

PAUL HAZARD AND THE "CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN CONSCIENCE"*

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AN inaugural lecture ought to be concerned with the joys and difficulties and profundities and techniques of one's discipline in general, and constitute a declaration of personal loyalty to its mysteries. However, I gave an inaugural lecture three years ago, and since—unfortunately—it was published, and since history (as we all know) does not repeat itself, I have decided to speak tonight on a specific individual theme. But this theme will be considered in a reckless and informal manner which, just possibly, may throw some light, if not on the joys and profundities of historical study, at least on its techniques, and especially on its difficulties. A direct declaration of personal allegiance may be lacking, but at any rate the background will be highly personal, and the lecturer's usual precaution of concealing the struts and stays of his vehicle behind a smooth streamlined surface will not be adopted.

In an essay¹ which but lately I contracted to write and which has just been completed, I discovered that I had chosen a formula, a sort of basic analogy or metaphor, to give unity to the argument, and on reflection, it appeared that this formula differed interestingly from the unifying formula which lies behind a great work of scholarship on the same historical period which was published exactly a quarter of a century ago. It struck me that it might be worth while to attempt to retrace the mental processes which had led to this choice, and this lecture is an attempt to describe them. But I must begin by referring to the great work which was published twenty-five years ago—Paul Hazard's *La Crise de la Conscience européenne 1680-1715*.²

You will remember how M. Hazard dealt with the years from 1680 to 1715, those vivid, prosaic, bitter, erudite and controversial years, making them appear as the life-span of the crucial generation in the intellectual history of modern times. "The majority of Frenchmen thought like Bossuet: suddenly, they thought like Voltaire—a revolution had taken place." The illustration is from France, but it is extended to the whole of Western Europe. As early as 1680, the ideas of 1760—indeed, of 1789—were all in existence in germ. At the turn of the seventeenth century, the

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¹ "Religion and the Relations of Church and State, 1688-1715", *New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. VI, edited by J. S. Bromley—to be published.

² Three vols., 1934; English translation by J. L. May as *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (1935).

spirit of the Renaissance arose again, albeit joylessly (a Renaissance without Rabelais), and prepared the transition from a civilization based on duty—duty to God, duty to the Prince—to one founded upon the idea of natural rights—the rights of the individual, of conscience, of reason, of criticism, the rights of man and the citizen. In this analysis, M. Hazard developed two main themes; on the one hand, there was a developing attack on the Christian world-outlook, on the other there was the simultaneous building-up of the new world-outlook. We study first, “Le Procès du Christianisme” and secondly, “La Cité des Hommes”. These two major themes are carried on in the next great book Hazard wrote, a study of eighteenth-century thought,³ where they figure as “The City of God” and “The City of Man”.

During the last seven or eight months in which I have been working within the period of Hazard’s “crisis of the European conscience”, I have, indirectly, but none the less inescapably, been often confronted with his thesis and the problems with which he was dealing. Now the historian—alas!—is obliged to wander into the field of other and more highly-specialized disciplines—literature, philosophy, theology, art, music, even science—and however cautious one may be, there is no evading the fact that, sooner or later, qualified or unqualified, consciously or unconsciously, one has to make up one’s mind. This claim to a universal scope for the historian may appear pretentious. But I hasten to add that my foray around the strategic marches separating the various fiefs within the kingdom of the humanities is an unpretentious expedition indeed, in which I figure, not as a knight-errant who will challenge the reigning barons, but as a humble clerk making a tally of their sheep and oxen for the pages of my Domesday, or at best, as a minstrel, singing the praises, impartially, of each splendid member of the warring aristocracy of the Arts. Admitting, then, that my conclusions are the result of unskilled drudgery around the more comprehensible fringes of other people’s disciplines, in this lecture I should like to suggest a rather different formula for interpreting the “crisis of the European conscience” from that which shapes the pattern of Paul Hazard’s brilliant work.

It would be interesting to investigate the ancestry of Hazard’s decision to give decisive importance to the years 1680 to 1715.⁴ For the moment, however, we need go no further back than Léon Brunschwig’s *Progrès de la Conscience dans la philosophie occidentale* for a parallel and a contrast. This generation, which Hazard regarded as so vigorous and new, was interpreted by Brunschwig in terms of disintegration. An intellectual, as well as a political regency, began in 1715; the fratricidal warfare of the great religious giants of the seventeenth century had left Catholic Europe

³ *La Pensée européenne au 18^e siècle* (2 vols., 1946).

⁴ The Goncourts referred to the period 1685–1725 as an “interregnum in French thought”. Lecky (*History of Rationalism in Europe* (2 vols., 1890)), I, pp. 407–8, emphasizes the period between Bacon and Locke. E. Dowden, *Puritan and Anglican* (1900), p. 31, emphasizes the years between the publication of the second part of *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the *Tale of a Tub*—“The questions which occupied the minds of the younger generation were new . . . In place of absolute dogma and unqualified conclusions we find a sense that truth is relative . . .” etc. For Lanson’s view—“Voltaire nageait en plein courant”, see his article “Questions diverses sur l’histoire de l’esprit philosophique en France avant 1750”, *Rev. d’hist. litt. de la France*, 1912, p. 313 et seq.

obsessed with fears of heresy, the spiritual atmosphere became too rarified to support healthy activity; the way was open for Voltaire.⁵ Now, I must concede that there is an element of artificiality in the comparison I have made between Hazard and Brunschwig—they both have a great deal to say, with many nuances and many-sided insights, and the word “conscience” in their titles does not have the same content for both of them—nevertheless, a sharp contrast remains, which has its interest. Indeed, my suggestion would be that the most apposite formula for synthesizing recent work on the “crisis of the European conscience” would be one which combines Hazard’s active theme of attack and innovation with Brunschwig’s concentration upon the old intellectual structure; a formula which sees the old striving intelligently to renew itself, while, paradoxically, from this effort, hostile and challenging innovation was born.

Since Hazard wrote, a great deal has been published, and there is obviously no time to refer now to more than a fraction of this material—and in any case, my knowledge of it is limited. One can refer only to some of the main tendencies of the new work. Annie Barnes’ fine study of Jean Le Clerc, R. L. Colie’s *Cambridge Platonists and Dutch Arminians*, and Stromberg’s *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England*⁶ are examples of books geographically centred on the intellectual capitals of Protestantism. From Paris, the “crisis of the European conscience” may look like a conspiracy against Catholicism; from Geneva (where liberal theologians were in the ascendant from 1706 onwards), from Holland (that haunt of Arminianism and heterodoxy) or from latitudinarian London, developments fit more naturally into the theme of internal tensions within Christianity itself. When Paul Hazard wrote, it was still possible, indeed it was natural, to speak in terms of a clash between religion and science; but the main tendency of subsequent work has been to expel this essentially nineteenth-century assumption from interpretations of the seventeenth century. In the year in which *La Crise de la conscience européenne* was published, a brief article appeared which—it so happened—was destined to initiate a theoretical discussion which may yet become as famous as Weber’s “Calvinism and Capitalism” hypothesis—a discussion of the linkages between Puritanism and the rise of the scientific attitude.⁷ A third characteristic of recent work upon our period is, I think, the intervention in force of the historical theologians and the ecclesiastical historians. In addition to all the research on straightforward religious history we now have excellent monographs on the idea of the Church in both Protestant and Catholic

⁵ L. Brunschwig, *Le Progrès de la Conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, Vol. I, pp. 222, 268.

⁶ A. Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc et la République des Lettres* (1938); R. L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment: a Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (1957); R. N. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England* (1954).

⁷ Dorothy Stimson, “Puritanism and the New Philosophy in Seventeenth Century England”, *Bull. of the Institute of the History of Medicine* (Johns Hopkins University), Vol. III, No. 5 (1935), pp. 321–32. For a bibliography of subsequent writings, see R. S. Westfall, *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (1958), p. 7, and J. K. Rabb, “Puritanism and the Rise of Experimental Science in England”, *Cahiers d’histoire mondiale*, Vol. II (1962), pp. 46–67.

theology,⁸ on the implications of the Eucharistic controversy,⁹ on the Catholic apologists' deliberate use of scepticism,¹⁰ on the idea of doctrinal development,¹¹ on Socinian propaganda,¹² on Gallicanism,¹³ on the intellectual background of Jansenism in both France and Italy.¹⁴ It is evident that the "crisis of the European conscience" is a phenomenon which can be illustrated at least as cogently from the writings of the contemporary theologians, apologists and antiquaries¹⁵ as from literature and philosophy. We can learn the same lesson from the contributions of the school of American historians who concentrate on the history of ideas. It is significant that three of the most important works of these scholars—Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being*, Tuveson's *Millennium and Utopia*, and Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*¹⁶—all emphasize the role of metaphysical and theological speculation (as against the sheer impact of scientific discovery) in forming the modern world-outlook. The specialist study of the history of ideas has also helped to detach us from concentration on brilliant isolated outbursts of the literature of dissidence in favour of a closer consideration of the average level of conventional argument and assumption. Bayle has been misunderstood in the past because he was studied too much in isolation as a sardonic iconoclast, while for me, F. E. Manuel's fascinating *The Eighteenth Century confronts the Gods*¹⁷ has the effect of putting Fontenelle into a more serious, less ironical context. Then finally, if the "crisis of the European conscience" is the curtain-raiser to the Enlightenment, one should note that our ideas of the Enlightenment are changing. The unsubtle portrayal of Voltaire as an anti-clerical anti-Christ—as a nineteenth-century Voltairean indeed—against which Chaponnière protested in 1932,¹⁸ is no longer possible after Pomeau's¹⁹ superb monograph. The affinities, as well as the differences, between Christian apologists and the *philosophes* are now being emphasized; Crocker²⁰ speaks

⁸ R. Voeltzel, *Vraie et fausse Église selon les théologiens protestants français du XVII^e siècle* (1956); G. Thils, *Les Notes de l'Église dans l'apologétique catholique depuis la Réforme* (1937).

⁹ R. Snoeks, *L'Argument de tradition dans la controverse eucharistique entre catholiques et réformés français au XVII^e siècle* (1951).

¹⁰ L. I. Bredvold, *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* (new ed. 1956).

¹¹ Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: the Idea of Doctrinal Development* (1957).

¹² E. M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism; Socinianism and its Antecedents* (1946).

¹³ J. Martimort, *Le Gallicanisme de Bossuet* (1954).

¹⁴ A bibliography covering Italy and France in detail may be compiled from E. Appolis, *Entre Jansénistes et Zelanti: le "tiers Parti" catholique au XVIII^e siècle* (1960). In addition, one ought to mention R. Taveneaux, *Le Jansénisme en Lorraine* (1960), with important new information on the movement of ideas and scholarship in the Congregation of Saint-Vanne.

¹⁵ For an introduction to their writings, see D. C. Douglas, *English Scholars, 1660-1730* (1939, new ed. 1951); M. D. Knowles, "The Bollandists", *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th Ser., Vol. VIII (1958), and "The Maurists", *ibid.*, Vol. IX (1959). Notice the weight given to this side of intellectual achievement in H. Busson, *La Religion des Classiques 1660-85* (1948).

¹⁶ Published in 1936, 1949 and 1960 respectively.

¹⁷ Published in 1960.

¹⁸ "If Voltaire had not existed, they'd have had to invent him, and as a matter of fact, that's what they have done" (P. Chaponnière, *Voltaire chez les Calvinistes* (1932), p. 32).

¹⁹ R. Pomeau, *La Religion de Voltaire* (1956).

²⁰ Lester G. Crocker, *An Age of Crisis, Man and World in Eighteenth-Century French Thought* (1959), especially p. 255.

of eighteenth-century ethical theory as accepting a secularized version of the Christian view of man's dual nature, Palmer²¹ shows orthodox and unbelievers agreeing in a common concept of nature which only Jansenists and a few sceptical materialists rejected. Today, to write in round terms of the warfare between Church and *philosophes* is a little old-fashioned, or at least, one prefaces everything by references to the great areas of common assumptions shared by both sides, and makes continual qualifications about the internal differences which fissure each group of combatants. Voltaire remained all his life an old-boy of *Louis-le-Grand*, an ex-pupil of the Jesuits,²² and nothing darkened his later years more than the materialists who would have the Sage of Ferney descended from a cod-fish.

Viewed, then, from Protestant centres rather than from Paris, freed from the anachronistic myth of a war between religion and science, expanded in scope by extended interests in technical theology and apologetics, and seen as a prelude to a more complicated Enlightenment, the "crisis of the European conscience", so it seems to me, is more appropriately described as a fermentation within a Christian intellectual *milieu* than a corroding attack from without. It is a civil war, street-fighting in the capital, rather than an eruption of invaders through the decaying frontier line.

Now I hasten to say that my view of the crisis as essentially a crisis *within* Christianity is not meant to be an exclusive interpretation. Inevitably, any survey of "the Spirit of an age" will end with an analogy. M. Orcibal concludes a recent paper²³ on the idea of the Church in our period by describing Catholicism, at the opening of the eighteenth century, as a fortress under attack by Gallicans, Jansenists, sceptics and unbelievers. René Pintard's monumental thesis on the *libertins*²⁴ ends by referring to the flood waters which cover the eighteenth-century landscape as having accumulated throughout the previous century in rivulets, hidden from the general gaze by the opulent vegetation of Christianity and classicism. One accepts these analogies (both making the "crisis" external to Christianity) and works with them so far—yet it is possible to prefer a different sort of formula for one's overall summary. These choices of formula and analogy, and the order of effectiveness one awards to them, are important. The layman may feel impatient with the historian and urge him to get on with the job of writing history, whatever trimmings he may adopt. But a formula which is adopted merely to give unity to the presentation, or a metaphor accepted merely to enliven the prose, can very easily become the core of the whole interpretation. When one speaks, for example, of the long feud between Germany and France, is it in terms of two predetermined opposites, self-justified existences, Leviathans that devour, or is it in terms of a civil war within an entity called Europe, which geographers, economists, linguists, anthropologists and students

²¹ R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (1939).

²² Pomeau emphasizes the fact that he remained impregnated with their "catholicity", even though their Christian teaching was wasted on him.

²³ J. Orcibal, "L'Idée de l'Église chez les catholiques du 18^e siècle", *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienza Storiche*, Vol. IV (n.d. 1957?), pp. 111-135.

²⁴ R. Pintard, *Le Libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (2 vols., 1943), pp. 573 ff.

of art and literature must help the historian to define? Or is it both—and if so, which formula will be most comprehensively employed? Similarly, the interpretation of the “crisis of the European conscience” poses a choice between two types of analogy—that of opposing forces on the one hand, and that of forces growing within forces on the other. Both may be employed, but which is to be employed most comprehensively?

From one point of view (though, as I have suggested, this is not the ideal formulation) the critical intellectual tensions of the transitional period between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may be described as a gathering assault upon the Christian fortress. We are all familiar with the composition of the attacking forces. Scientific views of causation undermine miracles, historical scholarship rejects legend, “reason” becomes the test of religion, the Cartesian tradition insists upon strict demonstration and clarity, Socinian propaganda moves on from scriptural liberalism to rationalistic simplicity, the French *libertins* are being read again, and there is a renewed interest in some of their original sources—the epicurean philosophy and Lucretius; the shades of Hobbes and Spinoza, but lately dead, haunt the theologians; Locke rejects innate ideas, the English Deists challenge revelation (Toland’s *Christianity not Mysteriorious*, published in 1696), Fontenelle’s attack on the oracles has sinister implications; Bayle’s *Dictionary* appeared in 1697, a work which was to be a handbook of scepticism throughout the eighteenth century.

But when in August, 1711, Voltaire left the classes of his Jesuit schoolmasters, the future still held alternative possibilities. It is misleading to isolate within the Enlightenment only those tendencies which were hostile to Christianity, ignoring the common ground between apologists and *philosophes*, and *a fortiori* it is more dangerous still to work back from this point, regarding “the crisis of the European conscience” simply as the prelude to an intellectual conspiracy.

We have noted that the Cartesian tradition demanded strict demonstration and clarity, and it is true that there were those who saw in its rigours a suitable camouflage for attacks on religion. “A great battle against the church is being mounted”, wrote Bossuet in 1687, “under the flag of the Cartesian philosophy”,²⁵ and five years later the Jesuit Père Daniel was afraid that the Cartesian path led to materialism.²⁶ Yet, as we know, in our period Cartesianism was captured for Christian philosophy by Malebranche and Arnauld, it duly became accepted in the Jesuit and Oratorian *collèges* of France and, as a recent writer has observed, the eighteenth century was capable of seeing Cartesianism solely through “an incense-laden apologetic mist”.²⁷ And here, in passing, one ought, perhaps, to say a word about Hobbes and Spinoza. They lie rather before our period, but their influence runs through it, and these two sinister figures are, above all others, qualified to fit into the theme of an attack on the fortress of Christianity—if cohorts are moving up to the assault, Hobbes and

²⁵ *Oeuvres*, ed. Migne (1865), XI, Col. 974.

²⁶ *Voyage du monde de Descartes* (1692).

²⁷ A. Vartarnian, *Diderot and Descartes: a Study of Scientific Naturalism in the Enlightenment* (1933), p. 38.

Spinoza are in the van, directing the battering-rams. Yet, on examination, their position is peculiar. Hobbs aroused great panic and no doubt his motives were devious, but it is worth pointing out that he wreaked his greatest devastation by crudely accepting unexceptionable Biblical propositions—that inspiration must be direct, not second-hand, that the resurrection of the body is true doctrine, not the immortality of the soul, that the Hebraic God of irrational will is the Christian Deity, not the serene, reasonable Godhead of the Greeks which the Church had appropriated to modify the original concept.²⁸ Hobbes had no real footing in the scientific movement of his age, and though he loved geometry he knew nothing about it—his method is not geometrical or new, it is rather an anti-method, a sardonic and deliberate reversal of the arguments from Scripture and the conventional assumptions that the theologians used. The voice of Hobbes spoke from inside the very Christian argument; the disproportionate fear he aroused among ecclesiastics is due to this very fact. Spinoza, it is true, stands right outside the Christian intellectual structure—but it is significant that, as Vernière²⁹ has shown, his influence was essentially *indirect*. His alien status made his readers unwilling to admit their alarm or indebtedness. In our period, Spinoza's impact was felt, not towards pantheism or determinism, but towards a new view of the Biblical documents—but here, it is notable that what he said did not become an issue until the theme was taken up by Richard Simon,³⁰ the Oratorian—i.e. taken up inside the fortress, by one of the garrison, not from the outside. However, I must leave this excursus on Hobbes and Spinoza and return to the thinkers who flourished within the strict limits of the period of the crisis of the European conscience. Most scientists then were convinced Christians (men like John Ray and Robert Boyle were entirely dominated by Christian inspirations) acutely aware, as Westfall has recently shown, that some of the concepts they were using were dangerous to their faith, and attempting to take precautions. The historians who demolished legends were ecclesiastics—non-juring divines and latitudinarian bishops, Jesuit Bollandists, Jansenist liturgiologists, Oratorians, Benedictines of the order of Saint-Maur. So, too, of philosophers, were Malebranche and Berkeley; Locke was sincerely anxious to find rational grounds for religious assent, Shaftesbury received the Sacrament blessing the Providence which had kept the Church of England free from “monstrous enthusiasm”.³¹ The most prominent Socinian writer in England was a respectable country clergyman.³² Calvinist refugees dominated the “Republic of Letters” in Holland; Jean Le Clerc was unorthodox on the Trinity but otherwise doctrinally sound,³³ and Bayle, that prince of sceptics,

²⁸ W. B. Glover, “God and Thomas Hobbes”, *Church History*, Sept. 1960, pp. 275 *et seq.*

²⁹ P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (2 vols., 1944).

³⁰ Taken up, one might add, as a Catholic device to undermine the Protestant reliance on the Bible, and not in the spirit of Renan (see H. Fréville, “Richard Simon et les Protestants d'après sa correspondance”, *Rev. d'hist. moderne*, Vol. VI (1931)).

³¹ R. L. Brett, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, a Study in Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (1951), pp. 46-7.

³² M. J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (1951), pp. 313 *et seq.*

³³ A. Barnes, *op. cit.*, pp. 237 *et seq.*

was an austere practising believer. The gulf between the actual sentiments of Pierre Bayle and the use that was eventually made of his writings is so great that for long he was regarded as an intellectual desperado keeping one foot planted in the door of the sacristy awaiting the decisive push of the *philosophes*, an old misconception which provides an example of the way in which this earlier period can be distorted by looking at it through the atmosphere of the high eighteenth century. Recent work on Bayle³⁴ returns to Saint-Beuve's dictum—"Bayle était religieux", a verdict based, not so much on his communicating four times a year, but on his self-revelation in private correspondence. With a Calvinist view of human nature and a conviction that men use reason merely as camouflage for the dictates of passion, Bayle turned inwards to a religious illumination which was all there was to live by. It was a pale, cold flame, but beyond its narrow circle there was darkness, delusively lit from time to time by the lightning flashes of passion, and blocked by an impassable tangle of the ruins of human endeavour at rational construction. Bayle, Locke and the seminal thinkers of this era may have deviated from strict orthodoxy—but no more so than Milton (whose heresy, it now appears, was not Arianism, but Nestorianism and Docetism³⁵), nor did their divergencies into heterodoxy travel through any greater distance than the Christian churches had already travelled from each other. These writers maintained religious practice and insisted that they adhered to Christianity. Thus, while from one point of view the "crisis of the European conscience" may be regarded as a gathering attack upon the religious fortress, its total significance is better seized if we see it essentially as a crisis within Christianity itself. "Reason", "Scepticism", and "Science" were, in this period, being used to explain, defend and re-interpret religion. As this process went on, two things were happening; arguments were scattered abroad and fell into the hands of agnostics and anticlericals, and, at the same time, changes were forced within the religious outlook, changes whose importance we can easily overlook if we insist on using the terminology of warfare to describe tensions of belief. Such terminology tends to concentrate on differences, rather than on the common ground of agreement, and encourages the assumption (often incorrect) that a monolithic intellectual unity has a superior survival value to a diversified and (even) conflicting complex of ideas. The period of the "crisis of the European conscience" may mark the origins of modernity—but if so, it was the beginning of modern times for both the apologists and the opponents of Christianity.

"Reason", "Scepticism", and "Science"—these ambiguous, all-embracing portmanteau words, are the essential stock-in-trade of the student of the period of the

³⁴ See P. Dibon's introduction to *Pierre Bayle, le Philosophe de Rotterdam* (1959), and W. H. Barber, "Pierre Bayle: Faith and Reason", in *The French Mind, studies in honour of Gustave Rudler* (1952). It has been remarked that Bayle's irony was that of Erasmus, not of Voltaire (Labrousse, in Dibon, *op. cit.*, p. 112). "Every day of our lives", wrote Bayle, typically, "we give our allegiance to truths while ridiculing some of the proofs on which they are supposed to be based" (P. Denis, "Lettres inéd. de P. Bayle", *Rev. hist. litt.*, 1912, p. 924).

³⁵ W. B. Hunter, "Milton's Arianism Reconsidered", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. LII (1959), pp. 9 *et seq.*; "Milton on the Incarnation: some more Heresies", *Journal History of Ideas*, Vol. XXI (3), 1960, pp. 349 *et seq.*

"crisis of the European conscience". It has often been suggested that a threat to religion was implied in Locke's use of reason,³⁶ in his rule that revelation has independent status, but that reason must judge what may properly be termed revelation. Yet, as has recently been pointed out, Locke and Tillotson were simply repeating the traditional teaching of Hooker and the Anglican theologians,³⁷ a teaching fully accepted by the Puritans and summed up by Baxter in *The Judgement of Non-conformists of the Interest of Reason in Matters of Religion* (1676). English Protestantism (and New England's Protestantism, too, whose deep cultural interests are now being particularly studied and emphasized)³⁸ was reluctant to concede that the Fall had irredeemably tainted the human intellect, and preferred, with Milton and the Cambridge Platonists, to see the primaeval tragedy as consisting in the overthrow of reason by the passions.³⁹ It may have been wicked to achieve an empire by eating of the forbidden tree, but it would certainly be folly to abdicate now—thus Anglican and Puritan alike proposed to cooperate with redemption by providing rational proofs for religion. One can see how the search for these proofs led to controversy among the orthodox, culminating in Samuel Clark's *Scriptural Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712); one can see the point at which Locke crossed the frontiers of danger⁴⁰; one can see how the Deists welcomed the opportunity to set forth the minimum of Locke's "reasonable Christianity" as their maximum. From reasonable religion, too, came "natural religion" and "natural morality". Before Shaftesbury said virtue should be its own reward, Cudworth⁴¹ had said so, in the course of refuting those who claimed that good and evil are the result of God's arbitrary choice (and those who said so include Descartes, the Calvinists and Hobbes—an interesting affinity). But it was the Jesuits who took the decisive step. Are unbaptized infants and virtuous pagans damned? Arnauld, the Jansenist, gave the rigorist answer, in defiance of human reason.^{41a} By contrast, the Jesuits praised the noble savage—and we are now coming to appreciate that they well knew that this was a fiction.⁴² One is inclined to think that the really effective exotic literature, so far as religious problems were concerned, was the Jesuit *Relations*. Who really cared for the romancers?—for Foigny's *Terre Australe* (1676),⁴³ with its Australians, all hermaphrodites and spending their leisure worshipping an incomprehensible, a

³⁶ E.g., B. Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background* (1957), pp. 267 *et seq.*

³⁷ S. L. Bethell, *The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (1951), Chapter I, "The Doctrinal Treatment of Faith and Reason in Seventeenth-Century Anglican Theology".

³⁸ S. E. Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (1956); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: from Colony to Province* (1953), and *The New England Mind: the Seventeenth Century* (1954).

³⁹ B. Willey, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁴⁰ See the discussion of Locke in D. G. James, *The Life of Reason: Hobbes, Locke, Bolingbroke* (1949).

⁴¹ J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth* (1951), pp. 40-1.

^{41a} Jean Laporte, *La Doctrine de fort-Royal II* (1) *Exposition de la Doctrine d'après Arnauld*, pp. 98-101, 115-7, 120, 137-8.

⁴² G. R. Healey, "The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage". *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XV (1958), pp. 143 *et seq.*

⁴³ G. Chinard, *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique* (1913), pp. 200-5.

work of fiction which, one is glad to note, turned out to be prophetic only in the second of these characteristics. The Jesuits, too, evoked the shimmering mirage of China, an unbaptized civilization which had found the true God. This, then, was the discussion about natural morality, which Bayle, with his virtuous atheist, carried to its logical conclusion.

Protestant exponents of "reasonable" religion were naturally exasperated by the Catholic apologists' deliberate use of scepticism. The Papists, wrote Bishop Burnet angrily, "went so far even unto the argument for atheism as to publish many books in which they affirmed that there was no certain proof of the Christian religion, unless we took it from the authority of the Church as infallible".⁴⁴ Richard Simon of the Oratory, the founder after Spinoza of Biblical criticism, was, in his aims, a Catholic polemicist, aiming to destroy Protestant reliance on the Scriptures. It is interesting to notice that the Quakers,⁴⁵ also, welcomed the detection of errors which drove men from the letter that killeth to the inner witness of the Spirit, and that Jesuits used similar tactics to weaken the Protestant appeal to the Fathers.^{45a} But, while Simon pushed forward the frontiers of scholarship, his polemical mania was becoming unfashionable. English scholars depended on Gallican scholars to defend the validity of Anglican orders, Gallican scholars welcomed the work of the English divines who defended the patristic writings, Protestants followed up Simon's hypotheses about Genesis,⁴⁶ in spite of all his conspiratorial aims, and divines of all parties joined to demolish legends. A respect for disinterested investigation was uniting the scholars of Christian Europe. In the short run, the crisis of the European conscience focused the critical attack on Biblical inerrancy, which Bossuet had foreseen when he condemned Richard Simon: in the long run, it marks the founding of an independent scholarly *milieu* within which the historians and theologians of all parties could debate with common standards of intellectual integrity.

With respect to the part played by "science" in the crisis of the European conscience, I have hardly time to speak. But one thing, perhaps, may be said; that is, the view that dramatic scientific discoveries brought a challenge to religion—in the form of ideas of inevitable progress, the immensity of the Universe, the invariable rule of natural causes, and the possibility of a plurality of worlds—needs so many qualifications that one is tempted to abandon it altogether in interpreting this period. Whatever other roots the idea of inevitable progress had, it has now been shown that it also was greatly influenced by the seventeenth-century writers of apocalyptic speculations,⁴⁷ and by the Protestant reply to Bossuet's accusation of "variations"—the reply that "God dispenseth not all his favours together",⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Burnet, *History of his Own Time* (1839 ed.), p. 129.

⁴⁵ Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (1919), pp. 289 ff. So too did Milton (Tillyard, *Studies in Milton* (1951), pp. 151-2).

^{45a} Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, pp. 50-8.

⁴⁶ A. Lods, "Astruc et la critique biblique de son temps", *Rev. d'hist. et de philosophie religieuse*, March-April, 1924, pp. 124 et seq.

⁴⁷ See E. L. Tuveson, *Millennium to Utopia* (1949).

⁴⁸ R. S. Crane, "Anglican Apologetics and the Idea of Progress, 1699-1745", *Modern Philology*, XXXI (1934).

and that doctrinal development was necessary and certain. The new Universe was accepted with enthusiasm by the apologists, in the spirit of John Ray's opening sentence, "how manifold are thy works, O Lord";⁴⁹ the ordered immensity and minute complexity which telescope and microscope revealed became new testimony to the Creator's grandeur. The hypothesis of a plurality of worlds (a good excuse to stroll with a charming lady in the moonlight) had been argued since Saint Augustine,⁵⁰ and the consensus of feeling in its favour at the end of the seventeenth century owed more to the Platonic and Christianized principle of plenitude⁵¹ (that is, that God would abhor a vast and useless emptiness) than to scientific discovery. This age combined its theology and science in a way that is strange to us, as has been recently illustrated in a fascinating study of the revolution which took place in its aesthetic assumptions.⁵² For long, mountains had been regarded as gloomy, ugly excrescences, and the old argument of Lucretius, that the world must be of fortuitous origin (otherwise it would be attractively smooth) still flourished. Thomas Burnet used science and the legend of the Flood to defend Creation and show how things had gone wrong—but More, the Cambridge Platonist, Ray, Bentley and the Reverend Erasmus Warren produced the more satisfying argument that mountains are beautiful, useful, and part of the Creator's design; from this point, John Dennis and Addison went on to develop theories of the sublime which linked the overwhelming universe of astronomy more surely with the religious feelings.

In retrospect, one can sense that the crucial problem which science was posing for religion in this age was that of reconciling Providence with a mechanistic universe. Actually, however, the age for the most part *did* make this reconciliation, to its own satisfaction, on Boyle's principle that "it much more tends to the illustration of God's wisdom to have so formed things at first that there can seldom or never need any extraordinary interposition of His power".⁵³ This was not merely the prejudice of (if the term may be used without misunderstanding) a "Christian scientist". Malebranche, for example, to the rage of Arnauld, held that God rested the seventh day and from henceforward rules by *volontés générales* rather than by particular interventions.⁵⁴ And it is also worth noting that this age absorbed the problem of Providence in a mechanistic universe within a much larger one, a problem as old as the Book of Job, the problem of evil. Providence is just as hard to justify in a universe where evil is rampant as in one which is ruled by natural laws—indeed, the scientific picture of such a universe was then used as a partial explanation of the age-old problem of evil. And here, we are at the heart of the "crisis of the European conscience". Here, in the problem of evil, is the essence of Bayle's attack on rationality, whether it be the rationality of Christianity, or the rationality of the

⁴⁹ John Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691).

⁵⁰ G. McColley, "The Seventeenth Century Doctrine of a Plurality of Worlds", *Annals of Science*, I (1936), pp. 385 *et seq.*

⁵¹ A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), pp. 99 *et seq.*

⁵² See Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *op. cit.*

⁵³ See Westfall, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–6.

⁵⁴ See H. Gouhier, *La Philosophie de Malebranche et son expérience religieuse* (1926).

Enlightenment. It is impossible for us now to rehearse the answers that were attempted; Cudworth's "plastic nature", which was God's drudge to carry on the process of creation (followed by Le Clerc and John Ray), the human limitations of Christ in his role as Mediator in Malebranche's philosophy, the necessary defect involved in creative differentiation of Bishop King, the eternal truths that bind even the Godhead, of Leibniz. Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* (1710) was the key work of this period. His "best of all possible worlds" is, in one sense, the peak of reasonable religion and of humanistic optimism; in another, it implies and foreshadows the defeat of reasonable religion and the breakdown of the Enlightenment, for if all partial evil is universal good, whatever is, is right, and pessimism and optimism are just different words for the same thing.

Inevitably, what I have said tonight touches only certain aspects of the subject and, probably, not the most important ones. Ideas, seen simply in their coordinating or contrasting patterns, have been discussed, and the crisis of the European conscience has been described as if it formed a nexus of purely intellectual tensions. But ideas unchallenged by events tend to be like machines invented before the social and economic demand has arisen for their usefulness—they remain portents on the margins of history. In the period of the crisis of the European conscience, however, the rich and developing pattern of ideas in Western Europe met with decisive challenge from three major events—it had three moments of catalytic development forced upon it. Louis XIV's expulsion of the Huguenots, the English Revolution and the quarrel over the Bull *Unigenitus* forced a reconsideration of the whole problem of authority in both Church and State, and as between Church and State. It would be difficult to "invent" three incidents better calculated to hasten on the movement of the developing patterns of human speculation, and to usher in an Age of Reason. In face of them, the old method of argument from Scripture collapsed—Bayle's commentary on "Compel them to come in" enforced the lesson that toleration was implicit in the total sense of the Gospels and in natural reason, which even the Bible could not flout; an English archdeacon summed up the debate of churchmen on the Glorious Revolution by ridiculing the mere possibility that Scripture could be validly cited against a people's liberties—"there be prime laws of Nature and Reason that our Blessed Saviour came to fulfil, not to destroy".⁵⁵ The Jansenists themselves, long skilled in the art of manoeuvring authority on to the wrong foot (you will remember how they condemned the five Propositions but could not find them in Jansenius) contributed to the Age of Reason, which they otherwise detested, by insisting on the commonsense meaning of the 101 Propositions; they rejected the right of authority to condemn forms of words *in odium auctoris*—what must be plainly accepted, must be plainly stated.⁵⁶ In face of these three challenges, persecuted Huguenots appealed to the conscience of civilization, and even to the sovereignty of

⁵⁵ K. G. Feiling, *History of the Tory Party, 1640-1714* (1924), pp. 491-2.

⁵⁶ See the modern controversy between J. F. Thomas, *La Querelle de Unigenitus* (1930), p. 60, and J. Orcibal, *Rev. historique*, CCVIII (1952), p. 321.

the people,⁵⁷ English ecclesiastics appealed to natural rights and constitutional liberties, Jansenists appealed to a future General Council.⁵⁸ It was a generation of appeals—appeals to a reason which lay beyond established authority. The next step was to invoke a General Will, or to call an Estates General—and to meet reality.⁵⁹ In another, and equally important, sense, events were pressing upon ideas—or rather upon ideals—in this period. The increasing complexities of civilization and the vision of human amelioration were pressing upon the simplicities of the New Testament, and leading to attempts to remould Christian ethical stereotypes.⁶⁰ No doubt this process is always going on, but the activity now was feverish, many-sided, and full of fertile contradictions—Jesuit probabilists and Jansenist probabiliorists; Fénelon fighting Bossuet for a new formulation of an ideal of aristocratic piety, and grafting an anticipation of Rousseauistic *sensibilité* on to the pattern of Catholic devotion; the exponents and opponents of Christian Stoicism; the writers of Puritan and Pietistic biography and autobiography; the essayists, who redefined the ideal

⁵⁷ See, in particular, G. H. Dodge, *The Political Theory of the Huguenots of the Dispersion* (1947).

⁵⁸ For the genesis and the precedents of this appeal, see Orcibal's *Louis XIV contre Innocent XI : les appels au futur concile de 1688 et l'opinion française* (1949).

⁵⁹ This statement does not, of course, apply to England. Here, the appeal to natural rights was realistic from the start. The doctrines of obedience which James II apparently relied on were, in general, held with realistic, even if not always conscious, qualifications (see the comments of Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, pp. 211–12, 238–9; of Godfrey Davies, "Tory Churchmen and James II", *Essays on the Later Stuarts* (1958), pp. 77–83; and the citation from Hickes (1683) in G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason*, p. 175). Though the fiction of "abdication" was used by some to keep an untarnished theory of non-resistance, most churchmen naturally turned to practical and traditional arguments. There were the "laws of England . . . like the dykes of Holland" (E. Carpenter, *The Protestant Bishop : Henry Compton* (1956), p. 84); there was the subject's right to his religion as part of his property (T. E. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *A Life of Gilbert Burnet* (1907), pp. 244–5); there was the Hobbesian commonsense proposition that a sovereign who cannot give protection is no longer sovereign (G. V. Bennett, *White Kennett, Bishop of Peterborough* (1957), p. 12; A. Tindall Hart, *William Lloyd* (1952), p. 118). As Berkeley pointed out, non-resistance could be maintained intact while, at the same time, the credentials of the authority claiming to issue orders subversive of one's beliefs could very properly be narrowly investigated (A. A. Luce, *Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (1949), p. 53). Following this line of attack, it was easy to come to conclusions of satisfying constitutional importance—"but what if neither King James nor King William be our supreme magistrate; but a collective body made up of King and parliament together? And this is indeed our case . . ." (N. Sykes, *William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657–1737* (2 vols., 1957), I, p. 47). And there was a general feeling that theoretical premises could not be allowed to end up in intolerable and unreasonable practical consequences. Compton (Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 87) in 1686 used words ("the king may ravish their wives, spoil their goods . . ." etc.) which anticipate Swift's famous statement of the case ("I will suppose him to murder his mother . . . to ravish matrons, to blow up the Senate", in *The Sentiments of a Church of England Man, Prose Works*, ed. W. Davies, Vol. II, p. 22). This theme of the abandonment of arguments from supposed divine rights and scriptural maxims in favour of commonsense can be similarly traced in other English ecclesiastical controversies of the time—over the supposed "divine right of tithe" (see L. A. Landa, *Swift and the Church of Ireland* (1954), pp. 127–30), among the Non-Jurors concerning the continuance of the schism against "the interest of mankind in general (which is an argument of right)" (see G. Every, *The High Church Party 1688–1718* (1956)), and above all in the Convocation Controversy. In this dispute one side monopolized the argument from tradition and precedent, and the other, in its own view, monopolized that from natural right and common reason, thus forming a contrast with the debate concerning the revolutionary settlement of the Throne, where the coincidence of the two arguments made the appeal to "reason" essentially realistic, rather than theoretical.

⁶⁰ A discussion of this problem occupies the last third of my essay for the *N.C.M.H.*

of the gentleman, and the satirists who disposed of the outworn *honnête homme*—all this activity is of the essence of the crisis of the European conscience.

But perhaps I ought to conclude by admitting that behind my view of this crisis lie certain personal feelings. Perhaps the real importance of the strictly religious history of this age lies elsewhere—entirely elsewhere—with the Jesuits, by-words for worldly finesse in Europe, who were adventuring out among the North American savages and the polished civilization of China and on the wild road to Lhasa, with the foundation of the S.P.C.K. and the S.P.G., which mark the belated beginning of Protestant missionary interest. The period of the crisis of the European conscience foreshadows at once the intellectual difficulties which Christianity was to face in the future—and the fantastic period of missionary expansion which marks the nineteenth century.⁶¹ But, confining the discussion to Europe, I feel obliged to admit that what I have said about the crisis of the European conscience being a crisis internal to Christianity rather than external to it, springs from doubts I have about even wider pre-suppositions.

I doubt if the temporary alliance of religion with culture and to some extent with authority in the Middle Ages entitles mediaeval civilization to be called “Christian” any more than modern secular civilization, and I suspect that modern secular civilization is given its peculiar flavour and outlook by technological progress, industrialization, population surges and crude mass literacy rather than by revolutions of ideas. In Hazard’s superb book the central figure is Bossuet, despairing but unbowed, fighting rearguard actions against Protestants, Socinians, Cartesians, Biblical critics, mystics and the world in general on behalf of an unchanging doctrine and an eternal corporation. By contrast, I confess that I like to look at the age through the eyes of Swift, who, caught in the toils himself, defended with masochistic irony the cause of “nominal Christianity”,⁶² real Christianity, as he said, having been generally rejected since primitive times. To Bossuet, Christian history was a sombre heroic battle of armies with standards glittering in the gale; Swift saw, with terrible clarity, that the true continuous history of Christianity has been one of compromise.

⁶¹ The emphasis on the nineteenth century in K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (1947), is an important counterbalance to impressions derived chiefly from the history of ideas.

⁶² *Prose Words*, ed. Davies, Vol. II, pp. 27–8.