Hume's audience would easily recognize the significance of Hume's views about space for Clarke's proof, making it *unnecessary* for him to discuss it *explicitly*.

⁸³ *Works*, 2: 753

⁸⁴ *T*, 38. Hume, however, accepts 'that an object may exist, and yet be no where', although this maxim 'is condemn'd by several metaphysicians [e.g. Clarke]' (*T*, 235). Objects and perceptions derived from senses other than sight and touch, on this view, since they 'exist without any place or extension', cannot relate to other objects by 'conjunction in place' (*T*, 237).

⁸⁵ *Works*, 2: 541: cp.525,538

time by observing that the capacity of the human mind is limited or finite in nature, and that we have no 'adequate conception of infinity'.⁸⁶ Hume, however, rejects 'the *error* of the common opinion, that the capacity of the mind is *limited on both sides*'.⁸⁷ While we have no adequate conception of infinity, 'our ideas are adequate representations of the most minute parts of extension'.⁸⁸ Human understanding, Hume maintains, is limited to reasoning on the basis of its *ideas*, as provided by impressions.⁸⁹ It follows that all reasoning about the nature of the infinite and infinite being is beyond the scope of human capacity.⁹⁰ These observations about the 'reach of human understanding',⁹¹ which, Hume claims is confined to 'the universe of the imagination',⁹² undermine Clarke's entire enterprise and all enterprises similar to it.⁹³

⁸⁶ *T*, 26.

⁸⁷ *T*, 28; my emphasis.

⁸⁸ *T*, 29.

⁸⁹ Clarke, of course, is firmly opposed to the empiricist epistemology which Hume employs against the claims of natural religion; cp. Clarke's remarks on our knowledge of necessary-existing substance of which we have '*no Image*, because 'tis the *Object of none of our Senses*' (*Works*, 2: 753). In general, Newtonian philosophy is committed to the view that, in so far as space is known, it is grasped not by the senses and imagination, but by the understanding or reason. It is evident, therefore, that the ontological issues dividing Hume and Clarke reflect divergent epistemological commitments.

⁹⁰ In general, Hume's view of the finite and limited nature of our ideas *systematically* cuts off all claims to *knowledge* of God's infinite attributes. This sceptical theme is apparent in other parts of the *Treatise*. Contrast, for example, Hume's claim that 'we have no idea of a being endow'd with any power, much less one endow'd with *infinite power*' (*T*, 248; my emphasis) with Clarke's opposing view at *Works*, 2: 553-54.

⁹¹ *T*, 64.

⁹² *T*, 68.

⁹³ Hume's scepticism about knowledge of the infinite in relation to the claims of natural religion has many sources. Among the most important and most obvious are Hobbes (cp. *English works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. W. Molesworth (11 vols., 1839, rpt. Aalen, 1966), 'Leviathan', ch. 3, para. 12; 'De cive', ch.15, #14) and fideist thinkers such as Pascal (Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, 1966), XV, 'Transition from knowledge of man to knowledge of God'). Another very important discussion of these issues which Hume was familiar with is Ralph Cudworth's *True intellectual system of the universe* (2 vols., London, 1678). This work contains an extended attack on all such scepticism -

Hume's refutation of the doctrine of infinite divisibility is no less significant for Clarke's Newtonian philosophy and theology:

(i) While Clarke holds that space is 'absolutely indivisible', matter, he claims, is infinitely divisible.⁹⁴ He defines matter as 'Nothing but a Solid Substance, capable only of Division, Figure and Motion',⁹⁵ and argues that it 'is always a *Compound*, not a *simple Substance*'.⁹⁶ Although Clarke rejects Descartes' definition of matter in terms of extension alone, he agrees with Descartes that matter is infinitely divisible.⁹⁷ For Hume, infinite divisibility as it relates to *extension* leads to absurdity and contradiction, and the same reasoning applies to the supposed infinite divisibility of matter or body. Hume's view implies, therefore, that both the Cartesian and Newtonian accounts of matter involve absurdity and contradiction, and that matter, so conceived, *cannot* exist. It also follows, on Hume's view, that any effort to distinguish matter and mind in terms of the infinite divisibility of the former and the indivisibility of the latter cannot be sustained.⁹⁸ This relates directly to the issue of thinking matter and the immortal soul.

(ii) The claim that *matter* is infinitely divisible, common to Descartes and Clarke, is essential to the argument that a material being *cannot* think, often referred to as 'the argument from the

~~particularly Hobbes's version of it — and argues that the infinite should be understood as the 'absolutely perfect' (a view at odds with Clarke's account; *Works*, 2: 537). See esp. *System*, 2: 640-49. Both Clarke's and Hume's discussions of (our knowledge of) the infinite must be placed against the background of this seventeenth century debate.~~

⁹⁴ *Works*, 2: 525; 541; 753; 3: 761-63; cp. Locke, *Essay*, II.17.12; II.23.31. Although Clarke accepts the infinite divisibility of matter, he also accepts Newtonian 'atomism' (or 'corpuscularianism'). On this view, there are 'original and perfect solid Particles of Matter, which are, (not indeed absolutely in themselves, but) to any Power of Nature, indiscerpible' (*Works*, 3: 762; cp. 774-75; 795; 813-15). Matter's infinite divisibility, therefore, is relative to the 'Power of God', and consistent with its indiscerpibility by 'any Power of Nature' (*Works*, 3: 762). As Leibniz indicates, there is an irony in the fact that Newtonian natural philosophy is based on an Epicurean ontology of 'a vacuum and atoms' (*LC*, 15-16, 36; 43-44).

⁹⁵ *Works*, 2: 563; cp. 545; 561.

⁹⁶ *Works*, 2: 753

⁹⁷ Descartes, *Principles of philosophy*, II.20.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Descartes, *Meditations*, VI.

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unity of consciousness'. Collins summarizes Clarke's influential version of it as follows: '*Matter is a Substance consisting always of actually separate and distinct Parts; Consciousness cannot reside in a Being which consists of actually separate and distinct Parts; therefore Matter cannot think, or be conscious.*'⁹⁹ The doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter is employed in the unity argument to establish that a material being is never 'one substance, but a heap of substances'.¹⁰⁰ Since what thinks must be a simple, indivisible substance, it must also be an *immaterial* being.¹⁰¹ The immateriality of the soul, as Collins points out, is the 'principal argument for the *Natural Immortality of the Soul*'.¹⁰² Clearly, then, Hume's criticism of the doctrine of infinite divisibility is directly relevant to Clarke's influential debate with Collins about the immortal soul and thinking matter: a relevance of which Hume and his contemporaries would be well aware.¹⁰³

(iii) Clarke and other Christian thinkers also employ infinite divisibility to defuse concerns about 'difficulties' generated by the idea of God's infinite being and attributes, particularly for the 'argument *a priori*'.¹⁰⁴ Clarke presents this view early in the *Demonstration*.

⁹⁹ *Works*, 3: 770.

¹⁰⁰ *Works*, 2: 753.

¹⁰¹ *Works*, 2: 563; 753; 3: 730; 761-62; 790-91; 813). See also *Meditations*, VI. Clarke argues that because matter lacks any principle of unity (there is no *subject*), it cannot support 'positive powers', such as perception, intelligence or will, and thus possesses only 'negative qualities' (*Works*, 2: 545; 562-63; 582; 3: 761).

¹⁰² *Works*, 3: 750.

¹⁰³ Clarke's argument for the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul was adopted by many of his contemporaries. See, e.g., Henry Grove, *An essay towards a demonstration of the soul's immateriality* (London, 1718). In his preface Grove states: 'The Argument from the Divisibility of Matter, which I have chiefly insisted on, tho' an old one,... hath of late Years been manag'd to greater Advantage than ever; particularly by the learned Dr. Clarke in his admirable Letters, which for strength of Reasoning, and fair Controversy, have not been often equal'd.' (p.5)

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Descartes, *Principles of philosophy*, I.25,26; Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the art of thinking*, IV, ch. 1.

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... in all Questions concerning the Nature and Perfections of God, or concerning any thing to which the Idea of Eternity or Infinity is joined; tho' we can indeed Demonstrate certain Propositions to be true, yet 'tis impossible for us to comprehend or frame any adequate or compleat Ideas of the *Manner How* the Things so demonstrated can Be: Therefore when once any Proposition is clearly demonstrated to be true; *it ought not to disturb us, that there be perhaps perplexing Difficulties on the other side.*¹⁰⁵

Clarke then argues that it is 'in like manner *Demonstrable*, that *Quantity is Infinitely Divisible*', although this too is subject to 'Metaphysical Difficulties'.¹⁰⁶ This issue became a significant point of dispute between Clarke and Collins.¹⁰⁷

Hume's remarks on infinite divisibility are pertinent to Clarke's claims. For Hume, 'whatever *appears* impossible and contradictory upon the comparison of ... ideas, must be *really* impossible and contradictory, without any farther excuse or evasion.'¹⁰⁸ He leaves no scope, therefore, for metaphysical doctrines leading to 'contradiction' or 'absurdity', and, accordingly, rejects infinite divisibility as '*really* impossible'. The implications of this with regard to God's being and attributes would be obvious enough to an audience suitably informed about the relevant debate.

Hume speaks even more directly to Clarke's claim that we may be *certain* of a demonstration that nevertheless is attended with 'difficult consequences':

¹⁰⁵ *Works*, 2: 525; cp.538; my emphasis.

¹⁰⁶ *Works*, 2: 525.

¹⁰⁷ *Works*, 3: 794; 814-15; 849-50. The general point Collins put to Clarke is that 'if there are any such Demonstrations, from whence any Contradictions or Absurdities follow in our way of conceiving Things, those Absurdities and Contradictions should affect a Demonstration so far that I ought to suspend my Assent.'*(Works*, 3: 814).

¹⁰⁸ *T*, 29.

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*A demonstration, if just, admits of no opposite difficulty; and if not just, 'tis a mere sophism, and consequently can never be a difficulty.... To talk therefore of objections and replies, and ballancing of arguments in such a question as this, is to confess, either that human reason is nothing but a play of words, or that the person himself, who talks so, has not a capacity equal to such subjects. Demonstrations may be difficult to be comprehended, because of the abstractedness of the subject; but can never have any such difficulties as will weaken their authority, when once they are comprehended.*¹⁰⁹

When this passage is read with a view to Clarke's philosophy and the controversy surrounding it, as I have suggested it must, then it is evident that it constitutes a sharp repudiation of Clarke's 'demonstrative' strategy.

The significance of Hume's critique of infinite divisibility is plain. He strikes at a number of important arguments that are fundamental to the metaphysical systems of Clarke and other Christian apologists. In the *Enquiry* Hume remarks that 'no priestly dogmas, invented on purpose to tame and subdue the rebellious reason of mankind, ever shocked common sense more than the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of extension, with its consequences'.¹¹⁰ In formulating his system of space, Hume has 'priestly dogmas' clearly in sight, and it is Clarke's 'priestly dogmas' that are of particular concern.¹¹¹

IV. Plenists, pantheists & the cosmology of 'atheism'

¹⁰⁹ *T*, 31-32.

¹¹⁰ *Enquiries*, eds. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (3rd. rev. ed., Oxford, 1975), 156.

¹¹¹ It is worth repeating that although Clarke is Hume's most obvious and prominent target, he is by no means his only target. Nevertheless, a proper appreciation of Clarke's particular significance in this context makes the theological dimension of Hume's concerns very apparent.

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The most essential point to emerge from the above discussion is that Hume's views on space must be read with particular reference to Clarke's philosophy. When this is done, it is evident that Hume opposes the doctrine of absolute space and thus rejects a key component of Clarke's 'argument *a priori*'. In more general terms, Hume's views on space are laden with theological significance, something that has been given insufficient attention by contemporary commentators.

This conclusion is important, but it allows for wide latitude of interpretation. For example, since a number of Clarke's critics on this subject, such as Leibniz, Berkeley and Law, were obviously sincere Christians, Hume's general position is not inherently anti-Christian. It is not clear, therefore, whether or not Hume's discussion of space should be read as a more basic effort to discredit Christian metaphysics. To appreciate the anti-Christian significance of Hume's account of space, we need to widen the scope of our investigation and consider how his views on space relate to his fundamental intentions in the *Treatise*.

Let us begin with some further observations about Hume's sources. Hume draws from a variety of sources in his account of space, the most obvious and widely recognized are Leibniz, Berkeley and Bayle.¹¹² There are, however, other plausible sources

¹¹² Although Bayle influenced Hume's views on space, I do not accept Robert Fogelin's interpretation that Bayle's 'conceptual skepticism concerning extension... sets Hume his problem, and his constructive account of these notions is formulated explicitly as an answer to [Bayle's] skepticism' (*Hume's skepticism*, 25; the relevant argument is in Bayle, *Dictionary*, 359-62). This claim, I believe, is misleading about both Bayle and Hume. Bayle's objective in the 'Zeno' article is not to defend 'conceptual skepticism about extension' as such, but to argue that extension can only exist *ideally* (*Dictionary*, 353; 366; 385). What Bayle and Hume share is a general scepticism about the possibility of natural religion, and for this reason Bayle was an obvious source for Hume's critique of real space and the theology associated with it (see *Dictionary*, 377-85; 135-39). Hume was not the first to use Bayle to criticize Clarke's doctrines. This was done most notably by Edmund Law in extensive notes to his translation of Archbishop King's *Essay on the origin of evil*, (London, 1731), [esp. ch.1](#), notes 5, 8, 11 and 13). Hume studied Law's translation of King and would know that Bayle's arguments could

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that are not so widely recognized, and some of them are suggestive of anti-Christian intentions. Among the important ‘plenist’ opponents of the vacuum are three prominent ‘atheists’ whom Clarke attacks by name in the *Demonstration*: Hobbes, Spinoza and Toland. A proper understanding of the motivation behind Hume’s discussion of space in the *Treatise* requires more careful consideration of Hume’s relationship with this group of thinkers. Hobbes and Spinoza are rarely, if ever, associated with Hume’s position on space, which is especially surprising in the case of Hobbes, as there are significant affinities between their views.¹¹³ For our purposes, however, Toland’s defence of the plenum and attack on the vacuum in *Letters to Serena* is especially relevant.¹¹⁴

Toland was notorious in the early eighteenth-century for *Christianity not mysterious*, the work for which he is now primarily remembered.¹¹⁵ The real substance of his philosophy, however, is largely contained in his *Letters to Serena* and the more obscure *Pantheisticon*.¹¹⁶ In these works Toland, who had strong sympathies with the philosophy of Bruno, Hobbes and Spinoza, develops his own ‘pantheistic’ philosophy in direct opposition to Newtonianism.¹¹⁷ The fifth letter to *Serena* is particularly

be used in this way. (E. C. Mossner, ed., ‘Hume’s early memoranda, 1729-40, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9 (1948), 496).

¹¹³ Hobbes, *The English works*, ‘De corpore’, ch. 7-8.; Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. S. Shirley (Indianapolis, 1992), I, Prop.15. Hobbes argues that space is ‘imaginary’ or a ‘mere phantasm’. See [esp. ch. 7, #2](#) (and, on time, #3).

¹¹⁴ Clarke attacks this work in *Demonstration* (*Works*, 2: 531). Brampton Gurdon devotes a large part of his Boyle lectures (*The pretended difficulties in natural or revealed religion no excuse for infidelity*, (London, 1723), esp. sermon vii) to Toland’s doctrine of active matter. On Newtonian opposition to Toland generally, see Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English revolution 1689-1720* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), ch. 6. Evidence of Toland’s reputation in early eighteenth century Britain is in Swift’s ‘An Argument against abolishing Christianity’, where Toland is described as ‘the great Oracle of the *Anti-Christians*’ (*A tale of a tub and other satires* (London, 1975), 236).

¹¹⁵ *Christianity not mysterious*, (London, 1696).

¹¹⁶ *Pantheisticon*, (London, 1720).

¹¹⁷ Toland seems to have been the first person to coin the term ‘pantheist’, in 1705 in *Socinianism truly stated* (O.E.D.). Margaret Jacob argues that Toland’s *Serena* was one of two texts (the other was the *Traité des trois imposteurs*) employed by a

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important because in it, as Frederick Beiser notes, Toland sketches 'a new cosmology whose purpose is to dispense with any need for supernatural intervention in the workings of "the Machine that we call the Universe"'. Beiser continues:

[Toland's] targets were the Newtonian concepts of space and matter, which had permitted Newton to postulate God's constant presence in the natural order. Rather than seeing space as the sensorium of God, as Newton did, Toland argues that it is only a relative concept, the sum total of distances between things.¹¹⁸

Although Toland's 'naturalistic cosmology' follows the footsteps of Bruno and Hobbes, there is, as Beiser notes, 'something new and important' about Toland's naturalism because it pushes Newtonian physics 'in the direction of complete naturalism'. Beiser describes the resistance that Toland met as follows:

Toland was again flying in the face of the latitudinarians. The Newtonian concepts of matter and space were essential elements in their program of reconciling natural philosophy and religion. Latitudinarian divines like Richard Bentley, Samuel Clarke, and Francis Gastrell argued that the Newtonian concepts gave evidence for the presence of some supernatural agency working within nature. But now Toland was questioning even these concepts.¹¹⁹

Beiser observes that it is not surprising that Toland found himself 'singled out as a target of the Boyle lecturers whose

circle radical freethinkers in the first half of the eighteenth century 'to propound the pantheism of the radicals' (*The radical enlightenment: pantheists, freemasons and republicans* (London, 1981), esp. 216-17. Important members of this circle of radical freethinkers included Toland, Collins and Desmaizeaux. On this circle, see *Radical enlightenment*, esp. ch. 5-6.

¹¹⁸ Beiser, *The sovereignty of reason: the defence of rationality in the early English enlightenment* (Princeton, 1996), 227.

¹¹⁹ Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 227.

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purpose was to defend religion, natural and revealed, against freethinkers and atheists.¹²⁰

The importance of Toland for Hume's views on space has gone *almost* unnoticed. The only exception I am aware of is Hendel, who notes the affinities between their views.¹²¹ Hume, says Hendel, 'would scarcely ignore the writings of this deist, Toland, who not only criticized Dr. Clarke but so hardily explored the possibilities of the naturalistic hypothesis.'¹²² Hume's connections with Desmaizeaux provide further weight to the suggestion that Hume likely had knowledge of Toland's philosophy in *Serena*, and would draw on it when developing his own views on space. Desmaizeaux and Toland were close friends and belonged to a circle of radical freethinkers that included Anthony Collins.¹²³ Desmaizeaux, moreover, edited two volumes of Toland's work, for which he wrote a memoir of Toland. This memoir describes all Toland's important works, including *Serena*.¹²⁴

Given these considerations, it is likely Toland's *Serena* was another important source for Hume to use against Clarke's doctrine of absolute space. The considerable resemblances between Hume's and Toland's views on this subject certainly suggests this. Particularly notable parallels appear in Toland's lengthy account of the role of *abstraction* in accounting for our *idea* of space:

YOU may now perceive how this Notion of absolute Space was form'd, partly by gratuitous Suppositions, as that Matter was finite, inactive, and divisible; partly, by

¹²⁰ Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 227.

¹²¹ Hendel, *Studies*, 145. Toland's discussion of space is not referred to in the works by Baker, Grant or Yolton cited above.

¹²² Hendel, *Studies*, 145.

¹²³ Collins and Toland shared similar views on a wide range of issues and were both hostile to Newtonian philosophy which they opposed with a 'materialistic' philosophy. In his controversy with Clarke, Collins, following Toland, describes space as 'nothing but the mere Absence or Place of Bodies' (*Works*, 3: 775; and Clarke's reply at 3: 794).

¹²⁴ *A collection of several pieces of Mr. John Toland now first publish'd from his original manuscripts: with some memoirs of his life and writings*, ed. Pierre Desmaizeaux (2 vols., London, 1726), 1: lvii.

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abstracting Extension, the most obvious Property of Matter, without considering the other Property, or their absolute Connection in the same Subject, tho each of 'em may be mentally abstracted from the rest, which is of singular use to Mathematicians on several occasions: *provided such Abstractions be never taken for Reality, and made to exist out of the Subjects from which they are abstracted, no more than plac'd in another Subject uncertain or unknown.*¹²⁵

This passage touches on several of Hume's most basic concerns, and takes a very similar stance on them. With this in mind, we may proceed to ask how Hume's views on space relate to his wider and more fundamental intentions in the *Treatise*.

In a series of articles I have argued that Hume's fundamental intentions in the *Treatise* are best characterized as essentially anti-Christian or 'atheistic' in nature.¹²⁶ It is, I maintain, problems of religion, broadly conceived, that unify the *Treatise*. The direction and structure of Hume's thought is shaped by his attack on Christian metaphysics and morals, and by his effort to construct in its place a secular, scientific account of morality. The constructive side of Hume's thought, his 'science of man', attempts to apply the methodology of the natural sciences to our understanding of moral life. This project begins with the study of human thought and motivation, and is founded on a naturalistic and necessitarian

¹²⁵ *Serena*, 218; my emphasis: cp, Hume, *T*, 33-39. Toland goes on to ridicule the doctrine of real space and the theological uses to which it has been put. He suggests that while he believes the defenders of real space do sincerely believe in 'the Existence of a Deity ... in my Opinion their unwary Zeal refin'd him into a mere Nothing, or (what they wou'd as little allow) they made Nature or the Universe to be the only God' (*Serena*, 219-20). After this passage Toland cites the short poem that appears as the motto of this paper.

¹²⁶ Along with those cited in n. 52-53 above, these papers include 'Hume's *Treatise* and Hobbes's *The elements of law*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46 (1985), 52-63; "Atheism" and the title-page of Hume's *Treatise*', *Hume Studies*, 14 (1988), 408-23; 'A Hobbist tory: Johnson on Hume', *Hume Studies*, 16 (1990), 75-79; 'Epigram, pantheists, and freethought in Hume's *Treatise*: A study in esoteric communication', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54 (1993), 659-673.

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conception of human nature. The model for Hume's project is Hobbes' similar project in *The elements of law* and *Leviathan*.

The critical dimension of the philosophy of the *Treatise* is simply the other side of the same anti-Christian coin. In order to clear the ground for a secular morality, Hume undertakes a sceptical attack on those theological doctrines and principles which threatened such a project. The varied and apparently disparate sceptical arguments Hume advances in the *Treatise* are in fact largely held together by his overarching concern to discredit and refute Christian metaphysics and morals. One of the most prominent and obvious targets of Hume's battery of sceptical arguments is Samuel Clarke, whose enormous reputation was based on his defence of Newtonianism in particular, and Christianity in general, with a particular view to demolishing the 'atheistic' philosophy of Hobbes, Spinoza and 'followers' such as Toland and Collins.

It is evident, on this view, that there is an intimate relation between Hume's constructive objective, to develop a secular, naturalistic moral science, and his sceptical assault on the principal doctrines of Christian metaphysics and morals, with Clarke as one of his most obvious and constant targets. The great merit of this interpretation is that it accounts not only for the unity and coherence of the *Treatise*, but that it also provides a detailed and plausible account of how Hume's intentions relate to his own philosophical context.

We can make considerable sense of Hume's discussion of space within the framework of the 'atheistic' interpretation. From this perspective, Hume's critique of the doctrine of absolute space and its associated theology is of a piece with his wider sceptical assault on Clarke's effort to vindicate the metaphysics and morals of the Christian religion. The significance of Hume's argument against infinite divisibility and the vacuum, therefore, is that they have an important role to play as part of Hume's more general effort to discredit the philosophical ambitions of Clarke and other Christian apologists. Hume's two-prong system of space, which repudiates

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the doctrines of infinite divisibility and the vacuum, discredits Clarke's most fundamental ambitions in the *Demonstration*.

It is important, however, to point out that Hume's system of space has a *constructive*, as well as a destructive role to play in the philosophy of the *Treatise*. Hume's system of space (and time) serves to establish a key component of Hume's wider cosmological framework in the *Treatise*. These cosmological ambitions may well be characterized as 'atheistic' in character, since they are closely related to the 'atheistic' cosmologies of the thinkers that Clarke set himself to refute (i.e. Hobbes and his followers). What these thinkers share, whatever their differences, is that they reject the fundamental tenet of Christian metaphysics: that there is necessarily an immaterial, intelligent agent distinct from, and ontologically (i.e. causally) prior to, the material world. According to the 'atheist's' cosmology, the natural realm is self-existent (not a dependent being), self-ordering and self-moving.¹²⁷ These 'atheistic' thinkers, furthermore, develop an anthropology and moral system that reflects their thoroughly *naturalistic* cosmological commitments. It is within the framework of an 'atheistic cosmology', so understood, that we should interpret Hume's constructive account of space (and time). Simply stated, Hume's cosmology has *no space for God* and is wholly naturalistic in character.

Finally, the 'atheistic' interpretation of Hume's views on this subject should restore *interest* in this aspect of his philosophy. Hume's discussion of space and time has been severely criticized by a number of commentators on the ground that the arguments put forward are both confused and philosophically dated.¹²⁸ Although this assessment of the philosophical merits of Hume's arguments may be fair, it is a mistake to conclude that his views on space are unimportant to his philosophy. On the contrary, his views on this

¹²⁷ The basic tenet of 'atheistic' cosmology, so interpreted, is well expressed by Lucretius: '*nature is free and uncontrolled by proud masters* and runs the universe by herself without the aid of gods.' (*On the nature of the universe*, 92)

¹²⁸ See, for example, Alexander Rosenberg, 'Hume and the philosophy of science', *The Cambridge companion to Hume*, ed. D. F. Norton (Cambridge, 1993), 83-84.

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subject have a significant role to play in the wider fabric of the *Treatise*, and illuminate important arguments in the *Dialogues* (i.e. pt. ix). I conclude, therefore, that Hume's discussion of space, so interpreted, has intimate links with his general philosophical system and is an essential component of his 'atheistic' intentions.¹²⁹

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¹²⁹ I am grateful to Jim Dybikowski for helpful conversation and comments on this paper.

REASON AND REVELATION IN SAMUEL CLARKE'S EPISTEMOLOGY OF MORALS

D. O. Thomas

I

In 1704 in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul's, Samuel Clarke delivered a series of lectures on the foundation established by Robert Boyle.¹ These were published under the title *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God. More particularly in answer to Mr Hobbs, Spinoza and their followers*. These eight lectures were so successful that Clarke was invited to deliver another series of eight in the following year. These were published under the title *A discourse on the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*.²

In the latter series Clarke has two main objectives: first, to establish that moral truths are necessary, immutable, eternal and binding even on the will of God, and capable of being apprehended by men through the exercise of reason. In maintaining this position Clarke opposes those who maintain that obligation is founded not in an eternal law but in an exercise of will or in a positive enactment. It is true, Clarke holds, that it is God's will that all men should obey the moral law, but their obligation to do so is founded not in the fact that such obedience has been willed, but in the rectitude of the law itself. Clarke also opposes those who hold that

¹ The Boyle lectures were founded 'to prove the truth of the Christian religion against infidels, without descending to any controversies amongst Christians; and to answer new difficulties, scruples, etc.' The lectures received the support of Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, when the funds provided by Boyle proved inadequate. Clarke was chosen to be a lecturer on the foundation by Tenison. See Edward Carpenter, *Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury: his life and times* (London, 1948), 34n.

² References to both series of lectures are to the joint publication under the title, Samuel Clarke, *A discourse concerning the being and attributes of God, the obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation* (7th ed., London, 1728) (hereafter *Discourse*), as well as to *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978) in square brackets.

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to say that a man is obliged to do (or to refrain from doing) certain actions is to say that he will be rewarded (or punished) for doing (or not doing) them. While it is true that it is God's intention that men should be rewarded or punished as is appropriate, to say that he is obliged is not to say that he will be punished or rewarded, but that he is subject to a law that states that he ought to do or ought not to do the relevant action. God will reward the virtuous and punish the vicious, but that He will do so is not the ground of the relevant obligation.³ The second main objective of the second series of lectures is to demonstrate that although moral truths can be determined by the exercise of reason, most men fail for one reason or other to exercise their reason. They are in need of a revelation from God to assist them, and such a revelation is given to them in the Holy Scriptures.

In his *Answer to Mr. Clarke's third defence of his letter to Mr. Dodwell*, Anthony Collins remarked: '[O]n occasion of the *Boylean Lecture*, the Existence of God is often made a Question (which otherwise would be with few any question at all)'.⁴ His observation was a salutary reminder that those who attempt to establish the truth of what everyone takes for granted give hostages to fortune. They may well bring into contention what no one thought of disputing. Moreover, the procedure designed to defend a belief might lead to weakening its acceptance. And although the conclusion of an argument may still be true even though the argument designed to establish its truth is invalid, its credibility is badly shaken if what is taken to be its strongest support is shown to be invalid. This danger threatens Clarke's attempt to establish the objectivity of moral judgement. He aims to establish that moral principles are eternal and immutable by showing that they are instances of necessary truth. The credibility of the conclusion is threatened if it can be shown that there are considerable difficulties in holding that moral principles are necessary truths. Clarke's

³ Clarke admits that the virtuous may not be rewarded in this life and that the vicious may escape their punishment. God's justice requires that there is a future life in which all will receive their just deserts (*Discourse*, 256-57 [*Works* 2: 645]). Clarke cites Plato's *Republic*, bk. 10, and *Proverbs*, xxiii, 17-18.

⁴ *Works*, 3: 883.

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main strategy is to argue that moral principles are like mathematical truths, universally and necessarily true, and that moral argument is like judgement in mathematics, consisting of deductions from principles that are self-evidently true.

The theory that moral principles are self-evident truths and that moral judgement is the intuition of such truths is made initially plausible by two considerations. First, as a matter of psychology, our judgement in a particular case is often immediate. If we are reminded that we have made a promise, say, we immediately assent that we have an obligation to keep it. We quickly bring a particular instance under a rule that we believe to be generally applicable. Our education in morals proceeds by being taught the general rules that ought to govern conduct, and unless we have reason to believe that in the particular instance under consideration that the general rule admits of an exception, we immediately agree that we should follow it. Secondly, this psychological immediacy is re-enforced by linguistic considerations. The general principle that binds obligatoriness to the relevant action is built into the language so that we come to think of a promise as something that ought to be kept. Terms that are used in ordinary life in guiding practice are not value-free or morally neutral; in the meaning of the term a promise is something that, generally, should be kept, a father is someone who has obligations to care for his children, a person is someone who has rights and to whom others owe duties. It is easy, however, to be misled by these two kinds of immediacy to think that in moral judgement we intuit necessary truths. We have to bear in mind that in practical affairs what may well be generally valid (and is seen to be so) does not have the status of a necessary truth.

The consideration that is fatal to the view that in moral judgement we intuit necessary truths is the fact that our moral rules and principles are defeasible. If moral principles were necessary truths they would admit of no exceptions, but in fact all the principles and rules that figure prominently in our moral thinking do in fact, albeit only rarely, admit of exceptions.⁵ This can be

⁵ The attempt to establish that there are at least some irrefragable rules is an intriguing one. In *Nicomachean ethics*, III,1, Aristotle claims that matricide falls

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clearly seen in cases where there is a conflict of duties, where the discharge of one obligation conflicts with the discharge of another, where the duty to keep a promise conflicts with the duty to help a neighbour in danger or in distress. So far from the obligation to keep a promise being one of strict liability, an enumeration of all types of cases in which one is justified in not keeping one would be a lengthy and complicated exercise in casuistry.

Clarke lists the following as examples of moral principles which he holds to embody necessary truth: piety, justice and equity, benevolence and sobriety (that is, prudent love of self).⁶ He is not altogether happy in his defence of these claims. In the first series of Boyle lectures Clarke demonstrated, he believed, the existence of God.⁷ But it may well be objected that piety cannot be obligatory for someone who does not accept Clarke's or any other arguments for God's existence. Moreover, it may also be doubted whether it is a necessary truth that we ought to worship until it is specified what worship entails. His defence of sobriety (that we ought to take care of ourselves so that we can more effectively take care of others) presupposes, as Henry Sidgwick points out, that we have duties to others.⁸

Clarke's defence of the claim that the principle of benevolence is a necessary truth is flawed. He claims that one ought always to prefer the creation of a greater good to the creation of a lesser. There are exceptions to this rule, however, for there are instances where one ought to prefer the creation of a lesser good, for example, where one has a duty to produce a benefit for a person who has a claim upon one. Sometimes one ought to prefer the

into the category of those actions: 'some acts we cannot be forced to do, but ought rather to face death after the most fearful sufferings.' (trans. Sir David Ross) But, even here, it may be possible to construct a case in which the rule would not hold.

⁶ *Discourse* 197-211 [*Works*, 2: 618-25].

⁷ For an analysis of the 'a priori' and 'a posteriori' elements of Clarke's arguments for the existence of God, see Alan P. F. Sell, 'Samuel Clarke on the existence of God', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 3 (1984), 65-75.

⁸ Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the history of ethics for English readers* (5th ed., London, 1925), 180.

creation of a benefit for one's child to the creation of a similar or greater benefit for a stranger, and sometimes one ought to prefer the creation of a lesser benefit to a stranger. Obligations in these cases are grounded not in the benefits to be produced, but in the relations between parties, relations arising from familial relationships or from agreements and engagements. It might even be argued that obligation is never grounded simply on the production of a benefit apart from consideration of the claims of those upon whom the benefit is to be conferred. Furthermore, if we were always obliged to prefer the creation of a greater benefit to a lesser one, then all our time and energies should be devoted to maximizing the production of benefits. Relaxation would only be morally permissible on the grounds that it was a factor in the maximization of the production of goods where it can be argued that the agent is more productive if he enjoys long periods of time off.

If it were always our duty to maximize benefits, supererogation would become an idle concept for it would be impossible to do more than one's duty. Furthermore, if actions can be both beneficent and supererogatory, then some characteristics other than beneficence will be required, to mark off the beneficent actions that are obligatory.⁹

The principle of equity, at least at first sight, seems to be a more promising example of a moral principle that can be presented as a necessary truth, but it is not without difficulties. It is true that if a member of a class is to be treated in a different way from all the other members of the same class, it must be by virtue of a significant feature that the others do not possess. But this is not a specifically moral principle, but one of a much wider application. It is a rule of language, for example, that if a thing merits a description or evaluation by virtue of some qualities it possesses, that description cannot be denied to any other member of the same class possessing the same qualities. When we consider the application of this principle to moral matters, difficulties arise.

⁹ The criticisms advanced here against Clarke's defence of benevolence can be brought against all theories which adopt the principle that the agent should always seek to maximize the beneficial consequences of his action.

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First, it is not always clear to whom the principle applies; it is not always clear who are entitled to be treated equally. If it is alleged that the principle applies to all human beings, it has to be acknowledged that some human's forfeit some of their entitlement to be treated on the same footing as others, and some are deprived of some of their rights in their own interest. Criminals fall into the former category and patients suffering from dementia into the latter. If, on the other hand, we hold that the relevant class is sentient beings, we have to admit that animals are entitled to the same treatment as humans. But quite apart from the difficulty of determining who are entitled to equal treatment, it has to be acknowledged that some moral philosophers have denied at least by implication that all persons are entitled to equal consideration. Both Joseph Priestley¹⁰ and Jeremy Bentham¹¹ believed that the interests of the majority should prevail, and even John Rawls, one of the stoutest defenders of the principle of equity among modern philosophers, has conceded that some members of the community may be given privileges if it is in the interest or in the potential interest of the least advantaged members of that community.¹² From both these considerations it can be seen that the application of the principle of equity is determined by factors not derivable from the principle of equity itself.

Clarke does not seem to have been aware of the difficulties of assimilating moral principles to mathematical truths and of holding that both are on the same footing as self-evident propositions. While it may be plausible to hold that in both cases extreme stupidity, want of mental capacity and inattention may prevent a person from seeing the truth, and while it may be true that corruption of manners and perverseness of spirit may affect moral judgement, they are hardly likely to corrupt understanding either in arithmetic or in geometry. One example that Clarke gives of a self-

¹⁰ Joseph Priestley, *An essay on the first principles of government* in Joseph Priestley, *Political writings*, ed. Peter N. Miller (Cambridge, 1993), 13.

¹¹ Jeremy Bentham, 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation', 'The common place book' in *Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (11 vols., Edinburgh, 1838-43), 10: 142.

¹² John Rawls, *A theory of justice* (Oxford, 1972), 60-61; 302-3.

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evident truth in mathematics is that a square is twice the size of a triangle with the same base and height.¹³ It is difficult to see how this insight is imperilled in the way that the apprehension of the truth and relevance of a moral principle can be corrupted by passion or self-interest.

Clarke has been heavily criticized for assimilating moral principles to propositions in mathematics and for assimilating moral judgement to the intuition of necessary truth.¹⁴ But the deficiencies in these matters should not be allowed to obscure the merits of his position in other respects. H. A. Prichard claimed that Clarke, like Cudworth, had been unduly neglected.¹⁵ He held that Clarke had the merit of showing that some things are right and some are wrong in their own nature, and not because they have been declared to be so by some law-giving authority. He also showed that if there is an obligation to obey a human law-giving authority, there is at least one obligation that is not created by that authority.¹⁶

The failure of the attempt to show that moral principles are instances of necessary truth should not lead us to dismiss the notion that there are principles that are objectively true. Neither should it lead us to hold that all such principles are the creation of legislative authorities. Nor, indeed, are we required to relinquish the belief that moral truths are apprehended by the exercise of reason, for if we relinquish the notion that the sole function of reason is the apprehension of necessity, then we are at liberty to consider other constructions of the rule of reason in morality.

II

Like many latitudinarians of the day, Clarke believed that the main function of religion is to make men virtuous, to equip them to survive the testing of character in this life and so enable them to

¹³ See *Discourse*, 177 [*Works* 2: 609].

¹⁴ See, for example, James Martineau, *Types of ethical theory* (2 vols., 3rd ed., Oxford, 1891), 2: 463-74.

¹⁵ H.A. Prichard, *Moral obligation* (Oxford, 1949), 77-79.

¹⁶ Prichard, 77-79.

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inherit eternal life. Clarke believed that God has made available to men all they need to know to be able to live virtuous lives, and although there are many metaphysical and theological questions shrouded in mystery, men do not lack practical guidance to live the good life. At first sight, it might seem as though his doctrine of the intuition of moral truths would give excellent support to the claim that every man can determine for himself his own moral obligations by the exercise of reason. All that men have to do is to pay careful attention to the nature of the situation they find themselves in and by intuition, by the apprehension of the ‘fittingness’ of the relevant action, read off their obligations. Furthermore, since the perception that an action is obligatory always generates a motive for the performance of the relevant action, a rational agent is fully equipped to do what is morally required of him.¹⁷ The only further requirement is that he should choose to do the appropriate action. A great deal of what Clarke says in defence of his doctrine of intuitionism lends support to the notion that the individual of good will and ordinary intellectual capacity can work out his obligations for himself by the exercise of reason. Such is his confidence that moral principles are accessible to the individual that he says:

[N]othing but the extremest stupidity of Mind, corruption of Manners, or perverseness of Spirit, can possibly make any Man entertain the least doubt concerning them.¹⁸

Or again, that:

negligent Misunderstanding and *wilful Passions or Lusts*, are... . the only Causes which can make a reasonable Creature act contrary to Reason, that is, contrary to the

¹⁷ The will of God always determines itself to act in accordance with the eternal law of rectitude, with ‘the eternal reason of things’. The same is true of a fully rational being. But men are not fully rational beings; they are often led astray by ‘negligent misunderstandings’ and powerful lusts. But while they often fail to act rationally, they are always under an obligation to do so, and they have in the exercise of their wills the capacity to choose to do what they ought to do (*Discourse*, 184ff. [*Works*, 2: 612ff.]).

¹⁸ *Discourse*, 177 [*Works*, 2: 609].

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eternal Rules of Justice, Equality, Righteousness and Truth.¹⁹

But Clarke's position, as presented in the Boyle lectures, is not as simple or as straightforward as this account might suggest. Although Clarke holds that the rational agent has full access to all the moral truths he needs, he does allow that his moral judgement might be inadequate or corrupt. In the conclusion to the first series of lectures, he explains why God provided a revelation of Himself through the incarnation of His son. Men are prevented from knowing the truth by 'the Ignorance of Foolish, and the Vanity of Sceptical and Profane Men' and by the 'Weakness of our Reason, the Negligence of our Application, the Corruption of our Nature, or the false Philosophy of wicked and profane Men'.²⁰

In the second series, when he comes to discuss the need for revelation, he writes:

such is the Carelessness, Inconsiderateness, and Want of Attention of the greater part of Mankind; so many the Prejudices and false Notions taken up by evil Education; so strong and violent the unreasonable Lusts, Appetites and Desires of Sense; and so great the Blindness, introduced by superstitious Opinions, vitious Customs, and debauched Practices throughout the World; that very few are able, in reality and effect, to discover these things clearly and plainly for themselves: But Men have great need of particular Teaching, and much Instruction; to convince them of the Truth, and Certainty, and Importance of these things; to give them a due Sense, and clear and just Apprehensions concerning them; and to bring them effectually to the Practice of the plainest and most necessary Duties.²¹

¹⁹ *Discourse*, 185 [*Works*, 2: 613].

²⁰ *Discourse*, 125 [*Works*, 2: 577].

²¹ *Discourse*, 272-73 [*Works*, 2: 652]. Clarke's discussion in the Boyle lectures of why we need a revelation of God's will is anticipated in an earlier work, *Three practical essays on baptism, confirmation and repentance* (London, 1699)

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The notion that the individual is self-sufficient in all that he needs to know to practise the life of virtue fades. So far from it being the case that only the most stupid, the most negligent and the most corrupt beings are unable to find things out for themselves, moral blindness afflicts most men, and, in certain circumstances, whole communities. Clarke is careful to insist, however, that ignorance of such truths is not an argument against the objectivity of the distinction between good and evil. What the argument from ignorance supports is not the subjectivity or relativity of moral judgement, but the need for education.²²

To appreciate the extent to which men need a revelation, we must take full account of the ways in which moral integrity is threatened and often overwhelmed. Our judgement is continuously threatened by passions, undisciplined desires, and the intrusion of self-interest. Here we need to distinguish those cases in which the perception that an action is our duty is confronted with an opposing desire, and those cases in which the judgement is clouded or overwhelmed. The former presents no difficulty for the intuitionist; the failure to do one's duty will be a failure of will, not of understanding; the latter, however, presents serious difficulties, for it implies that the truth is far from being continuously available to the individual in questions of morality. But these psychological factors are not the only ones that need to be taken into account; there are also social and cultural factors that lead men astray. Most men are highly dependent upon the beliefs entertained in the communities to which they belong, and if these beliefs are dominated by superstition and prejudice, their moral judgements will also be corrupt.

The revelation that men need is to be found in Holy Scripture, particularly in the *New Testament*. In the Scriptures the individual will find all that he needs to live the virtuous life and all that he needs to assure him what he needs to do to secure his salvation and entry into eternal life. Thus when Clarke discusses the need for a

[*Works*, 3: 549 ff.]. See also James P. Ferguson, *An eighteenth-century heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke* (Kineton, 1976, 13 ff.

²² *Discourse*, 196 [*Works*, 2: 617-18].

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revelation, there is a significant shift in the methodology of morals. Although it is true that reason and revelation conspire to deliver the same message, it is not by the exercise of intuition, but by reading and studying the Scriptures that most men learn the truth. The Scriptures have authority because they are inspired by Christ, the Son of God, and his authority is manifest in the miracles he performed.²³

That there is a dual access to the truth in morals created a delicate balancing problem for Clarke in determining the respective roles of reason and revelation. Assuming, as he did, that the function of religion is to bring men to the practice of virtue both for their happiness in this world and for their salvation in the next, he had to decide how men are best guided to the truth. But in doing so, there were dangers he had to avoid; if he said that reason was sufficient, he ran the risk of implying that revelation was not needed; on the other hand, if he said that revelation was necessary, he risked implying that reason is inadequate. The compatibility of reason and revelation is not in doubt.²⁴ Clarke's dissertation for his doctorate in divinity at Cambridge bore the title *No article of the Christian faith delivered in the Holy Scripture is disagreeable to right reason*.²⁵ The difficulty lies rather in asserting the sufficiency of the one without denying the necessity of the other. In the text of the second series of Boyle lectures it can hardly be said that Clarke adopts a consistent stance on the question. When he is concerned to establish the objectivity of morals, he stresses moral judgement as the intuition of necessary truth of which all men of goodwill and unimpaired intellectual capacity are capable. On the other hand, when he emphasizes the need for revelation, he stresses the incapacity of most men to arrive at the truth unaided. But whichever access predominates, whether the exercise of reason or reading the Scriptures, the same conviction prevails: whether by reason or Scripture God had given men a plain, clear and certain

²³ *Discourse*, 369 [*Works*, 2: 695]. See R.M. Burns, *The great debate on miracles from Joseph Glanville to David Hume* (Lewisburg, 1981), 99-102.

²⁴ *Discourse*, 365 [*Works*, 2: 694].

²⁵ John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1988), 117.

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knowledge of the truth. What keeps men from the truth is their own depravity.

Although Clarke freely admits that men make mistakes in their moral judgements, and although he allows that their judgements are clouded by passion and self-interest and perverted by superstitions, prejudices and false opinions, in the Boyle lectures he does not deal in any great detail with problems concerning the erroneous conscience. Although he admits that ‘God in his infinite Bounty may reward the sincere Obedience of his Creatures, as much beyond the Merit of their own weak and imperfect Works, as he himself pleases.’²⁶ He does not consider whether a man may escape censure if he sincerely believes that he ought to do what he does. Neither does he deal with problems occasioned by moral perplexity, by the difficulties occasioned by lack of knowledge of empirical matters concerning the consequences of actions, by the difficulties encountered in applying principles to particular situations, and the difficulties arising from a conflict of duties. Neither does he deal sympathetically with the fate of those who fall victim to the superstitions and prejudices which dominate their own thinking and the thinking of their contemporaries. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Clarke is so heavily influenced by his moral epistemology, particularly his theory of intuition, and his belief in the clarity and certainty of revelation, that he firmly believes that men may rest securely in the deliverances of conscience and that, if they are liable to error, it is largely because they have allowed their judgement to be corrupted by their sinfulness. With such convictions there is little room for acknowledging honest moral perplexity and the problems that derive therefrom.

In view of later developments in his thought it is important to notice the support Clarke’s account, of the need for revelation as well as the need men have for teaching and guidance in searching the Scriptures, gives to the work of the Church. One implication of the doctrine of the self-sufficiency of the individual which Clarke’s

²⁶ *Discourse*, 360 [*Works*, 2: 691].

intuitionism might seem to support would be to diminish the role of the Church in promoting the good life. His emphasis on the place of revelation and the careful nurturing of the believer's acquaintance with it diminishes that threat.

III

In 1712 Clarke published *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* which provoked an intense controversy in the Church of England, a controversy which reverberated for the remainder of the century and had a marked influence upon the development of theology, and ecclesiology, not least among liberal and radical thinkers. Clarke was suspected of trying to subvert orthodox beliefs in favour of Arianism in a dispute which centred largely upon the status of the persons in the Trinity and their relations one with another. Clarke argued that a careful examination of the texts of Scripture established the supremacy of the Father in the Trinity and the subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He was attacked by the Lower House of Convocation who sought his censure from which he was protected by the intervention of William Wake, the Archbishop of Canterbury.²⁷ Thereafter Clarke agreed not to preach or publish any further work upon the subject; and he signalled his intention of not accepting any further preferment in the Church which required a renewal of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles.²⁸ This, incidentally, would not have prevented his becoming a bishop as subscription was not required on elevation to the Sacred Bench, but that elevation was not offered to him. Although Wake defended Clarke from censure, he did not want to see him become a bishop.²⁹

In trying to determine the truth about the status of the three persons in the Trinity and the relations between them, Clarke

²⁷ Norman Sykes, *William Wake Archbishop of Canterbury* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1957), 2: 155ff.

²⁸ Thomas Emlyn, 'Memoirs of the life and sentiments of Dr Samuel Clarke', in William Whiston, *Historical memoirs of the life and writings of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (London, 1748), 26-28; cited by Norman Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker: aspects of English church history, 1660 to 1768* (Cambridge, 1959), 166.

²⁹ Sykes, *William Wake*, 2: 152.

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assumes that the truth is to be found in Holy Scripture. This is to be done by collecting all the relevant texts and drawing from a survey of them all the doctrines that they collectively support. He warns against treating any particular text apart from the whole and without considering the context in which it occurs. It will be immediately seen that in this work Clarke uses a methodology quite different from the two that we have seen used in the *Discourse*. It is no longer a question of deducing conclusions from self-evident truths, nor is it a question of reading the *New Testament* to discover the principles stated there, principles that are clear and plain. Far from being a relatively simple task that can be performed quite quickly by a person of ordinary intellectual capacities, deciding what doctrine the texts support is a lengthy process involving a careful examination of the relevant texts well as highly specialized skills, such as a thorough knowledge of the relevant languages and the cultural and historical background. This interpretation of what is involved in searching the Scriptures lays a heavy burden on the believer. Although he is not on his own since he has available all the resources of the Church in teaching and in guidance, nonetheless the ultimate responsibility is his, as he must rely on his own judgement. The obligations of the believer are clearly stated in the introduction to *Scripture-doctrine*:

The *only Rule of Faith* therefore to every Christian, is *the Doctrine of Christ*; and That Doctrine, as applied to him by his own Understanding. In which matter, to preserve his Understanding from erring, he is obliged indeed, at his utmost Peril, to lay aside all Vice and all Prejudice, and to make use of the best Assistances he can procure: But after he has done all that can be done, he must of necessity at last understand with his own Understanding, and believe with his own, not another's, Faith. For (whatever has sometimes been absurdly pretended to the contrary,) 'tis evidently as *impossible* in Nature, that in these things any one Person should *submit* himself to

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another, as that one Man should *see* or *taste*, should *live* or *breathe* for another.³⁰

In this passage Clarke exploits a confusion of two senses of 'understanding'; one in which the term refers to a mental process, and the other in which it refers to what is said to be understood. In the first sense it is true that I can only understand with my own understanding, as it is true that I can see only with my own eyes and taste only with my own taste buds. But if by 'understanding' I refer to what is understood, then it is not true that what I understand is understood only by me and it is not true that I cannot share the same understanding with others. But even if I could only understand with my own understanding in both senses of the term, it would not follow that I could not profess or subscribe to what others profess or subscribe to, that I could only profess to subscribe to what I understand. (Indeed, if that were true, there would be no point in Clarke's arguing that I *should* only profess or subscribe to what I can understand.) The question whether I should only subscribe to what I believe in or understand remains an open one. As we shall see, there may be other reasons why I can have an obligation to subscribe to things I neither understand nor believe.

However this may be, it is clear that Clarke wished to exclude the possibility that a person may rest upon another's profession of faith without verifying it for himself from his own experience in reading and searching the Scriptures. Since Clarke places a heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of the individual, it might be thought that in the last resort he adopts a subjectivist position - that the truth for him is what he *decides* is the truth. Against this contention it must be borne in mind that for Clarke there is always a truth to be discovered - that although his grasp of it may be weak and uncertain, and although he must act according to his convictions, there is a truth that he must do his best to apprehend. The fact that he may be mistaken implies that there is a truth for him to apprehend or misapprehend. Furthermore, the believer is not allowed to rest content with what he happens to believe at any

³⁰ *Works*, 4: i.

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one time; he must persist in questioning his own beliefs and, as far as he is able, approximate them to the truth.

Clarke's claim that the individual must reflect upon Scripture is strengthened by his belief that Scripture is divinely inspired. He follows in the Protestant tradition that emphasizes both the sufficiency and the necessity of Scripture. In comparison all teaching that is not based on Scripture is suspect and all doctrines that depend on metaphysical notions not warranted in Scripture are to be treated as distractions. In his *Reply to the objections of Robert Nelson*, Clarke writes: 'it is still always to be remembered, that not the uncertain Opinions of fallible Men, but the Authority of inspired Scripture only, is the Rule by which our Judgment must finally be determined.'³¹ But the strong and exclusive emphasis that Clarke places on the divine authority of Scripture to the detriment of all that proceeds from human institutions threatens the coherence of Clarke's whole system. Earlier I claimed that a delicate balance has to be struck between the claims of reason and those of revelation, but this balance is upset if Scripture is exalted and human institutions depreciated. For what are institutional requirements, such as those embodied in collections of articles and in creeds, other than the productions of human intellect?

It was to have been expected that Clarke's sharp distinction between what is divinely inspired and what arises from human sources would have led him to reaffirm his claim that the believer must not be required to believe anything that is not firmly grounded in Scripture, but Clarke's position is much more radical than that. Clarke's insistence that the believer must understand with his own understanding and not with another's made a considerable contribution to the development of the doctrine of candour.³² Candour, as it occurs in the writings of the eighteenth-century rationalists, is a complex virtue. The candid man must not only refrain from lying, he must also set himself to say what is the case even if doing so runs him into difficulties. (It is important to

³¹ *Works*, 4: 259.

³² Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Varieties of candour', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 7 (1988), 35-56.

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distinguish those cases in which the obligation to tell the truth does not presuppose an obligation to say something from those cases in which there is an obligation to say what is the case. The former does not entail the latter because the agent may satisfy the demands of candour by staying silent.) In addition the candid man must be active in searching the Scriptures and in thinking things out for himself. In sermon CVI Clarke warns: 'But one thing is very certain, that no man can be saved, who does not sincerely endeavour to find out the *Truth for Himself*.'³³

Lastly, the candid man must treat all others as persons capable of responding to rational argument and refraining from appealing to his prejudices or manipulating him in any other way. At this stage in his thought Clarke evinces a high regard for the capacity of the individual, a regard that is testified to by the weight of responsibility he places on his shoulders, for the believer must not rest upon what is commonly agreed to have been established by Scripture; Clarke goes further and claims that the individual believer must not subscribe to anything that he himself does not understand or believe to be founded on Scripture. In *Scripture-doctrine* he writes:

Men [are] to comply with their respective Forms, upon no other Ground but that of their being agreeable to Scripture; and consequently *in such Sense only, wherein they are agreeable to Scripture*.³⁴

But although the onus placed upon his shoulders is a heavy one, the believer has the assurance that by taking care and paying attention he can come to know all that is necessary for his salvation.³⁵ That the believer must rest on his own judgement has far reaching implications for the scope of Church authority. In the first place, the individual should not be required to accept anything

³³ *Works*, 1: 676. Cf. *Works*, 4: viii.

³⁴ *Works*, 4: x. Cf. 'A reply to the objections of Robert Nelson', *Works*, 4: 262: 'Otherwise he parts with his *Christianity*, for the sake of a *Civil and political Religion*.' See also Gascoigne, 131, and G. R. Cragg, *Reason and authority in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1964), 251.

³⁵ Sermon CXII, *Works*, 1: 713.

that is not founded in Scripture; secondly, the individual should not be required to accept anything he does not understand to be required by Scripture. Clarke held that no one should be required to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, to the Athanasian, Apostles' or Nicene Creed, or to the Book of Common Prayer unless he believed that they conform to Scripture. In the introduction to *Scripture-doctrine* he buttresses his doctrine of the supremacy of Scripture by appealing to the Thirty-nine Articles themselves. He reminds his readers that in the 20th article it is laid down 'that it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written'. And he draws attention to the 21st in which it is stated that general councils of the church are not infallible and their deliberations have neither strength nor authority unless it may be declared they are taken out of Holy Scripture.³⁶

To be adequate a profession of faith must not just be shown to be based upon Scripture, it must also generalize what every believer can understand. Clarke signalled his own intentions concerning subscription in the following passage in the introduction to *Scripture-doctrine* :

And (as I think the Sincerity of a Christian obliges me to declare,) I desire it may be *observed*, that *my* Assent to the Use of the Forms by Law appointed, and to all Words of human Institution, is given only *in that Sense* wherein they are ... agreeable to that which appears to Me (upon the most careful and serious Consideration of the whole Matter) to be the Doctrine of Scripture; and *not in that Sense* which the *Popish* schoolmen ... endeavoured to introduce into the Church.³⁷

That a believer must not confess or subscribe to something he does not understand or believe creates a problem for those who wish a church to publish articles of belief. Since individuals are not likely to agree with each other as to what is true, and since different individuals are likely to be at different stages of

³⁶ *Works*, 4: viii.

³⁷ *Works*, 4: xii.

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development, only the most general formula, like an acknowledgement that the Scriptures are the embodiment of the true faith, is likely to win the universal assent of all practising Christians. There are two ways of treating the Thirty-nine Articles: either as 'articles of peace' accepted *in toto* as a profession of loyalty to the Church of England, or as 'articles of belief' which one ought not to subscribe to unless one is sincerely convinced that they are all true in every respect. It is clear that Clarke holds the latter position. Robert Nelson objected that to indulge every person with such a liberty would subvert all religious and civil society. If everyone were free to interpret for himself how he is obliged by law, there would be no security for religion, liberty or property.³⁸

Clarke concedes that this is an important objection, the most important that Nelson has made. In reply he says that in matters indifferent (that is, not coming under the rule of faith) there is no derogation of the legislative authority of government. But in ecclesiastical matters (excepting rites and ceremonies), authority lies solely in Scripture. Whereas in civil matters the subject must defer to the supreme authority of the legislature (operating within its proper limits), in matters of faith he must own ultimate allegiance to Scripture. In those matters in which the believer's allegiance is to Scripture, and which override any allegiance to human formulae, Clarke claims that many articles written into and once thought acceptable have since failed to win common consent. Among these he lists, the following doctrines: Christ's descent into hell in the Apostles' Creed, the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian, the procession of the Holy Ghost in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, predestination and original sin (now understood in a sense quite different from that intended by the composers of the Thirty-nine Articles) and the consubstantiality of the persons in the Trinity in the Nicene Creed.³⁹ The demand that one should only profess what one believes to be true coupled with an increase in adherence to rationalist positions in theology led to a

³⁸ Clarke, 'A reply to the objections of Robert Nelson', *Works*, 4: 262.

³⁹ *Works*, 4: 263.

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movement within the Church of England for relief from subscriptions to the Thirty-nine Articles. In 1772 a petition was presented to Parliament by some members of the clergy for relief from compulsory subscription for candidates for ordination and for undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge.⁴⁰ The failure of this petition led to a breakaway movement which resulted in the establishment of the Unitarian movement in the United Kingdom.

As mentioned earlier, the coherence of Clarke's system is threatened by the emphasis he places on his claims that Scripture is the only rule of faith and the stress he places on claims that human authorities are subordinate to that which is divinely inspired. How, it may be argued, can Clarke maintain that there are two accesses to the truth, each worthy of respect, and that reason is equally God's gift to man? It may be objected here that this criticism ignores the division that Clarke makes between matters of morality which are clear and plain, and matters of faith which are revealed only in Scripture. To emphasize a division in Clarke's position on these lines could have, paradoxically, the effect of depreciating what as a Protestant he most wants to preserve, namely, the exclusive status of Scripture. For if it is true that the function of religion is to lead men to salvation and eternal life by the path of virtue and if moral principles are accessible to reason, is there not a danger that matters of faith, the mysteries of the Gospel, may come to be relegated to the non-essential? And if matters of faith are non-essential, if the life of virtue (which can be lived by the light of reason) is all important, then why should Clarke be as concerned as he is that collections of articles and the creeds should contain only what is attested in Scripture? On the other hand, if matters of faith which can only be determined by the study of Scripture are essential to the life of virtue, and, in consequence, to salvation and the attainment of eternal life, it cannot also be maintained that by the exercise of reason and action in accordance with it man's wellbeing can be achieved. If Clarke's system is to be seen as coherent

⁴⁰ Ursula Henriques, *Religious toleration in England 1787-1833* (London, 1961), 55.

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and self-consistent, neither the role of reason nor that of revelation must be over-stated.

Conclusion

In the history of moral philosophy Clarke's name has been associated with a form of intuitionism that approximates the apprehension of moral principles to that of propositions in mathematics. My purpose has been to show that this is not the whole story. There is no doubt that intuitionism plays a large part in Clarke's theory, but he was also concerned to show that revelation plays an important part in sustaining the good life, for the majority of men have to rely on the guidance they find in Scripture. There it is plain, clear and easily accessible. The Boyle lectures had two purposes: to demonstrate the truths of natural or rational religion and the certainty of Christian revelation.

When Clarke published the results of his extensive enquiry into the scriptural basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, a different methodology emerged. No longer is it a case of being confronted with propositions that are seen to be necessarily true, nor is it a case of reading truths that are clear and plain, truths that have their warrant in divine inspiration. Now the task is to establish (in a way that is in some respects analogous to literary criticism) the interpretation most strongly favoured by the weight of textual evidence. Here Clarke's individualism is even more markedly evident than in either of the two other methodologies. For in this case a heavy burden of interpreting the evidence - where the truth is neither plain nor clear - is placed on the shoulders of the individual. He must strive to do his best to make clear to himself the relations between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When it comes to profession of faith, Clarke insists that the individual must rest on his own judgement, and he must not be required to subscribe to any doctrine that he does not understand and believe to be true. This position, as we have seen, has weighty implications for toleration and freedom of worship, for ecclesiology, in particular the nature and scope of Church authority, and for the responsibility of the individual in matters of

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morals and politics. Above all it signalled one of the great foundations of the Enlightenment, the duty that each individual has to think things out for himself.⁴¹

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⁴¹ I wish to record my thanks to David Rees and Jim Dybikowski for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, SAMUEL CLARKE, AND THE TOLERATION OF HERESY

Chester Chapin

I intend to examine Samuel Johnson's attitude toward the eminent Anglican writer Samuel Clarke. Although accused of heresy and praised by religious radicals whose opinions Johnson detested, Clarke is the writer whose sermons Johnson valued above all others.¹ Examination of Johnson's attitude toward Clarke reveals a distinction between Johnson's personal tolerance for deviations from orthodoxy and his public stance as a defender of orthodox religion.

But first, a word about Johnson's own Christian faith. Some critics have thought Johnson himself heterodox as to one major doctrine, the Atonement. It has been argued that for most of his adult life Johnson regarded Christ's sacrifice as exemplary but not vicarious: 'that it had not wiped out the sins of mankind, but had shown the heinousness of sin and the need for repentance and piety'.² But as James Gray points out, as early as 1738 'Johnson clearly states his hope of salvation to be "through the *satisfaction* of Jesus Christ".'³ I agree with N. J. Hudson that Johnson, like most eighteenth-century Anglicans, emphasizes the moral content of religion.⁴ Showing the heinousness of sin, Christ's sacrifice is a powerful incentive to virtuous living. But it is also a true atonement. As Johnson wrote in his sermon for Dr. Dodd, Christian faith is 'a sincere reception of the doctrines taught by our blessed Saviour, with a firm assurance that he died to take away

¹ Sir John Hawkins, *The life of Samuel Johnson* (2nd ed., London, 1787), 366.

² James Gray, *Johnson's sermons: a study* (Oxford, 1972), 81. For the 'exemplary' argument, see Maurice Quinlan, *Samuel Johnson: a layman's religion* (Madison, Wis., 1964), ch. 3; and Charles E. Pierce Jr., *The religious life of Samuel Johnson* (Hamden, Conn., 1983), 157.

³ Gray, *Johnson's sermons*, 84.

⁴ N. J. Hudson, 'Johnson, socinianism, and the meaning of Christ's sacrifice', *Notes and Queries*, 32 (June, 1985), 240.

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the sins of the world, and that we have, each of us, a part in the boundless benefits of the universal sacrifice'.⁵

No doubt as Johnson grew older, 'he became more and more convinced of the vital importance' of the Atonement.⁶ If, as I have argued elsewhere, Johnson's enormous zest for living overflowed into what Miguel de Unamuno has called 'the hunger of immortality', it is not surprising that the dying Johnson insisted 'on the doctrine of an expiatory sacrifice as the condition without which there was no Christianity.' With his deep sense of human weakness and unworthiness, Johnson could not believe salvation attainable through human effort alone; Christ's sacrifice is a necessary condition for the attainment of immortality, for Johnson the 'great article' of Christianity.⁷

Given this sense of human imperfection, it might be expected that Johnson would condemn any teaching which minimized the need for supernatural assistance in the economy of salvation. In his *Dictionary* Johnson quotes Richard Hooker: 'There resteth either no way unto salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is *supernatural*, a way which could never have entered into the heart of a man, as much as once to conceive or imagine, if God himself had not revealed it extraordinarily; for which cause we term it the mystery or secret way of salvation.'⁸ A man in doubt of his acceptance with God, Johnson once said he might welcome a church like the Roman Catholic 'where there are so many helps to get to Heaven. I would be a Papist if I could. I have fear enough;

⁵ Johnson, Sermon 28, in Jean Hagstrum and James Gray, eds. *Sermons* (New Haven, Conn., 1978), 303-4. See also Sermon 6 where Johnson reminds those who boast of their virtue 'that the blood of Christ was poured out upon the cross to make their best endeavours acceptable to God' (72).

⁶ Gray, *Johnson's sermons*, 86.

⁷ Chester Chapin, *The religious thought of Samuel Johnson* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1968), 102; William Windham in G. B. Hill, ed., *Johnsonian miscellanies*, (2 vols., Oxford, 1897), 2: 387; James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, eds. G. B. Hill- L. F. Powell (6 vols., Oxford, 1934-50), 3: 188. Cited hereafter as *Life*.

⁸ Quotations from Johnson's *Dictionary of the English language* (1755; facs. rpt. New York, 1967). The italicized words within each quotation indicate where it maybe found.

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but an obstinate rationality prevents me.⁹ Of these heavenly helps the Catholics counted seven sacraments conferring grace; the Anglicans, only two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. As Jane Steen has shown in this journal, Johnson is fully orthodox in regarding Baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'necessary channels' of supernatural grace.¹⁰

The prevailing heresy of eighteenth-century Britain, if we exclude deism, was anti-trinitarianism in its various forms: Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism. By denying that Christ was truly God, anti-trinitarianism ran counter to the conviction of most Christians 'that only one who was truly God could be the Saviour of the world'.¹¹ What Johnson thought of Unitarianism, the most radical anti-trinitarian heresy, is evident from the contempt he shows for the Unitarian Edward Elwall, who was tried and acquitted in 1726 for publishing a violent attack on the Trinity,¹² and from his treatment of Edmund Barker, a member of Johnson's Ivy Lane Club and a 'professed' Unitarian, 'for which Johnson so often snubbed him' that Barker's visits to the club became 'less and less frequent'.¹³ Elwall wrote an account of his trial, calling the Trinity an 'absurd and horrid doctrine' and the Atonement a 'scandalous Popish invention'. Christ, for Elwall, is an inspired moral teacher, but 'he is not God'. Christ could not, and did not, 'make satisfaction unto God for us.'¹⁴ But for Johnson Christ is truly God. In his *Dictionary* he quotes Hooker who is himself quoting St. Hilary of Poitiers against the Arians: 'Neither hath Christ, thro' union of both natures, incurred the damage of either; lest, by being born a man, we should think that he hath *given over* to be God, or that because he continued God, therefore

⁹ *Life*, 4: 289.

¹⁰ Jane Steen, 'Literally orthodox: Samuel Johnson's Anglicanism', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 11 (1992), 87-106.

¹¹ Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), 255.

¹² *Life*, 2: 164.

¹³ Hawkins, 233-4.

¹⁴ Edward Elwall, *The triumph of truth: being an account of the trial of Mr. Elwall (1736)*, ed. Joseph Priestley (Birmingham, 1788), 11-12.

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he cannot be man also.’¹⁵ I agree with G. M. Ditchfield that ‘Johnson did not include Unitarianism within his definition of Christian.’¹⁶

The single most influential work of the eighteenth-century anti-trinitarian movement was Samuel Clarke’s *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). After an exhaustive examination of *New Testament* texts, Clarke concluded that the *Bible* did not support the orthodox view. Clarke’s own interpretation maintains the superiority of the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost instead of their co-equality, but replying to attacks upon the *Scripture-doctrine*, he also asserts against the Arians that the Son is not ‘[... a Creature, made out of nothing, just before the Beginning of this World;] *but that he was begotten eternally ... by the Will of the Father*’.¹⁷ Although vehemently denying that he was an Arian, Clarke’s view was widely regarded as at least ‘within the Arian circle of ideas’,¹⁸ and in 1714 his teaching was censured as heretical by the Lower House of the Church of England’s Convocation.

No doubt with Convocation’s censure in mind, Johnson referred to Clarke as a ‘condemned heretick’ on the subject of the Trinity,¹⁹ telling the Rev. William Adams that ‘he had made it a rule not to admit Dr. Clarke’s name in his Dictionary’.²⁰ Clearly, Johnson thought Convocation had every right to censure, if not to suppress, heretical opinions. In his discussion of Milton’s *Areopagitica* Johnson maintained that the publication of theological opinions which society thinks pernicious should not be tolerated, for ‘if every sceptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion’.²¹ Nor should the magistrate tolerate those who preach

¹⁵ Richard Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity*, bk. 5, ch. 53, in *Works*, (4 vols., Folger Library ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 2: 218.

¹⁶ G. M. Ditchfield, ‘Dr. Johnson and the Dissenters’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 68 (Spring, 1986), 388.

¹⁷ Clarke, *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978), 4: 555-56.

¹⁸ Rupp, 253-54.

¹⁹ *Life*, 3: 248.

²⁰ *Life*, 4: 416 n.2.

²¹ ‘Life of Milton’, *Lives of the English poets*, ed. G. B. Hill (3 vols., 1905; rpt. New York, 1967), 1: 108.

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against the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity because ‘permitting men to preach any opinion contrary to the established church, tends, in a certain degree, to lessen the authority of the church, and, consequently, to lessen the influence of religion.’²²

Clarke’s *Scripture-doctrine* is based upon the assumption that if private judgment and official creeds conflict, it is not only the right but the duty of every Protestant to adhere to the former. William Whiston tells us that Clarke gave his hearty approval to a proposed parliamentary petition in behalf of toleration for those ‘who did not believe the *Athanasian* [i.e. orthodox Trinitarian] Doctrine’, and while he is not explicit on the matter, it seems probable that Clarke thought the question of the Trinity should be left open as ‘a non-essential of faith on which each man might reach his own private conclusion’.²³

Johnson does not deny the right of private judgment but he believes it has been carried so far as to be in danger of giving rise to ‘a chaos of discordant forms of worship, and inconsistent systems of faith’. For Johnson religious unity is still the ideal; he opposes those moderns ‘who can look, with the utmost calmness and unconcern, at a rising schism, and survey, without any perturbation, the speedy progress of an increasing heresy’.²⁴

Yet as Sir John Hawkins said, Johnson ‘was ever an admirer of Clarke’.²⁵ At mid-century, during meetings of Johnson’s Ivy Lane club, Hawkins has Johnson combatting ‘the cant of the Shaftesburian school’ with weapons based upon Johnson’s acceptance of Clarke’s ideas.²⁶ The third Earl of Shaftesbury and his admirers were viewed with suspicion by the orthodox since they seemed to believe that man, being endowed with a ‘moral sense’, is innately good, a view opposed to the orthodox concept of

²² *Life*, 2: 254.

²³ William Whiston, *Historical memoirs of the life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (London, 1730), 101; Roland N. Stromberg, *Religious liberalism in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1954), 45.

²⁴ *Sermons*, 77, Sermon 7.

²⁵ Hawkins, 253.

²⁶ Hawkins, 255.

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man as a fallen creature always in need of divine grace. Arguing with the Shaftesburian Samuel Dyer, whose religious principles he suspected of 'giving way', Johnson, 'uniformly tenacious' of 'the nature of moral obligation', followed Clarke, according to Hawkins, in supposing 'all rational agents as under an obligation to act agreeably to the relations that subsist between such, or according to what he calls the fitness of things'.²⁷ Opposing the 'notions of Lord Shaftesbury', as well as those of 'some later writers, who have pursued the same train of thinking and reasoning', Johnson, says Hawkins, agreed with most of Clarke's opinions, 'excepting in that of the Trinity'.²⁸ And we learn from Boswell that in 1763 Johnson recommended Hugo Grotius, John Pearson, and Clarke 'to every man whose faith is still unsettled';²⁹ that in 1769 Johnson recommended Clarke on the subject of free will,³⁰ and that the dying Johnson urged Dr. Richard Brocklesby to read Clarke's sermons because Clarke was 'fullest on the *propitiatory sacrifice*'.³¹

According to William Seward, Johnson once remarked that Clarke's sermons were the best in the English language, 'bating a little heresy'.³² I believe Johnson's 'little' means 'relatively unimportant'. William Bowles reports Johnson as seemingly not disposed to censure Clarke for his heterodoxy: 'he held he said the Eternity of the Son & that was being far from Heretical'.³³ When the elderly clergyman Hector Maclean said Clarke was 'very wicked' for 'going so much into the Arian system', Johnson replied: 'I will not say he was wicked; he might be mistaken.'³⁴

Johnson, I believe, could regard Clarke's heresy as relatively unimportant because he thought Clark had not gone very far 'into the Arian system'. Unlike the Arians, Clarke held 'the Eternity of

²⁷ Hawkins, 253.

²⁸ Hawkins, 253; 255.

²⁹ *Life*, 1: 398.

³⁰ *Life*, 2: 104.

³¹ *Life*, 4: 416.

³² *Johnsonian miscellanies*, 2: 305.

³³ *Life*, 4: 524.

³⁴ *Life*, 5: 288.

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the Son', and in his comments on the propitiatory sacrifice Clarke uses language indistinguishable from that of orthodox divines. Christ is 'That Divine Person' who saves 'corrupted' mankind by 'giving himself a Sacrifice and Expiation for Sin' and by procuring 'God's Holy Spirit' to be 'in Men a new and effectual Principle' able to lead them finally to 'Eternal Life'.³⁵ The difficulty of classifying Clarke as an Arian was recognized at the time. As Francis Hare remarked, Clarke's friend, William Whiston, also censured by Convocation, was treated as 'a rank *Arian*', whereas with Clarke there could be only 'a Suspicion of favouring the same Notions'.³⁶

According to the Rev. William Adams, the prejudice which led Johnson to exclude Clarke from his *Dictionary* 'wore off'. Adams cites as evidence the fact that 'at some distance of time' Johnson advised with Adams 'what books he should read in defence of the Christian Religion'. Adams 'recommended Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, as the best of the kind', noting that Johnson 'was frequently employed in the latter part of his time in reading Clarke's Sermons'.³⁷ Johnson agreed with Adams' high estimate of Clarke's ability as a Christian apologist; as we have seen, he recommended Clarke to those whose faith was still unsettled.

But Johnson's disapproval of Clarke's anti-trinitarianism did not 'wear off' sufficiently for him to include quotations from Clarke in the fourth edition of his *Dictionary* (London, 1773). Johnson added over 2000 illustrative quotations to this edition, a number of them from authors not included in earlier editions. But there are no quotations from Clarke.³⁸

³⁵ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 685.

³⁶ Francis Hare, *The difficulties and discouragements which attend the study of the Scriptures in the way of private judgment* (5th ed., London, 1714), 24-25.

³⁷ *Life*, 4: 416, n.2.

³⁸ Allen Reddick, *The making of Johnson's Dictionary 1746-1733* (Cambridge, 1990), 122. All quotations signed 'Clarke' or 'Clarke's Latin Grammar' in various editions of Johnson's *Dictionary* are taken from the writings of John Clarke of Hull (1687-1734).

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An important reason for this omission is, I believe, Johnson's desire that his *Dictionary* should perform an educational function, that it should instruct the 'learner' and be of advantage 'to the common workman'.³⁹ Some of these learners would be young, but young or old, they would often be less educated and hence less capable of judging for themselves than Johnson's circle of friends. Where Johnson could praise Clarke to his friends without fear of being misunderstood, readers of his *Dictionary* might regard inclusion of Clarke as approval of heresy.

But even if Johnson had been inclined to include Clarke in his revised edition, the events of the early 1770s would have put a stop to any such inclination. As Allen Reddick has said, this was a period when the creeds and beliefs of the Church of England were undergoing a severe public challenge from reformers both within and without the church.⁴⁰

The 1770s saw successive attempts in Parliament by Anglicans as well as Dissenters to abolish or modify subscription to some of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. The spirit animating all these attempts is well expressed in the Feathers Tavern petition of 1771, sponsored by a group of Anglican clergy. The petitioners denounce the laws requiring subscription as an infringement of their Reformation right of private judgment in matters of religion, and pray 'that they may be restored to their undoubted rights as Protestants of interpreting Scripture for themselves without being bound by any human explanation thereof'.⁴¹ Although the trinitarian controversy had died down in the years following the publication of Clarke's *Scripture-doctrine*, it surfaced again during the 1770s. As John Spurr has said, 'it was anti-Trinitarianism of various sorts which lay behind the Anglican campaign of the 1770s for a relaxation of the terms of subscription', and Unitarianism, the

³⁹ Robert De Maria Jr., *Johnson's 'Dictionary' and the language of learning* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), 12.

⁴⁰ Reddick, 146.

⁴¹ Richard Burgess Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience: a study in the theory and practice of toleration in England during the eighteenth century* (Philadelphia, 1962), 149.

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most radical anti-trinitarian heresy, was now the creed of many former English Presbyterians, and of some of those who called themselves 'rational' Dissenters. In 1772 and 1788 the prominent rational Dissenter Joseph Priestley, whose theology Johnson disliked, reprinted Edward Elwall's account of his trial as part of his own campaign against trinitarian belief. I believe it is the growth of Unitarianism among Dissenters that Johnson has chiefly in mind when in *The false alarm* (1770) he mentions the 'sectaries' as people 'of whose religion little now remains but hatred of establishments'.⁴²

Johnson may have had rational Dissent in mind during his argument against the toleration of opinions 'contrary to the established church'. His opponent in this argument was Dr. Henry Mayo, a Dissenting clergyman, and the occasion was a dinner party at the Dilly brothers, also Dissenters, a fact Johnson himself emphasized: 'I dined in a large company at a Dissenting Booksellers yesterday, and disputed against toleration, with one Doctor Meyer.'⁴³ This argument took place on 7 May 1773. Just weeks before, on 2 April, a bill for the relief of Dissenting clergymen from subscription had been rejected in the House of Lords. This bill, sponsored by rational Dissenters, was sharply opposed by orthodox Dissenters who wanted no toleration for those 'who deny the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity and other important truths'.⁴⁴ These orthodox Dissenters hired Johnson's

⁴² John Spurr, *The restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven, Conn., 1991), 385; *Life*, 2: 124, for Johnson's opinion of Priestley's theology that it 'tended to unsettle everything, and yet settled nothing'; *DNB* s.v. Edward Elwall for Priestley's reprinting of Elwall; Johnson, *Political writings*, Donald J. Greene, ed. (New Haven, Conn., 1977), 344.

⁴³ Bruce Redford, ed., *Letters of Samuel Johnson* (5 vols., Princeton, N.J., 1992), 2: 30. Johnson may not have known that Mayo was an orthodox Calvinist. But Johnson was opposed to anyone, orthodox or not, who argued as Mayo did, that all religious sects should have full 'liberty of preaching' and that the magistrate should interfere only when there is 'an overt act which threatens the security either of the state or of some other sect'. Compare *Life*, 2: 249-50 and John Stephens, 'The London Ministers and subscription,' *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 1 (1982), 50 n.24; 51, esp. n.31.

⁴⁴ Barlow, 184, n.36.

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friend, the Anglican lawyer Sir Robert Chambers, to represent them in Parliament. On 25 March Chambers argued against the bill in a speech which has been called ‘chiefly a diatribe against anti-Trinitarianism’.⁴⁵ Johnson anticipated the rejection of this bill, writing on 4 March that ‘the Dissenters though they have taken advantage of unsettled times, and a government much enfeebled, seem not likely to gain any immunities.’⁴⁶

Against the prevalence of trinitarian heresy, Johnson, in the revision of his *Dictionary*, includes 63 quotations from a new author, the eminent theologian Daniel Waterland.⁴⁷ Johnson owned ‘Waterland on the Trinity, &c’, and it was chiefly as a champion of trinitarian orthodoxy that Waterland was esteemed.⁴⁸ Waterland wrote two massive ‘vindications’ of Christ’s divinity against ‘Dr. Clarke’s Scheme of the Holy Trinity’, and Johnson, according to Sir John Hawkins, thought Waterland had ‘foiled’ Clarke.⁴⁹

As Allen Reddick has said, several of Johnson’s quotations from Waterland ‘are pointed in their polemic’: ‘Had it been possible to find out any real and firm foundation for Arianism to rest upon, it would never have been left to stand upon artificial *props*, or to subsist by subtlety and management’; and ‘Such is the constant strain of this blessed saint, who every where brands the Arian doctrine, as the new, *novel*, upstart heresy, folly and madness.’⁵⁰

It might seem that the anti-trinitarian movement of the 1770s had led Johnson to change his mind about Clarke; that he now regarded Clarke’s heresy as dangerous rather than relatively unimportant. Johnson’s quotations from Waterland are not the first in which Arianism is condemned by name. In the first edition of

⁴⁵ Anthony Lincoln, *Some political and social ideas of English dissent 1763-1800* (Cambridge, 1938), 233.

⁴⁶ *Letters*, 2: 13.

⁴⁷ Reddick, 122.

⁴⁸ Donald Greene, *Samuel Johnson’s library: an annotated guide* (Victoria, B. C., 1975), 116.

⁴⁹ Hawkins, 254.

⁵⁰ Reddick, 157.

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Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755), Hooker under sense four of 'subtile' condemns 'Arrius' as a 'subtile witted' discontented man who 'through envy and stomach' was 'prone unto contradiction'. But it seems beyond question that the presence in Johnson's revised *Dictionary* of Waterland, 'the famous Defender of the Faith against the Arians', is Johnson's response to the increasing tempo of anti-trinitarian activity during the 1770s.⁵¹

It is Waterland's contention that *any* deviation from trinitarian orthodoxy is dangerous. He is aware of Clarke's denial of Arianism, but for Waterland this is a smoke-screen hiding beliefs which lead logically to 'Arianism or even polytheism'.⁵² If, as Waterland believes, it is impossible 'for the blood of any *creature* to take away the sins of the world ... the Scripture doctrine of the *satisfaction* infers the *Divinity* of him that made it: and hence it is, that those who have denied our Lord's proper *Divinity* have commonly gone on to deny any proper *satisfaction* also; or while they have admitted it in *words* or in *name*, (as they admit also Christ's *Divinity*), they have denied the *thing*.'⁵³ This, for Waterland, is true of Clarke. According to Clarke, 'The *Reason* why the *Son* in the New Testament is sometimes stiled *God*, is not upon Account of his *metaphysical Substance*, how Divine soever; but of his *relative Attributes* and divine *Authority* (communicated to him from the Father) over *Us*.'⁵⁴ For Waterland there can be no distinction between an absolute and a relative deity, for if the Son is not God in the full orthodox sense, he cannot truly be called God and must therefore be a creature in the Arian sense. If he is truly God, he must be of one substance with the Father, since otherwise there would be more Gods than one. Seeing quotations from Waterland but none from Clarke [who replied vigorously to Waterland] readers of Johnson's revised *Dictionary* who knew

⁵¹ *Biographica britannica* (London, 1763), 6: 4161.

⁵² Robert T. Holtby, *Daniel Waterland 1683-1740: a study in eighteenth-century orthodoxy* (Carlisle, 1966), 22.

⁵³ Waterland, 'The importance of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity asserted', *Works*, ed. William Van Mildert (Oxford, 1843), 3: 426.

⁵⁴ Clarke, *Works*, 4: 150.

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something of the Clarke-Waterland controversy might naturally assume that Johnson thought Waterland had confuted Clarke.

This, however, would be overstating the case. Johnson's defence of Clarke against Hector Maclean occurred in October 1773, some six months *after* the publication in March of the revised fourth edition of Johnson's *Dictionary*. Maclean, repeating his charge that Clarke was wicked, added that 'worthy men in England have since confuted him to all intents and purposes', to which Johnson replied, 'I know not *who* has confuted him to *all intents and purposes*.'⁵⁵ Maclean's 'to all intents and purposes' leaves one with the impression that Maclean himself was not absolutely sure that Clarke had in fact been 'confuted' ('to confute' in Johnson's *Dictionary* is 'to convict of error or falsehood; to disprove'). Reporting this conversation in his *Journey to the western islands of Scotland* (1775), Johnson remarks that he lost some of Maclean's good will 'by treating a heretical writer with more regard than, in his opinion, a heretick could deserve. I honoured his orthodoxy, and did not much censure his asperity. A man who has settled his opinions, does not love to have the tranquillity of his conviction disturbed; and at seventy-seven it is time to be in earnest.'⁵⁶ According to Hawkins, Johnson thought Waterland had 'foiled' Clarke, but 'to foil' in Johnson's *Dictionary* is 'to put to the worst; to defeat, though *without a complete* victory' (my emphasis). Finally, the conversation with William Bowles in which Johnson seemed not disposed to censure Clarke's heterodoxy took place in August, 1783. It would seem that in spite of the presence of Waterland in Johnson's revised *Dictionary*, the Rev. William Adams was right: Johnson's esteem for Clarke increased with the passing of the years.

But if Johnson himself thought Waterland had not quite made his case against Clarke, he might hope readers of his *Dictionary* would find Waterland's arguments altogether convincing. Johnson was not convinced by the usual arguments purporting to solve the free will problem, but in the *Dictionary* he repeatedly cites

⁵⁵ *Life*, 5: 288.

⁵⁶ *Journey*, ed. Mary Lascelles (New Haven, Conn. 1971), 121

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'Bramhall against Hobbs' in the hope that Bishop John Bramhall's arguments against Hobbesian 'necessity' would convince others.⁵⁷ Even if orthodox readers were persuaded to condemn all of Clarke's writings, valuable as Johnson found most of these, Johnson, I believe, would acquiesce. Hector Maclean might think, mistakenly, that Clarke was 'wicked', but his mistake was less important to Johnson than his orthodoxy. Although Johnson rejects the idea that Clarke himself was heretical on the subject of Christ's satisfaction, I believe he shared Waterland's belief that anti-trinitarianism had led others to a denial of the propitiatory sacrifice, 'without which there was no Christianity'.

What is puzzling is not Johnson's refusal to quote Clarke in his *Dictionary*, but the apparently excessive claims he made for the influence upon him of Clarke's sermons. According to William Seward, Johnson is reported to have said that Clarke's sermons 'made him a Christian', and some three months before his death the Rev. Richard George Robinson quotes him as saying that if he was saved, he should be 'indebted for his salvation to the sermons of Dr. Clarke'.⁵⁸ James Gray's careful examination has shown that important statements by Johnson on the Atonement echo views expressed by Clarke.⁵⁹ Since Johnson valued Clarke's sermons most of all for their interpretation of the Atonement, the statement quoted by Robinson might be explained as an exaggeration caused, as death approached, by Johnson's urgent sense of the vital importance of this doctrine. Although he had always emphasized the moral content of religion, the dying Johnson, besides recommending Clarke's sermons on the Atonement to Dr. Brocklesby, 'talked often' to Brocklesby 'about the necessity of faith in the *sacrifice* of JESUS, as necessary beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind'.⁶⁰

But the statement reported by Seward might have been made much earlier, and might seem to contradict Johnson's remark

⁵⁷ Chapin, 115.

⁵⁸ Gray, 66.

⁵⁹ Gray, 76-86.

⁶⁰ *Life*, 4: 416.

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concerning the influence upon him as a young man of William Law's *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (1729). But Johnson never says that Law's book 'made him a Christian'; he says only that the *Serious call* first started him 'thinking in earnest of religion' after he 'became capable of rational inquiry'.⁶¹ Law assumes the truth of Christianity; his *Serious call* exhorts Christian believers to live up to their beliefs. But I find it impossible to believe that Johnson would call himself a Christian without having made a 'rational inquiry' into the validity of the Christian 'evidences.' 'It is astonishing', Johnson asserts in Sermon 20, that any 'reasonable being' can forebear enquiring seriously 'whether the religion publickly taught carries any mark of divine appointment'.⁶²

If Law's *Serious call* inspired Johnson to think in earnest of religion, it seems likely from his many approving references to Clarke that it was chiefly Clarke's arguments in favor of Christianity that 'settled' Johnson's own faith, confirming him in the belief that Christianity was true. Presumably, certain of Clarke's opinions would have been rigorously tested during Johnson's arguments with Samuel Dyer, described by Hawkins as a man of 'keen penetration and deep erudition', a formidable antagonist whom Johnson would never contradict 'but in defence of some fundamental and important truth'.⁶³ It is worth noting that Clarke's explanations of the Atonement which Johnson follows most closely occur in Clarke's second set of Boyle sermons published as *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*. The Rev. William Adams had these particular sermons in mind when recommending to Johnson Clarke's 'Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion' as the 'best' of the many works written 'in defence of the Christian Religion'. Thus when Johnson says that Clarke's sermons made him a Christian, he may mean, not that Clarke taught him what Christianity was - the *Serious call* is

⁶¹ *Life*, 1: 68.

⁶² *Sermons*, 222.

⁶³ Hawkins, 252-53.

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more likely to have done that - but that it was Clarke's arguments which convinced him that Christianity was 'of divine appointment'.

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**CAUTION, CONSCIENCE AND THE NEWTONIAN
REFORMATION:
THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HERESIES OF
NEWTON, CLARKE AND WHISTON**

Stephen Snobelen

[A] lady asked the famous Lord Shaftesbury what religion he was of. He answered the religion of wise men. She asked, what was that? He answered, wise men never tell.

John

Percival, 23 October 1730¹

If political Reasoning had such weight as to bias honest men, We should have had no reformation by Luther or Others.

John Whiston, c.1761-72²

I

**NEWTON AND THE NEWTONIANS CLARKE AND
WHISTON³**

Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke and William Whiston were heretics. Early in his career, Newton broke with tradition in his science and his religion. Clarke and Whiston were his leading scientific and

¹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of Viscount Percival afterwards first Earl of Egmont* (3 vols., London, 1920), 1: 113.

² Manuscript note by William Whiston's son against a reference to Lord Godolphin's letter to Clarke in the Clarke article of the British Library's copy of *A new and general biographical dictionary* (12 vols., London, 1761), 3: 289.

³ The research for this paper was made possible with the assistance of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship and the Queen Elizabeth II British Columbia Centennial Scholarship. This paper has also benefitted from the advice and comments of Geoffrey Cantor, Jim Dybikowski, Rob Iliffe, Simon Schaffer, Larry Stewart and Paul Wood.

Caution, Conscience and the Newtonian Reformation

theological disciples, and the evidence suggests that they owed not only much of their natural philosophy to him, but that their teacher also set them on the path of heresy. Indeed, in their natural philosophy, antitrinitarianism, use of prophecy and apologetic efforts against unbelief, there is much to associate them together. Significantly, all three were theological dissidents who believed the Church needed further reformation. All were Cambridge scholars who eventually came to London: Newton to take a position at the Mint, Clarke to become rector of St. James's and Whiston to begin a career of public experimental lecturing. What is more, both Clarke and Whiston were important popularizers of Newton's natural philosophy and theology. Nevertheless, although they agreed on a number of central concerns, and even on some specifics, they parted on two crucial and related issues - namely, the publicity of their beliefs and the timing of the reformation.

For heretics in an age of orthodoxy, how much one's private beliefs should become public is a perennial problem. I trace in the lives of these men three responses to this dilemma. I argue that Whiston's zeal, Clarke's relative caution and Newton's fear of publicity can be explained not only by differences of temperament, but also by their separate strategies for the evangelization of primitive Christianity. The issue of publicity is pivotal once one understands the earnestness of each man's belief in the need for further reformation - the timing of which constitutes the second defining difference among this inner group of Newtonians. This study will therefore bring together an analysis of their distinct personalities and views of publicity to demonstrate why these three - so similar in their theology - differed so markedly in their preaching of these same beliefs.⁴

⁴ After completing the first draft of this paper I examined Jean-François Baillon's *Newtonisme et idéologie dans l'Angleterre des lumières* (Thèse de doctorat de lettres, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1995) and Maurice Wiles' *Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford, 1996), both of which touch upon several of the themes of this study. This paper has benefitted particularly from Baillon's study. See also his 'La réformation permanente: les newtoniens et le dogme trinitaire', in ed. Maria-Cristina Pitassi, *Le Christ entre orthodoxie et lumières* (Geneva, 1994), 123-37.

Stephen Snobelen

II

BEING HERETICS: THE DIFFERENT TEMPER OF THE MEN

Newton: Nicodemism

Newton was a Nicodemite. Like Nicodemus, the secret disciple of Jesus (*John* 3:1-2), he never made a public declaration of his private faith. He hid his faith so well that scholars are still unravelling his personal beliefs. Whiston attributed this policy of silence to simple, human fear, and there must be some truth in this. Every day as a public figure (Warden - then Master - of the Mint, President of the Royal Society), and with the spotlight of fame focused on him, he must have felt the psychological pressure of outwardly conforming to the Anglican Church while inwardly denying its doctrine and practice. Newton had a lot to lose. Even so, there is evidence that he sought to advance his heretical beliefs.

After becoming a heretic in the early 1670s, Newton faced a crisis of conscience: become ordained in an apostate Church by 1675 or give up his Fellowship. There is evidence that Newton attempted to secure an exempt law Fellowship in February 1673.⁵ Westfall finds this plausible and uses it as a *terminus ad quem* for Newton's conversion to antitrinitarianism. After his attempt failed, Newton chose principle and had been prepared to resign his Fellowship when a last-minute reprieve came from Charles II, allowing him to stay at Cambridge without taking orders.⁶ And so Newton was safe. It may be that for the first fifteen to twenty years after his conversion to antitrinitarianism, Newton only "thundered ... in the isolation of his chamber."⁷ If his private response to becoming a heretic in the 1670s and 1680s appears different from the actions of Clarke and Whiston in the early 18th century, it must be remembered that the world then was much less

⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 69 (1799), 1186.

⁶ Westfall, *Never at rest: a biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1980), 331-33; *The correspondence of Sir Isaac Newton*, ed. H. W. Turnbull *et al.* (7 vols., Cambridge, 1959-77), 7: 387

⁷ Westfall, *Newton*, 323.

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tolerant and plural. In the years immediately following the Restoration there was greater need for religious circumspection; by the 1710s and 1720s, a growing number of dissenters were crafting ways of speaking out with decreasingly severe repercussions. Newton's coming of age in a less tolerant age likely left its mark on his strategies for the rest of his life.

The earliest direct evidence of Newton revealing his views shows him sharing his faith with another antitrinitarian, John Locke.⁸ In 1689, Newton entered into theological discussions with Locke and sent his heretical confidant his antitrinitarian 'Two notable corruptions' (TNC).⁹ His correspondence with Locke shows that in 1690 he intended to publish the TNC on the continent in French, albeit anonymously.¹⁰ However, his accompanying letter to Locke shows that he was also toying with the idea of publishing it in English.¹¹ The boldness of his actions must be seen against the backdrop of the Trinitarian controversies of the 1690s, which had already begun by that time. But the early 1690s were still dangerous times for a heretic, and when Newton heard rumours about publication, he came to his senses and had Locke suppress them.¹² The anonymous publication of a heretically-inspired exercise in textual criticism was one thing, but to risk having his name associated with such a work was too much for him at that time.

After his intimate meetings with his fellow heretic Locke, Newton revealed his beliefs to others - but only a select inner group, likely in varying detail. The Swiss mathematician Nicholas Fatio de Duillier was one of the first of Newton's theological disciples.¹³ Others, such as Clarke and Whiston, followed. To

⁸ See Westfall, *Newton*, 488-93.

⁹ These letters are published in *Correspondence*, 3: 83-149. As Westfall notes, 'it is hard to believe that anyone in the late seventeenth century could have read it as anything but an attack on the trinity' (Westfall, *Newton*, 490).

¹⁰ Locke had sent a copy of the document to Jean Le Clerc in Amsterdam.

¹¹ Newton to Locke, 14 November 1690, *Correspondence*, 3: 82.

¹² Newton to Locke, 16 February 1692, *Correspondence*, 3: 195.

¹³ Cf. Charles A. Domson, *Nicolas Fatio de Duillier and the prophets of London* (New York, 1981), 46-51.

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these we can add Hopton Haynes, Newton's associate at the Mint. Newton also discussed his unorthodox views on the Trinity in a guarded manner with Colin Maclaurin.¹⁴ In the months before his death Newton also had discussions with the Socinian Samuel Krell, whom he patronized with financial support.¹⁵ In 1728 Whiston wrote of Newton 'of late communicating his Thoughts' on prophecy and theology to others, and testifies that Newton had revealed his beliefs on Arianism and Athanasius to 'those few who were intimate with him all along; from whom, notwithstanding his prodigiously fearful, cautious, and suspicious Temper, he could not always conceal so important a discovery'.¹⁶

Whiston also indicates how Newton went about evangelizing for the true faith. In what is likely an account of a meeting of Newton with Whiston and Clarke, Whiston refers to 'an excellent Friend' - Newton - opening the discussion by stating: 'That for his part, had it not been for the Church's farther Determination, he had been contented with the Arian Scheme.'¹⁷ Newton's strategy is obvious: he spoke favourably of an antitrinitarian form of theology ('Arian' may be Whiston's gloss), yet carefully implied submission to the Church's pronouncements. As this meeting would have occurred about a decade after Whiston and Clarke had become his committed natural philosophical disciples, Newton had waited patiently until considerable trust had been established.

Newton did not stop at private evangelization. While he suppressed the publication of TNC in 1692, he again considered

¹⁴ This, from the diary of Scottish clergyman Robert Wodrow (*Analecta* [4 vols., Edinburgh, 1842-3], 4: 59). I would like to thank Paul Wood for bringing this valuable source to my attention.

¹⁵ Crell to Newton, 16 July 1726, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, Wallers autografsamling England och USA; Crell to M.V. de Lacroze, 17 July 1727, *Thesauri epistolici Lacroziani* (3 vols. in 1, Leipzig, 1742), 1: 105; Charles Jordan, *Recueil de littérature* (Amsterdam, 1730), 44.

¹⁶ Whiston, *A collection of authentick records belonging to the Old and New Testament* (London, 1728), II: 1075, 1077.

¹⁷ Whiston, *Historical preface*, ix. I am indebted to Jean-François Baillon for his exposition of this passage and for demonstrating its significance. Baillon concludes that the 'excellent Friend' to whom Whiston refers 'est vraisemblablement Newton' (*Newtonisme et ideologie*, 176).

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publication in later years. By 1709 he had commissioned Haynes to translate this document into Latin (or at least the first part on the comma Johanneum).¹⁸ In August 1736, Caspar Wetstein, a Swiss clergyman in the English Church, inquired of Haynes about TNC. Haynes's reply is revealing, since he not only confirms that he translated the document 'at the desire of Sr. Isaac,' but he discloses that 'Sr Isaac intended them for the Press, and only waited for a good opportunity.'¹⁹ While a 'good opportunity' appears not to have come, Newton's intentions are revealing.²⁰

As in his natural philosophy, Newton used agents to help achieve his theological goals and this may have been one of his motivations for revealing his faith to others. Clarke is the most obvious example. We know Clarke translated Newton's *Opticks* into Latin and with Newton's involvement did battle with Leibniz on his behalf.²¹ A note in the final edition of Clarke's Boyle Lectures indicates that two arguments relating to Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy had been 'communicated by Sir Isaac Newton', and were 'published in his life-time ... with his express consent'.²² While in this case the initiative may have come partly or entirely from Clarke, this example helps demonstrate that the two did work closely together. Moreover, Andrew Michael Ramsay, who had discussions with Clarke shortly before the latter's death, affirmed that Newton 'voulut ... renouvella l'Arianisme par l'organe de son

¹⁸ This document, in Haynes' hand, is preserved as Yahuda Ms. 20. I would like to thank the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, for permission to quote from the Yahuda Mss.

¹⁹ Haynes to J. C. Wetstein, 17 August 1736, British Library Add. Ms. 32,425/388r. It does not appear to be coincidental that Caspar Wetstein was a near relation of Jean-Jacques Wetstein, Le Clerc's successor as librarian of the Remonstrant Library in Amsterdam. Thus far, however, I have only been able to uncover the above-cited letter from Haynes.

²⁰ See also Baillon's valuable work on Newton's intentions for this document (*Newtonisme et ideologie*, 185-216).

²¹ A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall, 'Newton and Clarke', *Isis* 52 (1961), 5835; c.f. Rob Iliffe, ' "That puzzleing problem": Isaac Newton and the political physiology of self', *Medical History*, 39 (1995), 455-57.

²² Clarke, *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978), 2: 721; cf. Whiston, *Clarke*, 156. This partially confirms a rumour Wodrow heard in 1725 (*Analecta*, 3: 2056), as this material was published as a response to Anthony Collins.

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fameux disciple & interprete M. Clarke.’²³ If he really did want to restore ‘Arianism’ through Clarke, it is possible he helped to inspire Clarke’s *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity*.²⁴ Still, Newton’s name was not attached. In 1713, however, he published an element of his theology under his own name. Larry Stewart has persuasively argued that the religious elements in the General Scholium to the second edition of *Principia* were meant to proclaim his faith and to support Clarke.²⁵ Nor did Newton escape criticism for this, as Stewart shows. Nevertheless, the *Principia*, produced as it was in Latin and limited numbers, was not meant to reach the masses.

Whiston did not hesitate to label Newton’s caution as fear, speaking in 1728 of his ‘prodigiously fearful, cautious and suspicious Temper.’²⁶ Two decades later he again characterizes Newton as having ‘the most fearful, cautious, and suspicious temper, that I ever knew.’²⁷ Whiston’s description is similar to Wodrow’s first-hand report in July 1727, which noted that Newton ‘was jealous of himself, and when enquired, or in conversation, he chose to be silent, unless he were perfectly master of the subject, or sure of what he had to say’.²⁸ In 1729 Wodrow records the testimony of Colin Maclaurin, who told him that ‘he has heard [Newton] express himself pretty strongly upon the subordination of the Son to the Father, and say, that he did not see that the Fathers, for the first three or four centuries, had opinions the same with our modern doctrine of the Trinity’, but who also added ‘that Sir Isaack was extremely cautious in his discourse upon these matters’.²⁹ Newton’s half-nephew Benjamin Smith also testifies that he ‘was

²³ Ramsay to Louis Racine, 28 April 1742, *Oeuvres de Mr. L. Racine* (6th ed., Amsterdam, 1750, 3: 199.

²⁴ Pfizenmaier provides evidence for this in *The Trinitarian theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): context, sources, and controversy* (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1993), 152-86.

²⁵ Stewart, ‘Seeing through the Scholium: religion and reading Newton in the eighteenth century’, *History of Science*, 34 (1996), 123-65.

²⁶ Whiston, *Authentick records*, II: 1077 (cf. 1071).

²⁷ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 251.

²⁸ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3: 432.

²⁹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 4: 59.

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in general silent and reserved.³⁰ Even allowing for Whiston's biased stress on fear, it seems likely that Newton's caution derived in part from his Nicodemite strategies. He was also well aware of how much Whiston knew of his beliefs and of his former disciple's propensity to broadcast his and others' opinions.³¹ Nevertheless, this is not a completely adequate explanation; it does not, for example, explain why Newton revealed his beliefs at all. Other evidence helps fill out his programme.

First, it is manifest that Newton did not like controversy. This is famously true in the case of his natural philosophical work; it is not unreasonable to expect that a similar dynamic applied in his theology as well. We see a hint of this in his theological manuscripts, where he writes that 'if any man contend for any other sort of worship which he cannot prove to have been practised in the Apostles days, he may use it in his Closet without troubling the Churches with his private sentiments.'³² Second, Newton's private writings exhibit powerful expressions of remnant theology.³³ He believed that although God revealed his truth through prophecies, these were nevertheless not intended 'to convert ye whole world to ye truth,' but only a small remnant of believers.³⁴ 'Tis enough,' he believed, that prophecy 'is able to move ye assent of those wch he hath chosen; & for ye rest who are so incredulous, it is just that they should be permitted to dy in their sins.' What Newton claimed for prophecy, he also asserted for the entire Bible, writing that God 'hath so framed ye Scriptures as to discern between ye good and ye bad, that they should be demonstration to ye one &

³⁰ John Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century* (8 vols., London, 1817), 4: 32.

³¹ James E. Force, *William Whiston: honest Newtonian* (Cambridge, 1985), 112-13.

³² Newton, Keynes Ms. 3/3 (cf. Keynes Ms 3/13). I would like to thank the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, for permission to quote from the Keynes Mss.

³³ On this, see Rob Iliffe, ' "Making a shew": apocalyptic hermeneutics and the sociology of Christian idolatry in the work of Isaac Newton and Henry More', in eds. James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, *The books of nature and Scripture* (Dordrecht, 1994), 55-88.

³⁴ Newton, Yahuda Ms. 1.1/17r.

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foolishness to ye other.’ The nature of this theology is made explicit a few sentences later, where he speaks of the ‘great odds’ of chancing to be on ‘ye right side.’³⁵ For Newton, the way was narrow and only a precious few would find it.

Finally, based on Hebrews 5: 12-14, Newton believed that only the ‘milk’ of simple truth was required before baptism, and that only those more mature could attain to the ‘strong meats’ of the deeper things in theology. ‘Strong meats’, he wrote, ‘are not fit for babes.’³⁶ These ‘strong meats’ for elders included such matters as disputes over Trinitarian dogma.³⁷ This helps explain why Newton, as in his natural philosophy, only revealed his beliefs to a select group of adepts. Thus, with certain strong qualifications and within severely restricted social boundaries, Newton was attempting to advance his faith; there is no other way to read the evidence. But this relative openness must not be measured according to Whiston’s scale.

Clarke: a subtle approach

Samuel Clarke, D.D., was a polite and subtle theologian. He wanted to refine religion according to Scripture and within the structures of the establishment. He desired greater clarity and less mystery in things doctrinal. But for all his subtlety and politeness, many still viewed him as dangerous. Robert Wodrow was alarmed at his teaching, which he outlines in his diary.³⁸ The orthodox churchman Daniel Waterland told Samuel Crell that one of Clarke’s chief sins was publishing his *Scripture-doctrine* in English.³⁹ As Francis Hare implied, some of the orthodox

³⁵ Yahuda Ms. 1.1/19r.

³⁶ Keynes Ms. 3/3.

³⁷ Keynes Ms. 3/51.

³⁸ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 2: 286-90.

³⁹ Crell to Lacroze, 17 July 1727, *Thesauri epistolici Lacroziani*, 1: 104.

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perceived Clarke to be more dangerous than even Whiston, since 'Prudence in [Clarke], is as great a Crime as the want of it in [Whiston]. The imprudent Man is treated as a Madman and a rank Arian: The Prudent one, is less a Heretick, but more dangerous ... and therefore the greater Alarm must be rais'd against Him.'⁴⁰ Unlike Newton, Clarke exposed his beliefs directly to public scrutiny and, like Whiston, he was not deterred by more moderate peers who warned him against publishing his *Scripture-doctrine*.⁴¹ Nevertheless, while he risked his position in Church and society, his was not the call to martyrdom.

Clarke obviously thought long and hard about the possible repercussions of publishing on the Trinity. He told Whiston that if Convocation condemned his work, he would resign his Church benefice and live in retirement. He even purchased a house in his parish in case he was expelled from his Rectory.⁴² It is a testimony to his relative boldness at this time that even after seeing Whiston's university and ecclesiastical careers ruined, he proceeded with publication in 1712.

Still, Clarke's approach differed from Whiston's, for his *Scripture-doctrine* was a more subtle, less direct attack on the Trinity. Nor did he call for sweeping changes in the doctrines and practices of the Church. Instead, he presented his intentions as an effort to fine-tune the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, in the ensuing controversy, Clarke appeared to compromise with the orthodox.⁴³ When the clergy proceeded against his *Scripture-doctrine* at the June 1714 meeting of Convocation, he defended himself with his reply of 26 June. On 2 July, however, he presented another, briefer paper to the Bishops, assuring them he would not preach or write on the Trinity in the future. He

⁴⁰ [Francis Hare], *The difficulties and discouragements which attend the study of the Scriptures in the way of private judgment* (1st ed., London, 1714), 28.

⁴¹ Whiston, *Historical memoirs of the life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (1st ed., London, 1730), 25.

⁴² Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 13.

⁴³ See J. P. Ferguson, *An eighteenth century heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke* (Kington, 1976), 59-97.

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apologized for giving offence to the Synod and Bishops and promised ‘to prevent any future complaints against me’.⁴⁴ The Bishops were satisfied, and there the matter rested.⁴⁵

As Ferguson notes, while Clarke’s 26 June reply ‘retracted nothing and showed no trace either of cringing or of panic’, his paper ‘had the appearance of being a recantation, and, in contrast to the independence of the Reply, it had an air of submissiveness and grovelling.’⁴⁶ Ferguson argues that a settlement was reached because the Bishops wanted ‘to avoid scandal and the odium of persecution’ and because of ‘Clarke’s own unwillingness to be a martyr.’⁴⁷ To Whiston, such a compromise must not be. He wrote that ‘Dr. Clarke (it seems) was Prevail’d upon’, and added, alluding to Luke 23:39, ‘I think the true Point was, Save thy self and us.’⁴⁸ He concluded:

Thus ended this unhappy Affair. Unhappy to Dr. Clarke’s own Conscience; unhappy to his best Friends; and above all unhappy as to its consequence in relation to the Opinion the Unbelievers were hereupon willing to entertain of him, as if he had prevaricated all along in his former Writings for Christianity.⁴⁹

To Whiston, Clarke had recanted out of fear and given up the cause. To Clarke the matter appeared somewhat differently, and he wrote to William Wake stressing that he had done all he could ‘with a good Conscience, for the sake of the Churches peace.’⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Clarke, cited in Ferguson, *Clarke*, 86.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *Clarke*, 89-90.

⁴⁶ Ferguson, *Clarke*, 86.

⁴⁷ Ferguson, *Clarke*, 87.

⁴⁸ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 73.

⁴⁹ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 85.

⁵⁰ Clarke to Wake, Christ Church, Oxford, Wake letters 18/358. This letter is undated, but was written while Wake was still Bishop of Lincoln — that is, before January 1716. It may be Clarke’s reply to Wake’s letter of 4 July 1714 (Cambridge University Library (henceforth CUL), Ms. Add.7113/7). When he published the second edition of *Scripture-doctrine*, Clarke assured Wake (by then Archbishop of Canterbury) that he had expunged that material that had given ‘the Greatest Offence’. and that he had added ‘a Caution against Enthusiasts, & against

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Nevertheless, others, both friend and foe, read Clarke's actions as caution and equivocation. John Laurence was alarmed that Clarke's paper appeared so much like a recantation.⁵¹ John Edwards noted Clarke's public reserve and mentions his 'Gift of Equivocating'.⁵² To Edwards, Clarke's caution directly contrasted with the otherwise like-minded Whiston. Edwards appeals to Clarke: 'Take off your Mask, good Sir; be open and ingenuous, as your Friend Mr. Whiston is, who puts not off with Disguises.'⁵³ In May 1717 Wodrow wrote that while 'many are going in to Mr Whiston's schem in England', and that Whiston 'perverts such as study Mathematicks with him', Clarke 'is much more cautious, and only talks in generall terms that the common notion of the Trinity is wrong'.⁵⁴ Arthur Ashley Sykes spoke of Clarke's 'readiness to discourse upon any subjects of Literature, and his affability, [which] made him admired and loved, as well as much courted by all', but went on to remark that Clarke also 'had a secresy, as to other matters, impenetrable'.⁵⁵ Here Clarke, who also stressed a remnant class and salvation for a few, appears similar to Newton.⁵⁶

Further testimony comes from John Jackson, a common friend of Clarke and Whiston. When Jackson heard Whiston was preparing an account of Clarke's life, he offered advice: 'I think

such as would destroy all external Order & Government in the Church' (Clarke to Wake, 19 May 1719, Wake letters 18/370).

⁵¹ [Laurence], *An apology for Dr. Clarke* (London, 1714), 49-52.

⁵² Edwards, *Some animadversions on Dr. Clarke's Scripture-doctrine* (London, 1712), 42.

⁵³ Edwards, *Animadversions on Clarke*, 42. He adds, however: 'But I believe we shall in short time have him in Mr. Whiston's Tone, who I look upon as the honestest Man of the two; for he plainly and freely tells us his Opinion, but the Dr. is somewhat reserv'd, and doth not speak out, perhaps waiting for a more favourable Season' (*Animadversions on Clarke*, 45). Whiston and Edwards are not entirely fair, as Clarke's theology appears to have been more orthodox than Whiston's.

⁵⁴ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 2: 322-3.

⁵⁵ Sykes, 'Elogium', 11-12, in Whiston, *Historical memoirs of the life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (3rd ed., London, 1748).

⁵⁶ Clarke, *A discourse concerning the connexion of the prophecies in the Old Testament and the application of them to Christ* (London, 1725), 9-10; idem, *Works*, 1: 387-93

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you may ... mention the Doctor's Infirmity, in not having Courage enough to set forward a Reformation.' Jackson lists as reasons Clarke's 'natural over-great Coolness and Caution of Temper' and his awareness 'that political Considerations prevail'd so far over even many of those who were of the same Sentiments with him ... as to make them disguise their real Opinion and Persuasion, and comply with the Bigotry and Iniquity of the Times.' Because of this, 'the Doctor thought he must have almost walked alone in any Steps towards a Reformation.' Although Clarke 'had the Heart and Will of the Queen, and of a few learned and great Men on his Side,' there were too many 'in high Places and Power, who, he knew, would discourage any Attempts he should make to restore Primitive Christianity.' Jackson adds that '[t]his Consideration, I know, often grieved his honest Mind.' Jackson believed Clarke felt impotent in such a state of political and ecclesiastical affairs to enact any sort of reformation.⁵⁷

Clarke's more moderate reformist intentions are exemplified in his efforts at revising the prayer-book and producing a better catechism.⁵⁸ In this, he demonstrates a more pragmatic drive than Newton. Whiston refers to his attempt to modify a doxology in his parish to present a more subordinationistic meaning - a project he thought to be one of Clarke's best efforts at reformation.⁵⁹ Also indicative of Clarke's strategy of reform is his support in late 1714 of an intended review of Anglican doctrine and liturgy. This evidence is provided by a letter to Clarke from Laurence.⁶⁰ Interestingly, with reference to this review, Laurence told Clarke that he had written 'to that honest man you spake of: But as yet I

⁵⁷ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 165-66.

⁵⁸ Ferguson, *Clarke*, 162-78.

⁵⁹ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 98-99.

⁶⁰ Although this correspondent only signs his name as 'J. L.', the initials, the fact that the writer lives in the country, and the letter's content point to John Laurence, a supporter of Clarke and one-time chamber fellow of Whiston at Clare College. Further evidence of this identification is supplied by a letter Laurence wrote to Whiston about the latter's 1730 *Memoirs of Clarke*. Laurence, who commends Whiston's 'honest freedom' and desires a 'speedy reformation', signs the letter 'J. L.' (Whiston, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Mr. William Whiston* (2 vols., 2nd.ed., London, 1753) 1: 286-7).

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say nothing of this to him; because I know he is for going faster, & <will> call this but Patch-work.⁶¹ It is tempting to suppose that this 'honest man' was Whiston; in any case, the description matches Whiston's stance.

Clarke's indirect efforts at reform can also be explained by the fact that he had bound himself in 1714 to refrain from preaching or writing on the subject of the Trinity again.⁶² This also helps show why Clarke turned to others to further his ends. Whiston identifies one of these agents as Jackson: 'Dr. Clarke has long desisted from putting his name to any thing against the church, but privately assists Mr. Jackson; yet does he [Clarke] hinder his [Jackson] speaking his mind so freely, as he would otherwise be disposed to do.'⁶³ That Clarke encouraged Jackson to publish in his defence, and that he helped edit Jackson's writings, is confirmed by their correspondence.⁶⁴ Clarke even tried to use Whiston similarly when he asked the latter to write a dissertation against the genuineness of 1 John 5:7.⁶⁵ Thus, despite his 1714 commitment - or because of it - Clarke continued his work in a clandestine fashion.

Clarke's reformation was of an altogether different nature from Whiston's. Although invited by Whiston, Clarke never attended meetings of Whiston's Society for the Promotion of Primitive Christianity.⁶⁶ He consistently rebuffed Whiston's efforts to align him with the latter's more radical agenda. Because of this, Whiston saw him as a coward and a traitor to the cause. Whiston also believed that he did not want to upset his ecclesiastical career. In 1709 Whiston passed a draft of his Primitive Christianity reviv'd on to Clarke for perusal. He wrote that although he 'knew [Clarke's] Thought upon the Merits of the Cause pretty well', he

⁶¹ J. L. to Clarke, 4 December 1714, CUL, Ms. Add. 7113/8.

⁶² Clarke, 2 July 1714, in [Laurence], *Apology for Clarke*, 45-8.

⁶³ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 267.

⁶⁴ CUL Ms. Add. 7113/9, 16; John Sutton, *Memoirs of the life and writings of the late Rev. John Jackson* (London, 1764), 24-26. Ferguson adds Sykes as another agent used by Clarke (*Clarke*, 154).

⁶⁵ The two men agreed instead to assign this task to Thomas Emlyn (Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 100).

⁶⁶ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 86.

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also ‘knew how Cautious and Timerous he was to their appearing in publick.’⁶⁷ Whiston expressed his suspicions to Clarke in a letter, writing: ‘I believe you are afraid to read them, for fear they should disturb your worldly designs. I am heartily sorry for it, and fear that you have sacrific’d part of that honest Christian Spirit ... to worldly Esteem and Preferment.’⁶⁸ Whiston pleaded with Clarke to ‘act openly’.⁶⁹ To Whiston’s dismay, Clarke resisted these appeals. Instead, Clarke attempted to moderate Whiston’s zeal.⁷⁰ For Clarke, the reformation would not be served by following Whiston’s path; the rector of St. James’s chose to remain in the establishment.

Whiston: shouting from the rooftops

The Reverend William Whiston was a prophet and a reformer. He made no secret of his fervent desire to see a wholesale restitution of primitive Christianity. While Newton wrote in private and Clarke played the role of redactor, Whiston unceasingly and openly preached, lectured and published. While Newton waited almost twenty years before contemplating publishing his heresy, and Clarke close to a decade, Whiston proclaimed his new-found beliefs within two or three years of accepting them. Neither before his 1710 expulsion from Cambridge, nor in the heresy proceedings afterwards, did he heed appeals for moderation.⁷¹ In his Society for the Promotion of Primitive Christianity, the dissemination of his views through his publications, lectures and ‘primitive library’, along with his administration of communion to fellow antitrinitarian dissenters, the one-time Lucasian Professor was living out his reformation.⁷² Whiston carried out in public many of

⁶⁷ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 16.

⁶⁸ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 16.

⁶⁹ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 17.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 14.

⁷¹ On this period see Eamon Duffy, ‘“Whiston’s affair”: the trials of a primitive Christian 1709-1714’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 129-51 and Force, *William Whiston*, 16-19.

⁷² Crell to Lacroze, 17 July 1727, *Thesauri epistolici Lacroziani*, 1: 104.

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the things Newton and Clarke believed in private, even though, as a rising star, he had much to lose.

At first glance Whiston's audacity appears inexplicable. Whence came his boldness? Whiston's personal traits of impetuosity, spontaneity and dogmatism go a long way to explain his actions. The German traveller Uffenbach described him as a 'man of very quick and ardent spirit', who 'is very fond of speaking, and argues with great vehemence'.⁷³ He gained courage from his sincere belief that he was on the side of God and truth. It also seems likely that, as with Clarke, his boldness was strengthened from knowing that Newton held similar beliefs.⁷⁴ But there are three other key factors which help to make sense of his approach.

First, there is Whiston's martyr complex. As early as September 1709, he assured his patron Bishop John Moore: 'I am prepar'd for the worst ... being fully resolv'd to hazard not only my Estate, but, by God's Assistance, my Life in this Cause'.⁷⁵ In November 1709, Sir John Percival noted that although Whiston had been 'threatened very hard ... he despises the worst they can do to him, and says they cannot hurt him, though they may the body'.⁷⁶ Responding to a warning from Robert Nelson, he asserted that he would hold to his principles, even to 'the hazzard of all my hopes & preferment, of my family, <nay> of my life it self in ys world'.⁷⁷ No one could steer him from his course. He memorized the last prayer of Polycarp in case he, like him, should have to die a

⁷³ Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, *Cambridge under Queen Anne*, ed. J. E. B. Mayor (Cambridge, 1711), 179.

⁷⁴ Cf. Westfall, *Newton*, 650.

⁷⁵ Whiston to Moore, 29 September 1709, Whiston, *An historical preface to primitive Christianity reviv'd* (London, 1711), xciii (see also Whiston, *Historical preface*, ciii).

⁷⁶ Perceval to George Berkeley, 29 November 1709, *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Report on the manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont* (Dublin, 1909), 2: 243.

⁷⁷ Whiston to Robert Nelson, 31 July 1710, Leicestershire Record Office, Conant Ms. DG11/DE.730/2, item 97.

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martyr's death.⁷⁸ In the end, this wasn't needed, although he sacrificed his university and clerical careers - not to mention his reputation.⁷⁹

Equally important is Whiston's fashioning of himself as a reformer. There is a strong restitutionist drive in both Whiston's natural philosophy and theology, not to mention his forty-five year effort to restore primitive Christianity. But Whiston also made explicit statements about his role.⁸⁰ In 1716, after claiming that he did not disrespect previous reformers such as Luther and Cranmer, he said that he was motivated by 'a desire of imitating them and of completing the reformation they began'.⁸¹ He told Edmund Halley: 'had it not been for the rise now and then of a Luther and a Whiston, he would himself have gone down on his knees to St. Winifrid and St. Bridget'.⁸² He hoped his 'most important discoveries concerning true religion, and primitive christianity' would help usher in the Millennium.⁸³

Finally, Whiston positioned himself as a fiery, latter day Hebrew prophet and fulfilled the role of the watchman (Ezekiel, 33). His tireless proclamation of coming destruction, the Millennium, the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of the Jews all attest to this. Moreover, like the biblical prophets, he pointed to the signs of the heavens - in his case eclipses, earthquakes and the aurora borealis - as divine confirmation of his message. His forthrightness and austere moral message also fit the prophetic mould. All this gave him his famous confidence and brazenness.

⁷⁸ Whiston, *Memoirs* 1: 132.

⁷⁹ See Baillon, *Newtonisme et ideologie*, 164-70, where Whiston is described as a 'martyre manqué'.

⁸⁰ Cf. Force, *William Whiston*, 93, 94, 111, 118.

⁸¹ Whiston, *An humble and serious address to the Princes and States of Europe, for the admission, or at least open toleration of the Christian religion in their dominions* (London, 1716), 62.

⁸² Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 208.

⁸³ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 34.

III

THE NEWTONIAN REFORMATION THAT NEVER WAS

A subversive reformation?

Clarke and Whiston desired a ‘second’ reformation in the Church of England. Were they acting alone, or were their efforts part of a broader, organized attempt? If the latter, how unified was the movement? And what role, if any, did Newton play? There is a range of evidence and possibilities to consider. I begin with the testimony of the ever-active rumour mill.

From the time Whiston first began to preach for a return to primitive Christianity, Newton, Clarke and Whiston became associated together in the public mind. Whether or not Newton supplied much of Whiston’s theology, rumours soon began to circulate that he did. Wodrow’s observations give a sense of the rumour mongering.⁸⁴ In May 1711, he wrote that Whiston ‘makes a great deal of noise this spring for his tenets and blasphemous errors’.⁸⁵ He then notes it was rumoured that Whiston ‘has not only much of his Mathematicks, but severall of his other errors from Sir Isaack Neuton’, although he was inclined not to believe it.⁸⁶ With such rumours circulating, small wonder that Newton sat in silence while his disciple was publicly prosecuted for heresy.

Before long the rumour mill hinted at conspiracy. Edwards surmised in 1712 that

I doubt not, but it was concerted between Mr. *Whiston*
and the Doctor, that they shou’d joyntly oppose the

⁸⁴ Wodrow’s remarks must be treated critically since they reflect orthodox opinion and because some rumours he notes reflect more slander than truth. For example, in a lengthy entry for 5 December 1712, he notes that some were claiming that Whiston was ‘turning atheisticall’ (Wodrow, *Analecta*, 2: 133). Nevertheless, much of what he records reflects truths we know independently.

⁸⁵ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 1: 325.

⁸⁶ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 1: 325.

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Doctrine of the Trinity, but that they should have their different Parts in this Work; one should attack it by certain Authorities, as of *Ignatius*, the *Apostolical Constitutions*, &c. the other by *Texts of Scripture*.⁸⁷

Writing two years later, Wodrow's sources include Newton and Bishop Moore, along with Whiston and Clarke, in this Arian conspiracy.⁸⁸ The same year, Edwards accused Clarke and Newton of conspiring together.⁸⁹ His remarks reveal that he was not alone in this opinion. Noting that the General Scholium (with its antitrinitarian argument) was not in the first edition of *Principia*, Edwards writes:

Sir *Isaac* and Dr. *Clarke*, having lately conferr'd Notes together (as it is thought) they have added them in the new Edition, tho' they are brought in there over Head and Shoulders: However, it seems it was agreed upon, that Sir *Isaac* should appear in favour of those Notions which Dr. *Clarke* had publish'd.⁹⁰

With Whiston's *Primitive Christianity reviv'd* in 1711-12, followed by Clarke's *Scripture-doctrine* in 1712 and Newton's General Scholium in 1713, it is not hard to see why the heresy watchdogs smelled an Arian conspiracy.⁹¹ Whether or not they were right, in the climate raised by Whiston's publications and prosecution, both the *Scripture-doctrine* and the General Scholium were daring enterprises.

Nor did the rumours disappear after this turbulent period. In 1725 Wodrow writes: 'I am told that Dr Clerk is extremely intimat with Sir Isaack Neuton, and had much of what he published from him; particularly what he has writt against [Anthony] Colins and

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Animadversions on Clarke*, 5.

⁸⁸ Wodrow, *Analecta*, 2: 285. Wodrow repeated this rumour in 1727 (3: 461).

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Some brief critical remarks on Dr. Clarke's last papers* (London, 1714), 36-40.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *Remarks on Clarke*, 36.

⁹¹ Cf. Stewart, 'Seeing through the Scholium'.

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others is all the fruit of his conversation with Sir Isaack.’⁹² Thus, innuendos about Clarke’s complicity with Newton were still making the rounds over a decade after the former published his Scripture-doctrine. Although he believed otherwise, Whiston recorded in 1728 that Newton was rumoured to have been the author of an antitrinitarian tract called *The history of the great Athanasius* - a suspicion raised because the views presented therein were ‘so very like Sir I. N.’s Notions of that famous Heretick.’⁹³ Since the inner group would have known better, this suspicion must have had wider circulation. Even though he never openly affirmed his beliefs, Newton was therefore subject to direct rumours about his orthodoxy - or lack of it.⁹⁴

Rumours are only valuable, however, if they correspond with what is otherwise known from more dependable sources. Do we have more substantive evidence of a subversive attempt at a Newtonian reformation? With respect to Newton, we have already recounted evidence, supplied by Whiston and others, that he cautiously and selectively revealed his heretical beliefs to a small coterie of disciples and that he may have tried to work through men like Clarke. Was this active evangelization? Westfall writes: ‘In [Whiston’s] recollections, one catches a glimpse - is it a true image or a mirage? - of one of the most advanced circles of free thought in England grouped about Newton and taking its inspiration from him.’⁹⁵ While the use of the term ‘free thought’ is an unhappy choice of words, the additional information presented in this paper does clarify this picture somewhat.⁹⁶ Still, the evidence falls short of exposing any organized conspiracy. Nor could Newton in any

⁹² Wodrow, *Analecta* 3: 205-6.

⁹³ Whiston, *Authentick records*, 2: 1078. It is likely that Whiston is speaking of the tract entitled *The true history of the great St. Athanasius* (1719).

⁹⁴ Thus Frank Manuel is mistaken on both counts when he writes of Newton that ‘guilt by association was not invoked, and during his lifetime nobody cast aspersions on his Anglican orthodoxy’. (*The religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford, 1974), 7).

⁹⁵ Westfall, *Newton*, 651.

⁹⁶ See also Baillon, who speaks of Newton’s involvement in a ‘reseau unitarien-socinien clandestin’ (*Newtonisme et ideologie*, 215).

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case control his select group. Here Whiston is a poignant case in point, but so is Haynes - who moved on to the more radical humanitarian Christology.⁹⁷ If there was a conspiracy led by Newton, it was run in a tentative, haphazard and desultory manner.

More evidence of active involvement exists for Clarke. His *Scripture-doctrine* of 1712 was clearly published with reformist intentions. Like his editions of Rohault's *Traité*, which included Newtonian footnotes to undermine the Cartesianism of the text, the *Scripture-doctrine* was mildly subversive in intent. Presented ostensibly as a systematization of the doctrine of the Trinity, it included interpretative material that subverted the received Trinitology. Nor did this go unnoticed.⁹⁸ In the end, however, Clarke's efforts were muted. As for Whiston, he does not appear to have had a shred of interest in a subversive reformation. In his reformist views, he was a radical. He looked upon the strategies of Newton and Clarke with disgust and as motivated by fear and political compromise.

Unfortunately for the cause of the reformation, he was not the man to front it. To many of his contemporaries he appeared rash, eccentric and unsophisticated. He lacked political acumen and failed to attract popular support. Whiston, despite his attempts at self-fashioning, was no Luther.

The Newtonian crisis of publicity

Whether or not Newton ever conceived of attempting a subversive reformation, Whiston dramatically altered the dynamic by thrusting the reformation into the public sphere. One can imagine Newton's alarm; even Clarke would have disapproved of his strident

⁹⁷ See Haynes, *The Scripture account of the attributes and worship of God: and of the character and offices of Christ* (2nd ed., London 1790).

⁹⁸ Despite his implicit denials of this, there is evidence to show that some of Clarke's exegesis in the *Scripture-doctrine* was inspired by Socinian hermeneutics. Clarke had more to hide than simple Arianism. Thus it is not insignificant that a catalogue of Clarke's library contains one and possibly two copies of the Socinian collected works (see *Daily Post*, Friday 21 April, 1732, No. 3930 and Monday 1 May, 1732, No. 3938).

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methods. For his part, Whiston was frustrated and embittered that he had to fight on his own. As early as 1711, he revealed this frustration in print. Almost certainly referring to Newton, he declared that he was ‘shock’d that [this] excellent Person does not more freely declare the Reasons of such his ancient Sentiments, and more freely endeavour the Alterations of such Things in our Church, as he cannot but know or suspect to be [unsupported] by the Christian Revelation in these Matters’.⁹⁹ In 1712, Whiston went a step further and named names, appealing directly to Newton, Clarke, Bishops Lloyd and Wake, along with several others, to support the cause of primitive Christianity openly. Whiston points directly to worldly caution as the reason for their reticence, and warns them that ‘they will answer it to our common Lord another day, when no political, prudential, or temporal Regards will be admitted against the plain Demands of Conscience and Sincerity’.¹⁰⁰ The charge of political compromise and prevarication was a continual theme from Whiston, who claimed that neither Emlyn nor himself were so corrupted, but that others, such as Clarke and Jackson, were.¹⁰¹

There is some truth in Whiston’s assertion: both Newton and Clarke were tied to the establishment. Throughout his public career, Newton showed no signs of wanting to endanger his position in society. It matters not that some Fellows of the Royal Society were much less orthodox than Newton; here private beliefs are less important than social orderliness and public conformity. Although Clarke risked his position with the publication of *Scripture-doctrine*, he made peace with the Church in the end. Whiston’s situation was different. After his expulsion from

⁹⁹ Whiston, *Historical preface*, ix.

¹⁰⁰ Whiston, *Primitive Christianity reviv’d* (2nd ed., London 1712), 196-7, cited in Baillon, *Newtonisme et ideologie*, 176-7.

¹⁰¹ Whiston to Jackson, 9 November, 1721, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 113. Whiston was not alone in this assessment. Haynes criticized Newton for his political fear (Haynes, *Causa Dei contra novatores: or the religion of the Bible and the religion of the pulpit compared* [London, 1747], 31, 58), and Jackson and Laurence expressed similar sentiments about Clarke (Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 165-6; [Laurence], *Apology for Clarke*, 49-52).

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Cambridge, he never enjoyed a formal, establishment position again. Instead, from the 1710s he earned his income through publishing, public lecturing, patronage and subscription schemes. While some of his patronage money came from establishment figures - including royalty - it all came after he had exposed himself as a heretic and was not tied to any guarantees of public orthodoxy. This independence of income, along with his confidence that his support came despite his public heresy, allowed him an autonomy in public thought and action not open to Newton or Clarke.¹⁰² Put another way, after 1710 he had nothing to lose.

Many believed that Whiston had transgressed the tacit standards of politeness and privacy. The Duke of Kent asserted that 'he should himself be loath to be in [Whiston's] company, for fear he should catch at his words, and publish them to the world in print, as was his way to do.'¹⁰³ Such was his reputation that Joseph Jekyll, one of his patrons, paid him twenty guineas 'not to give him any encomiums in his book' - likely a reference to his *Memoirs of Clarke*.¹⁰⁴ Whiston's public hints about Newton's private beliefs were probably a major contributing factor to the rumours about Newton's heterodoxy. They also (and here timing is crucial) helped precipitate Newton's rejection of his impetuous disciple.

Sometime around 1714 Newton broke with Whiston. The reasons are likely complicated, but Whiston hinted in 1728 that it may have been partly due to a fundamental clash between Newton's 'cautious Temper and Conduct', and his own 'openness of Temper and Conduct'.¹⁰⁵ A few years later, Newton made the break public by refusing to allow Whiston's nomination for membership in the Royal Society.¹⁰⁶ Whiston claims he had been

¹⁰² I analyze Whiston's income and patronage in my 'Eclipses, comets and lectures: the public scientific lecturing career of William Whiston, 1712-1750', unpublished typescript.

¹⁰³ Entry dated 28 July, 1732, diary of John Percival, *HMC Egmont diary*, 1: 288.

¹⁰⁴ Francis Lockier, 1-6 September, 1730, cited in Joseph Spence, *Observations, anacdotés, and characters of books and men collected from conversation*, ed. James M. Osborn (2 vols., Oxford, 1966), 1: 283.

¹⁰⁵ Whiston, *Authentick records*, II: 1071.

¹⁰⁶ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 249-50.

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on good terms with Newton for twenty years starting from their first meeting in 1694:

But he perceiving that I could not as his other darling friends did, that is, learn of him, without contradicting him, when I differed in opinion from him, he could not, in his old age, bear such contradiction; and so he was afraid of me the last thirteen years of his life.¹⁰⁷

As Whiston explains, Newton's irritation over being contradicted was the chief reason for Newton's rejection of his membership. Whiston's account closely matches what we otherwise know of Newton's temperament and autocratic style. Newton's intervention may also have been partly strategic - an attempt to distance himself publicly from Whiston and to help quell rumours of their heretical association. If this is so, there is evidence that Newton was partly successful.¹⁰⁸ But the personal clash of temperaments and Whiston's transgressions over publicity were probably major factors as well.¹⁰⁹ As for Newton's 'other darling friends', one assumes that Clarke was one of the foremost.¹¹⁰ Evidently, Clarke was the more compliant disciple. In a revealing comment, Benjamin Smith testified 'that Dr. Samuel Clarke, whom [Newton] called his Chaplain, dined at his table very often; and that of all his uncle's intimate friends he should say he

¹⁰⁷ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 250-1. An early example of dissension between the two men is seen in a four-hour prophetic discussion they had in 1706, and in which Whiston could only agree with one of Newton's prophetic interpretations (Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 36).

¹⁰⁸ See Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3: 205-6.

¹⁰⁹ Pfizenmaier, who believes that Newton moved to a more orthodox position than Arianism later in his life, suggests that the break between Newton and Whiston was caused by Newton's displeasure at Whiston's commitment to classic Arianism (Pfizenmaier, 'Was Isaac Newton an Arian?', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997), 57-80). This is doubtful. First, the dynamics outlined in this paper offer a more natural explanation. Second, evidence from Newton's private manuscripts implies that he would have had no trouble accepting even Christological socinians (and possibly even humanitarians) as Christians (see Newton, Bodmer Ms. 5A/3r, /4r, /7r [cf. 1r]; Yahuda 15/96r).

¹¹⁰ See Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 250, where Whiston describes him as Newton's 'bosom friend'.

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(Sir Isaac) had the greatest regard for Dr. Clarke'.¹¹¹ Clarke and Whiston do not appear to have had a similar falling out.¹¹² Clarke, characteristically moderate and unabrasive, was able to maintain contact with both.

Whiston's bitterness is reflected in his treatment of Newton regarding the reformation. In a letter to Jackson, Whiston gave first and second place in the reformation to Emlyn and himself, relegating Clarke and Jackson to third and fourth positions.¹¹³ Newton did not make the list. At the end of his life, Whiston wrote that he hoped Newton's discoveries in natural philosophy would combine with his own work towards the restoration of primitive Christianity as a prelude to the Millennium.¹¹⁴ Whiston's intentions are clear: although a reformer in natural philosophy, Newton was not to be classed among the hallowed group of religious reformers. Whiston, however, who had made a career out of popularizing Newton's inaccessible *Principia*, was determined to redress Newton's failure to publicize his doctrinal discoveries by revealing them himself.¹¹⁵ For all his bitterness, Whiston wanted to capitalize on both his one-time relationship with Newton and his knowledge of his similar heretical beliefs.

The differences between the three men over the publicity of their faith could not be more dramatic. Newton left behind a vast corpus of private theological manuscripts, but in his lifetime only published a few short paragraphs on religion. With Whiston, this ratio is reversed. While Clarke's published theology contains

¹¹¹ John Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century* (London, 1817), 4: 33.

¹¹² In 1717 Clarke performed the services for the wedding of Whiston's daughter Sarah (Bodleian Ms. Eng. misc. d. 297/7). We also know that the two were still on speaking terms in 1720 (Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 250) and that Clarke gave Whiston a copy of his edition of the *Iliad* in early 1729 (Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 142).

¹¹³ Whiston to Jackson, 9 November, 1721, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 113

¹¹⁴ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 34.

¹¹⁵ Whiston, *Authentick records*, II: 1070-80; idem, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 12, 98, 100; idem, *Six dissertations* (London, 1734), 268-71, 318-19; idem, *Athanasian forgeries*, 2-5; idem, *The eternity of Hell torments considered* (London, 1740), 1, 49; idem, *Memoirs* (1749), 206, 365, 477.

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heterodox elements, it never does so as directly as either Newton's private writings or Whiston's public works. With Whiston there is little difference between private and public beliefs; there is no evidence of dissimulation and no need for simulation.¹¹⁶ In contrast, Newton spent almost six decades passively simulating conformity to the Anglican Church. He avoided direct dissimulation by remaining silent in public; he simply allowed others to assume his orthodoxy. Once again, Clarke lies somewhere between the two, although arguably closer to Newton than Whiston. While neither Newton nor Clarke left behind memoirs of their lives, Whiston not only wrote his own, but supplied a biography of Clarke as well as several exposés of Newton. Frank Manuel once asserted that '[w]here Newton was covert Whiston shrieked in the marketplace.'¹¹⁷ While the truth it reflects must not lead us to assume that they agreed on every point, Manuel's thesis is compelling.¹¹⁸ But if Newton was covert and Whiston shrieked in the marketplace, Clarke spoke with politeness, temperance and moderation.¹¹⁹

IV

PROPHECY, PROVIDENCE AND THE "SECOND" REFORMATION

Newton, Clarke and Whiston all hoped for a further reformation in the Church. Newton, however, never made any open attempt at initiating it, while Clarke's efforts were limited and oblique. Whiston, on the other hand, revealed his heresy and his views on reformation to all - although his marginalization rendered him virtually impotent. Several contributing factors, including

¹¹⁶ On these two terms, see Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity on early modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 3.

¹¹⁷ Manuel, *Isaac Newton, historian* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 143.

¹¹⁸ See Force, 'Newton's God of dominion: the unity of Newton's theological, scientific, and political thought', in eds. Force and Popkin *Essays on the context, nature, and influence of Isaac Newton's theology* (Dordrecht, 1990), 95.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Wiles, who characterizes the 'Arianism' of Newton, Clarke and Whiston as 'secret', 'moderate' and 'public' respectively (*Archetypal heresy*, 77, 110, 93).

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temperamental differences, political and ecclesiastical associations, tactical disagreements and the remnant theology of Newton and Clarke, help explain these different strategies of evangelization. One final difference involves the interpretation of apocalyptic eschatology.

A firm believer in prophecy, Newton read history with *Daniel* and *Revelation* at his side and with them forecast the end of the age. However, while his antitrinitarian reading of the Apocalypse had *implications* for the present, including the contemporary Church, he did not attempt to comment apocalyptically on events of his own day. Past history was profoundly shaped by the Most High, the future would be charged with providential signs, but the present is devoid of apocalyptic activity. For Newton, there would be no Apocalypse now. His prophetic chronologies confirm his Janus faces of prophecy and apocalyptic quietude toward the present. Although reluctant to set dates, when he did the millennium was put off to no sooner than the twentieth century.¹²⁰ This was in direct contrast to then standard views that the end would occur in the eighteenth-century. In one manuscript he set Judgment Day ‘in the year of [our] Lord 2060’, adding:

I mention this period not to assert it, but only to shew that there is little reason to expect it earlier, & thereby to put a stop to the rash conjectures of Interpreters who are frequently assigning the time of the end, & thereby bringing the sacred Prophecies into discredit as often as their conjectures do not come to pass.¹²¹

Not only did he place the end many years beyond his own lifetime, but as he grew older he pushed the date back further still. He shifted the date for the onset of the 1260-year apostasy from 607 in the 1670s, to increasingly later dates that suggested the end would come in the twenty-third or twenty-fourth century.¹²² The apostasy was prophetically ordained to last for 1260 years, a period

¹²⁰ See Keynes Ms. 5/139r.

¹²¹ Yahuda Ms. 7.3g/13.

¹²² Westfall, ‘Manuscripts’, 132, 135-6, 139; Westfall, *Newton*, 325.

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of history he believed would be ‘of all times the most wicked’.¹²³ Newton believed the preaching of the everlasting Gospel to every nation and ‘ye establishment of <true religion>’ would occur only *after* the fall of Babylon.¹²⁴ In what Protestant exegetes would have viewed as a shocking decentring of the Reformation, he wrote that the ‘purity of religion’ had ‘ever since decreased’ from the Apostle’s time, and would *continue* to ‘decrease more & more to ye end.’¹²⁵ Only after this ‘greatest decay of religion’ would there be ‘an universal preaching of the Gospel.’ In case there could be any doubt as to the timing of this great event, Newton went on to say: ‘this is not yet fulfilled; there has been nothing done in ye world like it, & therefore it is to come.’¹²⁶ No contemporary effort at reformation could preempt this plan any more than one could fight against God. Furthermore, the message would fall on deaf ears.¹²⁷ A long period of corruption lay ahead.

As with other areas of belief, Clarke’s prophetic views are the most moderate. There is neither the same intensity of interest in prophecy as in Newton, nor the apocalyptic urgency so evident in Whiston. Nor is there evidence of date-setting. Nevertheless, there are indications he did not see the Apocalypse around the corner. In his 1725 pamphlet on prophecy, he argued that the 1260-year period does not date from the point the apostasy began with the rise of the tyrannical power, or from the time that ten kings received power from him, ‘but from the time of his having totally overcome the Saints, and of his being Worshipped by All

¹²³ Yahuda Ms. 1.2/62r. In another manuscript, Newton refers to the wickedness of his age, writing that it is ‘just that this generation should be permitted to dy in their sins, who do not onely like ye Scribes neglect but trample upon the law & ye Prophets & endeavour by all possible means to destroy ye faith wch men have in them’ (Yahuda Ms. 1.1/18r-19r). See also Force, *William Whiston*, 112.

¹²⁴ Yahuda Ms. 1.32/53r; Yahuda Ms. 9/158r.

¹²⁵ Yahuda Ms. 1.4/1r.

¹²⁶ Yahuda Ms. 1.4/2r (cf. 1.4/1r)

¹²⁷ Cf. Newton, *Observations upon the prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London, 1733), 250.

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that dwell upon the Earth'.¹²⁸ This hermeneutical move shifts the time further into the future.

Moreover, Whiston cites Sykes' testimony that Clarke expressed a 'Fear, that the Face of Protestantism would once more be covered by as foul a Corruption as ever was that of *Popery*, before the happy Liberty and Light of the Gospel should take place'.¹²⁹ Whiston notes that although Sykes ascribes this notion to Clarke, it 'was only a Conjecture of Sir Isaac Newton's, and', Whiston adds, 'I think a Conjecture not well grounded neither'.¹³⁰ He again alludes to this common belief of Newton and Clarke in the second edition of his *Essay on the revelation*, by which time he appears more open to the operation of this instrument, but not the implied lengthened chronology:

Sir Isaac Newton had a very sagacious Conjecture, which he told Dr. Clarke, from whom I received it, that the overbearing Tyranny and persecuting Power of the Antichristian Party, which hath so long corrupted Christianity, and enslaved the Christian World, must be put a stop to, and broken to Pieces by the prevalence of Infidelity, for some time, before primitive Christianity could be restored.¹³¹

An extract of a letter from Clarke to Jackson confirms Clarke's sentiments on this matter:

Whether the Convocation will continue so (viz. perfectly silent) or not, depends upon matters wherein you and I have no concern. When some old men are worn off, I am persuaded the *ὁ καὶ σὺ*, the great remaining impedi-

¹²⁸ Clarke, *Connexion of the prophecies*, 44-5; cf. Yahuda Ms. 1.2/61r. As we saw above, a note in the 1738 edition of Clarke's works indicates that this interpretation of Daniel's Seventy Weeks prophecy came from Newton (Clarke, *Works*, 2: 721).

¹²⁹ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 156.

¹³⁰ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 156-7 (citation from p. 157).

¹³¹ Whiston, *An essay on the revelation of St. John* (London, 1744), 321.

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ment, will be the growth of Total Infidelity, which prevails very much.¹³²

In a 1718 reply to a letter from Thomas Johnson, Clarke writes that '[t]he clouding of this great Truth [of religion] with infinite Heaps of Darkness, is one of the Universal Judgments w^h w^{ich} God has justly been pleased to suffer ye Nations of the Earth to punish y^mselves'.¹³³

Clarke's sermon on the Olivet Prophecy corroborates this testimony. In this exposition, entitled 'The abounding of iniquity the cause of its abounding more', Clarke points out that Christ himself predicted a widespread and general falling away from the primitive Gospel. The history of the true Church from the ascension to the advent was to be one of 'Persecutions, Cruelty, and open Violence of Infidels', along with 'the Treachery, Deceits, and Frauds of professed Believers' and 'Opposition which should in all Ages be made to Christ's Religion'.¹³⁴ Those 'Enthusiasts' who attempt to set up 'New Doctrine' must not expect 'great Success'; rather, Christ's 'true Disciples' could only expect 'Persecution and Sufferings of all kinds'.¹³⁵ Wickedness, iniquity and corruption would be the rule, truth faith the exception. This wickedness and corruption would be so pervasive, Clarke argued, that 'even Those who are well-disposed, are too often either drawn

¹³² Clarke to Jackson, 4 June 1715, in John Nichols, *Literary anecdotes of the eighteenth century* (9 vols., London, 1812), 4: 719. Clarke's allusion is to the apocalyptic passage 2 *Thessalonians* 2: 7, where the verb ('restrain') is used to refer to the agent (ο . xatiεc)v) hindering the appearance of the lawless One.

¹³³ From Clarke's undated response to Johnson, written on Johnson's 30 August, 1718 letter to Clarke, Bodleian Ms. Eng. lett. d. 73/147r. In a revealing comment, at least one of Clarke's correspondents agreed with the latter's stance. Expressing frustration at the state of affairs in the Church, 'J. L.' (probably John Laurence) told Clarke: 'I intend to write soon to a certain honest Man in Town to desire him to correct his Prophecys concerning Antichrist; for as Things seem to bode at present, there is more Likelihood of his Resurrection than his Fall.' As with J. L.'s 4 December, 1714, the implied attitude and prophetic beliefs of the 'honest Man' match Whiston exactly (J. L. to Clarke, 28 December, 1714, CUL Ms. Add. 7113/10).

¹³⁴ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 195.

¹³⁵ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 195-6.

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aside by the Example, or wearied out by the Opposition of a vicious and corrupt World. Because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold [*Matthew* 24: 12].¹³⁶ Turning imperialist Church rhetoric on its head, Clarke argues that it is absurd for the Church of Rome to ‘alledge Temporal Grandour, and Power, and Authority, and Visibility, and Universality of Extent, and the like, as Marks of Truth in matters of Religion’. Sounding more like a sectarian Anabaptist or non-conformist than a minister of the Church of England, he rejects ecclesiastical imperium and the Church triumphant and accepts a separated, suffering Church.¹³⁷ Like Newton, he felt powerless in the face of divinely-ordained rise of corruption and infidelity.

Whiston, by contrast, not only felt that a reformation was possible, but that it was happening in his own time and partly through his own efforts. He interpreted the growth of Unitarianism in his own day as evidence that the reformation was progressing, arguing that ‘I do not much doubt, if Christian Learning continue in Christendom, but the Athanasian Heresy will gradually sink out of the learned World, in like manner as the other ancients Heresies have long ago sunk out of it.’¹³⁸ After having devoted so much of his life to the reformation, he probably preferred to grasp at whatever evidence he could to bolster his belief that his cause was succeeding. For the last few decades of his life, he actively proclaimed that major apocalyptic events were unfolding in his age.¹³⁹ Nor was he coy about making the ‘rash conjectures’ over dates that Newton so despised. He identified the 1260 years of Roman tyranny as dating from 476 to 1736 AD, by which time he believed one of the ten kingdoms of the Roman Empire would cease persecution.¹⁴⁰ He was also confident that ‘the Jews [would] be restored to their own Country, and rebuild their Temple’ by

¹³⁶ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 196.

¹³⁷ Clarke, *Works*, 2: 200.

¹³⁸ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 159.

¹³⁹ Whiston’s prophetic works are strewn with catalogues of contemporary prophetic fulfilments. See particularly his *Accomplishment of Scripture prophecies* (Cambridge 1708).

¹⁴⁰ Whiston believed this nation to be Britain (*Essay on the revelation*, 319-20).

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1764.¹⁴¹ Two years after this, at the beginning of the seventh millennium, Christ would return. Those with whom he discussed prophecy in private testified to his confidence in his time-scale.¹⁴² In 1748 he attested to the urgency of these dates by declaring that his heralding the Millennium was his ‘peculiar business at present’.¹⁴³ Lecturing in Tunbridge Wells in 1746, he announced

that if I be right in my calculation, as to our Blessed Saviour’s coming to restore the Jews, and begin the Millenium 20 years hence, I cannot but conclude, that after those 20 years are over, there will be no more an Infidel in Christendom; and there will be no more a Gaming-Table at Tunbridge.¹⁴⁴

He was certain infidelity would have disappeared at a time Newton and Clarke believed it would still be increasing.

Unlike Newton and Clarke, he was living at the end. Since the 1260 years of antichristian tyranny had ended in 1736, he was witnessing the restoration of primitive Christianity. His confidence in the day fast approaching contributed to his boldness.¹⁴⁵ Newton and Clarke, on the other hand, read the signs differently and were much more tentative in their actions. Whiston knew this. In his *Memoirs of Clarke*, Whiston drops a bombshell and directly links the prophetic caution of Newton and Clarke with their reticence to work for a reformation. He argues:

it is not impossible that [their] Notion of a long future corrupt State of the Church soon coming on, according to the Scripture Prophecies, might be one Discouragement to Sir Isaac Newton’s and Dr. Clarke’s making publick Attempts for the Restoration of Primitive Christianity: as

¹⁴¹ Whiston, *Essay on the revelation*, 319-22.

¹⁴² See Onslow’s report of a discussion with Whiston shortly before 28 July, 1732 (*HMC Egmont diary* 1: 288-9) and the commentary of the poet Edward Young on a similar encounter (Young to the Duchess of Portland, 4 June 1748, *The correspondence of Edward Young 1683-1765* [Oxford, 1971], 302).

¹⁴³ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 284.

¹⁴⁴ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 1: 333.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Force, *William Whiston*, 114.

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I confess my Expectation of the near approach of the Conclusion of the corrupt State, and by Consequence of the Commencement of the State when Primitive Christianity is, by those Prophecies, to be restored, greatly encourages me to labour for its Restoration.¹⁴⁶

And so for Newton and Clarke, the growth of infidelity made open evangelization of primitive Christianity temporarily futile. While Whiston actively took up the cause of reformation both in public and private, Clarke and (especially) Newton seem to have been inclined to leave it to providence. This may also have encouraged them to set down roots with the establishment - from which Whiston, on the other hand, was formally cut off. It is difficult, of course, to tell if their attitudes were driven by their apocalyptic chronology or whether their attitudes (and stations in life) confirmed it. Whatever the case, although anxiety over the possibility of exposure must have been a factor, what Whiston interpreted straightforwardly as fear and want of zeal in Newton and Clarke was more complicated. It was not lack of faith: it was a strategy based on belief. Newton and Clarke would have looked at Whiston's open, untimely efforts with dismay. Worse still, Whiston was working against God's time-scale. Newton and Clarke did not expect the imminent return of Christ. They waited while God waited, and the increasing infidelity of their age was a sign that the end was not nigh. It was not a time for prophetic boldness.

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¹⁴⁶ Whiston, *Memoirs of Clarke*, 157. Cf. Westfall, *Newton*, 815-16.

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THE LIBRARY OF SAMUEL CLARKE

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Samuel Clarke's library (or a significant portion thereof) was sold by auction at Paul's Coffee House in London from 19 April to 2 May 1732.¹ Although the bookseller Thomas Ballard produced sale catalogues for this ten-day auction, none appear to have survived.² Thus, the discovery of an abbreviated catalogue published in the *Daily Post* is fortuitous for scholars who study Clarke.

Two cautionary notes need to be taken into account about the newspaper catalogue. First, the catalogue is not an exhaustive inventory of the entire library, which would have been many times larger. For obvious reasons, booksellers standardly included in newspaper advertisements only a fraction of the titles to be auctioned in a given day.³ As with other similar book sales, a disproportionate number of folios would have been listed in comparison to quartos and octavos. Moreover, although Clarke's library would have included them, few books of smaller size than

¹ The research for this article was made possible by a Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship and a Queen Elizabeth II British Columbia Centennial Scholarship. I would like to thank Jim Dybikowski and Paul Wood for valuable comments.

² There are no entries for Samuel Clarke in A.N.L. Munby and Lenore Coral, eds., *British book sale catalogues 1676-1800: a union list* (London, 1977). Munby and Coral list other catalogues produced by the bookseller Thomas Ballard including Anthony Collins' library in 1731 for which sale catalogues survive. Highlights of the Collins auction were also advertised in the *Daily Post*. Katherine Swift discusses Ballard and provides a chronological inventory of his surviving catalogues (Swift, *The formation of the library of Charles Spencer, 3rd Earl of Sutherland (1674-1727): a study of the antiquarian book trade*, D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1986, 78-85, 371-9), but includes no mention of the Clarke sale.

³ This is confirmed by the note in the sale advertisement for each day that the listed titles were 'Amongst many other valuable Books in this Day's Sale'. The practice of Ballard and other booksellers can be determined by comparing the printed catalogue from Ballard's sale of Anthony Collins' library with advertisements in the *Daily Post*.

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octavo are listed in the newspaper catalogue.⁴ But even if the unadvertised items were included, the notices do not allow us to be certain that Clarke's entire library was auctioned by Ballard.⁵ Nevertheless, it is likely that the sale included if not the entire library at least a reasonably representative selection of the books acquired by Clarke in his lifetime.

Second, the notices indicate that the sale included 'a Number of valuable Duplicates out of a College Library'. Thus, with the exception of the unnamed pamphlets in the 'Collection of Tracts relating to the Trinity' (offered on the eighth day of the sale), it is impossible to be certain which titles belonged to Clarke and which came from the library of the unidentified College. It is also not possible to determine if repeated items in the newspaper catalogue represent titles unsold in previous days or duplicates from the Clarke or College libraries. However, a survey of the four-volume edition of Clarke's works reveals that Clarke cited from, or alluded to, almost forty works that appear in the newspaper notices.⁶ This helps corroborate, but does not strictly confirm ownership. We

⁴ While virtually all the items listed as octavo in the newspaper catalogue are of this size, some, including *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, *Bibliothèque universelle* and *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, are duodecimo. We can infer that at least some of Clarke's smaller books formed part of the sale, but are under-represented in the abbreviated newspaper catalogue. Although book sale catalogues sometimes do list duodecimos and smaller items separately, they are often included in the octavo lists. We find headings such as 'Octavo & Duodecimo', 'Octavo and Twelves' and 'Octavo & Infra'. As is the case with the Clarke catalogue, 'octavo' was also used to designate both books of this size and smaller; (see the examples in A.N.L. Munby, ed., *Sale catalogues of eminent persons* (12 vols., London, 1971-5).

⁵ Although the first advertisement for the Clarke library gives notice of 'A Catalogue of Part of the Library', the initial notice for the sale of the Collins library announces the publication of 'A Compleat catalogue of the library of ANTHONY COLLINS' (*Daily Post*, 8 January 1731).

⁶ Each of these titles is marked with an asterisk in the transcription (three of which may be duplicate listings of the same works). In some cases, the references are to works within collections. For example, Clarke cites from Clement of Rome, Ignatius and Justin Martyr, and while there are no individual works of these writers, an edition of the Apostolic Fathers appears in the notice for the second day of the sale.

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may also assume that the three items translated or edited by Clarke were his personal copies (as little as this reveals). Furthermore, the advertisements imply that books from Clarke's library made up the majority of the volumes catalogued. Since this was an abbreviated catalogue headlining Clarke's name, it is possible that none of the College duplicates were listed in the advertisements.

In the absence of an extant printed catalogue, therefore, the newspaper advertisements provide a valuable list of 191 titles (many of which are multi-volume works) for students of Clarke, Newton-ianism and early eighteenth-century thought.⁷ In particular, the catalogue is useful for assessing Clarke's intellectual development and his theological and philosophical interests. Not unexpectedly, the list of publications is wide-ranging and includes theology, scriptural exegesis, ecclesiastical history, patristics, biblical texts, philology, the classics, travel literature, natural law, diplomacy, history, philosophy, mathematics and science. It is also worth noting that there is a respectable number of foreign journals. Some items reflect unique interests. For example, Clarke's collection of fifty octavo pamphlets relating to the Trinity confirms his engagement with the contemporary controversies surrounding this subject. Nor should the appearance of Edward Pococke's edition of Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah (ninth day of the sale) be overlooked particularly because we know of Newton's engagement with this Jewish author.⁸ Finally, Clarke's possession of one or even two copies of the rare Socinian *Bibliotheca fratrum*

⁷ There are 191 titles named explicitly. When the fifty-four quartos on the Popish controversy and the fifty octavos on the Trinity are added, 295 publications containing a minimum of 849 volumes are represented.

⁸ See especially Richard H. Popkin, 'Newton and Maimonides', in eds. Ruth Link-Salinger *et al.*, *A straight path: Studies in medieval philosophy and culture* (Washington, 1988), 216-29 and Popkin, 'Some further comments on Newton and Maimonides', in eds. James E. Force and Popkin, *Essays on the context, nature, and influence of Isaac Newton's theology* (Dordrecht, 1990), 1-7. Newton also owned the Pococke edition of Maimonides' commentary, along with four other Maimonides items (see John Harrison, *The library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), items 1018-22).

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Polonorum (third and ninth days of the sale), may indicate a systematic exploration of heterodox theology.⁹

The newspaper advertisements describe Clarke's library as 'a large Collection of the most valuable and useful Books in Greek, Latin, French and English'. It is possible to extrapolate a minimum estimate for the size of his library from evidence provided by the sale catalogue and contemporary bookselling practices. We know from the sale of Anthony Collins' library that while an average of almost eighteen items were advertised each of the twenty-eight days of the second part of the sale, close to 125 books were actually sold daily. The application of this same ratio to the average of just over nineteen titles advertised each of the ten days of the Clarke sale suggests a collection of at least 1300 titles many of which would have been multi-volume sets.¹⁰

⁹ The appearance of two copies of the *BFP* is one of the most fascinating revelations of the sale catalogue. As it is very unlikely that the unnamed College possessed three copies of this publication, it is probable that Clarke owned at least one of the copies listed for sale. In fact, it seems more likely that both copies were Clarke's than to suppose that the College library possessed even two sets. Of course, mere possession of a book does not imply agreement with its contents. Still, Clarke shows a familiarity with Socinianism in his writings and, as I hope to show in a future publication, appropriated some elements of Socinian theological argumentations. Thus it should not be completely surprising that a *BFP* should appear in his library.

It must not be assumed that because the work is included in the catalogue twice that the book did not sell on the first day it was offered. First, the sets are advertised as containing nine and eight volumes respectively, and the *BFP*, originally published in 1668, did circulate with both numbers of volumes (a ninth volume was added in 1692). Second, it is not likely that such a work would remain unsold through most of the sale. Finally, it is highly doubtful that a bookseller would break up such a valuable collection - although there is an outside chance that someone may have bought only the ninth volume to complete a personal set. In any case, the mere existence of the *BFP* in the catalogue is more important than the question of whether there were one or two copies. Here it is significant that Clarke's associates, Isaac Newton and John Jackson, also possessed Socinian books (Harrison, *Library of Newton*, items 421, 458, 459, 495, 496, 985, 1385 and 1534; *A catalogue of the genuine and curious library; of the late Reverend Mr. John Jackson* (Leicester, 1764), 26, 70).

¹⁰ This can be compared with the minimum number of titles in the libraries of John Locke (3641), Isaac Newton (1763), Anthony Collins (6893) and John Jackson

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Although it is impossible to offer a more exact estimate, further comments and suggestions can be made about some of the unidentified works in Clarke's library. First, while the fifty octavo pamphlets on the Trinity mentioned in the first two advertisements appear in the notice for the eighth day of the sale, the fifty-four items in quarto 'relating to the Popish Controversy' are found neither separately nor in aggregate among the sale lists.¹¹ Nevertheless, the existence of these works, 'collected and digested by the Doctor himself,' is a valuable measure of Clarke's theological preoccupations. Many of the former collection probably included works written against Clarke's *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) and his defenses of it, along with other titles relating to controversies over the Trinity from the 1690s until Clarke's death in 1729. In the latter case, one can get a sense of the type of works included by comparing a list of quartos in the Collins catalogue entitled 'Tracts of the Popish Controversy,' which includes works by George Tully, George Smalridge, Obadiah Walker, and Henry Aldrich from 1687 and 1688 the period of crisis that culminated in the Glorious Revolution.¹² We may also expect that Clarke owned many of the works published by his friends William Whiston and John Jackson, several of the latter being defenses of Clarke.¹³

(1776) (see John Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The library of John Locke*, (2nd ed., Oxford 1971); Harrison, *Library of Newton*; *Bibliotheca Antonij Collins, Arm. Or, a complete catalogue of the library of Antony Collins, Esq; deceased* Parts I and II (London, 1731); *A catalogue of the library of John Jackson*). If Clarke's library was smaller (and we cannot be certain it was), it must be remembered that Locke and Collins were great bibliophiles, and that Locke, Newton and Jackson died at more advanced ages (seventy-two, eighty-four and seventy-seven respectively) than Clarke (fifty-three), and thus had more time to acquire their collections. While Clarke's years as chaplain to Bishop John Moore, who amassed a library of some 29,000 volumes, may have stimulated an interest in books, it may also be said that Clarke probably had less need to acquire his own books during this period.

¹¹ The advertisements for 17 April and 18 April, 1732, note that 'a List of the Particulars to each Volume' in these collections was available, which appears to confirm that a printed catalogue was produced.

¹² *Bibliotheca Antonij Collins* Pt.2: 21.

¹³ Two of Whiston's more significant works appear below in the catalogue, and Clarke cites Whiston's *Praelectiones Astronomicae* (1707) in his third edition

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The frequency with which Clarke cites from other unlisted public-ations in his own writings, especially where he includes page references and quotations, suggest many other books that he may have owned.¹⁴ Several of these stand out, including George Bull's *Defensio fidei Nicenae*, William Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*, Jean Le Clerc's *Physica*, Descartes' *Principia and Epistolae*, *Essayes of natural experiments made in the Academie del Cimento*,¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes' *De cive*, *De homine* and *Leviathan*, Christiaan Huygens' *Opera*, John Keill's *Introductio ad veram physicam*, Leibniz's *Essais de théodique*, Nicolas Malebranche's *De la recherche de la verité*, Robert Nelson's *Life of Bishop Bull*, John Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed*, Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, Andreas Tacquet's *Astronomia*, Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of prophesying*, John Toland's *Letters to Serena*, Bernardus Varenus' *Geographia generalis*,¹⁶ along with works not listed in the catalogues by Erasmus, Pierre Gassendi, Edward Stillingfleet, John Wallis and John Wilkins. Clarke also refers to all three editions of Newton's *Principia*; we can be certain that he possessed at least the second edition of 1713.¹⁷ Finally, Clarke used many more classical and patristic authors than appear explicitly in the newspaper catalogue, including Lucretius, Seneca, Tacitus, Galen, Pliny, Philo, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Novatian, Lactantius, Athanasius, Hilary, Theodoret, Ambrose and Epiphanius.

Jacobi Rohaulti physica (London, 1710), 305. Clarke also refers to Jackson's *Adnotationes ad Novatianum* in the third edition of his *Scripture-doctrine* (Clarke, *Works* (4 vols., 1738; rpt. New York, 1978), 4: 144). A survey of the library owned by Jackson, an ally of Clarke's, shows many works by both Clarke and Whiston (see *A catalogue of the library of John Jackson*).

¹⁴ The information presented in this paragraph results from a survey of Clarke's *Works* and the third edition of his *Jacobi Rohaulti physica*.

¹⁵ Since Clarke cites this work in Latin in his third edition of Rohault's *Traité de physique*, it is not certain whether he is using the 1666 Italian original or Richard Waller's 1684 English translation of this text. The latter seems more likely.

¹⁶ Probably either of the 1672 or 1681 editions edited by Isaac Newton.

¹⁷ Richard Bentley to Isaac Newton, 30 June 1713, *The correspondence of Isaac Newton*, eds. H. W. Turnbull et al. (7 vols., Cambridge, 1975), 5: 413.

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Thus, with the appropriate qualifications, what follows is a trans-cription of the book sale advertisements, with duplicated text omitted from the notices for days two to ten. Original spelling of names and titles even where eccentric has been retained throughout.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BOOK SALE

(*Daily Post* Monday 17 April 1732, No. 3926 and Tuesday 18
April 1732, No. 3927)

BOOKS.

A Catalogue of Part of the Library of the late Reverend and Learned Samuel Clarke, D.D. and Rector of St. James's, Westminster: Being a large Collection of the most valuable and useful Books in Greek, Latin, French and English. To which is added, a Number of valuable Duplicates out of a College Library, all very fair and neatly bound, gilt or letter'd.

N.B. There are Fifty-four Volumes of Pamphlets in Quarto, and Fifty in Octavo, relating to the Popish Controversy and the Trinity, &c. collected and digested by the Doctor himself; with a List of the Particulars to each Volume.

Which will begin to be sold by Auction at Paul's Coffee-house in St. Paul's Church-yard, on Wednesday the 19th Instant, beginning every Evening at Six o'Clock, designing to sell by Day-light.

By THOMAS BALLARD.

Catalogues may be had at Mr. Stagg's in Westminster-Hall, Mr. Harding's in St. Martin's-lane, Mr. Parker's in Pall-Mall, Mr. Dunoyer's in the Strand, Mr. Brown's at Temple-Bar, Mr. Lewis's in Covent Garden, Mr. Hett's in the Poultry, Mr. Mount's on Tower-Hill, and at the Place of Sale, where the Books may be seen three days before the Sale.

THE FIRST DAY'S SALE

(*Daily Post* Wednesday 19 April 1732, No. 3928)

BOOKS,

To be Sold by AUCTION,

The Library of Samuel Clarke

This Day, the 19th Instant, at Paul's Coffee-House in St. Paul's Church-yard, by THO. BALLARD, Bookseller,

The FIRST DAY'S SALE, of

PART of the Library of the late Reverend and Learned Dr. SAM. CLARKE, Rector of St. James's, Westminster: Being a large Collection of the most valuable and useful Books in Greek, Latin, French and English. To which is added a Number of valuable Duplicates out of a College Library. Beginning at Six o'Clock in the Evening. Amongst many other valuable Books in this Day's Sale are the following, viz.¹⁸

OCTAVO	Petavius de Doct. Temp. 3V
Scot's Christian Life, 5 Vol.	Idem Theol. Dogmatibus, 3V*
Daniel's Septuagint	Cooperi Thesaurus Ling. Lat.
Dr Friend's Hist. of Physick, 2V	Blackhall's Works, 2V Gunton's
Hist. of D. Quixot, by Stevens, 3V	Hist. of the Church of
FOLIO	Peterborough, L.P.
Hammond on the N. Test. 2d Ed.	Scapulae Lexicon, Gr. Lat.
Episcopii Opera, 2 Vol.	Cambden's Britann. by Gibson
Dr. Lightfoot's Works, 2V*	Lamborchi Hist. Inquisitiones ¹⁹
Villalpandus in Ezek. 3V cum fig	Philostrati Opera, Gr. Lat.
Eachard's Ecclesiastical Hist.	Magna Biblioth. Vet. Pat. 14V
Beveregii Pand. Canon. 2V	Puffendorf's Law of Nature and
Montfaucon Collectio Pat. 2V	Nations

Catalogues to be had at the Place of Sale, where the Books may be seen all Day.²⁰

THE SECOND DAY'S SALE

(*Daily Post* Thursday 20 April 1732, No. 3929)

OCTAVO	FOLIO
Journal Litteraire, 11 Vol.	Cotelerii Patres Apostolici, 2

¹⁸ This introductory material, which appears in all subsequent advertisements, is omitted in the transcriptions of the other notices.

¹⁹ Misprint for 'Limborchi' (Philippus van Limborch).

²⁰ This concluding sentence, which appears in all subsequent advertisements, is omitted in the transcriptions of the other notices.

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Grotii Hist. Goth. & Vandal QUARTO Acta Eruditorum, 33 Vol.* Frezier's Voyage to the South Sea Hook's Animad. on the Coelestis of Hevelius, and other Tracts Philosoph. Transa. from the Beg- inning to the Year 1700, 12V* Lowthorp's and Motte's Abridg- ment of the Philosoph. Transac- tions, 5 Vol.	Greg. Nyssenii Op. Gr. Lat. 3V* Photii Biblioth. Gr. Lat. 3V* Augustini Opera, 6V* Ciceronis Op. om. Gruteri, 2V* Vossii Opera omnia, 7V Strype's Hist. of the Reform. 3V Memorials, 3V Baronii Annales, 6V Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses Somner's Antiq. of Canterbury. Lambini Horatius
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THE THIRD DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Friday 21 April 1732, No. 3930)

OCTAVO Bibliothèque Germanique, 14V Hist. Critique de la République de Lettres, 15 Vol. Fabricii Bibliotheca Latina Boyle's Works, 4 Vol. compleat Toland's Pantheist Cosmop. Virgil's Æneis, in Blank Verse, by Brady, 4 Vol. Whiston's Authent. Rec. 2 V.L.P. QUARTO Outramus de Sacrificiis	Selden's Eutychiei Annales 2V Horæ Hebraicæ, by Lightfoot 4V Horæ Hebraicæ, by Lightfoot 4V Burnet de Fide & Officiis Christ* Doway Bible 3 Vol. FOLIO Strype's Life of Abp. Whitgift - Life of Archbp Parker Hooker's Ecclesiast. Polity* Dr. Whitby on the New Testam. Additions 3 Vol.* Biblioth. Fratrum Polonorum 9V Plutarchi Op. Gr. Lat. 3 Vol.*
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THE FOURTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Monday 24 April 1732, No. 3932)

OCTAVO Burnet de Fide & Officiis, Liber Posthumous.* - Archaeologiæ Philosoph.	QUARTO Burnet's Archaeologiæ Philos. - Theoria Telluris Diogenes Lært. Gr. Lat. 2 Vol.
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- De Statu Mortuorum	Spinosae Op. Posth. Anno 1677*
Eachard's Eccl. Hist. 2V 2d Edit.	FOLIO
Essay for a New Translation of of the Bible	Chrysostomi Opera, Gr. 8 Vol.*
Knight's Life of Erasmus, L.P.	Lord Clarendon's Hist. of the Rebellion
Berkeley's Dialogues	Sir Thomas Brown's Works
- Treatise of the Principles of Human Knowledge	Collier's Church Hist. 2 Vol.
Bingham's Origines Eccl. 10V	- Dictionary. 4 Vol.
	Mabillon de Re Diplomatica

THE FIFTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Tuesday 25 April 1732, No. 3933)

OCTAVO	QUARTO
The Free-Thinker, 3 Vol. The Independent Whig, L.P.	Boyle's Philos. Works, 3 V.L.P.*
Newtoni Optica, Lat. a Clarke*	Kircheri Concordantia, 2 Vol.
Sherlock's Sermons, 2 Vol.	Patrick on the Old Testam. 9V
Archbp. Sharp's Sermons, 4V	Fabricii Bibliotheca Gr. 16V*
Dr. Clagett's Sermons, 2 Vol.	FOLIO
Stanhope's Paraphrase on the Epistles and Gospels, 4V Dr.	Treatise of Algebra, by Wallis
Horneck's Discourses, 2V Dr.	Natural History of Oxfordshire, by Dr. Plott
Whichcot's select Sermons - Discourses, 4 Vol.	Plott's Hist. of Staffordshire
Ovidii Opera omnia, 3 Vol.	Hackluyt's Voyages, 2 Vol.
	Postellus de Concordia
	Platonis Opera, Gr.*

THE SIXTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Wednesday 26 April 1732, No. 3934)

OCTAVO	FOLIO
Barnabae Epistola Catholica & Hermae Pastor*	Cudworth's System of Universe*
	Du Pin's History of the Canon of

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Athenagorae Opera, Gr. Lat.	Scripture
Whole Duty of Man	Spencer de Legibus Hebr. Hist.
Histoire des Empereurs, 13V	Eccles. Scriptores Græci
Memoires de Tillemont, 24V	Basilii Opera, Gr. Lat. 2V*
Republique des Lettres, 11V	Gregorii Nazianzeni Op. 2V*
Ditton's Law of Fluids	De Chales Cursus Mathemat.
Rohaulti Physica, per Clarke, 2d Edit.	4V Caesaris Commentaria, per S. Clarke, cum Figuris
The Religious Philosopher, 3V	Josephi Op. Gr. Lat. per Hudson, 2 Vol.*
Whiston's Theory of the Earth	

THE SEVENTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Thursday 27 April 1732, No. 3935)

OCTAVO

A journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, by Maundrell
Narborough's Voyages
Dampier's Voyages, 4 Vol.
Journals de Scavans, 91 Vol.
Collection of Pieces by Mr. Lock, never before printed.
Lock's Familiar Letters*
- Posthumous Works*
Moyle's Works, 2 Vol.
Gedde's Tracts, 4 Vol.
Ockley's Hist. of Saracens, 2V.

QUARTO

Grotii Excerpta ex Tragediis & Comediis, Gr.
- Dicta Poetarum ex Strobæo
Philostorgii Eccles. Hist.

FOLIO

Gregorii Nazianzeni Op. 2V*
Biblia Sacra Polyglotta, 6V.
Ammianus Marcellinus Valesii*
Brandt's Hist. of the Reformat in the Low Countries
Gregorii Astronomia
Petiti Leges Atticæ

THE EIGHTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Friday 28 April 1732, No. 3936)

OCTAVO

Sturmy's Theological Theory of Words

QUARTO

Cumberland's Law of Nature, Englished by Maxwell, L.P.*

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Ray's and Willoughby's Philosophical Letters	FOLIO
Le Clerc Biblioth. Univers. 22 T	Grotus ²¹ in Vetus & Nov. Test. 4 V.
Le Clerc Biblioth. Choise, 27 T Le Clerc Biblioth. Ancienne & Moderne, 28 Tom.	Barrow's Works, 2 Vol.*
A Collection of Tracts relating to the Trinity collected by the Rev. Dr. Clarke, in 50V.	Mede's Works, 2 Vol.*
Fab. Cod. Apoc. Novi Test. 4V.	Dr. Henry Moore's Works, 3V*
	Eustathius in Hom. cum Ind. 3V
	Hook's Micography ²²
	Hayes of Fluxions.
	Bocharti Opera 3 Vol.
	Bedae Hist. Ecclesiast. per Smith.

THE NINTH DAY'S SALE

(Daily Post Monday 1 May 1732, No. 3938)

QUARTO	Mersennus in Genesin. Chishul
Kircheri Concordantia, 2 Vol.	Inscriptio Sigea. Sancti
Pocockii Porta Mosis.	Chrysostomi Opera, 8V*
Outramus de Sacrificiis.	Eusebii Hist. Ecclesiast. Gr.*
Fabricii Bibliotheca, Gr. 13V*	Poli Synopsis Criticorum, 5V.
Bibliographia Antiquaria	Sancte Optati Opera.
FOLIO	Grotii Opera, 4V*
Biblia Polyglotta, 6V.	Schmidii Concordantia.
Castelli Lexicon, 2V.	Buceri Scripta Anglicana.
Bevergii Pandectae Canon. 2V.	Milii Nov. Test. Ch. Mag.*
Biblia Hebr. Gr. Lat. Vatab. 2V.	Cypriani Op. Cura Fell.*
Calvini Opera, 9V.	Irenaei Opera, per Grabe.*
Critici Sacri, 10V.	Fatres Poloni, 8V.

THE TENTH DAY'S SALE

²¹ Misprint for 'Grotius'.

²² Misprint for 'Micrography'.

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(Daily Post Tuesday 2 May 1732, No. 3939)

OCTAVO	Du Fresni Glossarium Lat. 3T.
Baluzii Miscellanea, 4 Tom.	Codex Theodosianus, 3 Vol.
Fabricii Bibliotheca Latina	Steph. Thesaurus Gr. 5 Vol.
FOLIO	Isocratis Opera
Brown. Fascicul. Rerum expet.	Tertulliani Op. cum Notis Rig.*
2V. Aristotelis Opera, 4 Tom.*	Hesychii Lexicon
Stephani Thesaurus Ling. Lat. 2V.	Polybii Hist. per Casaub.

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¹ This bibliography has no pretension to completeness. It was compiled with considerable assistance from others, especially Martha Zebrowski and Paul Russell. Its focus is on recent work, but it also includes a small selection of 19th and early 20th century materials.

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