

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82894-9 - A Tale of a Tub and Other Works
Jonathan Swift Edited by Marcus Walsh
Excerpt
[More information](#)

A TALE OF A TUB

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82894-9 - A Tale of a Tub and Other Works
Jonathan Swift Edited by Marcus Walsh
Excerpt
[More information](#)



Figure 1. Frontispiece of *A Tale of a Tub*, 1710.

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-82894-9 - A Tale of a Tub and Other Works
 Jonathan Swift Edited by Marcus Walsh
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

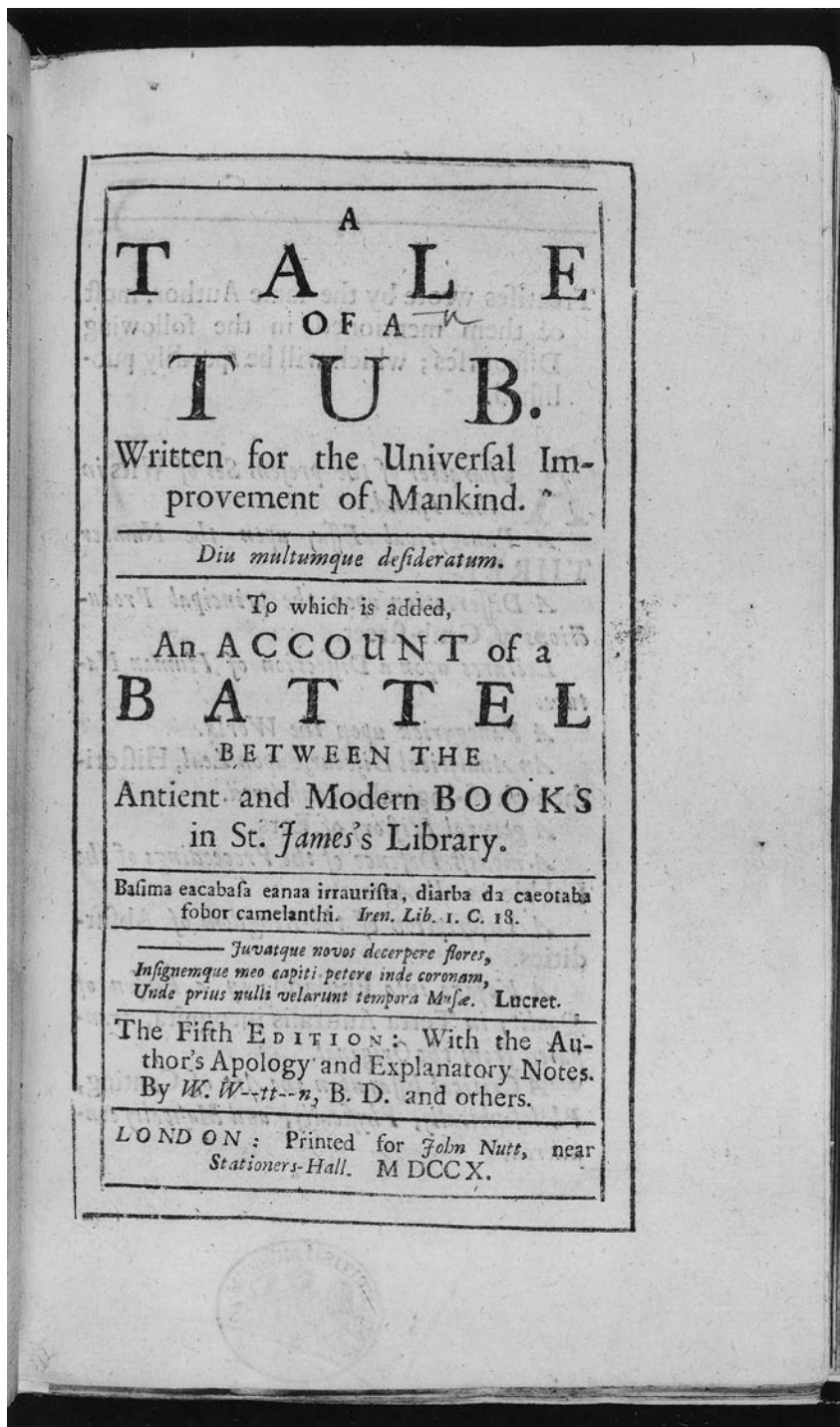


Figure 2. Title page of *A Tale of a Tub*, 1710; The British Library, shelfmark 1077.g.2.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82894-9 - A Tale of a Tub and Other Works
Jonathan Swift Edited by Marcus Walsh
Excerpt
[More information](#)

Treatises¹ wrote by the same Author, most of them mentioned in the following Discourses; which will be speedily published.

A Character of the present Set of Wits² in this Island.

A Panegyric Essay upon the Number THREE.³

A Dissertation upon the principal Productions of Grub-street.⁴

Lectures upon a Dissection of Human Nature.⁵

A Panegyrick upon the World.

An Analytical Discourse upon Zeal, Histori-theo-physi-logically considered.⁶

A general History of Ears.⁷

A modest Defence of the Proceedings of the Rabble in all Ages.⁸

A Description of the Kingdom of Absurdities.⁹

A Voyage into England,¹⁰ by a Person of Quality in Terra Australis incognita,¹¹ translated from the Original.

A Critical Essay upon the Art of Canting,¹² Philosophically, Physically, and Musically considered.

AN
 APOLOGY FOR THE, &c.

If good and ill Nature equally operated upon Mankind, I might have saved my self the Trouble of this Apology; for it is manifest by the Reception the following Discourse hath met with, that those who approve it, are a great Majority among the Men of Tast; yet there have been two or three Treatises¹ written expressly against it, besides many others that have flirted at it² occasionally, without one Syllable having been ever published in its Defence, or even Quotation to its Advantage, that I can remember, except by the Polite Author of a late Discourse between a Deist and a Socinian³.

Therefore, since the Book seems calculated to live at least as long as our Language, and our Tast admit no great Alterations, I am content to convey some Apology along with it.

The greatest Part of that Book was finished above thirteen Years since, 1696. which is eight Years before it was published. The Author was then young,⁴ his Invention at the Height, and his Reading fresh in his Head. By the Assistance of some Thinking, and much Conversation, he had endeavour'd to Strip himself of as many real Prejudices⁵ as he could; I say real ones, because under the Notion of Prejudices, he knew to what dangerous Heights some Men have proceeded. Thus prepared, he thought the numerous and gross Corruptions⁶ in Religion and Learning might furnish Matter for a Satyr, that would be useful and diverting: He resolv'd to proceed in a manner, that should be altogether new, the World having been already too long nauseated with endless Repetitions upon every Subject.⁷ The Abuses in Religion he propos'd to set forth in the Allegory of the Coats, and the three Brothers, which was to make up the Body of the Discourse. Those in Learning he chose to introduce by way of Digressions. He was then a young Gentleman much in the World⁸, and wrote to the Tast of those who were like himself; therefore in order to allure them, he gave a Liberty to his Pen, which might not suit with maturer Years, or graver Characters,⁹ and which he could have easily corrected with a very few Blots, had he been Master of his Papers for a Year or two before their Publication.

Not that he would have governed his Judgment by the ill-placed Cavils of the Sour, the Envious, the Stupid, and the Tastless, which he mentions with disdain. He acknowledges there are several youthful Sallies, which from the Grave and the Wise may deserve a Rebuke. But he desires to be answerable no farther than he is guilty, and that his Faults may not be multiply'd by the ignorant, the unnatural, and uncharitable Applications of those who have neither Candor to suppose good Meanings, nor Palate to distinguish true Ones. After which, he will forfeit his Life, if any one Opinion can be fairly deduced from that Book, which is contrary to Religion or Morality.

Why should any Clergyman of our Church be angry to see the Follies of Fanaticism and Superstition exposed, tho' in the most ridiculous Manner? since that is perhaps the most probable way to cure them, or at least to hinder them from farther spreading. Besides, tho' it was not intended for their Perusal; it railles¹⁰ nothing but what they preach against. It contains nothing to provoke them by the least Scurillity upon their Persons or their Functions. It Celebrates the Church of England as the most perfect of all others in Discipline and Doctrine, it advances no Opinion they reject, nor condemns any they receive. If the Clergy's Resentments lay upon their Hands,¹¹ in my humble Opinion, they might have found more proper Objects to employ them on: Nondum tibi defuit Hostis;¹² I mean those heavy, illiterate Scriblers, prostitute in their Reputations, vicious in their Lives, and ruin'd in their Fortunes, who to the shame of good Sense as well as Piety, are greedily read, meerly upon the Strength of bold, false, impious Assertions, mixt with unmannerly Reflections upon the Priesthood, and openly intended against all Religion; in short, full of such Principles as are kindly received, because they are levell'd to remove those Terrors that Religion tells Men will be the Consequence of immoral Lives.¹³ Nothing like which is to be met with in this Discourse, tho' some of them are pleased so freely to censure it. And I wish, there were no other Instance of what I have too frequently observed, that many of that Reverend Body are not always very nice in distinguishing between their Enemies and their Friends.

Had the Author's Intentions met with a more candid Interpretation from some whom out of Respect he forbears to name, he might have been encouraged to an Examination of Books written by some of those Authors above-described, whose Errors, Ignorance, Dullness and Villany, he thinks he could have detected and exposed in such a Manner, that the Persons who are most conceived to be infected by them, would soon lay them aside and be ashamed: But he has now given over those Thoughts, since the weightiest Men in the weightiest

*Stations*¹⁴ are pleased to think it a more dangerous Point to laugh at those Corruptions in Religion, which they themselves must disapprove, than to endeavour pulling up those very Foundations, wherein all Christians have agreed.

He thinks it no fair Proceeding, that any Person should offer determinately to fix a name upon the Author of this Discourse, who hath all along concealed himself from most of his nearest Friends: Yet several have gone a farther Step, and pronounced another Book¹⁵ to have been the Work of the same Hand with this; which the Author directly affirms to be a thorough mistake; he having yet never so much as read that Discourse, a plain Instance how little Truth, there often is in general Surmises, or in Conjectures drawn from a Similitude of Style, or way of thinking.

Letter of
Enthusiasm

Had the Author writ a Book to expose the Abuses in Law, or in Physick, he believes the Learned Professors in either Faculty, would have been so far from resenting it, as to have given him Thanks for his Pains, especially if he had made an honourable Reservation for the true Practice of either Science: But Religion they tell us ought not to be ridiculed,¹⁶ and they tell us Truth, yet surely the Corruptions in it may; for we are taught by the tritest Maxim in the World, that Religion being the best of Things, its Corruptions are likely to be the worst.¹⁷

There is one Thing which the judicious Reader cannot but have observed, that some of those Passages in this Discourse, which appear most liable to Objection are what they call Parodies, where the Author personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose. I shall produce one Instance, it is in the 51st Page.¹⁸ Dryden, L'Estrange, and some others I shall not name, are here levelled at, who having spent their Lives in Faction, and Apostacies,¹⁹ and all manner of Vice, pretended to be Sufferers for Loyalty and Religion. So Dryden tells us in one of his Prefaces of his Merits and Suffering, thanks God that he possesses his Soul in Patience.²⁰ In other Places he talks at the same Rate, and L'Estrange often uses the like Style, and I believe the Reader may find more Persons to give that Passage an Application: But this is enough to direct those who may have over-look'd the Authors Intention.

There are three or four other Passages which prejudiced or ignorant Readers have drawn by great Force to hint at ill Meanings; as if they glanced at some Tenets in Religion, in answer to all which, the Author solemnly protests he is entirely Innocent, and never had it once in his Thoughts that any thing he said would in the least be capable of such Interpretations, which he will engage to

deduce full as fairly from the most innocent Book in the World. And it will be obvious to every Reader, that this was not any part of his Scheme or Design, the Abuses he notes being such as all Church of England Men agree in, nor was it proper for his Subject to meddle with other Points, than such as have been perpetually controverted since the Reformation.

To instance only in that Passage about the three wooden Machines mentioned in the Introduction: In the Original Manuscript there was a description of a Fourth, which those who had the Papers in their Power, blotted out, as having something in it of Satyr, that I suppose they thought was too particular, and therefore they were forced to change it to the Number Three, from whence some have endeavour'd to squeeze out a dangerous Meaning that was never thought on. And indeed the Conceit was half spoiled by changing the Numbers; that of Four being much more Cabalistical²¹ and therefore better exposing the pretended Virtue of Numbers, a Superstition there intended to be ridicul'd.

Another Thing to be observed is, that there generally runs an Irony through the Thread of the whole Book, which the Men of Tast will observe and distinguish, and which will render some Objections that have been made, very weak and insignificant.

This Apology being chiefly intended for the Satisfaction of future Readers, it may be thought unnecessary to take any notice of such Treatises as have been writ against this ensuing Discourse, which are already sunk into waste Paper and Oblivion; after the usual Fate of common Answerers to Books, which are allowed to have any Merit: They are indeed like Annuals that grow about a young Tree, and seem to vye with it for a Summer, but fall and die with the Leaves in Autumn, and are never heard of any more. When Dr. Eachard writ his Book about the Contempt of the Clergy, numbers of those Answerers²² immediately started up, whose Memory if he had not kept alive by his Replies, it would now be utterly unknown that he were ever answered at all. There is indeed an Exception, when any great Genius thinks it worth his while to expose a foolish Piece; so we still read Marvel's Answer to Parker²³ with Pleasure, tho' the Book it answers be sunk long ago; so the Earl of Orrery's Remarks²⁴ will be read with Delight, when the Dissertation he exposes will neither be sought nor found; but these are no Enterprises for common Hands, nor to be hoped for above once or twice in an Age. Men would be more cautious of losing their Time in such an Undertaking, if they did but consider, that to answer a Book effectually, requires more Pains and Skill, more Wit, Learning, and Judgment than were employ'd in the Writing it. And the Author assures those Gentlemen who have given

themselves that Trouble with him, that his Discourse is the Product of the Study, the Observation, and the Invention of several Years,²⁵ that he often blotted out much more than he left, and if his Papers had not been a long time out of his Possession,²⁶ they must have still undergone more severe Corrections; and do they think such a Building is to be battered with Dirt-Pellets however envenom'd the Mouths may be that discharge them. He hath seen the Productions but of two Answerers, One of which first appear'd as from an unknown hand,²⁷ but since avow'd by a Person, who upon some Occasions hath discover'd no ill Vein of Humor. 'Tis a Pity any Occasions should put him under a necessity of being so hasty in his Productions, which otherwise might often be entertaining. But there were other Reasons obvious enough for his Miscarriage in this; he writ against the Conviction of his Talent, and enter'd upon one of the wrongest Attempts in Nature, to turn into ridicule by a Weeks Labour, a Work which had cost so much time, and met with so much Success in ridiculing others, the manner how he has handled his Subject, I have now forgot, having just look'd it over when it first came out, as others did, meerly for the sake of the Title.

The other Answer is from a Person of a graver Character,²⁸ and is made up of half Invective, and half Annotation. In the latter of which he hath generally succeeded well enough. And the Project at that time was not amiss, to draw in Readers to his Pamphlet, several having appear'd desirous that there might be some Explication of the more difficult Passages. Neither can he be altogether blamed for offering at the Invective Part, because it is agreed on all hands that the Author had given him sufficient Provocation. The great Objection is against his manner of treating it, very unsuitable to one of his Function. It was determined by a fair Majority, that this Answerer had in a way not to be pardon'd, drawn his Pen against a certain great Man then alive,²⁹ and universally revered for every good Quality³⁰ that could possibly enter into the Composition of the most accomplish'd Person; it was observ'd, how he was pleas'd and affected to have that noble Writer call'd his Adversary, and it was a Point of Satyr well directed, for I have been told, Sir W. T. was sufficiently mortify'd at the Term. All the Men of Wit and Politeness were immediately up in Arms, through Indignation, which prevail'd over their Contempt, by the Consequences they apprehended from such an Example, and it grew to be Porsenna's Case; Idem trecenti juravimus.³¹ In short, things were ripe for a general Insurrection, till my Lord Orrery had a little laid the Spirit, and settled the Ferment. But his Lordship being principally engag'd with another Antagonist,³² it was thought necessary in order to quiet the Minds of Men, that this Opposer should receive

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-82894-9 - A Tale of a Tub and Other Works
 Jonathan Swift Edited by Marcus Walsh
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

10 A TALE OF A TUB

a Reprimand, which partly occasioned that Discourse of the Battle of the Books, and the Author was farther at the Pains to insert one or two Remarks on him in the Body of the Book.

This Answerer has been pleased to find Fault with about a dozen Passages, which the Author will not be at the Trouble of defending, farther than by assuring the Reader, that for the greater Part the Reflector is entirely mistaken, and forces Interpretations which never once entered into the Writer's Head, nor will he is sure into that of any Reader of Tast and Candor; he allows two or three at most there produced to have been deliver'd unwarily, for which he desires to plead the Excuse offered already, of his Youth, and Franckness of Speech, and his Papers being out of his Power at the Time they were published.

But this Answerer insists, and says, what he chiefly dislikes, is the Design; what that was I have already told, and I believe there is not a Person in England who can understand that Book, that ever imagined it to have been any thing else, but to expose the Abuses and Corruptions in Learning and Religion.

But it would be good to know what Design this Reflector was serving, when he concludes his Pamphlet with a Caution to Readers, to beware of thinking the Authors Wit was entirely his own, surely this must have had some Allay of Personal Animosity, at least mixt with the Design of serving the Publick by so useful a Discovery; and it indeed touches the Author in a very tender Point, who insists upon it, that through the whole Book he has not borrowed one single Hint from any Writer in the World,³³ and he thought, of all Criticisms, that would never have been one. He conceived it was never disputed to be an Original, whatever Faults it might have. However this Answerer produces three Instances³⁴ to prove this Author's Wit is not his own in many Places. The first is, that the Names of Peter, Martin and Jack are borrowed from a Letter of the late Duke of Buckingham.³⁵ Whatever Wit is contained in those three Names, the Author is content to give it up, and desires his Readers will substract as much as they placed upon that Account; at the same time protesting solemnly that he never once heard of that Letter, except in this Passage of the Answerer: So that the Names were not borrowed as he affirms, tho' they should happen to be the same which however is odd enough, and what he hardly believes; that of Jack, being not quite so obvious as the other two. The second Instance to shew the Author's Wit is not his own, is Peter's Banter (as he calls it in his Alsatia Phrase)³⁶ upon Transubstantiation, which is taken from the same Duke's Conference with an Irish Priest,³⁷ where a Cork is turned into a Horse. This the Author confesses to have seen, about ten Years after his Book was writ,