

Benedict de Spinoza

by
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One of the arguments that Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) presents to his sympathetic audience in “Why I Am Not a Christian” is an appeal to the history of the wickedness of Christians: “The more intense has been the religion of any period and the more profound has been the dogmatic belief, the greater has been the cruelty and the worse has been the state of affairs. In the so-called ages of faith, when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition, with its tortures.” This reflection leads Russell to his impassioned conclusion: “I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.”¹ The argument is one that had been made in the early nineteenth century by Jeremy Bentham and George Grote,² and it is of the school of *moros sophoi*. In response, we might simply note what should be obvious to any casual reader of the Gospels, that there is a place among the followers of Jesus neither for pre-eminence among themselves nor for sectarian intolerance toward others. More than one Broad Churchman has pointed to Luke 9:46-56 as confirmation of this point.³

Archbishop Whately saw the germ of persecution planted in the common soil of human selfishness: “There is a notion that persecution is connected with religion, but the fact is that it belongs to human nature. . . . The majority of mankind have no real love of liberty, except that they are glad to have it themselves, and to keep it all for themselves.”⁴ Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86) more pertinently, for our purpose, laid the blame not on religion itself, but on a common error of organized religion—“excessive consistency.” It is this that “from time immemorial has spawned, or at least nourished, all the persecutions and religious hatred of the human race.”⁵ Both truth and tolerance are learned together by avoiding a forced and unnatural consistency in thought. One speculative error is canceled and corrected by another, and it is through this dialectical process of reasoning that, as we welcome discussion of intellectual differences, we progress toward truth.

That excessive consistency is not a necessary characteristic of organized religion is, perhaps, the fundamental assumption upon which the Broad Church movement developed. By emphasizing the moral truths rather than the speculative dogmas of Christianity, and by looking not only outside the Church of England but even beyond the traditions and intellectual heritage of Christianity itself for guidance, each Broad Churchman, to one degree or another, forced the Established Church to keep pace behind the march of ideas and to avoid the dangers of a comfortable but excessive consistency.

Although the impact that Spinoza had upon the Broad Church movement was, more often than not, indirect, there can be no doubt that his influence was profound. This seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher noted that the religious genius of St. Paul resided in the fact that, freeing himself from the dogmatism of the Pharisees, he assimilated the philosophy of his time and brought it to bear upon what he recognized as religious truth. The “old religion” of St. Paul and the early Christians invited difference and dialogue, and the Fathers of Christian theology arrived at their formative interpretations in a context of philosophical and religious debate.

This dialectic of discussion engaged in by original thinkers and interpretive communities not only reflected the philosophical differences that could be found in the non-Christian world, but—more important—was itself essential in the progress of the Christian Church. As one writer observes (without, apparently, perceiving the significance of what he notes), “The Arian thought of Antioch helped defeat Sabelianism at the Synod of Antioch in 269. Apollinarius and his school helped defeat the Arianism that persisted after the Council of Nicaea. The Antiochenes . . . helped defeat the Apollinarians at Constantinople in 381.”⁶ As Mendelssohn noted, one speculative difference cancels out another. Although the Nicean Council of 325 attempted to play the part, as it were, of the finger of God and to etch into stone a final definition of Christianity for a Church that had been characterized by speculative difference, *orthodoxy* could have no universal meaning without a centralized power to enforce it. Thus, Constantine, by uniting the Church to the State in 313, first introduced the element of consistency, which became excessive after Justinian—in an effort to ensure the intellectual insularity required by a policy of consistency—closed the ancient philosophical schools of Athens in 529 and initiated a policy of corporal punishment for heretics.⁷

Spinoza doesn’t go into all of these details of ecclesiastical history. It is enough for him to compare the Christianity of his own time and place with that described by St. Paul:

I have often wondered that men who make a boast of professing the Christian religion, which is a religion of love, joy, peace, temperance, and honest dealing with all men, should quarrel so fiercely and display the bitterest hatred towards one another In seeking the causes of this unhappy state of affairs, I am quite certain that it stems from a wide-spread popular attitude of mind which looks on the ministries of the Church as dignities Little wonder, then, that of the old religion nothing is left but the outward form—wherein the common people seem to engage in base flattery of God rather than his worship—and that faith has become identical with credulity and biased dogma. But what dogma!—degrading rational man to beast, completely inhibiting man’s free judgment and his capacity to distinguish true from false, and apparently devised with the set purpose of utterly extinguishing the light of reason.⁸

This Dutch philosopher recognizes that the enemy of civilization and morality is not religion, but rather the superstition and ignorance that result in degrading it. His aim, therefore, in so far as it pertains to religion, is conservative rather than destructive. In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, although his argument applies equally to any book-based religion, he clearly suggests that, if Christianity is to reclaim its ancient glory, the innovations introduced by the Emperors Constantine and Justinian must be reversed. First, philosophers must be allowed to teach and write beyond the constraints of any systematic theology in order that philosophy might attain its rightful position, not as a servant but as a guide to religion. Second, the State must cease to support and defend any one particular church or religious persuasion, but must rather enforce legislation amenable to the free exercise of religion for all its citizens.

Many have made the mistake of placing Spinoza in the same camp as Russell, identifying them both as atheists and enemies of religion. In this essay, while emphasizing those aspects of Spinoza’s thought that were most constructive in forming a climate of opinion conducive to the growth of the Broad Church movement, I intend also to correct, as far as I may, this popular misapprehension. For the historical circumstances of Spinoza’s life, I am especially indebted to Steven Nadler’s excellent biography, *Spinoza: A Life* (1999), mainly for disabusing me of a number of historical errors that had acquired the authority of tradition.

The Social and Historical Context

The Jews of the Iberian peninsula—the land that they themselves referred to as Sepharad and had inhabited since, at least, the third century—had contributed immensely to the cultural richness and economic growth of the Spanish nation. It was a nation consisting of Jews, Moors, and Christians. The twelfth-century Spanish

Poema del Cid tells the story of how, during the Crusades, a nobleman of Castile became a soldier of fortune, alternating in his allegiance between the Christians and the Moors. It is the poem of a land divided by prejudice, greed, and sectarian ambition. After the passion of the Crusades subsided, the neighbors learned again to live and work beside each other in relative peace and security. Neither the government of Spain nor the Catholic Church had anything to gain by troubling a stable coexistence. Discord, nevertheless, came uninvited when, in 1391, certain demagogues managed to incite a largely uneducated mob of Christian peasants and merchants to attack the neighboring Jews of Castile and force them, upon pain of death, to convert. The State could do little to put down an uprising so popular, and as “the mob is fearsome if it does not fear,”⁹ virtuous citizens could do even less as their neighbors were terrorized and murdered. The madness and fury of the mob spread like a contagion throughout the peninsula, until entire communities of Jews were destroyed.

The forced “conversions” resulted in a situation that the government of the Church had not anticipated and was ill-prepared to handle. Although there were, undoubtedly, numerous individuals in high places within the Catholic Church who felt hostility toward Jews and other infidels, ecclesiastical authority simply did not extend to those outside of the Church. It did, however, concern itself with heretics, including any persons within the Church—regardless of the circumstances of their conversion—who practiced or taught Judaism. Some of the Jews who had been forced into Christianity accepted their fate and, as Spinoza says, “were so speedily assimilated to the Spaniards that after a short while no trace of them was left, nor any remembrance.”¹⁰ That is to say, having abandoned their heritage and claimed another for their own, they disappeared as “Jews.” Nevertheless, most of these New Christians or “conversos,” justly or not, quickly fell under suspicion of Judaizing and were referred to as “marranos,” the vulgar equivalent of “swine”—although the term came to be used, as I will use it, merely as a referent to forced “converts” who resisted their conversion and retained their essential Jewishness.

In the decade following 1391 the Jewish population of Spain was decimated. The golden age of Sephardic Jewry had passed. This did not mean that the remainder of the Jews were of no consequence to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. From the beginning of their reign in 1474, the royal couple had been particularly anxious to maintain a wall of separation between Christian and Jewish communities and to protect the faith of conversos. They approved, in a general way, of St. Paul’s admonition to the struggling church at Corinth: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.”¹¹ Attempts at

segregation were, however, ineffective, and so, in 1480, in order to purify the Church, the King and Queen of Spain appealed to the strong arm of the Inquisition.

The Dominicans—or “Jacobins,” as they were known in France, or “Black Friars,” as they were known in England—were especially entrusted with this mission of inquiry, to locate and prevent the spread of heresy. They were the doctors of the Church, so to speak, and if the name of the Spanish Grand Inquisitor Tomas de Torquemada (1420-98) is today synonymous with outrageous cruelty, it is perhaps only because the paradigm of religious truth and its role in effecting salvation, eternal or otherwise, has so dramatically shifted since the Middle Ages that it is no longer easy to believe that heresy—or, at least, misbelief without misconduct—had ever *really* placed souls in jeopardy of damnation. But this was, as Russell noted, one of the “so-called ages of faith,” and Torquemada made it clear to the rulers of Spain that they could not hope to rid the Church of heresy without an absolute separation between Christians and Jews. Finally, in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella, apparently thinking it too inconvenient that Christians should be forced to “come out” from among the Jews, instead issued a decree expelling the Jews from Spanish territory.

The Sephardic Jews who did not convert dispersed to several countries, but most fled to Portugal. This proved to be a disastrous mistake, for four years later, they were again given the ultimatum, convert or leave. When Manuel, the ruler of Portugal, saw that the Jews were hesitant in choosing from among so many options, he lost patience. In 1497, he outlawed emigration and ordered all Jewish children to be presented for baptism. Still, it was not difficult to Judaize in secret, and over the next few decades there developed a “rather strong crypto-Jewish tradition.”¹² The Catholic Church took note that, politically and socially, Portugal had been an environment conducive for the spread of marrano culture and heresy, and in 1547, it unleashed its Inquisition there as well.

In 1580, after Portugal was placed under Spanish rule, the Inquisition grew more virulent than ever, and when Michael de Spinoza was born there in 1587 or 1588, truly he was born in a thorny place. Perhaps his father, Isaac, or his father’s brother, Abraham, fell under suspicion. What we do know is that the brothers and their families secretly fled the country, going different directions, sometime shortly after Michael’s birth. The Portuguese word *espinhosa* means “from a thorny place,” and when Michael de Spinoza joined his uncle, Abraham de Spinoza, in Amsterdam in 1623, they shared a name that would never let them or their children forget the inhumanity that ignorance and superstition can evoke when united with religious fervor.

The Jews had not been alone in feeling the horrible burden of Spanish Catholic dogmatism. The seeds of the Reformation had found fertile soil in the Netherlands,

and the Inquisition had subsequently claimed its victims there by the thousands. Finally, in 1555, the northern Low Countries declared its independence from Spain and, with fierce and indomitable resolve, sustained the war, with the exception of a twelve-years' truce (1609-21), until they secured their independence in 1648. Spain had taught the Netherlands well, and when Holland, along with the other northern provinces, adopted the "Union of Utrecht" in 1579, it began its great experiment with religious toleration that would attract the attention of persecuted peoples throughout the western world.¹³

That experiment, however, appeared to many to be threatened in 1619 by the decree of the Synod of Dort. The Reformed Church had divided into two warring factions, the Calvinists and Remonstrants. The Remonstrants were those who had followed James Hermann (1560-1609), better known as Arminius, in opposition to the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and complete depravity of the human condition. In 1610 they issued a "Remonstrance," which petitioned the Estates General to uphold the religious freedom that was guaranteed to them under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht. During the nine years that intervened between the "Remonstrance" and the Synod, the issue had become heavily politicized. When, in 1617, Prince Maurice of Orange, the Stadholder—that is, the commander-in-chief of all Dutch military forces, the most powerful person in the republic—threw in his hat with the Calvinists, the matter was virtually settled. The Synod was convened at Dort and, after hearing the Remonstrants make their case, they were expelled from the Church and forbidden the privilege of public worship. Calvinism was now the official religion of the republic. Consequently, there was an immediate purge of public and church offices at all levels.

By the time that Michael joined Abraham in Amsterdam, the heat of the debate had cooled significantly. But, the marrano position was precarious. If the Calvinists had the power to forbid Remonstrant assemblies in Amsterdam, then what prevented them from closing the three synagogues of the marrano foreigners? In fact, the Remonstrants themselves made use of this apparent inconsistency as an argument in their defense—not, of course, with any malicious intent toward Jews. Even so, the marranos were equally aware of the inconsistency and were especially on guard against offending the Calvinists by any words or actions that might suggest either personal friendship or ideological affinity with the Remonstrants.

Son of a Merchant

Michael married Abraham's daughter, his cousin Rachel, and went to work with his uncle/father-in-law, importing goods from the Barbary Coast, until he was secure

enough to begin his own business a few years later, just about the time that Rachel died, in 1627. In the following year, Michael married Hanna, who bore him several children in quick succession, Miriam, Isaac, and—on the 24th of November, 1632—Baruch. During the '30s Michael's status in the community grew, as he took an active role within the governing board of his synagogue and financially prospered. Although he never owned his own house, he was successful enough to be able to rent in the heart of the Jewish quarter, between the school and the synagogue. In the year before Baruch was born, the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt had moved into a home in the same neighborhood, and soon he was sketching portraits of his Jewish acquaintances in order to use them later in his paintings of Old Testament scenes. It was a busy, lively quarter of Amsterdam, and Michael had an extremely active and public life.

Fortune's wheel, however, began to turn before the decade was over. Michael had stood surety for several friends, and when they could not pay their debts, the burden fell upon him. A third son, Abraham Gabriel, had been born to Hanna and Michael probably in 1637, just after the death of Michael's uncle Abraham. Then, Hanna died at the end of 1638, perhaps after giving birth to Rebecca. When, in the following year, the three synagogues merged into the one Torah Talmud congregation, Michael ceased to take an active part in the lay leadership. Beset with new financial worries, five children (all still under ten years of age), and burdened with grief over the death of his second wife, he probably had neither time nor energy to spare. He did not remarry until 1641. Fortunately, Baruch was now at the age when he would be spending his days in the congregation's elementary school.

The orthodox education of his sons was, no doubt, especially important to Michael. The Amsterdam community of marranos had early on established its religious and educational priorities by locating and importing rabbis well-trained in and able to teach the Torah and the Talmud. Those first rabbis had been brought to Amsterdam from Venice, Constantinople, and Morocco. From Venice came Saul Levi Mortera, the renowned Talmudic scholar who, despite his Ashkenazic background, became the chief rabbi when the congregations merged in 1639. Quickly, they set about to train others from within the community. One of the first and most talented rabbis to emerge was Menasseh ben Israel, who would later gain international recognition as a Jewish diplomat and apologist to the Gentiles.

One of the popular misconceptions of Spinoza's life that Nadler's biography attempts to rectify has to do with the student-teacher relationship that Baruch had with Menasseh and Mortera.¹⁴ Although it is entirely possible that Baruch was a student of both, he would have had Menasseh as a teacher for only the shortest period of time. Menasseh taught the fifth grade from 1642 until early 1649. He was

relieved of his teaching responsibilities just at the time when Baruch would have been entering the fifth grade. Moreover, it is uncertain that Michael kept Baruch in school after the death of his oldest son, Isaac, in 1649. We do know that Baruch did not attend the highest class taught by Mortera, which involved training in rabbinic and philosophical literature. Thus, by 1650 he had replaced Isaac in the family business. Jean Maximilian Lucas (d. 1697), who boasted of personal familiarity with Spinoza, claimed that, as a boy of fifteen, the later philosopher had been Mortera's "disciple."¹⁵ However, Baruch's name does not appear in the school records of the 1650s, and so, if he had Mortera for a teacher, it was only in the context of the *yeshiva* that Mortera conducted on a weekly basis, in the evening.

After the war with Spain came to an end in 1648, commerce had been good, and Isaac's death would have come at the most inopportune time. Michael needed all of the help that he could get. Nevertheless, business was booming for only a short time before England, in 1651, passed the Navigation Act that prohibited trade with Dutch merchants. Cromwell was no friend of the Netherlands, and his hostile treatment of Dutch sailors and their ships led to the first Anglo-Dutch War in 1652. Once again, the Spinoza business fell into a slump. Then, at the end of 1653, Miriam, Michael's third wife, died, and Michael himself followed her a few months later.

“Wisdom Exalteth Her Children”

As a merchant, Spinoza would have made many contacts in the Gentile world. Among these contacts were a group of Remonstrants that James Martineau (1805-1900) refers to as “the Broad Churchmen of that day.”¹⁶ (Interestingly, though Martineau himself was a Unitarian, Alfred Benn identifies him as a representative of the Broad Church of his day.¹⁷) Since the Calvinist Reformed Church had made it illegal for Arminians to form themselves into a “church,” or *ecclesia*, these Remonstrants referred to their conferences as *collegia*. They, therefore, became known as Collegiants.¹⁸ This group had neither offices nor official places of worship, and yet Spinoza was particularly attracted to them. The reason for this attraction is not difficult to discern, for the inwardness of the Collegiants' religion, the simplicity of their lives, and their tolerance for differences in belief provided Spinoza with a moral ideal that he would defend throughout his life.

Spinoza may have begun meeting with a group of Collegiants in Amsterdam as early as 1654. They would have benefitted from his knowledge of the Old Testament and Hebrew, and he would have acquired from them a greater familiarity with the New Testament, the issues of the Arminian-Calvinist debate, and the philosophy of Descartes. Furthermore, their liberal theological opinions as well as the manner of

their arguments, which were philosophic rather than dogmatic, appealing to reason as a higher authority than Scripture, no doubt had a significant influence—perhaps, even, an exhilarating impact—on Spinoza’s thought and emotional processes at this time.

Although his association with the Collegiants aroused in him a new passion for ideas, there were other social influences that compelled him toward the practical world of the marketplace. Twenty-one or twenty-two years old now and without parents, Spinoza was in charge of the family business. His younger brother Gabriel worked with him to keep up the operations, but the Philistines were upon him—that is, the creditors—and Spinoza was faced with the possible disgrace not only of losing his father’s hard-earned business, but also of eviction and poverty. Finally, by taking advantage of a Dutch law that recognized anyone under the age of twenty-five as a minor, he was able to declare himself an “orphan” and a privileged creditor to his father’s estate.¹⁹

Although he saved the family business, this experience of almost losing everything, coming as it did in conjunction with the thought-provoking meetings he was having with his new Gentile friends, left the young Spinoza searching his soul for direction and questioning his values and pursuits. In his earliest philosophical work, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (1659-60), he recalls this time in his life when he first determined to pursue philosophy:

After experience had taught me the hollowness and futility of everything that is ordinarily encountered in daily life, and I realised that all the things which were the source and object of my anxiety held nothing of good or evil in themselves save in so far as the mind was influenced by them, I resolved at length to enquire whether there existed a true good, . . . whether, in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity.²⁰

Spinoza could not have known, when he first resolved to commit himself to wisdom, either the full extent of his impending loss or the magnitude of his eventual gain. Still, “Persistent meditation enabled me to see that, *if only I could be thoroughly resolute*, I should be abandoning certain evils for the sake of a certain good.”²¹

It is no coincidence that the conditional clause raises the point of debate between the Arminians and Calvinists. According to Calvin, because of Adam’s sin, “man was stripped and deprived of all wisdom, righteousness, power, life,” and “nothing was left to him save ignorance, iniquity, impotence, death, and judgment.”²² Without an act of divine grace, man cannot abandon any evil for good, except insofar as God uses him for purposes which, in our finite and depraved

consciousness, we cannot fathom. The proper response to the awakening of conscience is not, therefore, self-determination, but rather prostration before a righteous but merciful God. This response is not to be understood as indicating any inherent goodness in man, but is instead indicative of God's prevenient grace, whereby he, by his own pleasure and predetermined will, enables whomever he wills to approach him. Then, if the supplicant's self-estimation be adequate and his faith in the redemptive power of Christ be sufficient, God will impute unto him Christ's wisdom, righteousness, power, and life.

The Arminians remonstrated that such a doctrine entails too severe a separation between God and his creation and removes from man all responsibility in responding to the gift of God extended to all persons. Certain persons are predestined to salvation only in the sense that God foreknows who will avail himself of the opportunity to repent and accept in faith the gift of redemption. Basically, the argument between the Calvinists and Arminians is only a more sophisticated version of the debate between Luther and Erasmus. As far as this debate is concerned, the Arminians took the side of Erasmus.

After defining the "evils" that he would be released from as whatever contributes toward unhappiness, Spinoza notes that "all happiness or unhappiness depends solely on the quality of the object to which we are bound by love." In other words, our happiness is dependent on our perceived relation to that which we value. If the thing that affects our emotional condition is, in its relation to us, inconstant and perishable, then our happiness will also be inconstant and perishable; "but love towards a thing eternal and infinite feeds the mind with joy alone, unmixed with any sadness." Although he saw this clearly and was thoroughly determined to fix his affections on the eternal and infinite, nevertheless, says Spinoza, "I could not on that account put aside all greed, sensual pleasure, and desire for esteem."²³

His initial experience appears to argue against his Arminian friends. Certainly, it is in agreement with St. Paul's experience, as given in his Letter to the Romans: "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."²⁴ Yet, Spinoza was persistent, and soon he arrived at a significant insight of the workings of the psyche. Although the realization of the good and the desire to pursue it may not, in themselves, have sufficient force to effect a change in the affections, an habituation of the mind to steady itself on what the intellect perceives as good will gradually have the effect of eroding or displacing the former object of the affections. "This was a great comfort to me," says Spinoza, "for I saw that those evils were not so persistent as to refuse to yield to remedies." Over time, "as the true good became more and more discernible," Spinoza found increasing freedom over the evils that had brought him unhappiness.²⁵

Thus, from the very beginning of Spinoza's pursuit of wisdom—a beginning in which he reveals what would become a lasting preoccupation with the practical aspect of religio-philosophical ethics—he displays his originality, agreeing neither with the Calvinists nor with the Arminians. It is this characteristic trait of Spinoza's thought, to attend all schools and join none, to walk with all thinkers but follow none, that would ultimately make him the most misunderstood and reviled philosopher of modern history.

Exit Stage Left

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) had lived in Amsterdam for the last two decades of his life, during which time he wrote and published his major philosophical works. In the 1640s his writings were condemned by the Universities of Utrecht and Leiden, but by the time the States of Holland, in 1656, prohibited all professors from teaching Descartes's philosophy, the Cartesian system had gained a stronghold at both of these leading universities. At the time that Spinoza began his pursuit of wisdom beyond the confines of the synagogue, every Dutchman who had any pretension of being philosophical had an opinion on Descartes, and Spinoza would certainly have found this to be the case among the Collegiants, who tended to embrace his system. Very early, then, Spinoza would have felt the need to learn the language of Rome, the language in which nearly every major theological and philosophical work had been written since the reign of Caesar Augustus. It may have been his Collegiant friends who pointed him in the direction of Franciscus van den Enden, a local teacher who had been instructed in Latin by the Augustinians and, then, in Greek, philosophy, and classics by the Jesuits at the University of Louvain.

Van den Enden had begun private tutoring in 1652, and by the mid 1650s he had acquired a reputation in Amsterdam as a radical free-thinker. In politics he was a thorough-going democrat, advocating absolute equality among persons of both sexes and between all social classes. His daughter assisted him in providing instruction, and G. H. Lewes imagines Spinoza as her love-sick but hopelessly timid pupil.²⁶ In religion Van den Enden was, basically, a Deist. To the orthodox, both Calvinists and Jews, his freedom to teach in Amsterdam constituted a real danger to society, besides being an affront to common decency. When Spinoza became his pupil in late 1654 or early 1655, he did so with an evident lack of concern for the opinions of his orthodox neighbors. He may even have begun to attend other free-thinking groups in Amsterdam at this time, participating in their discussions. What is clear is that, if he had ever attended Mortera's evening class on the Talmud, he was no longer doing so, and he had, in fact, begun to distance himself even from the synagogue.

According to Lucas's account, at about this time two young Jewish men from the synagogue attempted to associate themselves with Spinoza. Pretending to befriend him and engaging him in discussion, they persuaded him to reveal his views, but only in a general and limited way. Subsequently, "considering that man's curiosity rarely has a good motive, he studied the behavior of his friends and discovered so much to find fault with that he broke off all association with them and would not speak to them any more."²⁷ This would have been typical of Spinoza, who, while highly valuing intellectual friendships, was extremely cautious (and wisely so) about revealing his thoughts to those whose character remained uncertain. Nevertheless, according to Lucas, the young men, perceiving themselves excluded from Spinoza's trust, took their revenge by spreading rumors of him within the Jewish community. When they saw that their rumors had aroused the suspicions of his neighbors, and that Spinoza's reputation among the lay leaders of the synagogue had been tarnished, "they made their report to the Judges of the Synagogue."²⁸

The *cherem* or ban of excommunication dates back to the period in which the Mishnah was developed, during the first and second centuries. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and when the Jesus movement was causing division within the Jewish community, the Pharisees implemented the *cherem* as a tool to enforce orthodoxy and maintain their distinctness as a community. That the *cherem* was used fairly often by the Amsterdam Jews during the seventeenth century is not surprising. The marrano immigrants who came to Holland generally did so with the intent to recover their Jewish heritage, and so they quickly set into place all of the commandments and prohibitions that set them apart as a people. There was biblical precedence for doing this, and no doubt the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were often read for inspiration. Upon returning to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity, their Hebrew ancestors knew the importance of rebuilding the walls. Discipline had been essential for that post-exilic generation. But, in the city of Amsterdam, where Collegiant liberals and free-thinkers like Van den Enden could walk among them, discipline was survival. Moreover, Spinoza's reported associations and views, if true, were evidence not merely of moral laxity, but of utter contempt for the Mosaic Law and, by extension, for the people of Israel.

After Spinoza was confronted with the charge against him and failed to show signs of contrition, the governing board of the Talmud Torah commissioned Rabbi Mortera, on the 27th of July, 1656, to pronounce the *cherem* against him: "By decree of the angels and by the command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of the entire holy congregation."²⁹ Then, a series of curses,

excessive and severe, were read by Mortera. Nadler points out, “There is no other excommunication document of the period issued by that community that attains the wrath directed at Spinoza when he was expelled from the congregation.”³⁰ Not even the *cherem* pronounced by the Amsterdam community in 1633 against Uriel da Costa, who had published the heretical *Examination of the Pharisaic Tradition*, displays the animosity vented against Spinoza.

Spinoza had not even published anything. A number of scholars have, however, surmised that his excommunication provided him with the incentive to write an *Apologia*, not with the intent to be restored to the synagogue, but to justify his views. Although never published, this may have been the first draft of what eventually became the *Theological-Political Treatise*. On the title page of his manuscript, the name Baruch would not have appeared, for as Joseph Ratner observes, “With the perfect grace and humor of a cultured mind, he changed his name from Baruch to Benedict, quite confident one can be as blessed in Latin as in Hebrew.”³¹ It is, perhaps, ironic that the name that Michael and Hanna had given their son, upon whom so many curses would fall, means “blessed.”

This excommunication forced Spinoza to leave the family business in the hands of his younger brother, and he immediately moved into the home of Van den Enden. Now, this humanist scholar not only had a taste and talent for theatrical productions, but he also had his students, both male and female, publicly perform. On the 16th and 17th of January, 1657, the playing company of Van den Enden put on a performance of Terence’s *Andrea* at the Amsterdam Municipal Theater. The performance attracted considerable attention and outrage, as the news spread that among the performers were young women and an excommunicated Jew. At this time, the Estates General of Holland was close to granting citizenship to its Jewish residents, and there may have been those within the Talmud Torah community who felt that Spinoza was an embarrassment to Jews and a unwanted nuisance. According to Pierre Bayle’s *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697), Spinoza was “treacherously attacked by a Jew who struck him with a knife when he was leaving the theatre.”³²

Fell’s Translator

His days under tutelage were now practically over. Although he was truly in possession of all that he needed to perform his great work, he had still to add to his thoughts the Quaker emphasis on the “inner light” as the inspired and living revelation of God. The Quaker mission to the Jews had been established in Amsterdam in 1656 by William Ames, and Spinoza took notice of this new sect.

Several months after his excommunication, he wrote to Ames, requesting a meeting. Ames speaks of their brief relation in a letter dated the 17th of April, 1657, addressed to Margaret Fell:

There is a Jew at amsterdam that by the Jews is Cast out (as he and others sayeth) because he owneth no other teacher but the light and he sent for me and I spoke toe him and he was pretty tender and doth owne all that is spoken; and he sayde tow read of moses and the prophets without was nothing tow him except he came toe know it within: and soe the name of Christ it is like he doth owne: I gave order that one of the duch Copyes of thy book should be given toe him and he sent me word he would Come toe oure meeting but in the mean time I was Imprisoned.³³

The beliefs that Spinoza is said to have expressed in this interview were those that had been impressed upon him through his familiarity with the Collegiants. There was no talk of creeds or dogma, but only of an interior religion.

The founder of Quaker society, George Fox, was at this time in prison, and Fell was now directing the movement from London. In early 1656 she had written a pamphlet—which Ames refers to in the above passage as “thy book”—to Rabbi Menasseh, who was now in London on diplomatic business. That pamphlet was entitled, *For Manasseh-ben-Israel the Call of the Jews out of Babylon*. Whether the rabbi ever actually read Fell’s work must be doubted, but the author forwarded a copy to Ames along with another pamphlet, *A Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham Among the Jews*. Ames translated both of these works into Dutch before his imprisonment, and his associate, William Caton, made sure that copies of both came into the hands of Spinoza. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this whole relationship between the Quaker mission and Spinoza is that, at the request of Caton, Spinoza apparently translated Fell’s pamphlets into Hebrew.

Early Philosophical Work

While residing with Van den Enden, Spinoza began to learn a new trade, grinding lenses. It was a solitary work that required great patience and care, and so it was especially suited to Spinoza’s temperament. At sometime in 1658, he left Van den Enden’s home and moved into the house of a Collegiant friend just outside of Amsterdam. Here he continued to develop his vocational skill until late in the year, when he moved to Leiden. Not only did the University of Leiden enjoy the best reputation within the republic, but it also had become known for the ability of its professors in teaching Descartes. Although Spinoza never officially enrolled in the

university, he attended classes and, before two years had passed, became known as one who excelled in the Cartesian philosophy.

It was at the University of Leiden that Spinoza first met and became friends with Adriaan Koerbagh and Lodewijk Meyer. Koerbagh would come to share many of Spinoza's radical religious and political ideas; but, being far more impetuous than his friend, he would be made to suffer for his lack of caution. In 1668, after making his views readily accessible by publishing them in the Dutch language, Koerbagh was convicted of Socinianism.³⁴ Arrested in Leiden, he was carried to Amsterdam in an open cage, so that he, like Christian and Faithful, "might be made a spectacle to all the men of the Fair."³⁵ He died in prison the following year. Dr. Meyer, who shared Spinoza's interest in a rational approach to Biblical interpretation, would become Spinoza's most trusted confidant and the publisher of his works both during his life and after his death.

It was while at Leiden that Spinoza wrote his unfinished *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. It is his purpose in this treatise to direct all of the sciences to one goal, "the achievement of the highest human perfection"—that is, to arrive at the supreme good, which is to apprehend and live in accordance with one's true nature.³⁶ This is possible only by understanding one's position within the whole, or how one fits into a symbiotic relation of all things. The common practice of perceiving all else from one's finite perspective in time and space, based on fortuitous and unconnected sensations in the body, leads to a misapprehension both of oneself and of Nature. This undirected activity of the mind that arrives at conclusions derived from sensations Spinoza calls "Imagination." "Intellect," however, is the corrective and intentional activity of the mind, whereby it perceives things clearly and distinctly, that is, connectedly. Moreover, "since it is self-evident that the more the mind understands of Nature, the better it understands itself," it follows that it will attain complete understanding or perfection as it "attends to, or reflects upon, the knowledge of the most perfect Being."³⁷ The goal of Spinoza's method is, therefore, to apprehend all things *sub specie aeternitatis*—that is, under the aspect of eternity or from the viewpoint of God. To do so is to grasp in a single act of the intellect the One and the All.

Spinoza is not able to go very far in his *Treatise* before he must address an obvious dilemma posed by his method. No sooner does he observe that it is through a true knowledge of the parts that we come to understand the whole than he proceeds to note that, because each part can only be known by its relation to all other parts, no one part can be understood without first having knowledge of the whole: "We have to begin from a given idea, and since to begin from a given idea is something that needs proving, we ought again to prove the validity of our reasoning,

and then again the validity of our reasoning, and so on ad infinitum.”³⁸ He appears to be caught in a vicious circle or infinite regress, yet he then insists that this is only apparent. Are we to end, he asks, even before we begin, by doubting knowledge itself, as do the skeptics? Or, are we to begin, he asks (in an obvious reference to Descartes), with radical doubt? No, neither of these alternatives are valid, for we have *a priori* or intuitive knowledge of Eternal and Infinite Being—that is, God. We have this knowledge as a clear and distinct idea, and “Ideas which are clear and distinct can never be false.”³⁹ We may then proceed on the basis of “moral certainty” (as opposed to mathematical certainty).

We might say, then, that Spinoza’s realist epistemology begins in a leap of faith. His assent to knowledge cannot itself be based on prior knowledge, but must commence in a decision. That decision is the act of faith. As Kierkegaard notes, when faith resolves to act, “doubt has been overcome; in that very instance the indifference of doubt has been dispelled and its equilibrium overthrown, not by knowledge but by will.”⁴⁰ Spinoza is able, personally, to triumph over skepticism, not by setting out to prove that the intellect begins with a clear and distinct idea of the Being of God, but rather by acting upon this assumption. It is only in this way that he can proceed to acquire the knowledge of the parts that, ultimately, confirm what had begun as an intuition of the whole. Then, as his intellect reaches perfection and he grasps the One and the All *sub specie aeternitatis*—then, at that very moment—faith passes into knowledge. Thus, although Spinoza’s philosophy begins in faith, it does not lead to faith, for faith is the condition of the intellect in its infancy.

Before completing the *Treatise* Spinoza grew dissatisfied with its form and, in late 1660 or early 1661, after leaving Leiden and returning to Amsterdam, he integrated the ideas from the *Treatise* into a more systematical treatment. In many respects, the additional ideas that Spinoza added to the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* anticipate the *Ethics*, the definitive expression of his philosophical system, and so they will be considered in connection with this latter work. By the time that Spinoza was working on the *Short Treatise*, he had returned to the vicinity of Amsterdam and had become the nucleus for a circle of intellectual friends, including Koerbagh, Meyer, and a few liberal Collegiants, who would, for the most part, remain loyal to him throughout his life.

Growing Reputation

In the summer of 1661 Spinoza, probably missing his access to the university and wanting quiet and inexpensive lodgings, moved to a small town just outside the city of Leiden. His Collegiant friends had contacts in Rijnsburg and arranged for him to

take a room there in the home of a chemist. Here, for the next two years, he divided his time between tutoring, writing, and constructing telescopes and microscopes. Already his skilled work in practical optics was attracting the attention of scientists.

Although Spinoza had still not published anything, his reputation was spreading quickly. Among the students of Leiden, the report in circulation was, “Mr. des Cartes was not the only philosopher who deserved to be followed.”⁴¹ Evidence of Spinoza’s growing reputation at this time may be seen in the fact that when Heinrich Oldenburg—who would soon, in 1662, be appointed secretary for the Royal Society of London—was in Leiden on business of state, he went out of his way specifically to meet the new Dutch philosopher. The subsequent exchange of letters between the two men make it clear that, although it was not Spinoza’s reputation in optics that had attracted Oldenburg to Rhijnsburg, the cautious Spinoza took care to ensure that this interview was not terribly revealing. Even so, Oldenburg seems to have never adequately grasped Spinoza’s system, despite the continued correspondence, and this cannot be entirely blamed on the philosopher’s caution.

Spinoza’s reputation also attracted a theology student from Leiden, Johannes Casarius, who hired Spinoza as his private tutor in the Cartesian philosophy.⁴² While laboring to devise a coherent and systematic method by which he might most effectively give instruction, Spinoza struck upon the idea of converting his lessons into a “geometrical” format. By adopting the structure used by Euclid (ca. 300 B.C.) in his *Elements*, Spinoza converted the Cartesian system into definitions, postulates, and axioms, and demonstrated the truth of each proposition by appealing to other propositions, the proofs of which had already been demonstrated. This Euclidian approach was, in fact, already implicit in Spinoza’s methodology, as described in the *Treatise* of 1659-60. All knowledge begins with an assumption or unproven postulate, which becomes the cornerstone for all subsequent understanding and is itself substantiated by the stability of the edifice that is built upon it.

Spinoza sent the completed manuscript of *Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy* to his friends in Amsterdam, and Meyer, after writing the introduction, published it in 1663. This had been a necessary work for Spinoza, as it established just how far he could go along with Descartes and where he parted from him. Furthermore, its publication at this time was especially practical, as it provided the intelligentsia with substantial evidence of Spinoza’s capability as a philosopher, thereby inviting recognition and correspondence from other thinkers. Meanwhile, he was continuing to work on his *Short Treatise*, now experimenting with converting it into the same type of “geometrical” format he had used in his exposition of Descartes. This experimentation resulted in the first drafts of what was to become the *Ethics*.

After the publication of *Descartes's Principles*, Spinoza moved to Voorburg, just outside of The Hague. However, his bags had hardly been unpacked when he was advised to leave the vicinity of the city, on account of the plague. Within the years 1663 and 1664, it would claim the lives of over twenty-four thousand in the city of Amsterdam alone.⁴³ Spinoza took shelter in a village near Rotterdam. It was here that he did much of his work on reorganizing the ideas of the *Short Treatise*, and it was here also that Willem van Blijenbergh's introductory letter found him.

Blijenbergh was a dogmatic Calvinist and a militant defender of orthodoxy, who, posing as a seeker of wisdom, threw out his hook in the direction of the recently published philosopher. Spinoza took the bait: "For my part, of all the things that are not under my control, what I value most is to enter into a bond of friendship with sincere lovers of truth."⁴⁴ He answered the Calvinist's queries regarding sin, will, and the attributes of God, and in response received a letter intending to correct him by the authority of Scripture. Spinoza, realizing that he had been taken in, replied in a forthright manner:

I see that no proof, however firmly established by the rules of logic, has any validity with you unless it agrees with the explanation which you, or other theologians of your acquaintance, assign to Holy Scripture. However, if it is your conviction that God speaks more clearly and effectually through Holy Scripture than through the natural light of the intellect, which he has also granted to us and constantly maintains strong and uncorrupted through his Divine wisdom, you have good reason to subordinate your intellect to the opinions which you attribute to Holy Scripture. Indeed, I myself could do no other.⁴⁵

Spinoza correctly observes that he and Blijenbergh part company at ground zero, and—this being the case—they have no foundation in common for a discussion of issues. The whole system of Calvinism is based upon two underlying presuppositions: (1) all of human understanding is defiled and untrustworthy; (2) the Bible is the inspired and inerrant revelation of a benevolent and omniscient God. Therefore, says Calvin, "We ought surely to seek from Scripture a rule for thinking and speaking. To this yardstick all thoughts of the mind and all words of the mouth must be conformed."⁴⁶ Spinoza, in contradistinction to Calvin, tells Blijenbergh, "Since I am conscious that when an indisputable proof is presented to me I find it impossible to entertain thoughts that cast doubt upon it, I entirely acquiesce in what my intellect shows me, without any suspicion that I am deceived therein, or that Scripture, even though I am not examining it, can contradict it."⁴⁷

Calvin and Spinoza cannot *argue* with each other, for neither accepts the final authority to which the other appeals: “Those who deny to themselves a faculty for sound reasoning cannot claim to prove their assertion by reasoning.”⁴⁸ Therefore, the two are reduced to fighting each other, and as Leo Strauss observes, “The passionate faith in the justice and truth of his cause compels each of the two opponents—it could indeed not be otherwise—to the attack!”⁴⁹ Even so, although Spinoza’s philosophy is directly antagonistic to the official religion of his country, the philosopher himself is quiet and peace-loving. Indeed, it would be dangerous for him were he not so. Therefore, Spinoza is willing to argue with those who respect and honor the “inner light” of reason, but he knows that it would be foolish to quarrel with those whom he cannot hope to persuade.

By the time that the second Anglo-Dutch War began in 1665—after England had taken possession of New Netherlands, renaming it New York—Spinoza had completed his restructuring of the *Short Treatise* into the three-part *Philosophia*. However, Blijenberg’s correspondence may have persuaded the careful Spinoza to delay its printing until a time when he could be more certain of his safety. After all, if by the publication of *Descartes’s Principles*, he had already attracted the attention of militant Calvinists, then the effect of publishing a clear exposition of his own philosophy would surely make him a target.

God or Nature

Over the years, Spinoza would continue to work on his *Philosophia*, expanding it into the five-part *Ethics* that would be published posthumously, in 1777. Since the ideas expressed therein had, for the most part, been formulated by 1665, and were already being espoused in the author’s correspondence, it may serve our purpose best to consider some of its main propositions at this point. Nothing could be more essential to an understanding of Spinoza’s philosophy than a careful reading of Part I of the *Ethics*, “Concerning God” (popularly referred to by its Latin title as the “De Deo”).

Following the wise example of Euclid, Spinoza begins by defining his terms. All things can be defined as either a *substance*, an *attribute*, or a *mode*. By “substance,” Spinoza means “that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed.” Substance, by its very definition, cannot be produced by anything else. If it were, then its conception would also require the conception of something else. Therefore, substance is “self-caused”; that is to say, existence belongs to its nature. Moreover, “Every substance is necessarily infinite.”⁵⁰ Were it not so, then we

would have to conceive of two or more things, none of which involves in its conception the conception of the other, and yet all of which are self-caused but imperfect or incomplete in being.

By “attribute,” Spinoza means “that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence.”⁵¹ In his letters, Spinoza preferred to define “attribute” by comparing it immediately with substance. An attribute is also “every thing that is conceived through itself and in itself, so that its conception does not involve the conception of anything else.” The difference is that attribute pertains to “the intellect, which attributes to substance a certain specific kind of nature.”⁵² According to Spinoza, although substance is infinite and consists of infinite attributes, the human intellect is able to conceive of only two attributes, thought and extension. The crucial difference between Descartes and Spinoza lies in the fact that, whereas the former began with two substances, thought and extension, and attempted to arrive at a connecting link between them,⁵³ the latter thinker, in a radical stroke of genius, invents a monistic parallelism, in which thought and extension are two independent and adequate conceptions of substance.

Perhaps, the best analogy that can be offered as an heuristic in explaining Spinoza’s conception of parallelism in substance is the Christian doctrine of the hypostatic union, according to which Christ is, at the same time, fully human and fully God. To think of Christ as human is to have an adequate conception of him; yet, humanity is only one of his two attributes. Thus, any representation of Christ that disregards his divinity is, though complete from one perspective, only half of the reality. Efforts to combine both perspectives in a single representation must, necessarily, be faulty, although—to the extent that both perspectives are equally balanced—they may succeed in suggesting a truth that they are incapable of adequately conveying. Likewise, any representation of substance, “ultimate reality,” or “the world” that emphasizes either extension or thought to the total neglect of the other is, in itself, an adequate conception, but only from a given perspective. Therefore, neither the materialist monist nor the idealist monist are wrong, except insofar as they repudiate the truth of the other. However, the dualist philosopher who attempts to create a *connection* between thought and matter does a disservice to both systems by inventing out of his own imagination what his intellect does not provide.

By “mode,” Spinoza means “the affections of substance; that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else.”⁵⁴ The conception of modes does not involve existence; “therefore, even when they exist, we can conceive of them as not existing.” All individual things, whether ideas or bodies, that involve in their conception finitude and duration are modes, and measure and time are in

themselves modal conceptions. “For example, extension is conceived through itself and in itself, but not motion; for the latter is conceived in something else, and its conception involves extension.”⁵⁵ All modes are conceived by the intellect by the attribute of thought or extension. The relation of mode to substance is the relation of the All to the One.

Almost all of Spinoza’s philosophy is contained implicitly in his definition to these three terms, and whatever is not implied therein is, nevertheless, consistent with it.

Spinoza proceeds to give two names to substance, *God* and *Nature*. By “God,” Spinoza means “an absolutely infinite being; that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which express eternal and infinite essence.” Based on the definitions already given, we must conclude that “God necessarily exists” and that “There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God.”⁵⁶ We should note that he has agreed with Descartes in accepting the validity of the ontological proof for God’s existence. Traditionally attributed to St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), the ontological argument, in brief, says that, because we can conceive of a being with every perfection, this being must in fact exist; for the very idea of perfection entails existence. Thus, it would be an inherent contradiction to say that we can conceive of a perfect being but that such a being does not exist. Since, therefore, we can conceive of substance with infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, it must exist. From this it follows that “the thing extended and the thing thinking are either attributes of God or affections of the attributes of God.”⁵⁷

There are two facets to Spinoza’s “Nature.” The first is *natura naturans* or “nature naturing.” By this term “we must understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, the attributes of substance that express eternal and infinite essence; or, God in so far as he is considered a free cause.” Thus, *natura naturans* expresses God or Nature as an active force or imminent cause. The second facet of Nature is *natura naturata* or “nature natured.” By this term, Spinoza means “all that follows from the necessity of God’s nature, that is, from the necessity of each one of God’s attributes; of all the modes of God’s attributes in so far as they are considered as things which are in God and can neither be conceived without God.”⁵⁸ By *natura naturata* we are, therefore, to understand the passive affections by which the attributes of God are conceived, but which do not, in their own conception, involve independent or necessary existence. In other words, Nature consists of both the attributes of substance—that is, thought and extension—and the individual modes.

The relationship between God and Nature in Spinoza’s philosophy has produced endless debate. Although this short essay does not permit us to enter into

a thorough discussion of the issues, nevertheless—in view of the influence, whether direct or otherwise, that Spinoza had on the major contributors to Broad Church ideology—it is important that we give some consideration to his position relative to theism. Even before the publication of either the *Ethics* or the *Theological-Political Treatise*, there were critics who charged Spinoza with atheism, and it is evident from his writings that he strongly objected: “Alas, things have now come to such a pass that those who openly declare that they do not possess the idea of God and that they know God only through created things (of which causes they are ignorant) do not blush to accuse philosophers of atheism!”⁵⁹ Clearly, Spinoza did not think of himself as an atheist. That, in itself, does not prevent us from identifying him as such. As Martineau observes, “The duty of applying to no one a term which he disowns is conditioned on his not altering its meaning in order to disown it.”⁶⁰ Moreover, it is not difficult to recognize some of the reasons that have led many to think of Spinoza as an atheist.

First, he denies God personality. That God is not personal does not mean that he is not living, but only that “neither intellect nor will pertain to the nature of God.” God does not discern, deduce, deliberate, or determine; rather, he acts out of the necessity of his own nature. What God does follows necessarily from what God is, or as Spinoza states, “God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.”⁶¹ We are not to think of God as Creator, but only as Being. The tendency to project and magnify what we perceive as traits of human excellence has always led the imagination toward the conception of an anthropomorphic deity. Thus, “a triangle, if it could speak, would likewise say that God is eminently triangular, and a circle that God’s nature is eminently circular. In this way each would ascribe to God its own attributes, assuming itself to be like God, and regarding all else as ill-formed.” However, God cannot be conceived by the imagination, but only by the intellect.⁶²

Moreover, the effort to attribute intellect and will to God has led theologians into logical contradictions. For example: If God were to create all things that he conceives, then he would be able neither to conceive nor to create anything more, and thus, in order to maintain both the omniscience and omnipotence of God, theologians are forced into separating intellect from will. So, God must be able to think that which is good and yet restrain himself from creating it, for if he creates all things that he thinks, he will exhaust his omnipotence. But, if God restrains himself from creating that which he thinks—and all things that God thinks must be good—then he is not omni-benevolent. Such puzzles, says Spinoza, are beneath the dignity of philosophy, and it is only “the common run of theologians” who are “so stupid as not to see that Holy Scripture speaks of God in merely human style.” True theologians—that is, those who possess the idea of God, and whose minds have been freed

from bondage to ignorance and the emotions—apprehend the difference between the metaphors of the imagination and the clear and distinct ideas of the intellect.

Second, by declaring that “God is an extended thing,”⁶³ Spinoza may appear to have equated God and matter—and indeed, were this so, we could have neither hope nor desire to deliver Spinoza from the charge of atheism. However, another way of saying the same thing is, “Extension is an attribute of substance.” Note that in this proposition there is no mention of modes. God is eternal and infinite substance conceived by the intellect through the attributes of extension or thought. As a living and active force of Nature, God is *natura naturans*. In order to equate God with matter, Spinoza would have to make substance equivalent with modes conceived merely through the attribute of extension. However, not even *natura naturata* is so conceived by Spinoza. In fact, it would be easier to eliminate one half of Descartes’s dualism and to be left with nothing but pure matter than to extricate God from Spinoza’s system. Novalis appears to note this very thing when he says, “Spinozism is a supersaturation with the divine.”⁶⁴

In making extension an attribute of God, Spinoza is adopting the premise of Lucretius (ca. 99-55 B.C.), *ex nihilo nihil fit* (“nothing comes from nothing”). God does not create matter *ex nihilo*; rather, God simply is, and every finite idea and body is a mode of his infinite being. Spinoza has always had difficulty persuading people that, by broadening the divine attributes so that they include extension, he is actually defining God as more magnificent than the description given to him by popular religion: “I do not know why matter should be unworthy of the divine nature, since there can be no substance external to God by which it can be acted upon. All things, I repeat, are in God, and all things that come to pass do so only through the laws of God’s infinite nature and follow from the necessity of his essence.”⁶⁵ The resistance that Spinoza’s God encountered can be explained, in part, to the residual Manichæism in Augustine’s theology and, thus, inherent also in much of early modern Christian theology, including Calvinism. Another and perhaps more influential factor behind the resistance is the popular desire to believe in a God who is above nature and who continually creates and intervenes in nature from without.

Some critics, in an attempt to convince their audience that Spinozism is atheism in sheep’s clothing, have sought to employ textual criticism in their favor. Basically, the argument is that, because of the risks involved in printing Socinian and atheistic documents, either Spinoza himself or his editors recast his works into phrases that would appear religious to the undiscerning. Andrews Norton, for example, argued that it was Spinoza’s translator or publisher who prevailed upon the philosopher to periodically substitute the word “God” for “Nature.”⁶⁶ However, even if it could be substantiated that the *Ethics*, like the Pentateuch, had several redactors, this would

not, in any way, affect the truth value of its propositions. Modern textual criticism, though, suggests that Norton did not get his facts straight. When Spinoza's friends, after the author's death, translated the *Ethics* into Dutch, the only change they made was to omit "or Nature" from the frequent formula "God or Nature."⁶⁷

Pantheism, Panhylism, and Panentheism

Beginning in the eighteenth century, Spinoza's interpreters have more often referred to him as a *pantheist*, one who believes that all things are God. The word was probably first coined by Joseph Raphson in 1697,⁶⁸ and so the earliest critics of Spinoza would not have had the option of using "pantheist" as a nomenclature. The word itself, however, is too often ambiguous to be helpful, and so it is important that we make a further distinction. Many use the term with the understanding that "all things" refer to all modes of extension, and so a "pantheist" is one who believes that God is equivalent with matter. This is S. T. Coleridge's definition:

It is a matter of perfect indifference, whether we assert a world without God, or make God the world. The one is as truly Atheism as the other. In fact, for all moral and practical purposes they are the same position differently expressed; for whether I say, God is the world, or the world is God, the inevitable conclusion, the sense and import is, that there is no other God than the world, that is, there is no other meaning to the term God. . . . It follows, then, that Pantheism is equivalent to Atheism, and that there is no other Atheism actually existing, or speculatively conceivable, but Pantheism.⁶⁹

The belief that Coleridge is describing is not, however, the "pantheism" defined by Raphson. Rather, it is what he calls *panhylism*, the belief that God is nothing more than the totality of material nature. Pantheism, properly understood, is the belief in "a certain universal substance, material as well as intelligent, that fashions all things that exist out of its own essence"⁷⁰ This definition may serve, in a vague way, to describe Spinoza's system, but it is misleading insofar as it conflates the attributes of God with the modes by which his attributes are known. The same criticism must be applied to the idea that Spinoza's system is "Materiarian Theism," a term that Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth used in *The True Intellectual System*.⁷¹ Cudworth appears to have meant nothing other than what Raphson designated as "pantheism." F. D. Maurice thought that he saw in Spinoza a reluctant pantheist, one who was constrained by the rigor of his logic to adopt a metaphysics contradictory to that which his feelings suggested.⁷² I would recommend that, unless we are to coin

a new term to signify the idiosyncrasies of Spinoza's system, the safest and, perhaps, the only honest recourse is to refer to that system as Spinozism.

One compromise between traditional theism and pantheism is *panentheism*, the belief that all things exist in God. This term was first coined by K. C. F. Krause to describe his own position, which can be summarized by two propositions: (1) All things are God; (2) God is not equal to all things.⁷³ The advantage of this doctrine, from the orthodox standpoint, is that it avoids the philosophical pitfalls and implied Manichaeism of *creatio ex nihilo*. God maintains his transcendence, while gaining the advantage of immanence; in other words, God is conceived as being both beyond all things and in all things. The supporters of this position—which has, by the way, gained considerable popularity and has recently been espoused by Marcus Borg⁷⁴—appeal to St. Paul's words, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being."⁷⁵ The crucial presupposition upon which "panentheism" is grounded is found in Henry More's argument against Descartes—that is, that infinite extension is not matter, but rather space, and thought occupies space. From this proposition, only a short move was required for John Toland to equate God with space. Since all divisible matter is in space, all things are in God.

However, the Spinozist response to the panentheist is the same as to the traditional theist. It is the response that Johann Herder (1744-1803) offered Jacobi, who had accused Spinoza of atheism:

If God does not exist *in* the world, and *everywhere* in the world, and precisely without measure, wholly and indivisibly (for the whole is but an appearance of God's greatness in forms appearing to us), then God exists nowhere. "Outside the world" there is no space; space comes into being in that a world for us comes into being, only by means of abstraction from an appearance.⁷⁶

In Spinoza's philosophy, God is infinite and indivisible extension and thought, whereas finite and divisible affections are merely modes. Space, as we know it, is a finite and divisible affection of extension. Although we may be in the habit of saying that where something is not, there space is, yet space is, nevertheless, something that is determined in its shape and movement by other modes of extension. Henry More was, therefore, mistaken. Space cannot, in and of itself, be extension, although it is one of the modes of extension. Therefore, if God does not exist in extension and in thought, then God exists nowhere. This being the case, Herder ended his correspondence to Jacobi in a poignant retort (and an obvious play upon the ironic "recantation" of Polycarp): "If you understand this innermost, supreme, all-embracing concept [of God] to be an empty name, then you are the atheist, not Spinoza."⁷⁷

Bondage and Freedom

The largest part of the *Ethics* pertains to the human mind and its emotions, and considers in depth the notion of “will” and the experience of bondage and freedom. These considerations are also integral to the Christian religion, and it is important that this chapter gives them some attention, however brief that attention must be.

Since all things individual are merely parts of a whole, it follows that God or Nature is alone independent and possesses the freedom of acting out of the necessity of its own being.⁷⁸ Every human being, as a mode, is like an organ within a functioning body (with the body representing the world). If healthy, the organ acts in accordance with its nature, but not merely out of the necessity of its own nature, for it is also acted upon by the other parts of the body. If the organ is not impeded or constrained in its function, then it may be said to act freely. However, even if the organ does not act, but rather is acted upon, it nevertheless is acted upon fully in accord with the causal necessity of the body. This is just the sort of freedom and bondage in which, according to Spinoza, we all participate.

Moreover, since mind and body are parallel but unconnected, they act or are acted upon simultaneously, but they do not influence each other. It follows, then, that people are deceived in thinking that their minds can freely control the movements of their bodies, “a belief that consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.”⁷⁹ Spinoza uses his own metaphor of a rolling stone to illustrate this psychological phenomenon:

Conceive, if your please, that while continuing in motion this stone thinks, and knows that it is endeavouring, as far as in it lies, to continue in motion. Now this stone, since it is conscious only of its endeavour and is not at all indifferent, will think it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wishes. This, then, is that human freedom which all men boast of possessing . . .⁸⁰

The experience or perception of freedom, in other words, consists not in the exercise of “will,” but in the merging of desire with the affirmation of the intellect. Spinoza’s rolling stone conceives that it has no desire other than to continue its movement and perceives that it is doing so. The positive conjunction of the desire with the perception, together with ignorance of the actual causes of movement, suggests to the susceptible imagination of the stone that its movement is caused by power of “will.” If, however, the stone conceives that its desire is to stop rolling but perceives

that it does not stop, and it is ignorant of the cause of its rolling, then the imagination of the stone suggests that its “will” is in bondage.

The corollary of this is that terms such as “good” and “evil,” “perfect” and “imperfect,” have to do with our perception of the actual condition of a thing in relation to an ideality. As long as we are aware, as we use such terms, that they “indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves, and are nothing but modes of thinking, or notions which we form from comparing things with one another,” then the terms retain their usefulness.⁸¹ However, we err if we suppose that there can be anything in God or Nature that is intrinsically bad or imperfect, for “it would argue great imperfection in God if anything happened against his will. . . . Indeed, the wicked, not knowing God, are but an instrument in the hands of the Master, serving unconsciously and being used up in that service.”⁸² Spinoza’s determinist psychology is compassionate, for—as Tolstoy states in *War and Peace*—“To understand all is to forgive all.” Yet, the proper response to determinism is not moral indifference. Since the emotions have so strong a hold on the conduct of the masses—that is, on those who do not have the law inscribed upon their hearts—it is necessary for the State to exercise control through promoting both hope of reward and fear of punishment.⁸³

There are obvious similarities between the determinisms of Spinoza and Calvin. Both deny the existence of will, and yet both also declare a way to salvation. In Calvin, however, “salvation” has to do with the condition of the eternal soul, as that condition is recognized by God. Although salvation may be experienced as freedom, the signs of freedom—that is, good works—are not to be mistaken as necessarily indicative of salvation. In other words, there is no visible church. Only God knows those whom he has saved. Thus, according to Calvin, salvation is neither synonymous with nor relative to freedom. It is granted to the elect by means of a supernatural gift of grace, which is received through *repentance* (by which the elect realize and fully accept their incapacity to effect change in their lives) and *faith* (by which they acknowledge the redemptive work of Christ and transfer all of their trust to God).

In Spinoza’s system, “salvation” is the self-determination enjoyed by those few who have adopted and pursued the method described in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. By beginning with the idea of God—that is, eternal and infinite Being—they have progressed from one clear and distinct idea to another until attaining an intellect that is freed from ignorance and those desires that are grounded in indistinct and fragmented ideas. Conceiving themselves in their true relation to God or Nature—that is, *sub specie aeternitatis*—the elect arrive at the intellectual love of God, the “pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as cause, that

is, the love of God . . . in so far as we understand God to be eternal.”⁸⁴ One who so loves God “cannot endeavour that God should love him in return”⁸⁵—that is, he cannot desire for God to act in any other way than out of the necessity of his own being. God can only love himself, and it is the *summum bonum* of human existence to fully participate in God’s love for himself. There is truth in Strauss’s equation of the *amor Dei intellectualis* with the *amor fati*;⁸⁶ however, “love of fate” suggests merely the passive acquiescence of the temporal in view of the eternal, whereas Spinoza’s “love of God” appears to be more of an active participation in joy. It is the joy of realizing one’s finite self absorbed in the infinite and eternal. This is Spinoza’s salvation; it is intellectual, contemplative without being Stoic, and moral.

Coleridge, after reading Edward Williams’s *Defence of Modern Calvinism* (1812), wrote the following in a letter of March 1815 to R. H. Brabant:

If Dr. W’s Opinions be indeed those of the Modern Calvinists collectively, I have taken my last Farewell of *Modern Calvinism*. It is in it’s [sic] inevitable consequences Spinosism, . . . Spinosism with all it’s Skeleton unfleshed, bare Bones and Eye-holes, as presented by Spinoza himself. In one thing only does it differ. It has not the noble honesty, that majesty of openness, so delightful in Spinoza, which made him scorn all attempts to varnish over fair consequences, or to deny in words what was affirmed in the reasoning.⁸⁷

Whether this is a fair assessment of either Calvinism or Spinozism, I will leave to the reader; but, it is significant that the “Father of the Broad Church movement” preferred Spinozism, as he understood it, to the Calvinism of England in the early nineteenth century.

Miracles

In the fall of 1665, when Spinoza put away his *Philosophia*, having decided that the time was not ripe for its publication, he immediately began to compose the *Theological-Political Treatise*. If he had, years earlier, written an *Apologia*, then he was now revising this former work and extending its scope. It is probable that Spinoza’s intentions were to prepare his audience for the reception of the *Ethics* and to effect a change in the way that philosophers were perceived, both in their relationship to the Church and to the State. Even so, as Nadler observes, after the arrest and conviction of Adriaan Koerbagh in 1668, Spinoza could have been “under no illusions about the reception his ideas would receive.”⁸⁸ Although he proceeded, in late 1669 or early 1670, with the publication of the *Theological-Political Treatise*,

it was published anonymously, in Latin, and gave on its title-page a false publisher and place of publication. If this was not sufficient precaution, Spinoza even attempts, in his Preface, to dissuade the common reader from concerning himself with the book: "I know how deeply rooted in the mind are the prejudices embraced under the guise of piety. . . . Indeed, I would prefer that [the common people] disregard this book completely rather than make themselves a nuisance by misinterpreting it after their wont."⁸⁹ Spinoza was, of course, asking for a miracle.

Perhaps, the most popular misrepresentation of Spinoza's treatise is that it depicts a God who is too weak to perform miracles. Spinoza does not deny that the power of Nature is infinite, "For since the virtue and power of Nature is the very virtue and power of God, and the laws and rules of Nature are God's very decrees, there can be no doubt that Nature's power is infinite."⁹⁰ What he denies is that God is so weak that anything could supercede his laws and rules. The term "miracle" cannot be understood, then, to refer to any event that is contrary to Nature, but rather to an event the cause of which cannot be determined. Because men, separating God from Nature, believed that God could mysteriously act apart from and in contradiction to Nature, they gladly attributed to God any unique and surprising event. A miracle would, to these men, confirm God's existence. However, for those who understand that nothing proves the existence of God more than the order that is preserved in Nature, the notion of miracle can only "cast doubt" on God's existence.⁹¹ Miracle is, in fact, an impious notion of the imagination, for it stands directly opposed to the idea of Law, and insofar as it suggests an arbitrary power greater than Law, it suggests Chaos. Moreover, if Chaos triumphs over Law, then either there is no God or—what to Thomas Hardy appeared as a far worse supposition—God himself is nothing other than Chaos or the combined force of "purblind Doomsters."⁹² Benjamin Jowett (1817-93), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, was in complete concord with Spinoza when he argued, "The more we take out of the category of chance in the world either of nature or of mind, the more present evidence we have of the faithfulness of God. . . . Surely He, in whom we live and move and have our being, is nearer to us than He would be if He interfered occasionally for our benefit."⁹³

The effectiveness of Spinoza's critique of miracles is, for the most part, limited by the monistic system upon which it is founded. From a monist perspective, Spinoza's argument is incontrovertible, but it has not had the same persuasive appeal in addressing a Christian audience as has had both David Hume's critique "On Miracles" in the *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and Gotthold Lessing's critique in "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power" (1777). Both Hume and Lessing concentrated their efforts not on the logical incoherency of

the idea of miracle, but rather on the relative authority of testimony and experience in constituting sufficient proof. Nevertheless, Spinoza's overall critique of Scripture did contribute significantly to the Enlightenment agenda of questioning the testimony of Scripture as an historical witness.

Scripture, True Religion, and the State

Spinoza maintains a distinguished position in the history of the science of biblical interpretation. He recognized that the Bible's varied parts should be studied as all other historical documents and works of literature. In opposition to Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), he proposed that, even though the "literal meaning" of Scripture may be "opposed to the natural light of reason," the literal meaning must, nevertheless, be retained, unless it can be established from Scripture that a metaphorical interpretation is warranted.⁹⁴ In opposition to the Calvinists, Spinoza appealed to Scripture itself as authority in proving that nothing in addition to the "natural light" of reason is needed for the purpose of interpreting Scripture.⁹⁵

Spinozan hermeneutics for the emendation of religion follows the same method as that given in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. That is, it begins with a clear and distinct idea, a premise that functions as a universal principle according to which all other ideas are formed: "We must first seek from our study of Scripture that which is most universal and forms the basis and foundation of all Scripture; in short, that which is commended in Scripture by all the prophets as doctrine eternal and most profitable for all mankind."⁹⁶ Thus, all of Scripture must first be studied before the religion of Scripture can begin to be formulated, and this "true religion" will evolve from a single foundational proposition. According to Spinoza, "From Scripture itself we learn that its message, unclouded by any doubt or any ambiguity, is in essence this, to love God above all, and one's neighbour as oneself."⁹⁷ Trusting to this one truth as a foundational light, Spinoza proceeds to create a coherent system, "the dogmas of the universal faith, the basic teachings which Scripture as a whole intends to convey":⁹⁸

1. God exists.
2. God is one.
3. God is omnipresent.
4. God is our rightful Lord.
5. Worship and obedience to God consist in love toward one's neighbors.
6. All who worship and obey God are saved, while those who live for their own pleasure are lost.
7. God forgives repentant sinners.

http://www.tejones.net/Unpublished_Essays/index.html

Furthermore, we can have confidence that this true religion, the religion of the Bible, has been passed down from generation to generation without addition or corruption. We know that this is so because it is the living and eternal Word of God that is “inscribed in men’s hearts—that is, in men’s minds.”⁹⁹

The difference between theological truth and philosophic truth is most evident in the final item in the list of Scripture’s basic teachings. Because God is not a person, he cannot “forgive” in the same sense that a human being forgives. Moreover, contrition does not, in itself, bring one toward a more blessed condition. We proceed toward salvation by attaining and maintaining adequate ideas, through which process our desires are slowly brought into line with the truth of things. Even so, as Spinoza says, “There is no one who does not sin, so that without this belief all would despair of salvation, and there would be no reason to believe that God is merciful.” Therefore, the proposition “God forgives repentant sinners” serves a pragmatic function in upholding religion itself, and so it is, from a theological standpoint, a true belief.

By clearly elucidating the dogmas of the universal faith Spinoza demonstrates that “faith demands piety rather than truth” and that “faith is pious and saving only by reason of the obedience it inspires.”¹⁰⁰ True religion—as such, and only as such—serves the needs of the State, and so it is in the State’s interest to support true religion; that is to say, it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to reward love for one’s neighbor and to punish hatred toward one’s neighbor. Clearly, true religion is integral to the very idea of a Commonwealth, and so Spinoza should not be thought of as advocating a Church establishment. On the contrary, religion itself suggests a separation of Church and State, so that all persons might not only be free to build upon the universal dogmas whatever rites and speculative opinions they please, but also be free to philosophize.¹⁰¹

The Last Days

The public outcry upon the publication of the *Theological-Political Treatise* was loud and unanimous. Not only Calvinists—although Calvinists especially—but also Remonstrants and Cartesians united in vilifying the anonymous author. Lucas, in his biography, refers to the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Jan de Witt, as Spinoza’s “illustrious Maecenas,” suggesting that De Witt served the philosopher as both a patron and a protector during this period.¹⁰² Many of Spinoza’s subsequent biographers have followed Lucas’s lead, supposing that Spinoza’s move into The Hague in early 1670 was motivated by a desire to take advantage of the political power of his patron. Nadler, after observing that “there is no independent evidence”

to support Lucas's account, quite reasonably notes that such a public expression of approval and encouragement by De Witt at this time would have been politically unwise and is highly unlikely in view of the Koerbagh affair.¹⁰³ Spinoza did, however, have other friends in town.

In May of 1671 he relocated to less expensive lodgings on the outskirts of the city limits. Here, at the home of Hendrik van der Spijck and his wife, Spinoza spent the greater part of the last five and a half years of his life. He was a quiet boarder, and he appears to have been on friendly, if not familiar, terms with his Calvinist landlord. He continued to grind lenses and to work on his *Ethics*, but he did not publish anything more.

These last years were not uneventful. Louis XIV of France had been demanding of the Dutch Republic religious toleration for Roman Catholics. After securing Charles II of England as his ally, Louis declared war in 1672 and marched 120,000 French troops into the Netherlands. In a state of panic, the populace blamed the De Witts, both Jan and his brother, Cornelius, for the invasion. They demanded an immediate change in government, that the grandson of William the Silent, who had led the Netherlands into independence from Spain, be given the same power as his heroic predecessor. William III—who was ultimately to become King of England—stood only to benefit from the public panic, and so he did nothing to stop it. The De Witts, however, refused to cooperate with the mob, and so a perjurer was found to testify that Cornelius had sought to hire an assassin to do away with William. Cornelius was, thus, conveniently cast into prison, but the mob remained unsatisfied. Finally, on August 27th, when Jan was visiting his brother, a rabble forced their way into the prison and beat the De Witts to death. When Spinoza heard what had happened he prepared a broadsheet to denounce the viciousness of the murders, and he would have gone out to post it near the scene of the crime, but he was saved by Mr. Van der Spijck, who apparently locked him in his room.

During the following winter, in 1672-73, the headquarters of the French army was at Utrecht. There, attached to a Swiss regiment, was a Colonel Stoupe, who had been a Huguenot minister in London during the Protectorate. He entered into correspondence with Spinoza, and on the behalf of the prince of Conde invited him to the French headquarters. Lucas tells us, "Mr. de Spinosa had a mind too well cultivated, and he knew too well what was due to a person of such high rank, to ignore on this occasion his duty to His Highness. . . . At last after some delays his friends persuaded him to set out on the journey."¹⁰⁴ Martineau offers, as an alternative explanation for Spinoza's journey, the hypothesis that Spinoza was secretly selected by both the Dutch and French forces as an intermediary "to measure the temper of the other."¹⁰⁵ Spinoza kept no journals and, unfortunately, left behind no

account of this dangerous journey. When he returned to The Hague, his adversaries suspected him of being a spy, and no doubt he narrowly escaped the fate of the De Witts.

Van den Enden, Spinoza's former teacher, had also volunteered for a mission. He joined a band of conspirators who delivered food to the Dutch. In 1674 they attempted to relieve Holland by raising an insurrection in Normandy. The attempt was unsuccessful and the conspirators were captured. Van den Enden was hung in front of the Bastille on the 27th of November.

As Spinoza's life drew to a close, he was offered a professorship at the University of Heidelberg. The only restriction imposed was that Spinoza not use the position to disturb the established religion. Nadler points out that the post being filled had previously been occupied by a Cartesian, and that it may have been Spinoza's reputation as the author of the *Descartes's Principles* that had led to the offer.¹⁰⁶ As events proved, the opportunity was only apparent, for the occupying French army closed the university in the following year. Fortunately, Spinoza declined, stating as his reason an unwillingness to surrender his quiet life.

However, his life would soon surrender itself. On Saturday, the 20th of February, 1677, Spinoza, ill with consumption, sent to Amsterdam for a medical friend—either Lodewijk Meyer or G. H. Schuller¹⁰⁷—who arrived the next day before the Van der Spijcks left for their morning worship service. When they returned, all four had lunch together. Then Spinoza and his doctor were again left alone as their host and his wife departed for the afternoon service. When the Van der Spijcks returned this time, their home was empty. They were told that Spinoza had died and that his friend from Amsterdam had quickly taken the body away. The Van der Spijcks were shocked. Spinoza's physical and mental condition had not prepared them for his sudden death. Martineau, always seeking an adequate cause for each effect, offers another hypothesis: "The aspect of those hours, with no more light upon them, is precisely what it might have been if the philosopher and the physician had arranged together and carried out a method of euthanasia."¹⁰⁸ It is an intriguing suggestion, but—once again—Spinoza had left behind no account of his journey.

Sebastian Kortholt, in the Preface to *On Three Great Imposters* (1700), wrote this of Spinoza's transition from human life to published immortality:

In order that he should not cease to do harm even after his death, he entrusted, on the day before he died, the books written by his hand to the care of his landlord, . . . so that they might be transmitted to Joh. Riversenius, an Amsterdam bookseller. This was done, and in the same year the Posthumous Works came into people's hands, and gave rise to

different opinions, though all intelligent men judged them to be discordant and impious beyond measure.¹⁰⁹

Van der Spijck, immediately after his boarder's death, even before an inventory could be made of his possessions, sent Spinoza's desk, together with all of its contents, to Amsterdam, where the philosopher's friends set to work preparing the manuscripts for publication. By the end of 1677, both Latin and Dutch editions of the *Posthumous Works of Spinoza* were in circulation.

Reception and Influence

There are only two biographies of Spinoza that were written shortly after his death. The first, *The Life of the Late Mr. De Spinoza*, was by his friend, Jean Maximilien Lucas. Although internal evidence suggests that it was probably completed by 1678, it was not published until 1719. Meanwhile, in 1705, a Lutheran pastor, Johann Colerus, published his own treatise, *On the True Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, defended against Spinoza and his followers: Together with a precise biography of the same famous philosopher compiled from his posthumous writings and the oral testimony of trustworthy persons who are still living*. Colerus had come to serve the Lutheran Church in Amsterdam in 1679, and he was transferred to the Hague in 1693, where he secured the very lodgings shortly occupied by Spinoza in 1670.

Both biographies were, of course, heavily biased. Still, one might suppose that Lucas's biography would have had the effect of providing some balance to the account given by Colerus. Nevertheless, for several reasons, Colerus's became the authoritative biography. It was published fourteen years before the other, and readers were satisfied with Colerus's perspective. Furthermore, Spinoza's writings had been banned, and it wasn't safe to praise them or their author, and so when Lucas's biography was finally published, only a few copies were allowed to circulate and only among certain groups of readers. Colerus doesn't appear to have ever heard of its existence. A composite of the Lucas and Colerus biographies was published in 1731, and readers quite naturally assumed that the Lucas text was merely a later interpolation. It wasn't until a complete text of Lucas's *Life* was discovered early in the twentieth century that scholars recognized its priority.

Surely, a Lutheran "authoritative" biography and critical assessment of Spinoza would have been enough to insure that his reputation and reception would be marred. However, in 1697, the French Huguenot Pierre Bayle included a brief and highly prejudiced depiction of Spinoza's life and works in his *Historical and Critical*

Dictionary. Bayle described our philosopher as “a systematic atheist,” but adds, “Of all the hypotheses of atheism, Spinoza’s is the least capable of misleading anybody; for . . . it opposes the most distinct notions in the human mind.” According to Bayle, Spinoza’s writings are full of logical contradictions and obscurities, and his treatment of miracles is mere word-play.

Bayle’s chief argument against Spinoza, however, is really against a straw man, and it is strikingly similar to the argument that Henry More had made against Descartes a few years earlier. Both Bayle and More take issue with the idea that matter-as-extension is a comprehensive attribute of the universe, since matter “extends” only by moving within space. Space rather than matter, says More, is extension, and since thought is immaterial, it occupies not matter, but space. Bayle supposes, moreover, that if reality can be apprehended in terms of either matter or thought, then logic insists upon the conclusion that every particle of matter is a thinking particle. “He ought,” Bayle complains of Spinoza, “to have recognized that everything in nature thinks, and that man is not the most enlightened and intelligent modification of the universe. He ought then to have admitted demons.” The biographical part of Bayle’s entry is full of errors and is of interest primarily in that it demonstrates the trend of myth-making in the absence of authoritative documents.¹¹⁰ Denis Diderot erringly relied on Bayle’s scholarship in preparing his own entry on Spinoza for the *Encyclopedie* (ca. 1772).

Fortunately, there were intellectuals who relied neither on Bayle nor on Diderot to form their opinions, and when Friedrich Jacobi introduced his friend Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Spinoza in 1774, the world was about to receive an alternative reading. Goethe read through the *Ethics* shortly after the publication of his *Sorrows of Young Werther*. I quote here in detail the pertinent section from Goethe’s autobiography, since it provides us with a key in unlocking the mystery of the attraction to Spinoza that immediately followed the Romantic egoism of Wertherism on the continent and of Byronism in England:

I could not possibly give an account of what I read out of this work, or into it. Let me just say, I found something in it to calm my emotions, and it seemed to open a broad, free view over the physical and moral world. However, I was particularly captivated by the infinite selflessness that radiated from each of his propositions. That curious statement, “He who loves God rightly must not require God to love him in return,” with all the premises on which it rests and all the results issuing from it, pervaded my meditations. To be free of self-interest in everything, and especially in love and friendship, was my highest desire, my maxim, my practice. . . . Moreover, let us not fail to recognize here that the closest unions really

result between opposites. Spinoza's all-soothing calmness contrasted with my all-agitating aspirations, while his mathematical method was the reverse of my poetic thinking and composing; and what made me his passionate disciple and most confirmed admirer was precisely that orderly procedure which people felt was inappropriate for moral subject matter. Mind and heart, reason and sense sought each other out in irresistible elective affinity, and by this means a unification of our very disparate natures was accomplished.¹¹¹

Thus, over half a century before Thomas Carlyle lectured his English readers, "Close thy Bryon; open thy Goethe,"¹¹² Goethe himself had learned to close his Rousseau and open his Spinoza. As Goethe's reputation developed, so too did Spinoza's, and after the "Pantheist Controversy" of 1783 between Mendelssohn and Jacobi, attitudes toward Spinoza began to shift dramatically. Not long afterwards, something remarkable happened that forever altered Spinoza's relation to religious thought. A minister of the Prussian Reformed Church, one who found the Dutch Jewish philosopher entirely amenable to his Christian faith, offered the cultured despisers of religion a new Spinoza and a refined Christian philosophy. That pastor, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, will have to be the subject of another essay.

Spinoza's work was a source of inspiration for generations of intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Writing in 1818, S. T. Coleridge supposed that "the whole first book [of the *Ethics*], De Deo, might be read in a literal English translation to any congregation in the kingdom, and that no individual, who had not been habituated to the strictest and most laborious processes of reasoning, would even suspect its orthodoxy or piety."¹¹³ Implicit in this remark is the recognition that Spinoza's system is not, without modification, a Christian philosophy. Whether Spinozism could be so modified was a concern of personal significance to Coleridge. One of Coleridge's most ardent disciples, John Sterling, shared the Sage of Highgate's admiration for Spinoza. In August 1834, when Arthur P. Stanley, fresh out of Rugby, was visiting "uncle" Julius Hare at Hurstmonceux and browsing over the bookshelves, Sterling pointed to the *Ethics* and called it "the profoundest book there was."¹¹⁴

Once the force of the higher biblical criticism had made itself felt in England, more scholars were willing to give a public voice to their admiration for Spinoza, without concern for his agreement with the Articles of Faith. George Henry Lewes, in 1843, published a vindication of Spinoza in *The Westminster Review*. Four years later James Anthony Froude, writing for the *Cambridge and Oxford Review*, identified Spinoza as the source of the "purest and loftiest religious philosophy" which has spread across Europe.¹¹⁵ It must be acknowledged that not all Broad

Churchmen revered the Dutch philosopher. Froude's brother-in-law, Charles Kingsley, saw Spinoza in very much the same light that Carlyle saw Voltaire—that is, as a revolutionary thinker whose contribution was purely negative, having “beat down the whole method of rabbinical interpretation” without having anything to put into its place. For Kingsley, Spinoza was no more than “the founder of German unbelief in the Old Testament.”¹¹⁶ On the other hand, Matthew Arnold more than admired Spinoza; he had discovered in the philosopher's *Theological-Political Treatise* a model for his own mission. In fact, Arnold's and Froude's criticism may stand together as generally representative of the Broad Church perspective: Spinoza had come to signify the merging of theology, philosophy, and science, the interconnectedness of the spirit and the mind, and the belief that truth is one, whether it comes from the Church or the Academy.

An English edition of Spinoza had not yet been printed. George Eliot (*nee* Mary Anne Evans) found both the *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Ethics* worthy of her philological talents; however, she abandoned the *Treatise* in 1849, convinced, as she explained to her friends, that what was needed was not a translation of Spinoza but “a true estimate of his life and system.”¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, with the subsequent encouragement of G. H. Lewes, she completed a translation of the *Ethics* in early 1856. Even so, the arrangements for publication fell through. We might conjecture that this was not altogether a disappointment to the translator, since in March she was reminding her friends not to mention her name in connection with the manuscript: “I particularly wish not to be known as the translator of the ‘Ethics,’ for reasons which it would be ‘too tedious to mention.’”¹¹⁸ Apparently, George Eliot got her wish, since Matthew Arnold wasn't aware of her work when, in 1863, he wrote, “The Ethics are not yet translated into English.”¹¹⁹ Rather surprisingly, it was not until 1883 that an English translation of the *Ethics* was finally published. William Hale White, the author of *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881), performed this much needed service.

In the year following the publication of White's translation, the headmaster of the City of London School, Edwin A. Abbott, published his Spinozistic satire on Victorian society, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. Not only does Abbott use geometrical figures as an allegorical device, but his “Promethean” first-person narrator, A. Square, recounts the story of his persecution resulting from his efforts to “arouse in the interiors of Plane and Solid Humanity a spirit of rebellion against the Conceit which would limit our Dimension to Two or Three or any number short of Infinity.”¹²⁰ His religious and philosophical mission is to awaken in the consciousness of humanity the existence of a higher reality perceivable “with the inner eye of thought.”¹²¹ Abbott's mind, like Spinoza's, was creative and scientific.

In *Philomythus*, his 1891 attack on John Henry Newman's *Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles* (1843), Abbott argued that, regardless of how many dimensions there may be to ultimate reality, the "right rule" of thought is "to regard as *antecedently* false, or highly improbable, *all statements that contradict our knowledge of the fixed and orderly course of things.*"¹²²

Abbott's God was the God of Spinoza, a Being too powerful to allow for miracles. This was also the God of Schleiermacher, who—more than any other theologian—brought Spinozism directly to bear upon Calvinist theology, transforming both in the process. For Schleiermacher, the fixed and orderly course of things was not prohibitive of miracles, but rather was itself the constant miracle of Infinite and Eternal Being.

Notes

1. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1957), 20-1.

2. "Bentham, the founder of Utilitarianism, was of the opinion that religion occupied 'a principle place among the causes of most human evils.' In partnership with George Grote he published a work in which he maintained that religion was not only totally useless but actually harmful to society" (Eugene L. Williamson, *The Liberalism of Thomas Arnold* [University, AL: Alabama University Press, 1964], 159). Dr. Thomas Arnold observed, "Except for a few fanatics in wickedness, all then, whether believers in Christ or no, will acknowledge that Christianity has done more to civilize the world than any other system, religious, political, or philosophical" (*The Englishman's Register*, No. 3 [May 21, 1831], in *The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold, D.D.*, ed. A. P. Stanley [London: B. Fellowes, 1845], 133).

3. Thomas Arnold wrote, in a letter of November 9, 1838, to the Chevalier Bunsen, "When Christ . . . forbade James and John to call down fire from heaven, etc. His meaning seems to me to have been this, that moral and religious superiority, *i.e.* the being Christians, did not confer any title to physical and external dominion. . . . This, I think, is the bar to religious persecution, because it is not the possession of religious superiority that warrants us in exercising physical power over other men" (Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.*, 2 vols., 12th ed. [London: John Murray, 1881], 2: 122). A. P. Stanley noted that much mischief is done by a wrong understanding of what constitutes *division* and *unity*: "Surely, when our Lord declared of the man who cast out devils in Christ's name, yet followed not with the Apostles, that 'he who was not against Him was on His part,' He told us clearly that there might be outward divisions of form, which were compatible with the truest unity of spirit" (Rowland E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Late Dean of Westminster*, 2 vols. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894], 1: 182).

4. Richard Whately, qtd. in Extracts from Nassau Senior's Journal, *The Life and Correspondence of Richard Whately, D.D., Late Archbishop of Dublin*, by E. Jane Whately, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), 361.
5. Moses Mendelssohn, *Morning Lessons or Lectures on the Existence of God* (Berlin, 1785); rpt. in *The Main Writings Relative to the Pantheism Debate between Jacobi and Mendelssohn*, ed. H. Scholtz (Berlin, 1916), 28-9, 29-44; abridged in *The Spinoza Conversations between Lessing and Jacobi*, ed. and trans. G. Vallee, J. B. Lawson, and C. G. Chapple (New York: University Press of America, 1988), 64-77, 77.
6. C. FitzSimmons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1994), 119.
7. Persecution under Justinian, as Jeremy Taylor notes, "came not so farre as death. The first that preached that Doctrine was *Dominick*, the Founder of the Begging Orders of Friers" (*Epistle Dedicatory, A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying, 1647* (Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press Ltd., 1971), 28.
8. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Seymour Feldman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), Preface, 3.
9. Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *Ethics, TIE, and Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Seymour Feldman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), Part IV, Prop. 54, Scholium; 184).
10. *Theological-Political Treatise*, 47.
11. 2 Cor. 7:14a, 17.
12. Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.
13. Article 13 of the Union of Utrecht stipulated "Every individual should remain free in his religion, and no man should be molested or questioned on the subject of divine worship" (qtd. in Nadler, 8).
14. *Ibid.*, 78-81, 90-3.
15. Jean Maximilien Lucas, *The Life of the Late Mr. De Spinosa*, 1719, trans. A. Wolf, in *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza*, ed. A. Wolf (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1927), 39-75, 44.
16. James Martineau, *A Study of Spinoza*, 3rd ed. (1895; rpt. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 7.
17. Alfred William Benn, *The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 1: 282.
18. The Collegiants would, by the end of the eighteenth century, disappear as a separate party, as they merged together with the Mennonites.
19. Nadler, 118-19.
20. Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, in *Ethics, TIE, and Selected Letters*, §1, 233.
21. *Ibid.*, §7, 234; my italics.
22. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536 ed., trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), I.B.2., 16.
23. *Treatise*, §9-10, 234-35.
24. Rom. 7:19.

25. *Treatise*, §11, 235.
26. George Henry Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy: From Its Origin in Greece down to the Present Day* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857), 388.
27. Lucas, 44, 46-7.
28. *Ibid.*, 47.
29. Nadler, 120.
30. *Ibid.*, 127.
31. Joseph Ratner, "The Life of Spinoza," in *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Selected from His Chief Works*, ed. Joseph Ratner (New York: Modern Library, 1927), xi-xxvi, xvii.
32. Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, trans. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991), 292.
33. Richard H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), 121. Popkin observes, "The original text is in *Letters and Documents of Early Friends, copied from originals which were preserved in Swarthmore Hall*, Vol. 1, p. 73, in the manuscript collection at the Friends Library in London."
34. Nadler, 265-69.
35. John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, publ. 1678 (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), First Part, 81.
36. *Treatise*, §13, §16, 235-36.
37. *Ibid.*, §84, §39, 255, 242.
38. *Ibid.*, §43, 243.
39. *Ibid.*, §68, 250.
40. Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), 69.
41. Lucas, 57.
42. Nadler, 196-98.
43. *Ibid.*, 212.
44. Spinoza, "Selected Letters," No. 19, in *Ethics, TIE, and Selected Letters*, 272.
45. *Ibid.*, No. 21, 275.
46. Calvin, II.A.8, 46.
47. "Selected Letters," No. 21, 275.
48. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. 5, 70.
49. Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, publ. 1930, trans. E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 196.
50. *Ethics*, I. Def. 3; I. Prop. 7, Proof; I. Prop. 8; 31, 34.
51. *Ibid.*, I. Def. 4, 31.
52. "Selected Letters," Nos. 2 and 9, 263, 267.
53. Descartes "maintained that the soul or mind is united in a special way with a certain part of the brain called the pineal gland, by means of which the mind senses all movements that occur in the body, as well as external objects, and by the mere act of willing it can move the gland in various ways" (*Ethics*, V. Preface; 201).
54. *Ethics*, I. Def. 5, 31.
55. "Selected Letters," Nos. 2 and 12, 263, 268-69.

56. *Ethics*, I. Def. 6; I. Prop. 11, Proof; I. Prop. 14; 31, 37, 39.
57. *Ibid.*, I. Prop. 14, Corollary 2, 40.
58. *Ibid.*, I. Prop. 29, Scholium, 51-2.
59. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. 2, 22.
60. James Martineau, p. 347.
61. *Ethics*, I. Prop. 17, Scholium; I. Prop. 18; 44-6.
62. "Selected Letters," No. 56, 283-84.
63. *Ethics*, II. Prop. 2, 64.
64. Novalis, "Last Fragments," No. 32, in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 159.
65. *Ethics*, I. Prop. 15, Scholium, 43.
66. Andrews Norton, *A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity: Delivered at the Request of the "Association of the Alumni of the Cambridge Theological School," on the 19th of July, 1839* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 9-10.
67. Nadler, 231.
68. Stephen H. Daniel observes that Joseph Raphson, in *De Spatio Reali seu Ente Infinitio* (1697), used the terms "pantheos" and "pantheismus." John Toland, to whom the origin of the word is often ascribed, probably picked up the term from Raphson ("Toland's Semantic Pantheism," in *Christianity not Mysterious* by John Toland, ed. Philip McGuinness et al [Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1997], 303-12, 306. Cf. Thomas McFarland, "Toland and the Origin of the Word 'Pantheist,'" in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1969], 266.)
69. Henry Nelson Coleridge, ed., *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 4 vols. (London: Pickering, 1839), 4: 223-24.
70. Daniel, 306.
71. Ralph Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, I.iv.7 (London: Printed for Richard Royston, Bookseller, 1678): 198-200. J. A. Passmore notes, "In one of his manuscripts Cudworth refers to Spinoza as 'a kind of hylozoick atheist'" (*Ralph Cudworth: An Interpretation* [London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1951], 6). Hylozoism is generally understood as the theory that all material objects possess life or, stated another way, that life is a property of matter itself. Coleridge, in 1818, more accurately refers to Schelling's system as "Hylozoic Atheism" (*The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 4 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71], 4: 874). As Thomas McFarland observes, "Hylozoism . . . is not a doctrine of Spinoza's" (n 159).
72. Frederick Denison Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886), 2: 390-91.
73. McFarland, 268.
74. Marcus J. Borg, "Thinking about God: Why Panentheism?," Chap. 2 in *The God We Never Knew* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 32-54.
75. Acts 17:28.
76. Johann Gottfried Herder, Letter to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, February 6th, 1784, in *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*, trans. and ed. Marcia Bunge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 123.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 124; *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.2. Cf. Schleiermacher to Jacobi: "Because you will not deify nature, you deify human consciousness. But, dear friend, in my eyes the one is as much of a deification as the other. . . . Are you better able to conceive of God as a person than as *natura naturans*? If you form to yourself a living conception of a person, must not this person of necessity be finite?" (*Life of Schleiermacher*, trans. and ed. Frederica Rowan, 2 vols. [London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1860], 2: 283).

78. *Ethics*, I. Prop. 17, 44.

79. *Ibid.*, II. Prop. 35, Scholium, 86.

80. "Selected Letters," No. 58, 286.

81. *Ethics*, IV. Preface, 153-54.

82. "Selected Letters," No. 19, 273, 275.

83. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. 4, 50-1.

84. *Ethics*, V. Prop. 32, Corollary, 217.

85. *Ibid.*, V. Prop. 19, 211.

86. Strauss, 202.

87. Earl Leslie Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), 4: 548-49. Cf. James Anthony Froude: "If Calvinism be pressed to its logical consequences, it either becomes an intolerable falsehood, or it resolves itself into the philosophy of Spinoza" ("Spinoza," *Westminster Review* [1854], in *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, 4 vols. [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894], 1: 339-400, 364.

88. Nadler, 269.

89. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Preface, 8.

90. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6, 74.

91. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6, 76.

92. Thomas Hardy, "Hap" (*Wessex Poems*, 1898), in *Complete Poems*, ed. James Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1976), 9.

93. *Select Passages from the Theological Writings of Benjamin Jowett*, ed. Lewis Campbell (London: John Murray, 1902), 142; quotation from *The Epistles of St. Paul*.

94. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Ch. 7, 91; cf. 105.

95. *Ibid.*, Ch. 7, 102-03.

96. *Ibid.*, Ch. 7, 93.

97. *Ibid.*, Ch. 12, 155.

98. *Ibid.*, Ch. 14, 167.

99. *Ibid.*, Ch. 12, 149.

100. *Ibid.*, Ch. 14, 168.

101. *Ibid.*, Chs. 18-20.

102. Lucas, 65.

103. Nadler, 259, 286-87; cf. Martineau, 73, Roger Scruton, *Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 12.

104. Lucas, 62-3.

105. Martineau, 92-3. Scruton dismisses Lucas's account and accepts Martineau's hypothesis as historic truth (13). Nadler rejects Martineau's hypothesis and accepts the account given by Lucas (319).
106. Nadler, 311-12.
107. According to Johann Colerus, Spinoza "had sent for a certain doctor L. M. from Amsterdam." However, in correspondence, Schuller informed both Tschirnhaus and Leibniz that he had been present with Spinoza at the time of his death (Nadler, 350).
108. Martineau, 103.
109. Sebastian Korthold, Preface to *On Three Greet Impostors* by Christian Kortholt, publ. 1700, qtd. in *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza*, ed. A. Wolf, 169-70.
110. Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, transl. and ed. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1991), 288-338.
111. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, transl. Richard H. Heitner, in *The Collected Works*, 12 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), 4: 459.
112. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 1833-34 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 146.
113. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, 2 vols., ed Barbara E. Rooke, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 4 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), 1: 55.
114. Rowland E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penhryn Stanley*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1844), 1: 110.
115. Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 208; Basil Willey, *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959), 117.
116. Letter of Charles Kingsley to Adolph Saphir, 1 November 1852, in *Letters & Memories*, ed. F. Kingsley; Bideford ed., 2 vols. (London: The Co-Operative Publication Society, 1899), 1: 307.
117. Letter of Mary Ann Evans to Charles Bray, 4 December 1849, in *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, ed. J. W. Cross, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885), 1: 172.
118. Letter of Mary Ann Evans to Charles Bray, 26 March 1856, in Cross, 1: 283. George Henry Lewes (1817-78), who first proposed the English translation of the *Ethica* to his publisher, G. H. Bohn, had initially made arrangements that he himself should manage the Introduction and editing and that a certain William Kelly would undertake the translation. Lewes's plan was revised shortly after his romantic liaison with George Eliot had begun in 1854. After the completed manuscript had been sent to Bohn in 1856, a disagreement over the original terms led to a heated exchange of letters between Lewes and Bohn in June, ending in Lewes's request to have the manuscript returned ("Bohn-Lewes Correspondence" in Dorothy Atkins, *George Eliot and Spinoza*, Vol. 78 of *Romantic Reassessment*, ed. James Hogg [University of Salzburg, Austria: Institute for English Language and Literature, 1978], 171-77).

119. Matthew Arnold, "Spinoza and the Bible," in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super, 11 vols. (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960-77), 3: 158-82, 175.

120. Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (New York: Dover, 1992), 70.

121. *Ibid.*, 72.

122. Edwin A. Abbott, *Philomythus*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1891), 92.

Benedict de Spinoza, Dutch Jewish philosopher, one of the foremost exponents of 17th-century Rationalism and one of the early and seminal figures of the Enlightenment. His masterwork is the treatise Ethics (1677). Learn more about Spinoza's life and work. Get exclusive access to content from our 1768 First Edition with your subscription. Subscribe today. When he was 18 or 19 years old, Spinoza and his brother went into business selling tropical fruit.