RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Illustrated from writers of the period

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4) that men have ever had an abhorrence of crime, and have always known that all vices and crimes should be expiated by repentance;
(5) that after this life there are rewards and punishments.[1]

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

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

[1] See *De Veritate, prout distinguitur a Revelatione, a Verisimili, a Possibili, et a Falso* (first published in Paris in 1624).
For a somewhat similar catalogue of religious principles, see Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Cap. xiv, quoted below, p. 217.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In this appeal to the evidence of prophecy and miracle,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[1] See below, pp. 67 ff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[1] *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Beschluss (see below, p. 185).
[2] A note inserted by Kant in his copy of his work *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, 1764.

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

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

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