ABRAHAM TUCKER OF MERTON COLLEGE (1705-1774)

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of Divinity
The Post-Graduate School of Theology of
The University of Edinburgh

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Alfred Wendell Hook
June, 1960
To the Hook and McCrea families who helped
Abraham Tucker of Merton College, Oxford (1705-1774), has been one of the "neglected philosophers" of the eighteenth century. He has been of enough importance in the standard accounts of British thought to mention in the footnotes or in a few paragraphs. But his many-sided intellectual interests never have been totally expounded. The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to offer such an analysis and interpretation. All previous studies of the life and thought of Abraham Tucker, with the exception of an abridgement of the *Light of Nature Pursued* by William Hazlitt in 1807, have been on selected themes. Hazlitt recognized the value of Tucker's ponderous work and made him more available by publishing a one volume condensation. Later in the nineteenth century, Leslie Stephen included an account of Tucker in his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. His presentation is excellent but necessarily brief. Still later (1902), Ernest Albee reviewed Tucker's psychology and ethics. John Fyvie described Tucker in a popular work in 1910 which presented a general sketch of Tucker's philosophy and theology. Finally, Howard Warren (1921) elucidated Tucker's contribution to association psychology. However, to this date no work has given a systematic exposition of Abraham Tucker's philosophy and theology.

With these previous studies in mind, the method followed in this dissertation has been to produce as faithful an account as
possible of the major themes in Tucker's writings, in the meantime bearing in mind the framework of eighteenth century life and thought. William Hazlitt also attempted something like this in his Abridgement: "There are two considerations which seem necessary... in abridging any author," he remarked in his Preface, "the size of the work, rendering it inaccessible to the generality of readers, and the merit of the work, rendering it desirable that it should be within every one's reach."¹ Hazlitt made Tucker more accessible, but there were two disadvantages in his method: on the one hand, in many passages you cannot tell if Hazlitt is paraphrasing or using Tucker's own words; and on the other hand, Hazlitt omitted a great deal of the charming detail in the old country gentleman's writing. Many illustrations were cut out, but the illustrations frequently have more color than the issue he was discussing.

The reader will want to know what is original in Abraham Tucker. We have not expected to find the originality of a reformer such as Martin Luther, or of a thinker such as Emmanuel Kant. On the contrary, a number of Tucker's beliefs were original in the sense of being "eccentric" or "singular." Some are unworthy of a good philosopher; but Tucker illustrates again that unflinching search for speculative truth which was characteristic of that period. The "boldest flight" which Tucker made, wrote Hazlitt (and also the most entertaining), was "The Vision," his philosophical conception of the

---

future life. On the other hand, every passage in Tucker's work is original in the sense of being individualistic and "independent in thought," after the apothegem of Sir Fitzjames Stephen, that "originality consists in thinking for ourselves, not in thinking differently from other people." Tucker reminded his readers in his Introduction that they should not expect a great number of "extraordinary strokes of penetration" from his pen.

In brief, we have not discovered a great amount of philosophical or theological originality in Tucker. Rather we have discovered that he was as a prism of eighteenth century thought; he took the prevailing philosophy and theology and spread it in a spectrum before his readers. Our thesis throughout this work has been that Tucker demonstrates the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of the Age of Reason. He has shown us specifically by his writings why the period was an age of enlightenment.

A few words are in order about the form and substance of what follows: the nature of the material has, in large measure, determined the form of the dissertation. Tucker's broad interests have made this a comprehensive work, rather than a dissertation organized around one central theme or idea. The present writer has attempted to answer Tsanoff's question as to "whether Tucker stored his sheaves as reaped

2 Ibid., p. xxix. Cf. post, Chap. V, "Natural Theology."

or whether he threshed his crop and then, unwilling to rake out his straw, packed and preserved it all together, grain and chaff."\(^4\)

The result is now before you.

In summary, we have defended the thesis that in Abraham Tucker we see the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of mid-eighteenth century English thought. We have documented this thesis by means of the following chapters: Chapter I presents his biography and general intellectual interests; Chapter II discusses Tucker as a philosopher; Chapter III summarizes his psychology and view of human nature; Chapter IV is devoted to ethics; Chapter V develops natural theology; Chapter VI, his Christian theology; and Chapter VII, his concept of the Church and personal religion. Finally, in our Conclusion we have mentioned the significance of Abraham Tucker. At many points we could have gone into more analysis and detail, but since we were considering the broad sweep of Tucker's thought this was difficult to do without lengthening the paper unduly.

The present writer has received wise counsel from many in the community of learning at every stage in the writing of the manuscript, and for their generous assistance he is grateful. As John Donne once expressed our interdependence, "No man is an Iland intire of it selfe, every man is a peece of the continent..." In Edinburgh, Principal John Baillie gave initial guidance to the research and later made

comments on the general direction in which the dissertation should move; Professor Thomas F. Torrance was of great help in his discerning remarks about the form and content of certain later chapters; Dr. J. A. Lamb, the Librarian at New College, and Miss E. R. Leslie, also of the New College staff, gave freely of their time during our residence in Edinburgh. In addition to the library at that institution, many other resources were available for study and research: the library of the University of Edinburgh; the National Library of Scotland; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and the British Museum. Upon moving to Claremont, California, we have been privileged to use the combined resources of the Honnold Library of the Associated Colleges, the library of the Southern California School of Theology, and the Scripps College Library. Moreover, special mention must be given to Dr. Theodore M. Greene of Scripps College, Dr. Herbert W. Schneider of the Blaisdell Institute for Advanced Study in World Cultures and Religions, and to Dr. John B. Cobb, Jr., of the Southern California School of Theology for examining individual chapters of the dissertation; and especially to Dr. Donald H. Rhoades of the latter institution for giving generously of his time to read and discuss several chapters. Mrs. Louis Gentile, who has typed the final copy, has contributed her time and technical knowledge towards the completion of the project. But most of all, Jane McCrea Hook has offered her constructive criticism and continued encouragement throughout the whole undertaking.

Claremont, California
June 28, 1960

Alfred Wendell Hook

A.W.H.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. ABRAHAM TUCKER, THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. His Biography</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Mind and Interests</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Influence on British and American Thought</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. TUCKER AS A PHILOSOPHER</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. What Kind of a Philosopher?</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Methodology: Latitude and Empiricism</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN NATURE</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The History of the Principle of Association of Ideas</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Psychology</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The Development of the Affections</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ABRAHAM TUCKER'S ETHICS</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tucker's Ethics of Hedonism</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Application of Ethics</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. TUCKER'S NATURAL THEOLOGY</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Deism and Natural Theology</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Similarity to Deism</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Tucker's Interpretation of Natural Theology</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. &quot;The Vision&quot;</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: RIDDLE AND ENIGMA</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. An Outline of Revealed Theology</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Controversy over Abraham Tucker's Theology</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. THE CHURCH AND RELIGION</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tucker's Association with the Church</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tucker's Idea of the Church</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Personal Religion</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Summary and Criticism</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM TUCKER</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: &quot;THE LIGHT OF NATURE&quot;</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Our present-day picture of the eighteenth century is quite different from that of our Victorian forefathers; we cannot dismiss that century with the curt remark of Thomas Carlyle, that "... it lies massed in our minds as a disastrous wrecked inanity, not useful to dwell upon. ..."¹ On the contrary, it is useful to dwell upon that period and to study it thoroughly: not only to correct the Victorian picture, but also to recognize the effect of the Enlightenment upon us today. The eighteenth century in Great Britain was far from being dull and vapid; rather, it was a time of critical intellectual and historical importance.

The study which follows seeks to elucidate one more piece of evidence about the paradoxical eighteenth century; Abraham Tucker looked out of his study window in Betchworth Castle upon the beautiful English countryside; but idyllic pastoral surroundings and a well-provided library were unable to prevent his being anxious about English history and destiny. He lived in years of crisis, not only for the English nation, but also for western civilization. One writer believes that 1715 was the critical year in the development of modern Western civilization; another has observed that the decades between 1690 and

1740 were "... years not so much of languid doubt as of critical tension."²

Our chronological limits in this study are 1705-1774, the lifetime of Abraham Tucker; that is, from the reign of Queen Anne through years of crisis to the ascension of the third Hanoverian sovereign, George III, "born and educated" in England, who gloried in "the name of Briton." Our country squire, Abraham Tucker, lived through nearly three-quarters of the century. He was born the same year as the physician and psychologist, David Hartley; and Francis Blackburne, writer of the Confessional. He was born eleven months after the death of John Locke in 1704; the year after the publication of Isaac Newton's Optics. Tucker was a peer with such men as James Thomson, John and Charles Wesley, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Gray, George Whitefield, Joseph Butler, George Berkeley, William Law, Oliver Goldsmith, Conyers Middleton, William Warburton, Benjamin Hoadly, Matthew Tindal and many others. Tucker died on the twentieth of November, 1774, the same year that Theophilus Lindsey wrote his Apology for Unitarianism; the year of the American Continental Congress in Philadelphia; and shortly before

² "... it was from 1715 onwards that there became apparent an effervescence and a diffusion of ideas so remarkable in its nature ... as to be without parallel in history. ... it is the eighteenth century of which we are the direct and lineal descendants." Paul Hazard, European Thought in The Eighteenth Century, from Montesquieu to Lessing (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. xvii; and Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England (Oxford: University Press, 1954), p. 1.
political revolutions in America and France. Merely recounting the persons and events of the eighteenth century, if it were possible in this short space, would indicate that the age is far from being "not useful to dwell upon."

Since this is a notable historical subject, we shall sketch out in a few large strokes some of its general features. In order to keep some perspective we shall confine our remarks to philosophy, the Church, and theology.

The Seventeenth Century

The intellectual forces which contended in the eighteenth century were the result of the break-up of the Middle Ages and of seventeenth century history. English thought was affected by that general cultural awakening in Europe known as the Renaissance. Speaking very broadly, the Renaissance was a first step in the transition from the Roman Catholic synthesis of the Middle Ages to the secular pursuits of modern times. Cultural changes in Europe after the thirteenth century had far-reaching influences. For instance, the rise of European nationalism brought great political upheavals on the Continent; the beginnings of modern science offered another intellectual absorption to compete with theology; the opening of world trade routes established and invigorated the spirit of commercialism; and the ecclesiastical break with the Church of Rome unleashed powerful new religious forces throughout Europe and eventually in the New World.

Moreover, in seventeenth century England the continued political
contest between Royalists and Parliament; the Civil Wars, Cromwell, the Restoration, the Revolution of 1688; and the continuous contention between Roman Catholics, the Church of England, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Independents all contributed to that confused state of affairs from which the eighteenth century was happy to be delivered. Abraham Tucker expressed a typical sentiment when, looking back at the "innumerable disputes" of the Ancients, Scholastics, and Reformers, he wrote:

All these old topics of litigation are now happily laid aside, or lie dormant in the closets of the studious, where they are treated as matters of speculation, giving no disturbance to the world in general.3 "Happily laid aside"! But he himself was soon involved in the perennial questions of philosophy and theology.

A. Philosophy

The Seventeenth Century

Speaking broadly again, the eighteenth century was specifically indebted to such seventeenth century writers as Francis Bacon, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Thomas Hobbes, the "Cambridge Platonists," Richard Cumberland, John Locke, and many others. Francis Bacon opened a way of new thought for England. He wrote the Advancement of Learning (1605), the first work upon a secular subject in English; but he doubted the value of the language medium and composed his other books in the

more acceptable Latin. In his Novum Organum (1620) he delivered the essentials of a new philosophy, by which he hoped to supplant Aristotle and the Scholastic method. Bacon believed that because knowledge should be practical, scientific inquiry should extend mankind's dominion over nature. Again, he affirmed the inductive method for philosophy and science, which was an observational and experimental way of proceeding: we must lay aside our a priori conceptions, he claimed, and approach nature and the empirical facts with a much more humble attitude. We have anticipated what was in nature instead of interpreting that which we actually found in the data. Perhaps Bacon's chief importance was as the eloquent exponent of a new science and philosophy in Britain, a philosophy which developed into empiricism. By this method Francis Bacon broke with the philosophy of the Middle Ages and also stood apart from Descartes' rationalism.

Francis Bacon was the seminal mind who saw new possibilities for science and for philosophy. In the meantime, physical and biological scientists, mathematicians, and physicians were drawing attention to specific practical results. Of course, the scientific movement in Great Britain was related to other independent discoveries taking place all over Europe; but it meant the specific achievements of such men as William Gilbert, William Harvey, John Napier, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, and other members of the Royal Society of London for Promoting Natural Knowledge. Moreover, their cumulative results did not seem antagonistic to Christianity. Their discoveries testified
to a universe full of order, design and law; a sublime cosmos built like a Great Machine which, of course, presupposed a divine Maker.

On the other hand, there was little satisfaction about the continued struggle between the Monarch and Parliament in the seventeenth century. This contest turned both on the issue of political authority and on the relationship of Church and State. Specifically, how long would the realm bow to a political theory which claimed that monarchs were the breathing images of God on earth? If this were true, then what political power had the Parliament? And in what relationship ought the Church to be, not only to the State, but also to the crown? Thomas Hobbes cast his controversial works, including Leviathan (1651), upon these troubled waters and insisted that the root of evil was a scheming and powerful Church. The Church competed with the State. Therefore let the Church be subservient to the State; this would insure obedience and also uniformity of worship. In philosophy Hobbes was concerned mainly with nature and man rather than with God. For this reason, he contended for mechanical causation and claimed that matter in motion was the sole reality. He attempted to reduce mind to matter and thought to motion.

Hobbes provoked his countrymen to strong reaction. Neither his philosophy, his political theory, nor his views on religion pleased. His inflammatory doctrines were interpreted as atheistic and materialistic. He was opposed by such individuals as Richard Cumberland and also those known as the Cambridge Platonists. These men, most of whom were affiliated with the University, included such scholars as
Benjamin Whichcote (their "founder"), Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, Nathanael Culverwell, John Smith, Simon Patrick, and others. Cudworth and More stood up to Hobbes' "atheism" and civil polity. The school opposed materialism, atheism (and their controversial Christian brethren) with the doctrine that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord"; that is, they preached an eloquent Christian Platonism, upheld the fundamental rationality of their faith, and practiced tolerance. They affirmed that men should obey the spiritual truth known by the light of nature rather than being fettered by dogma.

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the publications of John Locke began to circulate in England. When he died in 1704, he left the English-speaking world a philosophy which was to be pre-eminent for the greater part of the eighteenth century. In fact, his investigation of the problem of knowledge absorbed the attention of English, French, and German philosophers until well into the nineteenth century. Locke was immensely influential because of the variety of subjects upon which he wrote: not only philosophy, but also economics, government, finance, religious toleration, education, theology, and other matters. He was the embodiment of the sagacious and candid English philosopher who not only raised the ultimate questions, but also did so in the new spirit of tolerance.

Eighteenth Century Philosophy

Locke had raised forcefully the problem of knowledge: what was the mind capable of understanding? Where did knowledge cease and
opinion begin? But his own answers, worked out on the basis of
sensation and experience, only became the springboard for much
further philosophical discussion. Those eighteenth century writers
who dealt most trenchantly with these fundamentals were Berkeley
and Hume. George Berkeley detected certain implications in the
prevailing English philosophy which he considered inimical. In two
philosophical works published early in his life he advanced the
alternative of Idealism against the prevailing Realism derived from
Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. In his first book,
*An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), Berkeley analyzed
the connection between vision and touch; he concluded that the rela-
tionship was arbitrary, but nevertheless regular and constant. The
thesis of the second volume, *A Treatise concerning the Principles*
(1710), again countered Locke's realism: as for things in the material
world, "their esse is percipi"; that is, theirs was a passive
existence, depending upon their being perceived by a subject; the
true realities are God the Infinite mind and the finite minds which
He created to share in that reality.

David Hume, another of the most acute thinkers in the century,
is known for his thorough and radical application of empiricism. What
had been part of the philosophy of Locke and Berkeley became his
guiding principle. Hume gives us, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*
(1739), the logical and skeptical outworking of empiricism. In
epistemology, he reduced knowledge to impressions and a continuum of
ideas which were associated only by custom and experience; so that our
fundamental convictions came from neither reason nor experience, but from natural beliefs. Hume's function was not so much to break new ground in philosophy as to break up old ground. He was not only a pre-eminent writer of philosophy; he also criticized the Christian miracles with a famous essay and gave a critique of natural religion. He wrote in many fields of knowledge. By reason, Hume showed the limitations of eighteenth century reason. From the dates of his publications, philosophy was forced to shift to new ground.

In the meantime, others were commending doctrines which took exception to Empiricism. Such persons as Anthony Ashley Cooper (Lord Shaftesbury), Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith expounded views of human nature and ethics which were based upon the premises of natural morality or the sentiments. Shaftesbury, in particular, asserted that both nature and man were essentially good; therefore men were naturally social. We should seek virtue for its own sake, not for the reward of the Christian heaven. Moreover, we possessed by nature a "moral sense" which could guide us in the path of virtue, and which helped us choose the right and shun the wrong. On the other hand, others criticized this doctrine of the moral sense or else based human nature and ethics on the doctrine of association of ideas; examples of these writers would be David Hume, David Hartley, Abraham Tucker, and Thomas Brown.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century two types of thought were prominent in Great Britain, "Utilitarianism" and "Common Sense." The leaders of the school of Utilitarianism, or the philosophical
radicals, were Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and others. Bentham was interested in the application of his ethical theory to jurisprudence and political reform. His work carried over into the next century with the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832. Furthermore, the influence of Locke upon British thought began to wane in the latter part of the eighteenth century; and Hume's skepticism could not be left unanswered. In Scotland a group of scholars known as the Common Sense school became well-known. Richard Price and Thomas Reid are indicative of their thinking: Price was provoked at Hume's skepticism in ethics. He reaffirmed that right and wrong were self-evident ideas grounded in the nature of things, that is, in the immutable order of the universe. Reid of Aberdeen, who is known as the founder of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, directed probably the most telling reply against Hume: the latter's skepticism, he claimed, was a reductio ad absurdum of the theory of ideas in Locke and Descartes. After an acute analysis of Locke and Hume he reasserted the real existence of the mind and of external objects. Hume awoke both Reid and Kant from their dogmatic slumbers, and so stirred both the Scottish philosophers and the Continent to a renewed consideration of epistemology.

B. The Church and Theology

We shall now pass on to consider briefly some of the main issues in the Church and theology: the Church also had to make its way through uncertain times in both the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries. In the late seventeenth century, natural theology came into prominence in Britain. This interpretation was preached and written by such prominent men as John Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, John Locke, the Cambridge Platonists, and others in reaction to mid-century dogmatism and theological polemic. Then in 1689, the Toleration Act brought a profound change in English religious life by granting Nonconformists equal worship rights with the Established church. They received legal permission to worship openly and without fear of disturbance (except Roman Catholics and deniers of the Trinity). Moreover, freedom of the press also helped to circulate more liberal theological opinions.

As we enter upon the eighteenth century we discover a religious condition which differed both from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Both the religious hostilities of the previous age and the threat of Roman Catholicism being re-established had passed. As yet no one could anticipate the great nineteenth century struggle with the sciences, Evolution, and with Biblical criticism. On the other hand, the eighteenth century Church had to come to terms with natural theology and with reason. One of the earliest discussions was the Bangorian Controversy over the nature of the Church. Much Trinitarian disputation also carried over from the previous century, with Arian and Socinian opinions being held privately on all sides. The relevance of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament, was questioned. The Christian miracles were disputed, and the time-tested Articles of Religion were strongly objected to as freethinking
spread. Deism was perhaps the most threatening creed directed against the Church early in the century. Deists hoped to replace the Christian faith with a religion of reason alone. Naturally this attempt produced a great bulk of apologetic literature from the Church. Moreover, a debate continued throughout the period between those following Arminian and Calvinist theology. The Established Church was curbed in its effective operation by the suppression of Convocation, so much so that even its regular ecclesiastical needs were not acted upon. This was an age of controversy. In very general terms, the Church fell into lethargy early in the century only to gain spiritual strength after 1750.

After mid-century, the churches were engaged in other matters. Deism was no longer a threat. Instead various parties agitated strongly to revoke subscription to the Articles of Religion. Wesleyanism gathered strength in Britain; Unitarianism was debated and gained some following. The gentry turned its attention from theology to revolutions overseas and to economics at home. As the century passed, the Established Church had developed more of an evangelical spirit. Sunday schools had been founded; and many humanitarian pursuits, such as philanthropy and prison reform, had received their original impulse from within the churches.

These, then, are some of the more prominent features of the period which we are studying: a pedantic age, yet one in which we noted important developments in British philosophy; a calm and reasonable age, yet one which also produced a voluminous
controversial theology. We shall expect to see this pedantry and reasonableness often as we attend to the life and thought of Abraham Tucker.
CHAPTER I

ABRAHAM TUCKER, THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

A. His Biography

Earliest Days

We know very few details at present about the early life of Abraham Tucker, country gentleman, philosopher and magistrate. His mother, Judith Tillard, came from a family in Somerset, and his father, James Tucker, was a wealthy merchant in Siselane, London. He was born in 1705, but unfortunately both his parents died before he was two years old. The child Abraham was then left in the care of his uncle, Sir Isaac Tillard. Sir Isaac greatly influenced his nephew. Tucker later spoke of him "with affection and gratitude, declaring that it was to his uncle's bright example that he owed every principle of humour, benevolence, and liberality that he possessed."\(^1\) However, he was once upset when his uncle referred him to the letters of St. Paul as "the best model for epistolary composition."\(^2\) Tucker did not feel that the Christian saint was an exemplary letter writer.

As the boy grew up he appears to have been shy and whimsical. Tucker vividly remembered his shyness, recalling that he was "grievously disturbed" if people ever came to visit. In fact, he once hid away in

---


a "private corner" in order to escape the convivial atmosphere of one of his uncle's parties. On the other hand, his whimsical temperament shows abundantly in the Light of Nature Pursued.

**Education**

Abraham Tucker had the privilege of preparing for whatever adult career pleased him; fortunately his father willed him a sizable inheritance. When he was of proper age he was enrolled in a boarding school in Bishop's Stortford under a Dr. Tooke,

... where he made good progress: rather reserved and sparing of speech, but a boy of good humour and facetious: dispositions that remained with him throughout life (the latter are particularly conspicuous in his writings), and which rendered him most cheerful and agreeable in the circle of his friends and acquaintance, though somewhat silent among strangers.³

He seems to have been as normal and high-principled as any other boy, but because he was not physically strong, became quite studious. As an adult he felt that this early ambition was not a pure devotion to wisdom. It was colored with vanity and pride:

I had vanity enough while a school-boy: as soon as I could read currently, having gotten some books of chivalry, I determined upon making the conquest of the world: but being of a weakly constitution and continually bumped about by other boys, I found this scheme impracticable, so at thirteen resolved to write a poem finer than Homer of Virgil. Before I went to the University, being taught that the solid sciences were more noble than poetry, I purposed, as soon as I should have made myself perfect master of

---

logic, to elucidate all useful truths, and banish error from among mankind.4

In 1721 Tucker left Bishop's Stortford for Merton College, Oxford, where he matriculated as a gentleman commoner. At the University he concentrated on "metaphysical and mathematical pursuits."5 We do not know his precise attitude toward the student life at Oxford, but many obstacles were thrown in the way of the gentleman commoners. This group was quite large in number:

They were allowed either to dine with the Fellows or at a separate table of their own: their college charges were double those of an ordinary member, and a liberty even more proportionate to their position seems to have been allowed them. Every temptation to idleness was in fact thrown in their way. They were told plainly that it was not for men of their fortune to mind exercises; if studious, the gentleman commoner was taunted with being "morose" and "a heavy bookish fellow": if his wine was good, the Fellows would forgive every delinquency, and excuse even absence from morning chapel.6

It is evident that Tucker's earlier upbringing helped him to meet such temptations. Besides excelling in metaphysics and mathematics, he also engaged tutors in French, Italian and music. Moreover, he was not touched by the new fashion for smoking and drinking which insinuated itself into the university about that time; nor did he associate with the social life of Merton Walks, which was the fashionable Oxford


promenade of the time:

We can very dimly discern the more prominent features of the scene—the brilliant medly of smirking beaux and smiling belles, the laughter and jest and repartee, the soft compliment and whispered assignation, the couples retreating to talk sentiment in the more retired corners, the elders talking fashion and scandal in the broad promenade, the tap of the snuff-box, the rattle of the fan.7

Tucker also accepted the laxness of religion in the university, but he refused to flatter those who were candidates for orders in the Church:

When I was at the University I remember to have heard the young fellows, intending for holy orders, descant upon the call they must profess to have, before they could obtain ordination. They seemed in general to look upon it as a remnant of the Romish superstition, and that our first Reformers understood by it a secret intimation or impulse of the Holy Spirit, urging them to the sacred function. Those of a more serious turn, yet too rational to pretend to methodistical experiences, wished they could be excused from the question, as knowing of no such impulse they ever had, which might entitle them to answer in the affirmative. Others regarding it as an antiquated form, which had no real meaning, but to which for decency's sake they must give some meaning, thought a nominal appointment to some paltry curacy or chaplainship a sufficient call within the words of the institution.8

Tucker's application to studies did not demand all of his time. In the summers he travelled, either in England or abroad. As a perceptive student he derived great benefit and instruction from his experiences. He did not go on a grand tour of the Continent; but he spent his holidays in a few locations, so avoiding some of the difficulties of eighteenth century travel. "He usually spent the

7 Ibid., pp. 59f.
summer vacations in tours through different parts of England, Wales and Scotland, and once passed six weeks in France and Flanders."9

After finishing at Oxford (1724), Tucker enrolled at the Inner Temple in London as a law student:

... for some time, he applied very closely to the law, in which he acquired such a degree of knowledge as enabled him to conduct with advantage the management of his own affairs, and frequently to render very essential service to his friends and neighbours.10

He was never called to the bar. We do not know if poor health was the reason, or more probably that Tucker did not care for such a public life. However, he served for many years as a magistrate in Surrey County.

**Country Gentleman**

In 1726 Tucker purchased Betchworth Castle and considerable surrounding lands in Surrey County.11 He then became a model country gentleman. He treated his tenants and servants quite well; no doubt his deportment came from his native cheerfulness and common sense.

---


11 His beautiful estate was near Dorking, about twenty miles south of London on the North Downs near the "Pilgrim's Way." The present writer has inspected the remains of the Castle. Today it is only a ruin, but a section of the grounds has been converted into an imposing golf course.
philosophy of life. He often chuckled at certain conversations with his tenants: "a farmer will tell you 'u hog won't stray so fur from home uz un ox ur u flock u sheep." He habitually walked the length and breadth of his estate in order to supervise the fields and flocks:

It is characteristic of him that he committed to paper a number of observations on this subject which he had selected from various authors both ancient and modern, together with remarks which he had made himself of had collected from the experience of his neighbors and tenants.13

After being settled for nine years, Tucker married Dorothy Barker, the daughter of Edward Barker "of East Betchworth, Curistor Baron of the Exchequer." Their marriage was of deeper understanding and affection than many others. Tucker recalled many instances of their happy home life. Three daughters were born into their family, "Dorothy, who died under three years old, Judith, and Dorothea-Maria ... ." Judith remained a spinster. When her father died she inherited the estate; she also published the first complete edition of the Light of Nature Pursued in 1779. Dorothea-Maria married and bore a son, H. P. St. John Mildmay, who wrote "Some Account of the Life of Abraham Tucker, Esquire," for the 1805 (second) edition of his grandfather's work. Tucker introduced his family several times

13 Fyvie, op. cit., p. 205.
14 Ibid.
into the text of the *Light of Nature Pursued*. He referred to his wife as "Euridice" or "Riddy," and the girls as "Serena" and "Sparkler." The family lived happily for eighteen years, until the death of Mrs. Tucker in 1754. For a considerable time Abraham was deeply affected by her loss:

Then indeed desire left me . . . and with it fled joy, delight, content, and all those under desires that used to put me upon the common actions of the day: for I could like nothing, find amusement in nothing, and care for nothing: and in their stead succeeded melancholy, tastelessness, and perpetual restlessness. And though I called in all my philosophy to rescue me from this disconsolate condition, it could not relieve me presently, but had a long struggle before it could get the better of nature.  

Soon afterward, Tucker turned to literature and writing. First he collected the letters that he and his wife had written during their infrequent periods of separation. He re-copied this correspondence, entitled the letters "The Picture of Artless Love," and gave a copy to the Barkers. He kept his own copy as a remembrance. Tucker then tried to be both father and mother to his daughters. He helped to educate them. He taught "Serena" and "Sparkler" French, Italian, and . . . also instructed them in many other branches of science which he thought might, in future, contribute to their advantage or amusement: but he was, above all, careful to instill into their minds the purest principles of morality, benevolence, and religion.  

---

17 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 54.  
He continued his active life as a country gentleman, author and magistrate until 1771, when he was struck by blindness. He always had been a man of strict habit, just as methodical as a certain religious group which he did not admire:

His usual method of spending his time was to rise very early to his studies, in the winter burning a lamp in order to light his own fire before his servants were stirring. After breakfast he returned to his studies for two or three hours, and then took a ride on horseback or walked. The evenings in summer he often spent in walking over his farms and setting down his remarks; and in the winter, while in the country, reading to his wife and afterwards to his daughters.19

Tucker was one of those rare persons who spent a large portion of time philosophizing. In two decades he wrote and pondered over the five publications which we shall describe presently.

Abraham Tucker usually has been called a "country gentleman." However, during his adult life he did not give up his ties with the city of London, which he had come to know as a student. Each winter and spring he would spend several months there in residence. He lived on Great James Street, not far from St. Paul's church. While in the city,

... his evenings were more frequently spent in friendly parties with some of his relations who lived near, and with some of his old Fellow Collegiates or Temple Friends.20

Characteristically, Tucker made friends with the intellectuals, where he was known for his skill in the Socratic method. From his own

references to London we know that he was familiar with a great segment of its public and private life. He was also a member of the Bishop of London's congregation (Dr. Thomas Sherlock) and heard his sermons and discourses with much pleasure. His closest city friend seems to have been his cousin, James Tillard, who also lived on Great James Street. Tillard was also a man of letters. He happened to be one of the unfortunates struck by William Warburton's frequent polemic. Tucker always adhered to a methodical life while in residence in Great James Street. He conducted business matters personally. If he found that he could not combine business and exercise, "he would sometimes walk from Great James Street . . . to St. Paul's or to the Bank, to see, as he would good-humouredly observe, what it was o'clock."  

In 1771, cataracts on Tucker's eyes shut off his vision completely. The main reason for this condition may have been his concentration on the final volumes of the Light of Nature Pursued. But he "accepted the infirmity with admirable equanimity, laughed at the blunders into which it led him, and invented a machine to enable himself to write."  

In a measure, John Milton's family life was repeated. Tucker's daughter, Judith, learned Greek so that she could read her father his favorite authors in the original tongue. At


length Abraham Tucker "was seized in 1774 with an illness which proved fatal; and he died, as he had lived, with perfect calmness and resignation." He was respected and loved in Dorking, a parish which always valued his presence:

To describe him as a neighbor, landlord, master, father and magistrate, it would be necessary to mention the most amiable qualities in each. It is unnecessary to add that he was very sincerely regretted by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

There is a plaque to his memory in St. Martin's Church.

But we have not yet completed our description of Abraham Tucker. We shall now look briefly at his writings, which best demonstrate the scope of his mind and his many interests.

B. Tucker's Mind and Interests

Metaphysical Humorist

Leslie Stephen, in appreciation of Tucker, once described him as a "metaphysical humorist":

Philosophical theories were the game which he loved to follow through all the intricacies of some speculative labyrinth, and his ambition was to be received as a worthy colleague of Locke instead of Chatham. His devotion to abstract enquiries was free from the slightest tinge of moroseness or indifference to practical affairs. He was an example of that rarest of all intellectual compounds, the metaphysical humourist."

---

Assuredly this is one quality which makes Tucker admirable. Even in the midst of grave discussions Tucker gave his subject a whimsical touch. He hoped that his readers would

... ascribe the levities and singularities of thought to a desire of enlivening abstruse matters, and rendering them visible by familiar images, not always chosen by the courtly standard.26

We find another characteristic of Tucker in his well-chosen nom de plume, "Edward Search." Tucker had all his books published under that significant pen-name. It served a two-fold purpose, preserved his anonymity and also indicated the nature of the writer who used it:

No one ever more fully appreciated the maxim, that the search after truth is more delightful than the fruition. He would have regarded a fallacy which is too easily exposed just as a sportsman would regard a fox which did not give him a good run.27

A suggestion for the name might have come to Tucker from such a passage as that in Plato's Phaedo, where Socrates' friends asked him how they would find another good teacher after he had gone:

Socrates: Hellas ... is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men. ... Seek for him among them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of spending your money. And you must seek among yourselves too; for you will not find others better able to make the search.

The search, replied Cebes, shall certainly be made.28

As we shall see later, Tucker placed both himself and Socrates in that branch of the philosophy family known as "the Searches."\textsuperscript{29}

**Literary Merit**

Abraham Tucker had neither a publishing date to hurry his writing nor a literary reputation to maintain. Because of this he used his mature years in composing the *Light of Nature Pursued*. As a preliminary exercise, he spent seven years on his first philosophical treatise, *Freewill, Foreknowledge and Fate, a Fragment* (1763). Later he included this essay as one chapter of the *Light of Nature Pursued*. Tucker wrote on the light of nature for eighteen years; he was an independent thinker and never courted public opinion. One reason for this, as Mackintosh noted, was that "he wrote to please himself more than the public."\textsuperscript{30} He addressed the few rather than the many. "My address is made to the few," he commented later in life, "and my aim extends no further than to suggest a clue by help whereof a performance, intended for the many may be better calculated to answer its purpose."\textsuperscript{31} William Paley later found this remark and followed Tucker's suggestion.

Since Tucker wrote to please himself, we find that his main literary faults are digression and repetition. He admitted this in


\textsuperscript{30} James Mackintosh, *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy, Chiefly During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1837), p. 269.

his Conclusion:

Repetitions and misplacings I fear there are several, for being more solicitous for the substance than the form, if any clearer explanation or further application occurred than had been made before, it seemed more pardonable to resume an article already dispatched, than omit anything material, or lose a use it was capable of being turned to.32

Of course, this was one reason for his lack of popularity as a philosopher. In yet another place he described his completed work as a series of essays rather than as a systematic exposition of philosophy and theology.33 Everyone who has read in Tucker agrees that he is unbearably prolix. Leslie Stephen said:

The last twenty years of his life were devoted to the composition of this book; and he has no intention to spare his readers one inch of the devious track which he has followed throughout that time. He never hurries; he cares nothing for concentration; the twentieth statement of any proposition is as prolix as the first; he utterly ignores the principle that the secret of being tedious is to say everything.34

For this same reason the younger William Hazlitt abridged the Light of Nature Pursued into one volume in 1807. "As to the pains and labour it has cost me, or the time I have devoted to it," he declared, "I shall say nothing."35 He presented the essentials of Tucker's work by

32 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 676.
striking out the many duplications and restatements. On the other hand, one of the most entertaining features of the original work is Tucker's innumerable asides and digressions. We learn many autobiographical details and impressions of the times when he wanders off his subject; truly "it is impossible to dip into any chapter without finding some charm in the quaint and good-humored naivete of the writer." 36

In spite of the length of the Light of Nature Pursued (3,951 octavo pages in seven volumes) and his repetitious style, Tucker received favorable notices when his first four volumes were published in 1763. On the one hand, John Fyvie mentioned that the Light of Nature Pursued was "reviled by the reviewers, neglected by the public, and disparaged by his friends." 37 But the evidence does not bear all this out. The Monthly Review, for example, contained the following favorable comments:

His talents are far above mediocrity: he must have read and thought with equal attention and perseverance upon the numerous subjects which he hath considered: his extraordinary penetration hath enabled him to explore the most hidden recesses of the mind . . . : and though many of his readers may think him mistaken in his leading sentiments, or in some less important parts of his system, they will certainly meet with a variety of original matter, and cannot fail of being pleased with the amiable spirit of candor and benevolence which breathes through the whole of his performance. 38

However, his last three volumes were not as well received by the public. Credit was given to Tucker for his "sagacity and ingenuity," but criticism of his work was overdue:

We give him full credit for the sincerity and benevolence of his intentions, and cannot sufficiently extoll the great liberality of sentiment which he every where discovers. At the same time we think he has disgraced his judgment, and in some measure defeated the usefulness of his work, by his mistaken regard, we are tempted to say, affected deference to public authority in matters of religion, which has led him to attempt to reconcile contradictions, and to introduce such a licentious interpretation of words and phrases, as, if generally admitted, would render the most solemn professions, and engagements uncertain and deceitful, and destroy all confidence between man and man.39

On the whole, Tucker has been duly recognized for his contribution to philosophy and has received ample credit for his work:

The author of the Abridgement of Tucker says, that he was "discouraged by his friends, neglected by the public, and ridiculed by the reviewers." It was not so. Both the Critical and the Monthly Review notice and recommend his works in terms of more than usual respect. The latter, especially, not only gives a careful and extended analysis of his writings, ... but takes frequent occasion to extoll him as a writer and philosopher above, ... rather than below his deserts.40

We have now appraised Tucker's shortcomings as a writer; on the other hand, he possessed an excellent talent for illustration.

"There is one work to which I owe so much," said William Paley in his Moral and Political Philosophy,

... that it would be ungrateful not to confess the obligation: I mean the writings of the late Abraham Tucker ... .

---

39 Ibid., March, 1779, p. 437.
I have found in this writer more original thinking and observation upon the several subjects that he has taken in hand, than in any other, not to say in all others put together. His talent also for illustration is unrivalled.  

Tucker's illustrations help to commend his philosophy. He took all of life and literature as his resource. He analyzed philosophical problems either with "the microscope," a favorite instrument of the Searches, or with "the telescope." He cited Plato as his authority for "mingling coarse objects among the most serious subjects."  

Because of this, the familiar objects of daily life continually crept into his writing:  

... the childish game of cat's-cradle, the handiwork of the village carpenter, the groom saddling a horse, a girl going to a ball, or something that reminds him of his own courtship: these and a hundred other familiar objects enable him to expound his views on fate, free-will, a future life, the mechanism of the human mind, and the purposes of the Almighty.  

In short, he makes you like him in spite of your being buried under an avalanche of paragraphs. But his lack of popularity is not entirely his own fault. Mackintosh wrote that "the neglect of his writings is the strongest proof of the disinclination of the English nation, for the last half century, to Metaphysical Philosophy."  

---

44 Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 273.
were true in 1837, it easily could be as true today.

**Tucker's Interests**

We have reviewed Tucker's qualities as a writer. We shall now enumerate his many personal and social interests. The pamphlets and books which we shall cite furnish a great deal of the best biographical material.

*A Country Gentleman's Advice* . . . : Tucker first came to the public's attention as a writer in 1755, with the publication of a political tract entitled *The Country Gentleman's Advice to his Son* . . . *With Regard to his Political Conduct.* His grandson remembered the general argument of the pamphlet:

In the year 1755, at the request of a friend, he worked up some materials that were sent to him, into the form of a pamphlet. . . . It seems to have been dictated by no party feelings, even in the person by whom the materials were compiled, but generally cautions young men against engaging in political societies in which their passions are liable to be inflamed, and, from the zeal and enthusiasm of the moment, their humour often pledged to support measures which their cooler reason and reflection disapprove.

In this tract Tucker explained his attitude toward government. At one time he might have been interested in politics. But he would not give

---

45 One conceivable reason for this pamphlet may have been the previous Whig-Tory political activity in Oxford, which culminated in the famous 1754 "Oxfordshire Contest" between the "Old Interest" Tories and the "New Interest" Whigs. Cf. *The Oxfordshire Contest: or the Whole Controversy between the Old and New Interest. Containing, Great Variety of Wit, Humour, and Argument; Letters, Songs, etc.* (London: W. Owen, 1753).

up his free time which meant to him leisure for speculation and writing. He had a detached attitude toward politics and proclaimed that he was a political "neutral." In *A Country Gentleman's Advice* he gave a short exposition of the recent history of England and Scotland and also of the Whig and Tory political parties. He appealed to both Whigs and Tories to use their heads more and their emotions less. Walpole believed that certain men had their price, but Tucker countered him by claiming that the worst thing that could happen was that a person would become the "tool of a tool":

Much less be cajoled to act a subordinate part under them: they are, themselves, but engines play'd off by some shrewder hand than their own: and, of all humilities, never condescend to be made the tool of a tool. 

Because of his law training and residence in London, Tucker was acquainted with British politics. However, he refused to offer his name as a county representative:

He was once . . . prevailed on to attend a county meeting at Epsom, where party ran very high, and though he took no active part in the proceedings there, he was introduced into a ludicrous ballad, where he is described, with several other gentlemen of respectability and talents as confounded by the superior powers and eloquence of the Whigs of that day, Sir Joseph Mawbey and Humphry Cotes. This circumstance afforded to Mr. Tucker abundant

---


matter for humourous animadversion, and whenever politics were the subject of conversation he seldom failed to advert to the ill success of his only essay in public life; and he was so much amused with the figure he made in verse, that he set the ballad to music.50

Instead of serving in the national government, Tucker became a magistrate in Surrey County. Apparently he carried out his duties quite successfully. In a poem entitled "Box hill," by Edward Beaven, his character is referred to:

For Tucker fills the magisterial chair,
Who long has gained the love of human kind:
The featur'd souls displayed in his free eye,
The beam of honour strong and mercy's shade.51

Tucker also criticized the "Violent, or Court Whigs," who followed inclination rather than reason. The best policy, he asserted, was to

... manage so, that if your neighbors will rank you under some class, they may call you a Moderate Whig, rather than by any other denomination: but do you yourself disclaim all marks of distinction; desire no appellation but that of an honest Englishman, a sincere, hearty lover of your country, and every individual thereto belonging; and endeavour to square your actions agreeably to that character: for in so doing you will act most conformably to the precepts of Christianity, the lights of natural reason, and the truest wisdom.52

Although he refused to enter politics, Tucker affirmed that it should be "a science, as well as law or physic, which requires the application of a whole life to learn compleatly."53 Most of all, a politician

52 Tucker, Country Gentleman's Advice, pp. 542.
53 Ibid., p. 49.
should avoid heated discussions and narrowness of temper. He should always guide himself by the general good.

Freewill, Foreknowledge and Fate; Man in Quest of Himself: Abraham Tucker's second and third pamphlets illustrate his life-long interest in philosophy and metaphysics. This is a major theme of the dissertation and will be considered in the next chapter. The former essay was published in 1763; his philosophy was soon criticized in the Monthly Review. Tucker then wrote a rebuttal entitled Man in Quest of Himself . . . 54 Tucker incorporated his essay on freewill into the Light of Nature Pursued as Chapter XXVI, "Freewill." Tucker's speculations were often "as wild and entertaining as John Buncle,"55 and yet he pictured himself as a genuine successor to John Locke.

Light of Nature Pursued: This fourth publication, which was Tucker's magnum opus, contains all of his curiosities and interests; but we find certain ones here which are not illustrated in other essays and pamphlets. (1) Farming and Agriculture: we have referred to this interest above.56 Unfortunately we cannot compare his theories with such contemporary advocates of improved agriculture as Jethro Tull (1674-1740) or Lord "Turnip" Townshend (1676-1738). We do not know if Tucker also practiced crop rotation or selective animal

54 Here he used the pseudonym "Cuthbert Comment."

55 Hazlitt, op. cit., p. viii.

56 Cf. ante, p. 19.
breeding. But the natural beauty of his estate attested to a Divinity. Even the design of vegetables inferred a Creator:

Then if we turn our eyes upon the vegetable tribes, we may see them, in countless multitudes of trees, shrubs, weeds, mosses, funguses, cover the ground or produced in water: each growing, spreading, and flourishing by peculiar laws adapted to its own kind, and all worked in such exactness and nicety of art, as the greatest human ingenuity could not imitate. . . .

Furthermore, Tucker had a remarkably kind attitude toward animals. He too deplored the fact that "there was no law to protect them, and public opinion, brutalised by such spectacles as the baiting of bears and bulls, . . . had no pity or regard for them." In reaction to this brutality, Tucker claimed that our treatment of animals affected our attitude toward our fellow men:

Nay, could we be sure they were but Cartesian machines, insensible of pleasure or pain, still it would be prudent to keep the measures of humanity with them for our own sakes: for the habit of Charity may be weakened by acts which do no mischief to the subjects whereon performed. . . . Solomon says the merciful man is merciful to his beast: which implies that by being unmerciful to the beast he will become so to his own kind: for it is our disposition of mind that governs us in our dealings with both, nor is it possible for man utterly to cast off all tenderness and humanity to the inferior animals, without contracting a callousness and obduracy that will cover him from any impressions by the distresses of his own species.

We should not degrade either animals or natural resources. Tucker saw

---

57 Tucker, Light of Nature Pursued, Vol. II, p. 76. This is a long passage on the argument from design.


the Providence of God working daily on his estate, and he was bound to respect that which had been given to him in trust. He was primarily a student, but his love of natural beauty helped him appreciate country life in Surrey County.

(2) Music: Tucker's musical talent is more notable than his interest in agriculture. He studied the violin at the university and then kept in practice for many years. In the midst of his heavy philosophical writing, music expressed his feelings. He remembered attending a party where

... the ladies declared they should be vastly delighted to hear a solo on the violin by a philosopher, or hoped his scholar would accompany him with an amorous sonnet of his own composing, and that the entertainment might conclude with a dance of forests full of loons, bears, and tigers, to a jig of the Thracian harper.

He had a good ear for music, but little talent for singing. He was offended by the low standard of musical taste in his parish church. He rebuked himself for even entertaining the thought that he might "pretend to faint away at the screamings of a country Church, because we happen to have a fine ear, and delicate taste for music." He knew that songs made a vivid impression on the imagination. He deplored a shoddy ballad, but realized that even songs in bad taste could persuade a man's heart:

The songs inspiring party-zeal and the spirit of drinking, are generally very bad music, badly executed, being rather roars or squalls than songs: yet have they the full weight upon the company. I doubt not that many a jolly toper has

---

60 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 421.
61 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 443.
bawled out, The Soph he is immortal, and never can decay, for how should he return to dust, who daily wets his clay? until he has sung himself into a full persuasion of that being a solid argument, which would justify him in his assiduities at the bottle. And though the Quaker never sings professedly, yet the whine and awkward cadence and see-saw action, wherewith the spirit vents itself in his sermons, may be called a bastard-singing; and perhaps that is all there is affecting in them. Thus it appears by manifold experience, that singing even of the most hideous kind is a powerful engine for working sentiments into the mind.62

He was interested in hymnology and church organs, but he felt that Methodist hymn-singing was one-sided. They "lay them all out upon the Redemption: but though this be the principal topic of joyful praise, it is not the only one. They are so zealous for the Son, that they totally overlook the Father."63

(3) Law: Tucker also kept informed on jurisprudence. His training as an advocate is evident in many passages of his major work, as for example, when he wrote about Justice, Equity and Ethics.64

(4) Science: Abraham Tucker was intensely curious about science. He never mentioned the Royal Society of London, but he praised the progress of the English in physics, chemistry and mathematics. Tucker quoted Sir Isaac Newton on a variety of subjects and in practically every volume of the Light of Nature Pursued. Newton's "epoch-making success in interpreting the complex relationships of the things which compose the physical universe in terms of a calculable and

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., p. 444.
64 Cf. post, Chapter IV, "Abraham Tucker's Ethics."
mechanical scheme..." excited not only David Hume, but also Abraham Tucker. Many of these calculable and mechanical experiments were repeated by Tucker. For example, he used Newton's "gold lace" experiment to demonstrate certain phenomena of vision. He also applied many other experiments as buttresses for his philosophy: for example, he made use of gravity and cohesion in explaining the Mundane Soul; Newton's hypothesis of the earth circling the sun illustrated God's Providence; and Tucker theorized that, in a future existence, light beams were used by microscopic "Vehicles" for transportation. Tucker heartily agreed with the majority of eighteenth century thinkers, that the physical sciences gave indubitable support to theism and Christianity.

(5) Medicine: Experimental medicine also aroused Tucker's curiosity. He had not studied the subject as John Locke or as David Hartley, but he regarded highly the metaphysical implications of certain experiments on the human foetus. He developed one of his hypotheses about the future life on the basis of these experiments.

Vocal Sounds: This is the last essay which Tucker wrote, an

---

"acute and very scarce little work" entitled Vocal Sounds. It was privately printed in 1773, only the year before his death. It is a good example of his concern for philology and the Classics. Once again we discover the cheerful temperament of the old country gentleman. The closest he came to mentioning his loss of sight was that he wished to listen awhile to the "voice of nature":

    I have determined for awhile to take down my telescope set to view celestial objects by the Light of Nature, and, taking the hearing trumpet, listen to the voice of nature, in order to catch and mark down all the minute variations of sound she leads us through in our discourses familiar or solemn; together with the notions of our organs in producing them; hoping thereby to reduce the whole into a consistent and regular system.

He knew French and Italian, read Cicero and other Latin authors, and also studied his Greek New Testament. Unfortunately he did not use the "solemn power of philology" consistently. He also developed a science called "philophony," or the study of English pronunciation. He claimed that very often English was "not Spelt as Spoken." Because of this he developed a "reformed" alphabet which was "useful for teaching French and English." Etymology being a passion with the Searches, Tucker delighted to analyze words and listen to people's various accents:

---

69 Samuel Parr, Bibliotheca Parriana. . . . (London: John Bohn and Joseph Mawman, 1827), n.p. Two copies of Vocal Sounds are in the British Museum.

70 Search, op. cit., p. 3.

71 Ibid., p. 125.
it would make an Englishman sweat to repeat this line of Ennius in the manner he ought:
Africa terribili tremit, horrida terra tumultu.
"Through Afric's drear terrific turmoils ran," but a Welchman would rattle it off manfully, till he made the sound an echo to the sense.72

Tucker not only studied the sources and meanings of words, but he also attended to the Classical literature of Greece and Rome. In Vocal Sounds, for example, he proclaimed his love for the Latin poetry, especially the hexameter form of composition. He was dissatisfied with the popular translations of the Aeneid and Georgics. Because of this he tried to improve them by casting them into a better English hexameter. Leslie Stephen called the result "a queer specimen of English hexameters."73 Tucker admitted that his translation probably would not be a public success:

... in the little circle of my private acquaintance they are regarded as curiosities rather than beauties, hanging a peg lower than the two other translations. Indeed it may be doubted whether the Latin measure can ever come into vogue among us or our neighbors the French, for we are all so used to expect harmony from accent and rhyme that we cannot easily find it in any other source.74

This attempt to develop a taste in Englishmen for hexameters is just one illustration of his devotion to the Classics. Tucker also had discovered that

... in the correct literature of reason, and in the imitation of ancient classical masterpieces, there was at least order and repose, as there was not in the

72 Ibid., p. 36.
74 Search, op. cit., p. 85.
unsettled social, political, and religious life of England. 75

He was never more at home than when quoting the opinion of one of the Ancients. In a later chapter we shall describe a myth in which Tucker conversed with Plato, Socrates, Timaeus, Pythagoras and others. 76 He mentioned over thirty figures of Greek and Roman literature in his writings. Moreover, as the Augustan orators used proper language forms, so it was equally necessary for him to attend to the correct forms of expression:

As for Pliny the elder, or ... Aulus Gellius, tis no great matter how we read them so we understand their meaning, for they only aimed at informing our understandings ...; but the orators and historians of the Augustan age laid as much stress on their language as their matter, esteeming it a necessary feather to wing the arrow which would not pierce without it. 77

His essay on "Death," written near the close of his own life, is similar to Cicero's treatise on old age. Tucker was also fond of "taking up an old classical notion and remodeling it according to his own fancy." 78 One example is his changing Plato's charioteer and horses in the "Phaedrus" into the figure of a man riding a horse: the rider represented "Reason" and the horse "Imagination." 79 Another


76 Cf. post, Chap. V, "Natural Theology: The Vision."

77 Search, op. cit., p. 88.

78 Fyvie, op. cit., p. 223.

Platonic hypothesis which he developed was the World-Soul in the "Timaeus." In fact, Tucker absorbed some of the Classical notions so much that his religious orthodoxy was doubted. Although he intended to use certain Classic beliefs as buttresses for the Christian faith, the former sometimes nearly replaced the latter. But we see that Tucker received most of his inspiration from the order and repose of the Classics.

C. Influence on British and American Thought

Did Abraham Tucker's passion for philology and Classical literature mean that he ignored contemporary English literary figures? In his works there are very few references to living poets, philosophers, divines and men of letters. John Fyvie noticed this lack of references to contemporary literature in Tucker:

... it is ... remarkable that there is no trace of his ever having come into personal contact with any of the eminent authors who were his contemporaries, hardly even a trace of familiarity with any of their writings. The principal works of Pope, Johnson, Goldsmith, Swift, Defoe, Gray, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollet all appeared in his lifetime; but beyond the occasional quotation of a line from Pope's "Essay on Man" there is throughout the whole of these seven discursive volumes scarcely the remotest reference to contemporary general literature. Fyvie is partially correct. One has to look very carefully to find any such allusions. Actually, Tucker mentioned both Milton and Addison more often than Pope. It is true that he did not mention

80 Cf. post, Chap. V, "Natural Theology."

81 Fyvie, op. cit., p. 211.
the authors named above; but Tucker did quote from Shakespeare, Dryden, Edmund Waller, and Sir John Suckling. Fyvie also noticed that Tucker made few references to "important contemporary speculative works bearing on the subject of his own inquiries,"82 such as Butler's Analogy, Hume's Treatise, Reid's Inquiry, or Adam Smith's Moral Sentiments; but he did occasionally quote from or allude to other writers such as Locke, Berkeley, Hartley, Cudworth, Tillotson, Beveridge, Wollaston, Tindal, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke. Moreover, he mentioned a few contemporary theological writers such as Bishop Thomas Sherlock, Archdeacon Stabbing, and John Law, Bishop of Carlisle. But his avoiding polemics in theology and philosophy was in keeping with his "love of retirement."

Because Tucker avoided entering into controversy he exercised only a minor influence upon British and American letters. We can name only a few outstanding persons who read him. After the reviews of his work in 1768 and 1776, nothing appeared to attract public attention until Theophilus Lindsey's An Historical View of ... Unitarian Doctrine (1783). This was an unexpected polemic in which Tucker was charged with being a Unitarian who conformed to the Trinitarian order of worship merely because of custom.83 But soon afterward (1785) William Paley's very popular work, Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, again called attention to Tucker.84 Then in 1800 Samuel

82 Ibid. 83 Cf. post, Chap. VI, pp. 254ff.
84 Cf. ante, p. 28.
Parr used Tucker as a resource for his "Spital Sermon, preached at Christ Church" on the fifteenth of April. Parr praised him for his treatment of "satisfaction," "justice," and "Universal Benevolence." Furthermore the *Light of Nature Pursued* was enough in demand that a second edition was printed in 1805; Tucker's grandson wrote a biography to inform readers about his life. Because the seven volumes were difficult to read, William Hazlitt finished an *Abridgement* in 1807. However, he felt that Tucker was "too discursive" and that his philosophy would lead to skepticism. After Hazlitt, Archbishop Richard Whatley condensed some of Tucker's most useful arguments in the notes to his 1822 Bampton Lecture, *The Use and Abuse of Party Feeling in Matters of Religion*. He acknowledged his debt to Tucker's essay on freewill, considering it "most ingenious and accurate, though prolix and tedious."

A third edition of the *Light of Nature Pursued* was printed in 1834, with others following in 1836, 1837, 1842 and 1848. Tucker's work was published in the United States in 1831 and later. That is the

---


limited extent of the dissemination of his writings. He has been both praised and blamed as an author. Ernest Albee accused him of being "utterly lacking in metaphysical talent," while Leslie Stephen characterized him as a "solitary and half-trained thinker."\textsuperscript{88} We shall consider his qualifications as a philosopher in the next chapter. We conclude this biography by observing that, although Tucker is usually included in histories of modern philosophy, few readers have taken the time to study him thoroughly.

CHAPTER II

TUCKER AS A PHILOSOPHER

In our biography of Abraham Tucker we mentioned that he spent nearly two decades writing philosophy. But now we must ask, in what sense (or senses) may we refer to him as a philosopher? By what right should he be included in a list of notable British thinkers? The preliminary purpose of our chapter is to answer this question; but in order to answer with any adequacy we will have to consider the larger picture of eighteenth century rationalism and also the expression "the light of nature." The second purpose of our chapter is to expound Tucker's philosophical method and to offer a synopsis of his total work. Finally, we shall summarize the chapter and criticize certain of Tucker's main philosophical principles.

A. What Kind of a Philosopher?

Abraham Tucker was a liberally-educated English gentleman. He was curious about many subjects, but above all he attended to the study of philosophy. Let us now look closely at what this means: we believe that Tucker was a philosopher in several senses. First of all, he was a lover of wisdom; "my love of retirement has furnished me with continual leisure, and the exercise of my reason has been my daily employment..."¹ Tucker was always a student and a lover of books, and he used his leisure

to cultivate a worldly wisdom. Secondly, he was a philosopher in the sense that he attempted to see life steadily and as a whole. This was just as serious a matter for Tucker as for Socrates or the Ancients. For this reason, he never could tolerate a "minute philosopher," that is, anyone who expected all the ultimate questions settled handily.

In the same manner as George Berkeley, he inveighed against all "dabblers in metaphysics":

... we have but one of these two ways to secure ourselves against their artifices: either by resolving never to meddle with any subtilties at all, or by going through with them. ... Wherefore your dabblers in metaphysics are the most dangerous creatures breathing: they have just enough abstraction to raise doubts that never would have entered into another's head, but not enough to resolve them.2

Tucker was also a philosopher in a third sense: he interpreted human experience on the basis of available knowledge and organized his findings into a (more-or-less) coherent argument. He believed that philosophers should be the interpreters of life. They were like lookouts stationed on hilltops, but not with Lucretius' olympian attitude of detachment; they were set apart so that they could warn the people below:

... [they] ought to consider themselves as persons placed upon a promontory for the sake of others, and as a peculiar privilege to themselves, to make signals to their fellows below, warning them against deviations from what they discern to be the proper ultimate point of pursuit: not striving to force attention ..., but choosing rather to proceed by ways of friendly admonition and gentle persuasion. ... 3

Fourthly, Tucker was a philosopher in the sense that he dedicated himself to a theoretical pursuit. He concurred with Aristotle, that

2 Ibid., p. 7. 3 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 684.
philosophy was theoretiκά, a theoretical discipline which was set above the practical affairs of men. The common people needed sermons, but only philosophers should seriously consider intellectual matters; discourses in philosophy were

... addressed to the studious, who can follow a train of reasoning throughout, and distinguish between what is asserted as a certain truth, or only as a necessary consequence from the argument at present in hand. [Philosophers] will not be like the politely learned, reading only to shine in conversation: whose aversion to trouble makes them expect to have ... a whole system explained while one sits prattling over a dish of tea. 4

We believe that Abraham Tucker merited the title of philosopher because of these reasons. On the other hand, in our conclusion we shall mention one sense in which he was quite deficient; but let us now continue with another theme, the relationship of Abraham Tucker and eighteenth century rationalism.

Eighteenth Century Rationalism

Certain passages in this paper repeat often-told features of English thought. However, these are so characteristic of the age that they must be alluded to. One of the best examples is the rationalism of the 1700s. Abraham Tucker was very deeply involved in the problems of the Enlightenment. Before we delineate Tucker's own rationalism we shall need to know something about the spirit of the age. What was "Rationalism"?

Rationalism in England meant several things:

---

First of all, the expression indicates that "reason" was given undisputed priority in all matters of thought, especially in religious matters. Specifically it signified the elucidation, according to reason, of the supernatural aspects of Christianity. Few genuine Deists or Skeptics existed in the early decades of the century, but a majority of the theologians and philosophers were rationalizers. As Pattison has written, rationalism simply meant the "assumption of the supremacy of reason in matters of religion. . ."). By the 1700s Locke's views on toleration and the reasonableness of Christianity were winning their way. Men of thought had been allowed a certain independence from traditional beliefs; consequently, many enlightened people interpreted reason as essentially superior to revelation. Of course, the masses and the more zealous Christians were little affected by this new spirit of rationalism. John Wesley is an example of those who dissented from this fashion of the gentry. In his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (1754) he defended Scriptural truth:

... the Scripture, therefore, of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess. It is the fountain of heavenly wisdom, which they who are able to taste prefer to all writings of men, however wise or learned or holy. . . . God speaks, not as man, but as God. His thoughts are very deep, and thence His words are of inexhaustable virtue.

---


But many of the educated did not agree with Wesley and his kind. They questioned, and not always privately, if every part of the Bible was worthy of God. Even Abraham Tucker committed his private doubts to paper. Many persons found fault with the Biblical record, especially with the Old Testament. There were defects in Scripture; all of the Old Testament was not "heavenly wisdom." The problem which confronted them was how to reckon the ancient and modern orders of thought. "How was the God of Christian tradition to be identified with the God of abstract reasoning? How could Jehovah be equivalent to nature?" Because of this, the Bible was submitted to the test of rationality: reason was to judge its worth. Reason was used as a clever "both/and" modus operandi: that is, it was conceived as both adequate and yet inadequate as a help to philosophers and Divines; adequate, in the sense of being competent to assess any supernatural evidence offered; but inadequate in the sense of needing revelation to complement reason. Many were convinced that Scholasticism was right: by reason alone, they claimed, certain significant affirmations could be made about the nature and attributes of God; but above reason there were, of course, the revealed truths of God.

(2) From this kind of rationalism—as the criterion of revelation


9 Pattison, op. cit., p. 298.
--it is natural to expect another development. In the eighteenth century the term also meant hostile criticism of accepted religious beliefs; that is, an all-out war between "Reason" and "Orthodoxy." As we shall see in Chapter V, the English Deists often were this kind of rationalist. Especially in the decline of Deism they ridiculed the Orthodox faith and thus set an example for Continental Deism.  

(c) Finally, "Rationalism" is a philosophic term used in contrast to "Empiricism." As in the philosophy of Descartes, such a Rationalism is "a faculty independent of, or opposed to, or otherwise contrasted with, experience or observation." In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English Rationalism was expressed in terms of "innate ideas" and the "moral sense." To certain men, Lord Shaftesbury for example, nature had given each person a fundamental moral sense which the mind, so to speak, brought into the world:

Sense of right and wrong therefore being as natural to us as natural affection itself, and being a first principle in our constitution and make; there is no speculative opinion, persuasion or belief, which is capable immediately or directly to exclude or destroy it.

10 Around 1760 in England, "people began to lose their taste a little for this anti-religious reason. Abroad, however, it suffered no abatement. Voltaire came upon it and made lavish use of it. Baron von Holbach did much to propagate it by his translations and adaptations. Still more effective was the influence the English deists came to have on thinkers in Germany, who were indebted to them . . . for giving them a general forward impulse." Paul Hazard, European Thought in the Eighteenth Century from Montesquieu to Lessing, trans. by J. Lewis May (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 61. On pp. 62ff., he gives more details of French and German attitudes.

11 John Herman Randall, Jr., and Justus Buchler, Philosophy, An Introduction (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1942), p. 84.
That which is of original and pure nature, nothing beside contrary habit and custom (a second nature) is able to displace. . . .

Of course this was the most controversial part of his philosophy. Shaftesbury asserted that this first principle of the mind only needed to be cultivated and brought forth. "The moral sense might be called 'good taste in the art of living,' and like other forms of taste it [could] be improved by training." Abraham Tucker and the other Empiricists disagreed here substantially.

Now that we have given a general interpretation of what rationalism meant in the eighteenth century, we must ask another question: how did this rationalism develop? Why was reason so highly regarded? How did it become the criterion of revelation? The answer, in a word, was because of the cataclysmic political, cultural, and religious changes of the previous centuries. In England the essentials of the Faith were not only doubted privately; eventually they were drawn into public controversy:

Christianity, instead of producing Christian individuals and societies, seemed for so long to have been producing disputes, persecutions and wars, and had, in the Protestant countries, not only renounced the Holy See but split up further into so many sects, that a desire arose during the seventeenth century to formulate a creed which would be acceptable to all good and reasonable men.14

---


14 Ibid., p. 6. McGiffert also well summarizes the work of the philosophers and scientists: "Many causes . . . were uniting during this period to promote rationalism and to extend its influence among the
Because of this unrest, and because of newly-permitted freedom of thought, men began to publish their innermost convictions. John Milton had argued in his famous *Areopagitica* (1644) "... for the liberty of unlicensed printing" in England, and one major result of this liberty was the rationalistic spirit of the next century. Bacon and Locke had conferred a great responsibility upon their countrymen. Consequently, in the eighteenth century rationalism was less of a conscious creed than ...

... a habit of thought ruling all minds, under the conditions of which all alike tried to make good the peculiar opinions they might happen to cherish. The Churchman differed from the Socinian, and the Socinian from the Deist, as to the number of articles in his creed; but all alike consented to test their belief by the rational evidence for it. ... 15

In short, rationalism was the dominant spirit of the educated during the reign of the Hanoverian kings in England; therefore the debate waxed strong over the claims of reason. Abraham Tucker commented that this inquiry was "the principal, or perhaps only question agitated with any degree of warmth and earnestness ...," whether reason was sufficient to guide conduct, or whether revelation also was needed. 16 Could reason develop a morality independent of the old revealed truths? Some writers, such as the Deists, said yes. Most others, especially the Churchmen,

thinking classes of England as well as of the Continent. In the philosophical sphere, the work of Descartes and his school, of Spinoza, Hobbes and Locke, in the scientific world the discoveries of and the theories of Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Gassendi, Bacon, Newton, and others, combined to promote the credit of human reason and to undermine the authority of traditional systems and opinions." Arthur C. McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (London: Duckworth and Company, 1911), p. 192.


said no, revelation also was needed. Tucker's sentiment was with the majority.

**Tucker's Rationalism:** We have mentioned that Tucker also followed the fashion of his day in assuming the supremacy of reason. He began intentionally, in the Introduction to the *Light of Nature Pursued*, upon the "ground that nobody claims, or that we all possess in common," and by so doing he hoped to avoid controversy:

Both believer and unbeliever will admit that there are certain truths and certain duties discoverable by our own care and sagacity, that our reason is of some use to us, and that we ought to make the best use of it in our power. This . . . is what I purpose to attempt, to try what may be done by the exercise of our reason. . . . Since it is allowed on all hands that reason may do something for us, let us avail ourselves of that something she is capable of, be it little or . . . much.17

In this significant passage, Tucker was re-stating a view of reason which we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*; Aristotle did not believe that the mere possession of reason made you a creative human being:

. . . by "rational" we mean the exercise or activity (energeia), not the mere possession, of reason; for it is the former that would seem more properly entitled to the name.18

Therefore Tucker hoped to carry out this precept by exercising his own reason. He admitted that his coldness of temperament made him rather cautious; but he also followed Descartes in reviewing his new thoughts repeatedly, in order to "discern the genuine rays of truth from the

---


flashy meteors of delusion."\(^{19}\)

"The Light of Nature": We have just mentioned that Tucker was a rationalist, in the sense that he also assumed the priority of reason on both philosophy and theology. Next we shall inquire about his choice of "the light of nature" as the title of his seven volumes. "The light of nature" was familiar in many contemporary works. The Deists hoped to develop a new religion and ethical system upon the light of nature. But if the expression had such a Deistic coloring, then why did Tucker choose it as his title? In his text he uses the expression quite infrequently. It seems to be little more than a title for his work. He did not mention it in his Introduction, but included it prominently in the Conclusion. Referring to the seventy-three chapters preceding "Religion" he said:

Hitherto I have proceeded by the sole light of nature: I come now to compare the discoveries made thereby with those imparted to us from the religion wherein we were bred up in order to find what there is of conformity between them.\(^{20}\)

Of course, the manner in which you used "the light of nature" depended upon how much of a Deist you were. Wollaston and Tindal illustrate for us two contrasting uses: William Wollaston, in the *Religion of Nature*


Delineated, concluded that the light of nature was an insufficient ethical guide for men. However, he refused to extend his investigation beyond "that light which nature affords. . . . Whatever is immediately revealed from God, must . . . be treated as being what it is." For this reason, Wollaston held that the heathen philosophy was incomplete. On the other hand, the Deist Matthew Tindal contended for the complete sufficiency of the light of nature: we ought to adhere "strictly" to it because of the corruptions in Biblical religion. Said Tindal, the light of nature did not have the defects which Samuel Clarke claimed to have found. Moreover, the lapse of the heathen world into idolatry was the direct result of the scheming priests.

All of these matters lead us to inquire about the specific source of Abraham Tucker's title. This is difficult to answer. Most of the authors which he read, such as Cicero, "the Schoolmen," Locke, Wollaston, or Tindal, mention the light of nature. His title is very similar to Wollaston's popular book, and also to Nathanael Culverwell's *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* (1652). Culverwell complained a hundred years before Tucker was writing that, although he found many authors using this phrase, scarcely any of them explained what it meant. Culverwell took Proverbs 20:27, "The understanding of

---


22 Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation: or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (London: n.p., 1732), Chaps. VI, XIII, XIV.
man is the candle of the Lord," as his subject for a series of Chapel addresses at Cambridge University:

It is a work that requires our choicest thoughts, . . . to give reason the things that are reason's, and unto faith the things that are faith's. . . . Reason and faith may embrace each other. There is a twin-light springing from both, . . . and they both sweetly conspire in the same end. . . .

In other words, both Culverwell and Wollaston had considered a theme which is similar to Abraham Tucker's work; but we cannot trace any direct connection between Tucker and anyone else. He mentioned no specific source for his title.

What then may we know about this phrase, "the light of nature," by consulting other works? The analogy between light and knowledge may be traced back to early Western thought. In his "Allegory of the Cave," Plato related the story of one who was taken out into the sunlight and then returned underground. He then declared that the flickering blaze of a fire was a trifling substitute for the sunlight which he had experienced.

Aristotle also spoke of the light of the mind: as the presence of light made potential colors into actual colors, so likewise the mind could achieve "a sort of positive state like light." Allusions

---


to the figure may also be found in Classical philosophy, in Augustine of Hippo, Paracelsus, and in others who wrote during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; the Scholastic writers mentioned the lumen naturale.26

In France, Descartes worked to give the expression more specific meaning; but in his writing the light of nature seems to shift from a natural tendency of belief to self-evidence because of freedom from contradiction.27

Over in England the physician Richard Burthogge expounded this relationship between the light of nature and revelation in the Organum Vetus et Novum (1678):

Clearness of apprehension, which is in the mind the same that clearness of seeing is in the eye, is opposed to obscurity and darkness, and presupposes light. . . . Intellectual Light is that means whereby the Understanding comes to see and apprehend its objects; . . . and is either Light of Revelation, which is called Light of Faith; or Light of Nature, which is also called Light of Reason; where Reason is appropriately taken, and most strictly. . . . The Light of Revelation is that discovery or manifestation God himself is pleased to make of things by his Spirit, and is chiefly in the Holy Scriptures. The Light of Nature is all other Light whatever but that of Revelation.

26 See the Appendix, "The Light of Nature," for selective examples of the use of the phrase. Rudolf Eislcr, Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1910), pp. 738ff. gives a long list of sources. "Light; e.g., of nature (naturale), the natural faculties as affording knowledge, wisdom, etc.; contrasted with light of grace (gratiae), the illumination due to divine grace. . . . The term is a scholastic and theological one, and is applied also to the various sources of 'light' or 'leading,' as light of faith (fidei), of knowledge (scientiae)." "A natural power, or instinct, by which men are led to truth. . . . in anticipation of experience or revelation." Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology ("Light of Nature"), Vol. II, pp. 6, 32.

27 The Meditations and Selections from the Principles of René Descartes, trans. by John Veitch (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1908); Principles, I: 30, and Meditation II.
Knowing these various ways in which the expression was used, we now find that Abraham Tucker's interpretation was essentially that of Burthogge: the light of nature means, in general, simply "reason," or as Tucker commented: (1) No man should "... expect to live by reason; but his conduct will be guided by such rules and opinions as he has stored up in his imagination."29 (2) Reason had no need to be infallible. In fact, she should occasionally "submit herself to authority, and... trust to others in matters belonging to their several sciences..."30 (3) Reason should store the mind with "solid knowledge," and produce "such habits and desires as may continually lead the active powers into proper courses."31 (4) The Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit, and Redemption could never have been inferred "by the strongest efforts of human reason":

Therefore I must rank the Redemption with all belonging to it... among those additions in the republication of the law of Nature which were not in the first edition; as being never discoverable by human reason, nor could ever have been known otherwise than from Revelation, and those miraculous events that were testimonials of it..."32


29 Tucker, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 20. Arthur O. Lovejoy has pointed out that "... it has become customary seriously to exaggerate the rationalism of the period..." Unless "reason" is carefully and somewhat peculiarly defined, such expressions [as "the dry light of reason"] are misleading. The authors who were perhaps the most influential and the most representative in the early and mid-eighteenth century made a great point of reducing man's claims to 'reason' to a minimum..." Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1948), p. 68. Compare Tucker's attitude with this statement.

From this enumeration we find that Tucker apprehended the "light of nature" in three ways: (a) As Wollaston, he intended to discover the limitations and strength of reason; but he disguised this purpose by using the oblique phrase, "to try what may be done by the exercise of reason . . ."\textsuperscript{33} Tucker also believed that a bare, non-mystical light of nature would be sufficient to bring the non-believer to the threshold of "Religion" and to the authoritative Christian revelation. (b) Again, Tucker followed Descartes in affirming that the light of nature ought to dispel the contradictions in his thoughts. Historically it was evident that Christian dogma led to confusion; therefore, Tucker reasoned, one who followed the light of nature should be led to simple and unconfused thoughts. For this reason, Tucker rationalized the doctrine of the Church; the removal of mystery ought to mean the removal of contradiction.\textsuperscript{34} (c) But perhaps most of all the light of nature meant that which agreed with Tucker's common sense: that which was "natural" and "reasonable" would easily fit into his scheme of things. In one place he asserted that if a "rational idea" of a Church rite was found, the one could presume it to be "the genuine and true one."\textsuperscript{35} In other words, the light of nature, or reasonableness, was often that which agreed with the private and benevolent judgment of an eighteenth century country squire.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., Vol. I, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., Vol. II, p. 476.
B. Tucker’s Methodology: Latitude and Empiricism

Up to this point we have seen that Abraham Tucker was a rather typical eighteenth century philosopher who chose to follow the light of nature wherever it might lead. Let us turn next to the important question of his methodology.

Encyclopaedic Approach to Knowledge

Tucker included every shade of orthodox and heretical opinion in the 106 chapters of his work. He wanted to neglect no one in his encyclopaedic approach to knowledge:

... it will be no wonder if I should be found hereafter adopting the sentiments ... of an enthusiast, a bigot, a visionary, a sensualist, a freethinker, a sceptic; yet, I hope, without inconsistency or wavering of opinion.36

As he introduced himself to his readers, he tried to prevent everyone from suspecting that he might be hiding a deus ex machina. He addressed all prelates and clergymen, all philosophers and freethinkers, and informed them that every opinion was of some public benefit. Moreover, he deplored controversy unless it was a last measure:

Let every man by my consent offer whatever he thinks beneficial to the public; we stand obliged to him for his good intentions however ineffectual they may prove, or how much soever we may perceive him mistaken; provided he does not meddle with the opinions of others until he finds them standing directly athwart his way; then indeed disputation becomes necessary, but it is never desireable ... unless when absolutely necessary.37

36 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 5.

37 Ibid., p. 2. We are following Tucker’s order here; in his Introduction he first made his apology and then considered philosophy.
By this very accommodating approach, Tucker hoped to establish a point of contact with all contending parties. But he did not intend to take sides in this new conversation which he was reviving in his study; he would not play favorites. Because of this Tucker classed himself as a "neutralist." He used this word specifically. He wanted to be a mediator and reconciler of opinions:

I have so little the spirit of contradiction, that I do not willingly disagree with anybody even in points of speculation, but endeavour at all possible means of reconcilement . . . I am forced, in defence of my property, to fight by turns on opposite sides of the same question; not as a Dracunculus, hewing down both friend and foe, but as a mediator, labouring to reconcile jarring interests.38

Tucker hoped to "accommodate every taste" and to avoid hurting anyone's feelings by adhering strictly to this policy of neutralism. He believed that this method would "bring the contending parties into better humour with one another, . . . by showing they [agreed] already in many respects" of which they were unaware.39

But then a doubt crept into Tucker's mind. After such a dramatic apology to every shade of opinion, how would the Orthodox feel? He was not worried about his neutralism. If he seemed to "shake the main pillars of morality as well as religion," that was only because they were on shifty ground. Tucker wished to re-set them in firm and immovable foundations. Therefore he assured the Church that his neutralism would not inadvertently slip him into heterodoxy:

Those who maintain an established form of doctrine can receive no injury from me. For whenever I consort with them, as they may expect

38 Ibid., p. 5.  
39 Ibid., p. 2.
... will frequently happen, they will have in me a competent witness to the reasonableness of their doctrines, against whom no exception can be taken for prejudice or partiality.

*Synthesis vs. Skepticism:* This was Tucker's apology at the outset of the *Light of Nature Pursued.* However, it is evident that his neutralism also covered over a fundamental tension. Tucker had decided already between skepticism or a synthesis of philosophy and theology. Strictly speaking then, was Tucker a neutralist? Was he content to leave philosophy, religion, and ethics in skepticism and confusion? Neutralism, in the sense of impartiality, would have meant that he followed the argument relentlessly, even if it led to Hume's skeptical conclusion. But the fact that Abraham Tucker was *both* a philosopher and a member of the Church of England constrained him to take up the other alternative: he must work toward some new synthesis of empirical philosophy and his rationalistic theology. He would not allow neutralism to drift towards skepticism. Tucker actually dedicated himself to reconciling the old order with the new. We see him wrestling over these alternatives of neutralism, synthesis, and skepticism in a late passage of the book:

> I am not conscious of having advanced any thing in contradiction of the opinions generally received as fundamental, nor yet anything which had not its support independent [of] them. My not using authority ought no more to be taken as a proof of rejecting than receiving it: for it was my business to go on quietly my own way without taking side among contending parties; desirous of being thought a neutral, as the character most suitable to that spirit of reconcilement I have professed all along.

---

40 Ibid., p. 5.  
41 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 97f.
Expositor of Rational Christianity: But once again, how could Tucker deal with this tension between the God of Biblical revelation and the Deistic idea of Divinity? His answer, so typical of the period, was to expound "a Christian Philosophy or a rational Christianity." By this procedure, Tucker again echoed John Locke, who had published The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures (1695). Locke laid the groundwork for those who followed by affirming that the Bible was especially intended

... for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind in the way of salvation, and, therefore, generally and in necessary points, to be understood in the plain and direct meaning of the words and phrases ...  

Two generations later Tucker interpreted Christian reasonableness as meaning that he should expound "what there is conformable between the discoveries of Reason and Revelation, and how far they support, illustrate, and strengthen each other..." By so interpreting Christian doctrine, Tucker hoped to make the Rationalists more "sympathetic" to the Church; and by the same token, he hoped to bring the Orthodox around to a more "rational" interpretation of dogma. In Chapter VI we shall investigate to what degree Tucker was successful.

But let us go one step further into how Tucker considered reason and revelation: in his Introduction, and indeed throughout the whole work


43 Tucker, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 98. The possibility that there might be discoveries that would not support and strengthen each other was ignored.
he conceived of philosophy and orthodox religion in very optimistic and
general terms. He minimized, nearly denied, the possibility of disagree-
ment. Tucker would have made light of William Temple's observation
about the inevitable competition between philosophy and religion:

There are two main factors in the tension between Philosophy and
Religion: the first is the identity of the province in which each
claims supremacy; the second is the complete opposition in their
method of dealing with it resulting from a difference of aim. For
Philosophy seeks knowledge for the sake of understanding, while
Religion seeks knowledge for the sake of worship. The province
claimed by both is the entire field of human experience.44

In contrast, Tucker affirmed that there was no confusion in trusting both
reason and doctrine for guidance; philosophy was not inimical to religion:
"natural philosophy is become an innocent inoffensive science, a useful
minister in the temple of the Lord."45 Unfortunately philosophy was not
understandable by the masses because of its refined and technical expres-

sion. For this reason, Locke was right: the Gospel had been given as a
guide for all mankind. Because of these reasons, Tucker affirmed that
Philosophy and the Gospel were not in tension or conflict, but needed
and complemented each other:

Company, 1949), p. 30. "The philosophy which now took its rise was
no longer the servant of theology. It was, at most, the friend, and
even possibly the enemy, of theology. Before the end of the rationalist
period it was the master of theology, though often wholly indifferent
to theology, exactly because of its sense of mastery." Edward Caldwell
Moore, An Outline of the History of Christian Thought Since Kant (London:

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear how God, by the provisions of his Wisdom, has raised up the two trees of knowledge, Philosophy, and Religion, from little seeds, by slow and successive gradations, and how apt they are, by their mutual influence to purify and meliorate each other: for when set at too great distance apart, Philosophy becomes a vain babbler, and Religion a superstitious enchantress. Therefore it is highly expedient to approximate them as near as possible, that they may engraft into each other by approach: for their juices will mellow by mingling together, their branches grow more vigorous over a larger compass of ground, and bear salubrious fruits of more general use.46

Therefore by this rational methodology Tucker hoped to accommodate philosophy and the Christian religion.

Tucker's Interpretation of Empiricism

Now that we have reviewed Tucker's encyclopaedic and latitudinarian approach to knowledge, we shall pass on to describe his philosophy. "Since . . . my attempt can draw no ill consequences," Tucker further remarked in his Introduction, " . . . I may proceed without fear or scruple to such exercise of my reason as I am capable of making."47 He was an enthusiastic disciple of Locke, which meant that he was very partial to Empiricism, or the philosophy of experience:

English philosophy is distinctly the Philosophy of Experience, and the advance of English Philosophy in its successive representatives consists in the more precise definition of what experience means.48

Although Empiricism was developed by that group of British philosophers reaching from Bacon and Locke to David Hume, the term was used in early Greek medicine.49 With the publication of An Essay concerning the Human

49Burnet mentions the importance of Alkmaion of Kroton, a physician who had been associated with the Pythagoreans: "Alkmaion's importance really
Understanding (1689), Locke opened our modern consideration of epistemology or the theory of knowledge. The touchstone of empirical philosophy is that

... all knowledge is derived from sense experience. ... The mind is originally an absolute blank (tabula rasa) on which, as it were, sense-given impressions are mechanically recorded, without any action on the part of the mind.50

Empiricism also stresses the importance of observing data, of experience, and of the senses. In his epoch-making essay, Locke set out to examine the mental abilities of human beings, in order that he might know "what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with."51 After refuting the doctrine of "innate ideas" in Book One, Locke then formulated his own empirical philosophy as follows:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas:—How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded;

lies in the fact that he is the founder of the empirical psychology. He regarded the brain as the common sensorium, a view which Hippokrates and Plato adopted from him ... There is no reason to doubt that he made this discovery by anatomical means," John Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1930), p. 194. The philosophy of Empiricism is related etymologically to empeiros, en, "in" + peira, "trial, attempt, essay, experiment." Although Tucker praised John Locke's philosophy, he never alluded to the important contributions of Francis Bacon or David Hume.


and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either about external or sensible objects, or about the internal operations or our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking.52

When we turn to Abraham Tucker, we do not find a more strict interpretation of empiricism. He did not criticize Locke, as did Berkeley, or apply empiricism rigorously as did Hume; but rather he returned to his mentor and defended him. From Locke he had learned how to direct his observation, and how to make use of all that he beheld.53 Tucker was always pleased when a fundamental disagreement with Locke narrowed and vanished because of his further inspection.54 In fact, Tucker lavished praise upon John Locke as one of the brightest examples of English philosophy:

Mr. Locke in particular has contributed not a little to facilitate the increase of knowledge, by pointing out the sources and channels from whence it must be derived, and clearing away that incumbrance of innate ideas, real essences, and such like rubbish, that obstructed the searches of the studious formerly; so that the reasonings of men are becoming more accurate, more solid, and if one may so say, more reasonable, than they were before.55

As for Tucker's empiricism, he began by observing that "... reason cannot work without materials, which must be fetched from nature."56 Yet the greatest part of it was beyond men; how to proceed? Tucker ignored the vast "stores of nature" which were beyond his reach, and turned to the examination of human personality. James Seth marked this

52 Ibid., Bk. II, Chapt. 1, par. 2.
55 Ibid., p. 4. 56 Ibid., p. 6.
movement in English philosophy, whereby the experimental method narrowed to the psychological, or introspective approach, and fixed attention on the inner side of human experience:

This is the method common to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, to the associationists, and the Scottish intuitionists.57

Abraham Tucker also began his empirical study by concentrating upon the mind and the inner man:

Of what [materials] stand within our ken, some we discern by immediate intuition, others we gather by inference and long deductions of reasoning. It seems expedient then to begin with the things lying nearest to us, these being the premises which must help us to investigate others more remote. Now what is nearer to a man than himself, his sensations, thoughts, and actions? These, therefore, I purpose to examine in the first place, rather than hunt after abstract notions or essences of good or evil; which can only be discovered, if ever, from a careful observation of the former.58

Following this, he also re-phrased Locke's thesis in Book II of his Essay, that Sensation and Reflection were the two fundamental sources of knowledge:

Sensation, as we learn from Mr. Locke, and may find by our own observation, is the first inlet and grand source of knowledge, supplying us with all our ideas of sensible qualities; which, together with other ideas arising from them, after their entrance into the mind [i.e., Reflection], complete the stores of knowledge and materials of reason.59

Since "experience" is also a fundamental term in empiricism, we shall now illustrate what it meant to Tucker. In one sense, he equated experience with the whole field of human awareness; that is, to be conscious is to "experience": "my door stands open," he said, "to receive whatever valuable comes in from all quarters."60 Then again by experience

59 Ibid., p. 78.
60 Ibid., p. 5.
he meant that fund of knowledge or information which we accumulate simply because we exist: "if we consult experience, it will testify that all species of evidence have their turns in prevailing upon us."61 Finally, Tucker recognized experience as a Baconian act of observation which was opposed to theorizing and speculation:

... how solid a science soever may be erected on ideal qualities, it rests on speculation only, and contributes nothing to our better accommodation, unless relating to such qualities wherein mankind has some concern; and what are of this kind can only be ascertained by experience and observation.62

Both Abraham Tucker and David Hume had a common goal in wishing to introduce this "experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects."63 Tucker felt that the ancient and modern attempts to establish morality by means of reason had not entirely failed. Locke, he remembered, had "pronounced [morality] capable of demonstration equally with mathematics."64 But even if Locke's opinion could not be sustained, Tucker nevertheless held a high estimate of reason. He was persuaded that he could "approach towards the certainty of demonstration" because the evidence which he intended to produce would command our full and unreserved assent. Of one

61 Ibid., p. 122.
62 Ibid., p. 6. Randall and Buchler mention three other interpretations of "experience": as a quality of sensation or emotion; as the world of fact; and as a relation or interaction. Randall and Buchler, op. cit., pp. 85ff.
thing he was very certain: we could interpret religion and morality better if we knew ourselves. We shall go into the relationship between his empiricism and his psychology and ethics in the next two chapters.

**A Synopsis of the Light of Nature Pursued**

Before we conclude this section on methodology, it will be in order to offer a synopsis of Tucker's seven volumes. Although the total work is extended and very repetitious, "... he was not without method; but his plan grew as he proceeded."65 Tucker's grandson mentioned that he made "several sketches" before choosing his final plan, and that he printed that outline as a dialogue. At any rate, Tucker requested his reader, "if I have any [!]," to suspend his judgment on the work until he had read all 106 chapters. It is surely an understatement to say that "something in the nature of an analysis of the general scheme ... would have been extremely desireable."66 Therefore we shall offer a synopsis of the contents.

Abraham Tucker divided his writings into three general divisions: (I) "Human Nature (thirty-six chapters)," (II) "Theology (thirty-one chapters)," and (III) "The Lights of Nature and Gospel Blended (thirty-nine chapters)." In "Human Nature," Tucker considered the details of the human mind, marking out the first twenty-six chapters for that subject. "This ... we may look upon as the groundwork and foundation; and he who

---


would have a firm superstructure must allow sufficient time for laying the foundation well. The remaining ten chapters in "Human Nature" cover the same ground as Wollaston; that is, the ethical guidance which the light of nature offered to a heathen philosopher. In (II) "Theology," Tucker passed over into natural theology; or, to use his figure of speech, he laid aside his "microscope" of self-analysis in order to take up his "telescope" and examine the vast spaces of the universe. In "Theology" he considered the nature and attributes of God, certain problems of natural theology, and particularly the question of future existence. Finally, in his last general division (III) on the "Lights of Nature and Gospel Blended," he considered the question of Church doctrine and practice. He intended to show how these conformed to reason. After writing on Church matters for twenty chapters, he "descended" again to the "practical" and wrote essays on various subjects which came to his mind. In his Conclusion he reviewed the total work, closing with the observation that

... if my rude sketches should occasion some completer production which may gain general currency and do signal service among mankind when Search and his embryo work are clean forgotten, I may still take credit for it in my own account.  

C. Summary and Criticism

We have now completed our general analysis of Abraham Tucker as a philosopher, having examined his relationship to eighteenth century rationalism and also his methodology. Of course, his philosophy will

---

67 Ibid., p. 7.  
bear directly upon the next several chapters on Psychology, Ethics, and Natural Theology. For the present, we shall conclude with the following remarks:

(1) To begin with, it is true that Tucker was a philosopher in the senses suggested early in the chapter. However, there is one fundamental sense in which he was not at all a philosopher: that is, he failed in the essential task of philosophy, which was to question the easy-going assumptions of his society. On this matter there is a great difference between Hume and Tucker. Hume threw men back upon their first-principles, whereas Tucker remained essentially an apologist for Locke. Hume struggled with his own illusions and with the illusions of the age, whereas, in general, Tucker did not. Tucker felt that he should "warn those below" about mistakes they were making, but he did not become a gad-fly to the Athenians. Abraham Tucker's philosophy did not stir men to find new bases for belief and action, because he did not enter into deep conversation with any eminent thinker. In later chapters we shall find that his synthesis of philosophy and religion failed, partly because of his optimism and partly because of his self-imposed solitude. Coolness and detachment did not bring forth a vital philosophy.

(2) Secondly, the "neutralism" which Tucker affirmed in his Introduction is misleading. What he actually worked for was a new synthesis of philosophy and theology on a rationalistic basis. He was not a neutral in the sense of being "indifferent," because he hoped to silence skepticism. Neutrality meant a toleration of all points of view and freedom of expression for all parties. But Tucker was not neutral or
impartial in the sense that he had no cause to serve. Is this ever possible in philosophy and theology?

There is no neutral standpoint and no faithless situation from which approach can be made to that which is inseparable from faith... Neutrality and uncommittedness are great delusions where God and the gods of men are concerned. Men must raise the question about revelation today because... the freedom of inquiry that is present in this bondage is very real. 69

(3) Our most fundamental criticism is Abraham Tucker's apprehension of "Reason." On the one hand, he pragmatically assumed the supremacy of reason at the beginning of his investigations of the light of nature: reason was "the ground that we all possess in common." 70 Although he expressed doubts about its adequacy, nevertheless he tested all beliefs by the rational evidence for them. On the other hand, his ambiguity soon appeared; after he had acknowledged reason as his criterion, he then undercut his premise by imposing limitations upon it. Man was a "sensitive-rational" creature who should not expect to live by reason alone, but also by imagination. 71 Moreover, this ambiguity was characteristic of the age--reason being both the criterion of judgment and yet not adequate. But is this a just conception of autonomous reason?

Rationalism is not really so much an excess of confidence in reason as a want of confidence in it; since it does not attempt to understand a great part of human experience. 72

---


Again Tucker ascribed to that familiar dictum of the Enlightenment, that that which was "reasonable" was also "natural." That is, whatever appeared reasonable "was regarded as natural, as somehow rooted in the very nature of things." Tucker equated the light of nature with autonomous reason; but to follow reason in that sense meant to pursue an illusion:

... for Rationalistic thought reason in its ethical and religious aspects stands simply for the residuum left in man's higher mental life when you have purged out everything derived from Christianity. Abstract the Christian ingredients, and you have man as he really is. But ... this so-called reason, ... this constant unvarying and universally distributed stock of moral and spiritual convictions ... is devoid of real existence.

Moreover, Tucker assumed that he and everyone else knew what was reasonable and natural; but "no one took pains to inquire carefully what reason [was]," Furthermore, in the Enlightenment that which was natural did not refer to anything original or primitive, but signified that which was "congenial to those in whom human nature [was] most fully developed"; for example, Tucker and an unsophisticated Goth would never have agreed upon that which was "natural"; but the country gentleman would have trusted the "educated in the most polite nations of the civilized world" to know what was natural and reasonable.

75 Ibid., p. 17.
76 Willey, op. cit., p. 20.
Finally, Tucker's eighteenth century conception of reason is far too static, far too confined to be of much value today. For one thing, he tended to associate rationality solely with the intellectual process, thereby separating "reason" and "imagination." But a much more comprehensive view has been suggested, a theory which maintains that "reason is the capacity for objectivity . . ."; that is, reason is the "capacity to stand in conscious relation to that which is recognized as not ourselves."77 Reason must include more than the bare intellect or abstracted ideas; as John Macmurray has pointed out, the emotions and personality are equally as involved in being reasonable and objective:

Objectivity or reason, which is the essential characteristic of personal consciousness, is not confined to any one aspect of consciousness. It is the essence of personal consciousness as such. Rationality is not a peculiar characteristic of the intellect. It is equally characteristic of the emotional life . . . art and religion are just as rational as science or philosophy. The rationality of thought does not lie in the thought itself, as a quality of it, but depends upon its reference to the external world as known in immediate experience. . . . What makes [thought] rational or logical is the purpose which governs it—the purpose of expressing symbolically some aspect of the world we know. Our emotions have this same characteristic of referring to that which is recognized as not ourselves. That they are subjective is beyond doubt; but then, so are our thoughts. 78

Tucker hinted at part of this statement when he recognized that rationality included more than the unaided exercise of reason, and was also concerned with imagination. But he radically sundered reason and imagination, believing in "one cast of mind for the closet, and another to serve

77 John Macmurray, Interpreting the Universe (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), pp. 127ff.

78 Ibid., pp. 131ff.
him... when he enters the busy world." Moreover Tucker not only sundered reason and imagination; he also separated the realms of nature and grace. For him, rationality was structured in the knowledge of natural objects. Rationality depended upon his conscious behavior--obedience--in terms of the nature of the object:

It is therefore most irrational to act toward an object in a way not appropriate to it, or to transfer to it a way of acting appropriate to a natural or an impersonal object which does not apply. If the reason imagines that there is only one mode of rationality, that which the reason acquires when it behaves toward natural objects and makes that universally applicable, then it is being unreasonable and irrational. It is thus irrational to direct to God the mode of rationality that we apply in the investigation of natural causes or motions--but it is that irrationality that lies in so much of the eighteenth century agnosticism and deism.80


80 I am indebted to Professor Thomas F. Torrance of New College for this observation, in a letter dated 13 March, 1960.
CHAPTER III

PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN NATURE

To the ordinary common-sense Englishman, who approached philosophical questions with interest but without any special metaphysical aptitude, the systems both of Hume and Berkeley appeared to be open to the fatal objection of paradox, and, hence, throughout the eighteenth century, Locke continued, in ordinary estimation, to hold the supreme place among English philosophers. . . . His influence is apparent in almost every philosophical and quasi-philosophical work of the period.1

The author of these remarks could have had Abraham Tucker in mind as he summarized the influence of John Locke upon the eighteenth century, for his remarks apply very well to Tucker. In Chapter II we mentioned the impression which Locke's works had made upon Tucker, who called himself an "imitation" of his forerunner. Locke not only influenced British philosophy, government and theology with his writings, but he also helped to formulate the principles of Association Psychology.

To this latter theme we shall now turn: in the present chapter we shall show how Tucker expounded the psychological theories of Locke and David Hartley and then made his own specific contribution to this new way of thinking. In the first section of the chapter we shall mention the history of Association of Ideas. Following that, we shall

then consider Abraham Tucker's relationship to Associationism. Immediately afterwards, we shall expound his concept of the affections and of human nature. Finally, we shall close the chapter with an evaluation of Tucker's contribution to association psychology and to empirical philosophy.

A. The History of the Principle of Association of Ideas

Definition

The phrase "association of ideas" was used by eighteenth century writers to refer to the sequences in trains of memory, imagination and cognition: "their problem was to formulate the principles involved in such sequences." But also the phrase is used to "... express the conditions under which representations arise in the consciousness..." The specific problem for eighteenth century psychologists such as Abraham Tucker was to account for the mind and complex human behavior in terms of simple Sensation and Reflection. If these latter were the two grand sources of knowledge, then how were the mind and affections derived from them?

Association appeared to furnish the requisite instrument: it was adopted and applied to the fullest extent. Hence, the association doctrine became the cardinal psychological principle of that school of thinkers which adopted the empirical method in philosophy.

---


The Suggestions of Plato and Aristotle

Once again we find a general suggestion of this principle in Plato and Aristotle. For example, in Plato's *Meno*, Socrates was determined to show his friends that knowledge was latent in the mind and needed only to be recollected with the help of some other person. Socrates illustrated his belief by interrogating one of Meno's boy slaves, who answered correctly his questions about geometry. But how could the slave boy know the correct answers? Socrates suggested that

... if he did not acquire them in this life, then he must have learned them at some other time. ... And if there are always to be true notions in him, ... which only need to be awakened into knowledge by putting questions to him, his soul must remain always possessed of this knowledge. ...  

In other words, innate knowledge could be made explicit by the proper questions and associations. Again in the *Phaedo*, Plato suggested that recollection (anamnesis) was based upon the similarity or contiguity of ideas: if a lover saw an unused lyre, a recollection of the beloved to whom it belonged immediately would come to mind:

... in like manner anyone who sees Simias may often remember Cebes; and there are endless examples of the same thing. ... And is not this sort of thing a kind of recollection--though the word is most commonly applied to a process of recovering that which has been already forgotten through time and inattention?

Plato believed that a certain subject might suggest both similar ideas and also different subjects or other kinds of knowledge; we

---


6 Ibid., p. 426.
recollected certain subjects either because they were similar to or contiguous to others. Plato held that association was founded upon recollection: the innate knowledge in the soul, which was given in a pre-existent state and then forgotten during incarnation, was re-acquired by men through their senses and by means of recollection.

Aristotle distinguished in his psychology between Recollection (anamnesis) and Memory (mneme). He felt that recollection was more than the mere recovery of memory:

...at the instant when one first learns [a fact of science] or experiences [a particular fact of sense], he does not thereby 'recover' a memory, inasmuch as none has preceded, nor does he acquire one ab initio. ... But to remember, strictly and properly speaking, is an activity which will not be immanent until the original experience has undergone lapse of time. For one remembers now what one saw or otherwise experienced formerly ...

In other words, recollection was empirically based. Our thoughts were initiated either by a present intuition or "from something either similar, or contrary, to what we seek, or else from that which is contiguous with it." He reaffirmed the hypotheses of similarity and contiguity and added that of contrast. He also interpreted how we recollect a specific subject or object: for example, we remember Autumn, the "season of mists," when we behold milk because the mind quickly moves from milk to white, to mist, to moist, and finally

---


8 Ibid., 451b, lines 17-20, p. 612.
from moist to Autumn. Therefore, if a person wishes to recollect something

... he will try to obtain a beginning of a movement whose sequel shall be the movement which he desires to reawaken. This explains why attempts at recollection succeed soonest and best when they start from a beginning [of some objective series].

On the other hand, if he were unable to recall the beginning idea of a sequence, then a mid-point was equally as effective as a mnemonic starting place. In a series of numbers, "if one does not recollect before, he will do so when he has come to [a number in the midst of the series, I to IX], or, if not, nothing can help him. . . ."

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Developments

The principle of the association of ideas was preserved after Plato and Aristotle in the Greek and Roman Schools of philosophy, by Augustine of Hippo, and by others in Medieval Europe. Much later, in the seventeenth century, both Rene Descartes and Thomas Hobbes restated this phenomenon. But John Locke actually coined the phrase, the

---

9 Ibid., 451b, lines 30-34, p. 613.
10 Ibid., p. 614.
11 Cf. Warren, op. cit., Chap. II, "Mental Association from Plato to Hume"; G. Croom Robertson, op. cit.; and Charles E. Spearman, Psychology Down the Ages (London: Macmillan and Company, 1937), Vol. II, Chap. XXVIII, "Association of Ideas." Thomas Hobbes, in "Leviathan," Bk. I, Chap. III, "Of the Consequence or Train of Imaginations," wrote this significant passage: "By Consequence, or TRAIN of thoughts, I understand that succession of one thought to another, which is called, . . . mental discourse. When a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual as it seems to be. . . . This train of thoughts, or mental discourse, is of two sorts. The
"association of ideas." However, his nomenclature was just the reverse of the eighteenth century usage. Locke distinguished, as Aristotle, between accidental associations based on custom or chance and the natural sequences of ideas. But Locke then identified the association of ideas with the former, so making it the explanation of error and the antipathies which separate men:

... to this, perhaps, might be justly attributed most of the sympathies and antipathies observable in men, which work as strongly, and produce as regular effects, as if they were natural, and are therefore called so, though they at first had no other original but the accidental connexion of two ideas.12

Of course a few idea sequences had a "natural correspondence and connexion one with another," but they were rare; besides these, another group associated merely because of chance or custom:

... ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it; and if they are

first is unguided, without design, and inconstant. ... The second is more constant; as being regulated by some desire, and design. For the impression made by such things as we desire, or fear, is strong, and permanent, or, if it cease for a time, of quick return. ... The train of regulated thoughts is of two kinds: one, when of an effect imagined we seek the causes, or means that produce it. ... The other is, when imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced. ... Thomas Hobbes, "Leviathan," The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury; edited by Sir William Molesworth, Bart. (London: John Bohn, 1839), Vol. III, pp. 11-13.

more than two which are thus united, the whole gang, always inseparable, show themselves together. 13

These unnatural connections explained that "madness" in men which opposed their reasonableness. But the association of ideas was less important to Locke than his analysis of sensation. He did not publish this chapter until the Essay's fourth edition. Apparently it was "an afterthought." 14

Not long after Locke's death, David Hume considered the great possibilities in this doctrine of association. However, he made a fundamental change in Locke's hypothesis. For Hume, association was not merely the explanation of prejudice and error; instead he saw in this new hypothesis a parallel to Newton's discovery of gravity. As gravity affected the movement of heavenly bodies, so association synthesized ideas within the mind:

Here is a kind of attraction, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms. Its effects are everywhere conspicuous; but, as to its causes, they are mostly unknown. . . . 15


Hume was especially impressed by the credibility which foreign languages gave to the principle: "among different languages," he remarked in his Inquiry Concerning the Human Understanding. "... it is found, that the words, expressive of ideas, the most compounded, do yet nearly correspond to each other..." For him the Babel of languages on earth gave "certain proof" that the association of ideas was a universal principle. In another place Hume asserted that association was the "uniting principle among ideas..., a gentle force which commonly prevails...." Apparently he overlooked the investigations of Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Hobbes when he considered himself as the first to classify associated ideas:

To me, there appear to be only three principles of connexion among ideas, namely, Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause or Effect.  

Hume surmised that these three principles would not satisfy all men. Nevertheless, most complex ideas could be analyzed under these three generalizations. Hume hoped to make association the basis of a "complete system of the sciences." But he seems to have been

primarily interested in the epistemological importance of the doctrine, rather than in its psychological possibilities:

... he was interested in psychology ... as a stepping-stone to his theory of knowledge. From the psychologist's standpoint, then, it is more fitting ... to regard the association psychology proper as beginning with Hartley, whose Observations on Man marks a new epoch in mental analysis. ... 19

David Hartley, a devout eighteenth century physician and contemporary of Tucker and Hume, was the first in England to use the association of ideas as a comprehensive psychological theory. His purpose in the Observations on Man was to state "... General Laws, according to which the Sensations and Motions are performed, and our Ideas Generated"; and then to apply the "... Doctrines of Vibrations and Association to each of the Sensations and Motions in particular." 20 That is to say, he built up both the structure of the mind and moral character from the simple data of sensation and ideas. In this pioneering work, Hartley felt that he placed morality and religion on an unshakable foundation. The original suggestion about this application of the association of ideas came from John Gay of Sidney

---

19 Warren, op. cit., p. 15.

Sussex College, Cambridge. 21 But Hartley's other specific sources were certain implications in Newton's Optics on the relationship of vibrations to sensation, and also Locke's exposition of the doctrine of association. In his first chapter, Hartley theorized that the white substance in the medulla was both the immediate instrument of sensation and also the immediate instrument by which ideas were presented to the mind. "Vibrations" in this substance in turn produced "vibratiuncles" which corresponded to their originals. After this hypothesis, Hartley then introduced his own version of Associationism:

Any Sensations, A, B, C, etc., by being associated with one another a sufficient Number of Times, get such a Power over the corresponding Ideas a, b, c, etc., that any one of the Sensations A, when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind b, c, etc., the Ideas of the Rest. 22

Later he mentioned that simple ideas ran into complex ones, and that simple vibratiuncles then changed into those which were complex. Hartley frames six classes of "Intellectual Pleasures and Pains" by means of association, namely, Imagination, Ambition, Self-Interest, 

---

21 John Gay had written a Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principles of Virtue or Morality, in which he laid down a theory of association based upon "Resting Places": "... we choose out certain Truths and means of Happiness, which we look upon as RESTING PLACES, which we may safely acquiesce in, in the Conduct both of our Understanding and Practice. ... And these RESTING PLACES are so often used as Principles, that at last, ... we are apt to imagine them, not as they really are, the Substitutes of Principles, but Principles themselves." Preface to William King, An Essay on the Origin of Evil (London: R. Knaplock, J. and J. Knapton and W. Innis, 1731), p. xxx. Cf. post, p. 95.

22 Hartley, op. cit., Prop. X.
Sympathy, Theopathy, and the Moral Sense:

The pleasures and pains of sensation are the ultimate irresoluble facts. From them are generated the pleasures and pains of imagination. From these two, again, in various combinations, arise the pleasures and pains of ambition. From the three thus obtained, the pleasures and pains of self-interest, and so on.23

Unfortunately he combined his creative psychology with a naive optimism and a faith in the necessary and progressive maturing of personality. However it is undeniable that Hartley forcefully called attention to this new doctrine:

The principle of association was seized upon by students of ethics, esthetics, logic, jurisprudence, and biology, and applied to their several spheres. Associationism appeared to be "in the air" during this period, much as evolutionism was in the air a century later.24

Abraham Tucker was one of four men who, following Hartley, each applied the principle of association to his special field of interest.

B. Tucker's Psychology

The principle of association of ideas provided Abraham Tucker with a new foundation for his psychology (theory of the mind) and for his understanding of human nature. He is another example of those who "excelled in that introspective analysis which has been practiced by many English writers."25 Tucker followed up the implications in


24 Warren, op. cit., p. 177.

Hartley's psychology and applied the principle of association of ideas to morality and ethics. Twenty-six chapters of his *Light of Nature Pursued* develop this theme. Tucker read and borrowed from Hartley, but he ignored completely Hume's commentary on associationism never mentioning him once.  

**Sources of Knowledge, Sensation and Reflection**

We have noticed that Tucker followed Locke's interpretation, that Sensation and Reflection were the two sources of knowledge. 27

Tucker believed that we developed both our Imagination and Understanding from these two sources:

We come into the world a mere blank, void of all inscription whatsoever. Sensation first begins the writing, and our internal sense or reflection increases the stock, which runs into various assortments, and produces other ideas different from the root whereout they spring. . . These stores, together with the repository containing them, we may style the imagination, the word implying so much; for being derived from image, which is the same as idea, it imports the receptacle of ideas. . . Among these ideas, some being more engaging than the rest, attract the notice particularly to themselves: the mental eye singles them out from the whole scene exhibited before it, sees them in a stronger light, holds them in longer view, and thereby gives occasion to their introducing more of their own associates than they could have done in the rapidity of their natural course. This operation of the notice being frequently repeated, at length becomes itself an object of our observation, and thus we discover a power we have of heightening the colour of our ideas, of changing or directing their course by the application of our notice: and the exercise of

26 Cf. post, p. 103n.

27 Cf. ante, Chap. II, p. 68.
this power I take to be what is commonly meant by an act of the Under- 

Understanding. 28

Tucker often stressed that the senses were intended merely to "throw materials into the Imagination to be worked upon there." 29 And yet he admitted that these bare sensations gave him no "absolute certainty of external objects." But how could he know that the ideas in his mind represented reality? He answered that "in some instances [our ideas] have constantly agreed in the same story, but for this we must trust our memory...." 30 In other words, he had no more certitude than Hume that his ideas represented anything more than the associations of chance and custom. Moreover, for Tucker, the sense organs themselves did not perceive. Sensations entered us by means of light, air or "effluvia" and passed through a long series of "bodily organs" and "mental organs" in order to reach the seat of perception:

Sensations from bodies we are conversant with come to us mostly through external mediums first, then through our bodily, and lastly through our mental organs; and the workings of our thought require no other conveyance than the latter.... For the mind sits retired in kingly state, nothing external, nothing bodily being admitted to her presence: and though in sensation, the notice be received from things without us, they only deliver their message to the mental organs, which by them is carried into the royal cabinet. Thus, whether we see and hear, or whether we remember what we have formerly seen and heard, the mind receives her perception directly by the


29 Ibid., p. 109.

30 Ibid., p. 113.
same hand: and how much soever sensible objects may give us information remotely, the pictures of them in our imagination, are what we immediately discern. ... 31

That which we discerned, of course, was an Idea: "In every exercise of the Understanding, that which discerns is numerically and substantially distinct from that which is discerned." 32

As for Reflection, the other source of knowledge, Tucker demonstrated it by the shouts of a mob, the blow of a stick, and by Isaac Newton's familiar optical illusion of the "gold lace":

From all which instances it is manifest that our organs, being once put in motion by external objects, can excite sensations of the same kind, for some little time after the objects have ceased to act. 33

He called that mental phenomenon which remained after the shouting, or the blow, or the gold lace an "idea of Reflection." He distinguished Reflection per se from the idea of Reflection: the former was a receptacle, so to speak, in which the ideas were stored "in what is vulgarly called the mind." Then ideas interacted therein and increased their number by forming new ones:

But those ideas ... having gained admittance through the avenues of sensation, do by their mutual action upon one another, and by their operation upon the mind, or of the mind upon them, generate new ideas, which the senses were not capable of conveying; such as willing, discerning, remembering, comparison, relation, power, and innumerable others. And this proves a second fund for supplying us with materials for our knowledge. ... 34

But the mind itself did not perceive these ideas. Here Tucker rephrased

---

31 Ibid., p. 83.  
32 Ibid., p. 17.  
33 Ibid., p. 84.  
34 Ibid., p. 86.
Hartley's doctrine; ideas impinged upon some "interior fibres, animal spirits, or other substances" within the "mental organs (not Hartley's medullary substance)," and the latter were the actual source of perception.\textsuperscript{35} Even though ideas of Reflection were weaker than the direct experience of Sensation, they were of fundamental importance. We developed such human qualities as "justice, mercy, approbation, virtue, duty, and other abstracted ideas" by means of the ideas of Reflection.\textsuperscript{36}

**Tucker's Development of the Mind**

From the rudiments provided by Sensation and Reflection, Tucker then fashioned a theory of the mind by using the following principles, "Combination," "Trains of Thought," and "Translation."

**Combination:** Tucker supposed that the first action in developing the mind was the combination of simple Ideas which were floating around in the Imagination and waiting to be used. The most comprehensive psychological principle was "Combination," which included within it both "Composition" and "Association." We shall see in the following passage that he recognized the hypotheses of "fusion" and "association by contiguity." Tucker equated fusion with the word "Composition," which was the melting together of simple ideas to form complex ones; while "Association" meant those separate, distinct,

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 85. \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 110.
ideas which adhered strongly to each other:

For our ideas come together in two several manners: one by composition, when they so mix, and as I may say melt together as to form one single complex idea, generally denoted by one name, as a man, a table, a dozen; the other by association, when they appear in couples strongly adhering to each other, but not blended into the same mass, as darkness and apparitions, the burst of a cannon or push of a drawn sword, and the dread of mischief accompanying them.37

In Newtonian fashion he described a complex idea as analogous to a machine which was made of many simple parts.

On the other hand, Tucker claimed that ingredients often were added during the process of Composition, so that a resulting complex idea contained certain totally new properties: "... a compound may have properties resulting from the composition which do not belong to the parts singly whereof it consists."38 In this statement Tucker anticipated John Stuart Mill's hypothesis of "mental chemistry." That is to say, he went beyond the mere mechanical conception of association of ideas to suggest mental synthesis or a creativity in the mind itself. "Tucker's statement of this principle is perhaps his most important contribution to the association theory."39 But he returned to John Locke for an explanation of human error; there was an "arbitrary element" of custom or chance in our associations, because our minds could bring divergent ideas together; yet once an association was formed, the words and their signification cohered.

37 Ibid., p. 87.
38 Ibid., p. 127.
39 Warren, op. cit., p. 66.
without further special attention. However, the stock of ideas in our minds was large and our understandings were narrow, which meant that fallacies in judgment were bound to come. Tucker unknowingly agreed with Hume, who also claimed that a confusion existed over the classification of the principles of association. He felt that compounded and associated ideas often were mixed together. Tucker strove to keep "association" confined to the law of contiguity; that is, he interpreted "association" as only those ideas which strongly adhered to each other but did not lose their individual identity. He also recapitulated Hobbes, that the universal example of the association of ideas was the "association between words and their signification":

Hence it comes to pass that many words, having various significations, always suggest that sense which the context requires. The word Man is used for one of the human species, for a male, for a full grown person, a corpse, a statue, a picture, or a piece of wood on a chess-board, yet we never mistake the meaning, being directed thereto by what gave occasion for its being employed.

Trains of Thought: After the mind had thus combined these simple ideas, trains of thought could be formed. Tucker held that such trains developed strictly from complex ideas. He recapitulated the familiar law of "association by similarity," which was suggested

---

40 Tucker, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 93. We have not tried to reduce the principle of association either to "similarity" or to "contiguity," but have kept both terms.

41 Ibid., p. 94.
in Plato and Aristotle and then reasserted by John Gay. Tucker's version of association by similarity ("Trains") is as follows:

On hearing the report of a gun, one's thought may run upon soldiers, upon their exercises, upon battles, particularly that before Quebec: this may put one in mind of Canada, of the fur trade, of surprising stories told of the beavers, their contrivance in building themselves houses, of the sagacity of animals, of the difference between instinct and reason, and abundance of other speculations widely remote from the sound of a gun. . . . This regular succession of ideas, all bearing reference to some one purpose retained in view, is what we call a train. . . .

Rote memory, so necessary to master a language, was developed from trains of thought. Tucker also recognized what J. S. Mill later called "oblivescence" or "lapsed links": when a train of thought was too long for the mind to grasp in its entirety, "... the middle links frequently drop out, or pass so swiftly as not to touch the notice." He also believed in "unconscious cerebration," that trains of thought were connected not only mentally but also physiologically.

Translation: This principle was also very important in the development of Association Psychology. In this final stage of mental development, Tucker theorized that "translation" went beyond association by similarity and contiguity, and also beyond fusion. He

---


believed that a further and final change took place in the mind because of "Translation." Tucker was one of the first to call attention "to the transformation which the elementary data of experience undergo in the process of association." Translation worked as follows: the more we repeated a certain train of thoughts, the sooner one part of it would absorb our attention. Consequently, each simple idea contained in the train would not be equally and indelibly underlined. On the contrary, the mind would fasten attention on the most noticeable portion of the train and leave the rest to drop into the background and eventually completely out of notice (Mill's law of oblivescence). By this principle Tucker explained how we could hold a fundamental conviction and yet be unable to give specific reasons for it:

... daily experience testifies that conviction will often remain after the grounds of it have slipped out of our thought: whenever we reflect on the thing proved, there occurs a judgement of its being true, united in the same assemblage without aid of any proof to support it. ... By this channel we are supplied with many truths, commonly reputed self-evident, because though we know them assuredly for truths, we cannot discover how we came by that knowledge.

He did not realize that he concurred with Hume, that association was

---

45 Warren, op. cit., p. 264; that is, Tucker apprehended association of ideas as a "transforming process." James Mackintosh criticized him for using the term "Translation" instead of "Association," "hiding but aggravating the offense by a change of technical terms. ..."
Even so, Thomas Brown had substituted another term, "suggestion," for "association."

the gentle force operating gradually yet constantly upon the mind and human nature, profoundly and radically altering our dispositions:

... many times it happens that we find the same means conducive to our enjoyments of various kinds, and upon repeated occasions, which gives them the tincture so often, that at last it becomes their natural colour. They then move us of themselves, without needing any further inducement to recommend them; and then the translation is perfectly completed. ... But oftener the quality comes gradually by use: boys are driven by fear to their lessons until they take a liking to them; and many find amusement in professions they first entered into much against the grain.47

In this quotation we discover also that Tucker applied the law of Translation to more than the development of the mind; it was equally important in accounting for the emotions and passions. Consequently Tucker developed the much-debated eighteenth century "moral sense" by means of Translation:

... having shown how translation prevails in satisfaction, ... as well as assent, there will appear reason to conclude, that we derive our inclinations and moral senses through the same channel as our knowledge, without having them interwoven originally into our constitution.48

Here again Tucker had paraphrased "the Rev. Mr. Gay's" hypothesis, probably without knowing it.

Our next section will be a synopsis of how Tucker accounted for the affections and human nature by means of Translation. He concluded Chapter XVIII ("Translation") with this comment:

... all the motives actuating us in our riper years, except sensations of pleasure and pain, or our natural

47 Ibid., p. 152.
48 Ibid., p. 151.
and acquired appetites, are of the translated kind. Through this channel we derive most of our tastes, inclinations, sentiments, moral senses, checks of conscience, obligations, impulses of fancy, attachments to professions, fondness for diversions, regard to reputation, views of prudence, virtues and vices, and in general all those pursuits, whether of distant or present aims, that render the occupations of men different from the amusements of children.49

C. The Development of the Affections

In the foregoing sections we have seen that both David Hartley and Abraham Tucker hoped to account for the whole mind by means of the association of ideas. Now as we investigate the affections, we discover that once again Tucker followed Hartley: as Translation had developed the mind, so now it applied to the affections; as Translation had altered the simple ideas of the mind into the knowledge by which we lived, so now Tucker intended to translate the elemental pleasures and pains into our complex affections and emotions. We shall consider his method by reviewing his chapters on "Satisfaction," "Pleasure," "Passions," and "Sympathy."50

Satisfaction: Tucker maintained that pleasure and pain were the primary materials for forming personality. The pleasure-pain law was the prime-mover of human action. But he avoided the popular connotations of "pleasure" by using the more extensive word "satisfaction," which was that "vivifying ingredient which gives life and

---

49 Ibid., p. 152.
50 Cf. Vol. I, Chaps. VI, XXII, XXI, XIX.
vigour to our motives.  

"Everyday experience sufficiently illustrated Satisfaction:

Let him reflect on what he feels when anything happens that pleases him, when he sits down to a well furnished table with a good appetite, when he reads a diverting book, . . . when he looks back upon some performance for which he can applaud himself."

Satisfaction also included the features of "joy, delight, pleasure, amusement, complacence, engagement, content, as the several stages." Strictly speaking, men were motivated by the "expectation of satisfaction," not by its fulfillment. In this passage Tucker held to a consistent psychological hedonism, that "present satisfaction is the end we constantly have in view on proceeding to action." In our next chapter we shall review his attempt to develop altruism from hedonism by means of Translation.

Pleasure: Tucker did not forget his earlier remark about the misuse of the word "pleasure." After a lengthy discussion of Satisfaction he reconsidered this comment. As with Satisfaction so with Pleasure: a person's prospect of it, not his actual possession of it, was his incentive to action. Moreover, this affection was important because it in turn was the basis of more refined tastes and affections. Tucker affirmed that "nature gives us at first none other pleasures besides those of sensation and appetite." Good health and vigor of

51 Ibid., p. 45.  
52 Ibid., p. 46.  
53 Ibid., p. 46.  
54 Ibid., p. 48.  
55 Ibid., p. 175.
mind and body in adults were yet examples of this kind of elemental pleasure. But Translation steadily operated on sensation and appetite and soon developed higher enjoyments. Tucker later distinguished two types of pleasures, the "bodily" and the "mental." But all pleasures, whether bodily or mental, were qualitatively the same:

Thus our pleasures, how much soever afterwards multiplied, take their rise from sensation alone, all others being derivative or translated from that original. Both Paley and Bentham later adopted this interpretation. Tucker realized that the "intense pleasures engage more with the generality of mankind, than a continuance of the gentler amusements," but some people chose the latter, especially those older in age and experience. Moreover, Tucker believed that eventually all men ought to choose the higher pleasures because they were more translated:

The most refined pleasures are those that have passed through the greatest number of translations, and therefore stand furthest removed from sense; but before we depend upon them for our enjoyments, we ought to be well assured of our having a real relish for them. . .

The Passions: These were heightened affections which resulted from the thwarting of our personal desires or satisfactions:

56 Ibid., p. 175. John Stuart Mill also divided the pleasures; but he insisted that they were qualitatively different: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government; in Everyman's Library (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1910), pp. 7ff.
57 Ibid., p. 176. 58 Ibid., p. 176.
... when the purpose we aim at does not ensue upon our first endeavours, the mind redoubles her efforts under an apprehension that a stronger exertion may succeed where a weaker did not. ... After having frequently practiced exertions of this sort, the spirits get a habit of rising in a ferment, which will let no other idea intrude besides that of the engaging object: and then desire takes the form of a passion. 59

He differentiated the passions from the gentler affections on the basis of their "violence" and "turbulence"; but this was only a difference of degree, not of kind. As we grew older the passions lessened and the grip of habit increased: "in those few desires [older people] have remaining, they show less of passion than stubbornness of habit." 60 Tucker expounded the passions of Love and Hate, Anger and Revenge, Fear and Shame, and Grief and Friendship. All of these also were the direct product of Translation. We shall notice briefly Love and Revenge.

Tucker believed that Love was "a disposition of mind to receive pleasure from certain things, which disposition nature never gave us. ..." 61 It was translated from the egoistic self-love of children to a more altruistic state in mature people:

Thus the most resplendent love springs originally from our concern for ourselves, and our own desires, like a rose growing from a dunghill. ... But as flowers retain no scent of the dirty ground from whence they spring, so genuine love, although increased by acts of kindness, carries always a retrospect to those that are past, and does not look forward in expectance of having them continued. 62

---

59 Ibid., p. 160.  
60 Ibid., p. 175.  
61 Ibid., p. 166.  
62 Ibid., p. 167.
All family relationships were based upon this translated love. For instance, parental love for children had no innate or emotional basis but was formed strictly from "example" and "sympathy." That is to say, as social beings we observed the universal care of parents for their children and as a consequence we developed the capacity to love. Moreover, knowing that our children were of our own flesh and blood made us "look upon them as a valuable possession, and begin our concern for them."63

As he worked out his principle logically, Tucker considered that Revenge and anger were as genuinely translated as the affections of love, joy, or hope:

... the desire of revenge is not a natural but a translated desire; we first look upon it as a means of procuring ease to ourselves, and security from injury; but having often beheld it in this light, and end at length drops out of sight, and desire, according to the usual process of translation, rests upon the means, which thenceforward become an end whereon our views will terminate.64

In other words, the law of lapsed links could develop the base side of human nature as inexorably as the honorable. The principle of Translation was not selective; it developed the passions as easily from desire as the virtues from pleasure. Tucker carried the principle to its logical conclusion: he affirmed that even the impulse for self-preservation was the result of Translation. "Surely this must be regarded as the reductio ad absurdum," remarked Albee,

63 Ibid., p. 168.
64 Ibid., p. 163.
"of the conception of the mind as a tabula rasa, helped out by the
principles of 'association' and 'translation.'"\textsuperscript{65}

\textbf{Sympathy:} Tucker again appealed to common experience for the
source of this important affection:

We are not long in the world from our first entrance before we perceive that our pleasures and pains depend much upon the actions of those about us; on a little further progress, we discover that their actions follow their disposition of mind, and afterwards learn to distinguish those dispositions by certain marks of them in their looks and gestures. . . . When we arrive at the use of understanding, . . . we purposelously imitate the ways and manners of our teachers, or other persons whom we esteem more expert and knowing in any matter than ourselves. Thus we acquire much of our sympathy by inadvertent notice, and add more by design and industry; until custom in both ways has worked out trains wherein imagination learns to run involuntarily and mechanically.\textsuperscript{66}

In this passage we see that Sympathy--the capacity for sharing in the joys and sorrows of others--originated both in the principle of pleasure and pain, and also in observing and imitating others. It was a highly translated affection, differing in degree but not in kind from those which were more base. Tucker warned that sympathy could get such a strong hold on us that, if we were not careful in accepting the "impressions" of others, we might not be able to keep our own conduct steady.\textsuperscript{67} In these comments Tucker again was restating an earlier suggestion of Gay, who wrote that "public Affections are . . .

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{65} Albee, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 141.
    \item \textsuperscript{66} Tucker, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 154.
    \item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 155.
\end{itemize}
acquired either from our own Observation or the Imitation of others."

We have now completed our synopsis of Tucker's interpretation of the affective side of human nature. Before going on to his ethics in the next chapter, we shall make some further comments about his general treatment of psychology and philosophy.

D. Summary and Criticism

Abraham Tucker made two general contributions to the development of Association Psychology in the eighteenth century: the most important was his inference of the principle of fusion (Combination)

68 Gay, op. cit., p. xxxiii. Tucker's conception of the origin of sympathy differs in certain respects from both Hartley and Hume. On the one hand, Hartley agreed with Tucker and Gay, that sympathy was a highly translated affection. But he differed when he asserted that all the higher affections, sympathy included, were of a second kind, and qualitatively separated from pleasure and pain. To Hartley, "the most general of our desires and aversions are factitious, i.e. generated by association..." (Hartley, op. cit., Vol. I, Sec. III, Prop. LXXXIX). That is to say, he asserted that the affections were something of an artificial construction. When the principle of association evolved the affections of ambition, self-interest, sympathy, theopacy, and moral sense, it also effected a qualitative change in them. Hartley here abandoned the consistent hedonism of Gay and Tucker.

On the other hand, David Hume's conception of sympathy contrasts with all of these men. He affirmed that sympathy was in no sense a translated affection; we understood the joy and sorrow of men because our capacity for sympathy was inborn: "Thus it appears, that sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature, ... and that it produces our sentiment of morals in all the artificial virtues. From thence we may presume, that it also gives rise to many of the other virtues, and that qualities acquire our approbation because of their tendency to the good of mankind." (David Hume, op. cit., Vol. IX, Bk. III, Pt. III, "Of the Other Virtues and Vices," Sec. I, p. 357.) Hume's excellent discussion was wasted effort upon Abraham Tucker.
from those of similarity and contiguity; this was an original con-
tribution. He also rendered service in a second manner, by
popularizing Association Psychology. The Light of Nature Pursued,
combined with the offerings of Hartley, Hume, Priestly, Erasmus Darwin
and Archibald Alison, helped to spread this hypothesis throughout the
world of letters in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Tucker
wrote in the creative period between Hartley and Thomas Brown, when
Association Psychologists were groping for the principles involved.
His contribution in this latter respect is worth noting. "Many
passages in the Light of Nature . . . are actually the first tolerably
satisfactory treatment of the topics in question from the Association-
ist point of view. . . ."69 Our next chapter will deal with Tucker's
delineation of ethics by means of the principle of Association.

In the meantime, certain questions and criticisms of Tucker's
psychology and philosophy need to be made; both bodies of knowledge
are so interrelated that our comments will apply also to Chapter II.
At this point we also need to bear in mind that Tucker's own reaction
to the doctrine of Innate Ideas had colored his philosophical and
psychological arguments.

(1) We observe, first, that Tucker appeared to be a more
radical and thoroughgoing Empiricist than is actually the case. Some
passages of the Light of Nature indeed present the mind as little more
than the "resultant of a psychic parallelogram of forces."70 By this

69 Albee, op. cit., p. 163. 70 Ibid., p. 137.
particular stance Tucker identified himself with Locke's claim that the mind was a *tabula rasa*, with respect to innate ideas though reconstructive of and receptive to specific content. Tucker became essentially an apologist for Locke's epistemology, to which he gave total allegiance. If he had stated this theory of the mind consistently he would have been very close to Hartley's position. Tucker placed his faith in Empiricism, vis-a-vis Rationalism and Idealism.

Tucker's reaction to Berkeley is an illustration of this unbounded trust in Empiricism. He affirmed, as did Locke, that a real thing in the external world was related to its corresponding idea in the mind by cause and effect. He also acknowledged the theory of representative perception; that is, the idea in the mind corresponded approximately to the object in the external world. Furthermore, Tucker claimed that the ideas within us were "substantially" and "numerically" distinct from their objects; that which we discerned immediately was pictures in our imagination rather than the objects themselves. Berkeley's critique of Locke naturally puzzled Tucker: how could Berkeley deny abstract ideas? The Bishop held to an "idle fancy . . . that all about us in nothing but idea and delusion."\(^7\)

As a matter of fact, Berkeley was as concerned to avoid delusion as Tucker. He had set out to refute skepticism, materialism, and atheism. In another place Tucker admitted, "for aught I can determine to the contrary, Bishop Berkeley may be in the right"; then he added his own summary of Berkeley, that this life was possibly ". . . one

---

\(^7\) Tucker, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 400, 496.
A continual scene of delusion from the cradle to the grave. Tucker's best statement about Berkeley is in the following passage:

When I consider Bishop Berkeley's notion of the non-existence of all bodies, and that the appearances they seem to exhibit are only perceptions raised in our imagination by the Divine power, I cannot help wondering that he did not go on to deny the existence of all spirits too; for we have no better evidence of the latter than the former. How know I there are any other persons in the world, unless by seeing them before me or hearing them speak? and if they have no real bodies, nor there be any real air, whose vibrations bring the sound of their discourses to mine ears, what reasons have I to believe that there are any real beings, whose actions occasions of those bodies, or that air, which are purely imaginary? So that if when I see the sun rise in the morning, . . . trees buffeted about by the winds, or rivers rolling along their foamy waves, the whole be nothing less than succession of ideas in my own mind. . . . From hence it will follow, what possibly there may be no more than two beings in nature, God and myself. Thus, if we give way to the suggestions of a lively fancy, and think ourselves warranted to take anything for certain the contrary whereof cannot be mathematically demonstrated, we shall never know where to stop.

Tucker reacted to Berkeley in the following ways: first of all, if the Bishop insisted that the external world was delusion, then he challenged Berkeley to prove that "multitudes of sentient beings" could not

---

72 Ibid., p. 114.

73 Ibid., p. 399. Cf. p. 400. Of course, Berkeley's notion was of the non-independent existence of bodies. To him it was evident that "the absolute existence of sensible objects in themselves, or without the mind" was "... either a direct contradiction, or else nothing at all. . . . It is on this therefore that I insist, to wit, that the absolute existence of unthinking things are words without a meaning, or which include a contradiction." The Works of George Berkeley, D.D., Formerly Bishop of Cloyne, Including His Posthumous Works, edited by Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901), Vol. I, "Of the Principles of Human Knowledge," Part I, par. 24, p. 270.
exist "in the composition of every man (But sentient Beings would not have to reside in one mind. Berkeley said that not one, but many minds existed, and above all was the mind of God)." Tucker replied next in what he believed was a more serious criticism. It was actually the same kind of refutation as Dr. Johnson's kicking of the stone: he completely missed Berkeley's main thesis when he appealed to "custom and experience": for him these were the final bar of justice. We may admit that we do not have absolute certainty, Tucker affirmed, yet the knowledge which we possess is dependable: "knowledge, that is, absolute certainty, was not made for man, but man is so constituted as to do very well without it." Thus Tucker thought he slipped by Berkeley, as he substituted a faith in the reality of the external world for certainty. Finally, Tucker defended Locke's Realism with the dictum that "the bodies we daily see and handle, actually exist in as great variety of magnitudes as we commonly suppose, and our operation upon them is of our own performance." Tucker clearly did not understand Berkeley's interpretation of existence, nor did he perceive that such a quality of existence always depended upon sense data. It is plain to see that Tucker did not comprehend the skeptical implication of representational perception.

74 Ibid., p. 399.
75 Ibid., p. 120; Cf. p. 113.
76 Ibid., p. 30.
(2) We mentioned that Tucker, in some passages of the Light of Nature Pursued, presented the mind as essentially passive. On the other hand, he claimed repeatedly that the mind was more than a tabula rasa. For this reason, it would appear that he was not a straightforward empiricist, but a "rationalistic empiricist"; he had in fact assumed certain a priori principles from the current Rationalist interpretation of philosophy. Tucker held that the mind was more than the mere product of associated internal and external sensations, because it actively manipulated the presentations thrown into the Imagination by the sensations. Tucker expressly criticized Hartley, because he felt that Hartley interpreted the mind as only a passive receiver of vibrations: "thus these two gentlemen [Hartley and Berkeley] represent the mind as an idle insignificant thing, never acting at all, but always gaping and staring at what passes." On the other hand, he adapted Aristotle to his psychology when he made the mind its own efficient cause; that is, to use Aristotle’s words, the mind was its own "immediate source of change or cessation from change."

77 Ibid., p. 29.
78 Aristotle, selected and translated from the original Greek into the English of today by Philip Wheelwright (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1951), p. 26. Prichard’s criticism of Locke on this head also applies to Abraham Tucker: "Yet [he] habitually takes for granted that at least part of the independent reality which we want to know is a physical world, possessing certain very definite characteristics. And in seeking to explain how certain activities of the mind arise he never hesitates to refer to certain physical processes as part of the explanation. He is therefore plainly begging the question. For the
Moreover, Tucker believed that the mind was active in another way. He hypothesized that the mind created new ideas by the process of "Combination" or mental synthesis. But how could this be if the mind possessed no spontaneity or activity? Tucker did not investigate this phenomenon thoroughly.

In adopting Locke's a posteriori method he did not deal with why the mind could synthesize ideas by Combination. What phenomenon enabled the mind to rise above its passive source? Tucker interpreted Association as a "transforming process." But why was not the mind merely the sum of its associations? What lay behind this "law of creative synthesis?" The Rationalist could agree with Tucker here, but maintain that sensations merely stimulated the mind and set off its inherent synthetic operations. Tucker's hypothesis of Combination was mainly "a mode for expressing a problem, rather than a formula for disposing of it." We believe that at this point Tucker went

issue being, 'Do the mind's activities yield knowledge?,', he is tacitly assuming that on certain matters they have done so. The fact is that [he] constantly speaks as though we had some way of knowing what the world is without knowing it, and can thus settle whether certain processes through which we have gone or can go . . . will give us knowledge of it." Harold Arthur Prichard, Knowledge and Perception, Essays and Lectures (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), p. 107.

79 Harry L. Hollingworth, Mental Growth and Decline, A Survey of Developmental Psychology (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927), pp. 374f. Since there was no experimental psychology in Tucker's day, the problem seemed much simpler. In recent years the discipline of physiological psychology has attempted to base its findings upon the study of human anatomy; today, "... integration becomes the major problem of physiological psychology."  Fields of Psychology, edited by J. P. Guilford (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1940), p. 56. To Tucker the Association formula solved this problem neatly.
beyond Empiricism per se and made a Rationalistic assumption. One of the prime arguments against Empiricism applies precisely at this point:

The fundamental objection to empiricism is that it fails to give an accurate explanation of experience; individual impressions . . . are momentary, and their connection into a body of coherent knowledge presupposes mental action distinct from mere receptivity. Tucker's analysis of the creative activity of the mind is too foreshortened. Passmore's comment on Hume's description of the Association of Ideas is equally relevant here: "we are not to ask why association operates as it does; but we can describe how it works. . . ." But this is not following the argument wherever it leads, for Tucker merely to say that Association happens. At least Temple offers three justifications for the development of creative mind, (a) the brute fact of "a combination of circumstances" which were by nature not of consciousness; (b) "a fresh creative act" by that which sustains all existence; or (c) that the possibility of the mind rising from the elemental forms of life was "present throughout" the creation in rudimentary and imperceptible form. But Tucker offers none of

---


these. It appears that his conception of the development of the mind and of human nature is far too inadequate. Again, Temple suggests a more dynamic interpretation:

We do not first know sensations, and then build these up into a system or order. . . . The extension and the beauty of the world are there in the initial datum . . . in cognition the subject-object relation is ultimate, and neither term is in any degree reducible to the other. Apprehension is of the object. Moreover apprehension is interpretative from the outset, and sensation is from the first indissolubly inter-penetrated by interpretation—which may of course be mis-interpretation.83

Kimball Young, the psychologist, adds that "the rise of the self depends upon the capacity of the individual to be an object to himself. . . . One perceives oneself only after he has perceived others."84

(3) Again, Tucker's reaction to the doctrine of Innate Ideas nearly made him into an environmentalist. He never openly criticized Descartes' epistemology or any specific English Rationalist. Undoubtedly this indicates his judgment of Locke as the eminent English philosopher. If he had lived later during the inquiry into "Heredity" and "Environment," he would have been an ardent defender of the latter belief. Tucker was emphatic that education and custom worked through Translation to fashion us as we are. On the other hand, he tacitly assumed that two forces naturally affected a child, both Translation and Imitation. For instance, in his chapter on "Sympathy," he assumed

83 Ibid., pp. 125f.
that children naturally imitated their elders. For these reasons we conclude that Tucker did not account for complex human nature solely by Association Psychology, and that actually he based the whole affective side of human nature on more than the principle of Association. In fact, as Albee says, "we are each a bundle of tendencies and predispositions, instead of the receptive waxen tablet that Tucker, following Locke, assumes."  

85 Albee, op. cit., p. 143.
CHAPTER IV

ABRAHAM TUCKER'S ETHICS

The most ample testimony has already been given to the original genius, the moral excellence, the benevolence, and the perspicuity of the Author by many of the most enlightened men of the present age. Some . . . have openly acknowledged the assistance which they have derived from Mr. Tucker's researches.¹

Those men to whom Abraham Tucker's grandson referred were eminent persons of the early decades of the nineteenth century; such figures as William Hazlitt, William Paley, Samuel Parr, Archbishop Richard Whatley, and Sir James Mackintosh. Tucker's literary reputation is parallel to that of Joseph Butler: as Butler was highly regarded in the nineteenth century, so likewise was Abraham Tucker. He lived on in his admirers, revered as a man of considerable originality. Tucker's name was kept before the world of letters by Hazlitt, while he influenced the University and Seminary through Paley's oft-reprinted textbook on ethics. But eventually the reputations of both Butler and Tucker faded.

Tucker as a Moralist

Let us now turn to Tucker's exposition of ethics. Throughout the last century he was well-known as a moralist. As David Hume was "seized very early with a passion for literature," so Tucker's thoughts from "earliest youth" turned " . . . towards searching into the foundations and measures of right and wrong . . ."² John Fyvie interpreted him as

² Ibid., p. 3.
"essentially a moralist," while Hazlitt also eulogized him for his "sound, practical, comprehensive good sense..." Both Henry Sidgwick and James Seth give Tucker the credit for the creative exposition of John Gay’s principles:

So far as the merit of originality can be claimed for this development of the ideas so briefly sketched by Gay, it is to Tucker, not to Paley, that such merit belongs. The first principle of Tucker’s ethics is hedonism, or regard for pleasure as the good. As we saw in the last chapter, Tucker asserted that the "prospect of satisfaction [pleasure taken in its largest sense] was the essential motivation of all men. He was both a psychological hedonist and an ethical hedonist. He claimed that pleasure is the motive of all men, and furthermore that all men ought to seek pleasure, and preferably those which were the "mental" or higher kinds. Here is a graphic passage in which he affirmed hedonism:

Our sincerest affections take rise from our wants and pleasures, as the sweetest flowers grow out of the dirty ground; thus the mire of sordid appetite must be the soil wherein to plant them all. ... The prevailing form of hedonism in modern ethics has been "Utilitarianism," a school of thought introduced in England by Jeremy Bentham and re-interpreted by John Stuart Mill and others. Tucker’s ethics are similar to

---


both of them. On the other hand, he is identified with another branch of hedonist ethics which anticipated the School of Utilitarianism and which has been entitled "Theological Utilitarianism." This type of ethics may be found in such eighteenth century writers as John Gay, John Brown, Abraham Tucker, and William Paley. The general distinction between these two expressions of Utilitarianism is found in their views of God. In the earlier form, divine rewards and punishments made up for the theoretical deficiencies of the system; but in the School of Utilitarianism the theological sanction was nearly ignored. Bentham mentioned it several times but he did not dwell on it. Theological Utilitarianism, on the other hand, was more forthright in recognizing the need for a divine sanction. For example, Abraham Tucker introduced the divine sanction because he felt it was necessary as a first principle. However, William Paley mentioned the sanction at the forefront of his ethics; he rested his whole system upon the doctrine of rewards and punishments. Theological Utilitarianism was an orthodox expression for ethics throughout the eighteenth century.

With this brief word about Utilitarianism as a background, we will now attend to Abraham Tucker's interpretation of ethics. We shall also compare and contrast him with certain other writers. Immediately following this adumbration we shall note how he applied his system and then close the chapter with a summary and criticism.

---

6 This doctrine was "... the first definite form which Utilitarianism took, and which in its time exercised an immense influence." A. W. Hastings, "Utilitarianism," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1922), Vol. XII, p. 560.
A. Tucker's Ethics of Hedonism

The Sumnum Bonum

The "Ultimate Good," as Tucker translated the Latin phrase, was "Satisfaction," which meant not only pleasure in its largest sense, but also a "complacence of mind together with the avoidance of pain or uneasiness."7 He was an ethical optimist. He assumed that the pleasures of life usually outweighed the pains. Furthermore, he affirmed the Aristotelian formula for happiness, that we should live according to the Golden Mean; that is, we should always exercise moderation between the extremes of desires.8 Or again he followed Aristotle in claiming that happiness was determined by "the whole tenor of our lives."9 On the other hand, he also defined happiness as the aggregate of satisfactions, "... the surplus of success a man has met with or may expect over and above his disappointments..."10 He interpreted Satisfaction and Happiness as complementary to one another: the former was our immediate goal and therefore our immediate source of Happiness. Yet Happiness was always our ultimate end of action, even when immediate conditions obscured this goal.11 These two were ordained by Nature herself.

But Tucker's egoism also had to answer to the ethical question of self-denial. Should one seek only his self-satisfaction? Several passages

8 Ibid., p. 209.
9 Ibid., p. 207.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 209.
in the *Light of Nature Pursued* seem to approve of this strict egoism. In one place Tucker advised, "it is the first rule of happiness to procure the gratification of our desires. . . . Let every man . . . study to gratify himself in whatever suits his taste and inclination." Or again he wrote, "our appetites prompt us fast enough to this gratification, to choose objects suited to our particular taste and to vary them as we find our relish change. . . ." On the other hand, Tucker mitigated this bare egoism by maintaining that such selfish acts were impractical. Our desires usually misled us and so defeated us. Like other good hedonists he approved of self-denial because it was common sense: "the very interests of our desires sometimes require self-denial, which is recommendable only on that account. . . ." Self-denial was an evil by itself, but present pleasure could be suppressed if this led to a greater satisfaction in the future. Above all, Tucker maintained that self-denial helped to subordinate our desires:

... self-denial becomes recommendable, for the ease it will procure us, by breaking the force of those desires that would interrupt and tease and torment us perpetually with their importunities.

By this analysis we see that Tucker did not distinguish sufficiently between *hedone*, "pleasure," that which all men pursued; and Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, "happiness," in which pleasure accompanies the good. As far as Tucker was concerned, the active pursuit of Satisfaction should lead to Happiness; while with Aristotle "the fulfillment of human potentialities

---

12 Ibid., p. 208.  
13 Ibid.  
14 Ibid.  
15 Ibid., p. 238.
accompanied by pleasure is the good.” Or in Aristotle's own words, "to live well and to do well are the same thing as to be happy.”

The Nature of Virtue

After Tucker affirmed hedonism as the first principle of his ethics and suggested that self-denial was permissible, he expounded Virtue. What did Virtue, arete, mean to him? He agreed with the Ancients that we did not possess it by nature, but that we had to develop it as "something habitual [hexis].” In essence he looked upon Virtue as "a habit of pursuing courses contrary to those pernicious ones that passion or appetite generally lead men into..." Tucker agreed with Aristotle's principle that men could strengthen Virtue by the correct moral choices: "every habit gains strength by exercise..." But Virtue was not its own reward because it stood "two removes from the summum bonum." Virtue itself could never be the moral sanction, that is, it could never impel us to act "because action must proceed upon a view to some end..." Tucker's humanistic interpretation of ethics is well expressed in this passage:

---

17 Aristotle, selected and translated from the original Greek into the English of today by Philip Wheelwright (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1951), p. 160.
19 Ibid., p. 215.
20 Ibid., p. 216.
21 Ibid., p. 218.
22 Ibid., p. 219.
Life has been compared to a game, and we know the cards will beat anybody, but he that plays them carefully will do more with the same cards than another who throws them out at random. The gifts of nature, education, and fortune, are the cards put into our hands: all we have to do, is to manage them well by a steady adherence to our judgement. Therefore virtue, taken in the largest sense, . . . may well be styled the only thing desirable, as drawing all other good things after it. . . .

Moreover, Tucker recommended that we cultivate Virtue because it was understandable and useful. He countered those who acclaimed the moral sense by stating that "if you talk of an essential and independent goodness, few can discern it. . . ." Tucker also added a circular argument for Virtue: not only was Virtue good because it was useful, but also it was useful because we could trace out her "good consequences."

The Cardinal Virtues

When Tucker had finished arguing that Virtue was more advantageous than desire, he next expounded the Cardinal Virtues of Graeco-Roman thought. To him they were a diversity as in Aristotle, and not a unity as Socrates or Augustine. He named the Virtues of The Republic as his general guides for moral conduct. However, he used the Latin derivations, Prudence (prudentia) and Fortitude (fortitudo) instead of Wisdom and Courage. His immediate goal was to deduce a system of ethics from Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, and Justice. Tucker looked upon these Virtues as being both instrumental and intrinsic. That is, he believed

---

25 Tucker also added a fifth Cardinal Virtue, "Benevolence," which we will discuss below.
the Cardinal Virtues were the means by which Happiness was attained, but also as a result of Translation these same Virtues were looked upon as ends in themselves. Therefore they were intrinsically valuable. This interpretation appears frequently in his psychology and ethics. We shall now review these Virtues.

**Prudence:** Tucker selected Prudence as the chief Cardinal Virtue. He divided it into physical and moral prudence, but considered the latter more important. Moral prudence meant "making the best use of such lights as we have, not in the number or clearness of them; for virtue lies solely in the right application of our powers. . . ." Prudence was the "essence of moral wisdom," giving us the presence of mind to listen to the "whispers of moral sense amid the clamours of passion" and advising us to regard "distant good equally with present pleasure"; it urged us always to follow "the dictates of reason." In essence, Prudence was

... no more than a steady, habitual desire of acting reasonably, generated by a thorough persuasion that in so doing we shall act most for our advantage. . . .

**Fortitude and Temperance:** Tucker subordinated all the other natural Virtues to Prudence. Fortitude meant having a "perpetual presence

---


of mind," or that Stoic emotional state in which one was unruffled by threats, and also in which one had "absolute command of his notice to fix . . . upon any point he [judged] proper." Everyone coveted Fortitude because it helped them to overcome fear. Temperance, of course, was the golden mean between total self-denial and pure pleasure-seeking. Temperance watched over "habit, passion, humour, and whatever else would entice us away from following our judgement. . . ." This Virtue opposed all the "intense pleasures"; Tucker felt that young people and the multitude had put too much value upon them. On the other hand, Temperance would "debar us no pleasure we can have at free cost, but rescue us from those that would make us pay more than they are worth. . . ."

Justice: Tucker called upon his law training in order to give a detailed study of Justice. In keeping with his times, he affirmed that Justice originated both in the social contract and in utility:

Since then we find so manifest a necessity of justice to secure the happiness and tranquility of life, we need seek for no other foundation than utility, whereon to build our obligation to support it. Moreover, the social contract originated as follows. In his "natural" state, man had no need for law, for " . . . justice owes its being to

---

29 Ibid., p. 232.
30 Ibid., p. 236.
31 Ibid., p. 240.
32 Ibid., p. 241.
society." But because selfish men disputed over nature's goods, they established rules of distributive justice in order to give each one "the share of the blessings that nature had poured out among them." Men were both rewarded and punished according to necessary rules. Moreover, if we eliminated all laws and traditions, a community would "gradually fall into notions of justice" in the manner which Tucker described. He separated "apparent utility"—working for self-advantage or mere profit—from "real utility," that which "upon the whole amount of consequences tends to advance a man's real happiness. . . ." Herein his thought is similar to John Stuart Mill's definition of utility as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." But Tucker also claimed that "natural justice" and "legal justice" were inadequate social controls unless the population chose to obey them.

---

33 Ibid., p. 240. Tucker followed the example of many others in criticizing Thomas Hobbes' opinion that man was perpetually in conflict in his natural state. Tucker summarized him as follows, that "... men were born enemies to one another, and that it was nothing but necessity and weakness which drove them into society for their mutual defence (Cf. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Pt. II, "Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth,"). . . ." Tucker's rejoinder to Hobbes was an appeal to experience: we must look at infants to know what natural man is like. "Whoever observes little children may perceive them . . . attentive only to present sensations of pleasure and pain; so they are born with neither friendship nor enmity, but have the seeds sown in them that will produce both . . . we may with as much justice say they are born friends to the species, as enemies." Ibid., Vol. II, p. 314. Cf. Locke's Two Treatises of Government.


For this reason, each person had to cultivate a "conscientious regard for the obligations of justice," and adhere to this vow "against all the solicitations of interest. . . ." Moreover, since laws were necessary we ought to use punishment as a deterrent. Tucker felt that punishment was "a remedy against those [crimes] which might be committed hereafter. . . ." for such a preventive policy would teach the society "forbearance of injury."  

**Benevolence:** After expounding the four Cardinal Virtues, Tucker added a fifth one, "Benevolence," which supplemented Justice. Heretofore Benevolence had been treated as a branch of Justice. They both sprang from the same principle, "that our own good is contained in the good of others. . . ." However, Tucker reversed this interpretation and made Benevolence the root and Justice the branch. Justice per se could not be the basis for moral conduct. It "only restrains from doing damage or wrong. . . .," and consequently it was unable to give society direction. Something was needed beyond Justice, and for this reason,

---


38 Ibid., pp. 241, 186. Tucker's interpretation here was based on the "classical" theory of penology, "that the individual calculates pleasures and pains in advance of action and regulates his conduct by the results of the calculations." Of course, he believed in general rules for conduct instead of specific calculations; but the fallacy in this theory was that "... intent was not considered in the treatment of criminals, or was considered only occasionally or incidentally; little interest in the question of responsibility appeared." Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1939), p. 351.

39 Ibid., p. 249.
Benevolence became the basis for positive moral action. If a debtor paid his debt, he was merely fulfilling his legal obligation; "but if he does you a service you had no right to expect, he deserves your acknowledgements." This unexpected and benevolent action went beyond the law; such benevolence should be our social motivation. This Virtue was the keystone of his ethics.

Tucker defined Benevolence as "a diffused love to the whole [human] species." It rested on the same foundation as love, that is "the pleasure of pleasing..." But we should not mistake the genuine Virtue for that spurious Benevolence which was based upon vanity. True Benevolence had to be "free and voluntary." A Virtuous man therefore would do well to seek out the "stoical doctrine concerning apathy," because by such "impartiality and steady tenor of conduct he will fall deficient in no one branch of benevolence..." Tucker then attempted to equate his virtue of Benevolence with Stoic apatheia in the following passage:

... selfishness is not having a regard for oneself, but having no regard for anything else. Therefore, the moralist may exhort men to a prudent concern for their own interests, and at the same time dissuade them from selfishness, without inconsistency.

---

40 Ibid., p. 250. 41 Ibid. 42 Ibid. 43 Ibid., p. 253.

44 Ibid., p. 251. But how can we combine meaningfully, apatheia, "insensibility to suffering (which may lead to the emotional state of being personally "unharmed")," with benevolentia, being "disposed to promote the prosperity of others," and being "kind" and "charitable"? Is it possible to base moral conduct upon a benevolent imperturbability? It is no wonder that the Stoic "was accused of smugness and complacency; as an aloof spectator he watched the misguided world from the cold heights of his detachment..." He could reflect upon the weaknesses of mankind; but he offered
He closed his essay on Benevolence by recommending that we make it another habit of character:

By often contemplating these advantages of benevolence, a man may bring himself to a hearty liking of it, and then whatever opportunities of exercising it offer, he will embrace them out of inclination, not from any selfish views, but because he thinks it the best. . . . For desire being perfectly translated to the act itself, he will no more need to retain in mind the reasons first inducing him to put on that disposition. . . . Therefore he who shows an habitual readiness to do good offices . . . is truly benevolent. . . .

The Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope, Charity):

We shall make a short digression here to append Tucker's theological virtues. He included them much later, but his discussion is relevant at this point. The greatest of these supernatural Virtues was not Love, but Faith:

Faith supported the other theological Virtues, which could not "walk the rough paths of earth, without leaning on its strong-built shoulders." As for the Virtue of Hope, it solaced us and urged us onward to attainable advantages; Hope, discerning "a present fruition from joys at a no remedy, for he was free from the weakness of compassion. . . . Nor was the sage unconcerned with spiritual things, but the things of the spirit become repellent when handled by a perfect spiritual pride. . . ."


distance," encouraged us towards a distant and desirable happiness; only a "fervent glow of hope" could help produce a faith which "removed mountains and passed undismayed through feiry trials. . . ." The third supernatural Virtue, Charity, was "coeval with the Attributes" of God; Charity helped us to "attain some faint resemblance of our Maker"; this Virtue strengthened both Faith and Hope, and invigorated the whole society. As a flower grew out of the dirt but retained no trace of earthiness, so "in like manner Charity, though shooting most vigorously from rational self-love, yet when perfectly formed has no tincture of the parent root. . . ." Many social benefits were the "natural produce of a thorough Charity"; but even if Charity were not tangibly rewarded, it still enlarged our understandings and cleared our judgments. On the other hand, Charity was not entirely feasible; Tucker satirized English pleasures with this passage:

Therefore were Charity and fellow-feeling to be the prevailing humour in the world, it would become fashionable and engaging to ride as many miles upon a public service as after a stinking fox [!]

Charity also improved Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. That is, it helped every man to "find immediate pleasure in contributing to the general good wherein our own is contained. . . .", He summed up the Theological Virtues with the observation that they mutually supported each other.

Moral Action and Conduct

After these various preliminary considerations, Tucker turned to

---

48 Ibid., p. 270. 49 Ibid., pp. 278f. 50 Ibid., p. 281. 51 Ibid., p. 304. 52 Ibid., p. 304.
examine our motivations for moral action and conduct. In his curious words, a Motive was the "final cause" of any human action "... by a metaphor taken from mechanical engines which cannot play without some spring or other mover to set them at work." But the spring or mover of human beings was to seek satisfaction and avoid uneasiness. Moreover, our specific motives and ideals had to be worked out through experience:

... nature does not furnish us with motives. [They] must be worked out by experience of what hurts or delights us; for we can have no inducement for action before we know what to choose or reject.

These empirically-determined motives had two common features: (a) all people sought attainable ends which their "judgement of fancy" recommended and which gave them the "greatest satisfaction"; (b) every motive contained several possibilities, "several ends of action one within another," such as the alternatives between becoming proficient in an art, getting established in a profession, or advancing our fortune.

General Rules

After expounding the motivation in ethics, Tucker moved on to consider moral conduct. He was a strong defender of general rules. These rules were not only the means to upright behavior, but because they were Translated, they should be regarded as ends in themselves:


As we cannot upon every occasion see to the end of our proceedings, [the moralist] will establish certain rules to serve as landmarks for guiding us on the way. These rules, when he has the leisure and opportunity for mature consideration, he will build on one another, erecting the whole fabric upon the basis of [the] summum bonum before described. But because their reference to the ultimate end cannot be continually kept in mind, he will ensure himself and everybody within his reach, to look upon them as good in themselves, that they may become influencing principles of action. 56

By establishing these general rules for guidance, Tucker avoided the problem of the "hedonistic calculus," into which the School of Utilitarianism soon was thrown. Later in the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham claimed that we ought to calculate the consequences of our actions by the Utilitarian criteria of "intensity," "duration," "probability," "proximity," "fecundity," "purity," and "extent." 57 Of course, his ethical system was debated for decades. But Abraham Tucker avoided this moral arithmetic and depended upon general rules for ethics. Here is a significant passage in which he stated some of his own doubts about calculating pleasures and pains with exactness:

Our tastes varying as much as our faces, make us very bad judges of one another's enjoyments, for we take for granted that everybody must be pleased with what we like ourselves, and according to the vulgar saying, measure other people's corn by our bushel. . . . Neither can we trust even experience itself in this case, for because a thing has pleased us once, we cannot always be sure it will do so again. . . . If we make mistakes in estimating pleasures singly, we commit more in computing the value of a series of them when taken collectively: for we cannot reckon them with the same exactness


57 "To take an exact account of the general tendency of any act, by which the interests of the community are affected, proceed as follows. . . ." Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (London: T. Payne and Son, 1789), pp. xxvii ff [my italics].
practicable in our money affairs, nor can we tell how many little amusements are equivalent to a great one, as we can how many shillings go to a pound. . . . Therefore we are forced to take our pleasures in the lump, and estimate them upon view; as a man who guesses at a flock of sheep by the ground they cover. . . .

The General Good

In a word, men ought to act according to general rules of conduct; but Tucker also named a corollary to this principle. Would it not follow that, if men were guided by general rules then they ought to work for the general good? Tucker believed that the two principles of working for the general good and allowing Translation to transform our inner nature eliminated egoism. Moreover, when we worked for the general good we also built up a fund of happiness for all men: "whatever good we do to any particular creature, we do to the universe." Tucker was not a "citizen of the world," but a "citizen of the universe." If we dedicated ourselves to the upbuilding of the general welfare, we would be acting like two business partners who strengthened each other for the sake of the company. "Therefore the whole universe may be justly regarded as an innumerable host of partners dealing together in the traffic of happiness." Tucker commended this principle once more in the following passage:

... the general good becomes the root whereout all our schemes and contrivances, all our rules of conduct and sentiments of honour are to branch: and the centre whereeto all our particular lines of direction are to point. . . . Nevertheless, let it be

59 Ibid., p. 615.
60 Ibid.
remembered that the whole is made up of individuals; so that every pleasure we do to our neighbor is an addition to the quantity of happiness in nature.\footnote{Ibid.}

Deciding Right Action

Let us conclude moral action and conduct with Abraham Tucker's three rules for determining "the right." As we mentioned above, he maintained that mankind never would possess certainty about specific moral actions. But instead of the hedonistic calculus being our guidance, he named "expedience," "satisfaction [happiness]," and "use" as his general precepts. Since no ethical tenet could be "right in itself," then every rule and action would have to be judged "upon a supposition of [its] expedience."\footnote{Ibid., p. 211 [my italics].} Of course, Tucker interpreted expedience here in a positive sense. Secondly, all general or particular rules of action were judged only "... from their reference to happiness," and never because of "anything essential or in themselves..."\footnote{Ibid., p. 212 [my italics].} In this second rule Tucker anticipated Bentham's criterion of "purity." That is, the more satisfaction and happiness a rule gave, so likewise the more rectitude it possessed; "the highest rules are those which answer this purpose most generally and effectually."\footnote{Ibid., p. 214.} Thirdly, Tucker mentioned that right moral action should be partially determined by use; we valued many objects and fashions which were indifferent in themselves because later they might be useful:

\footnotesize
---

\footnotemark[61]\textit{Ibid.} \hspace{1cm} \footnotemark[62]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 211 [my italics]. \hspace{1cm} \footnotemark[63]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 212 [my italics]. \hspace{1cm} \footnotemark[64]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 214.
Riches, power, fame, health, strength, existence, talents, knowledge, accomplishment, luck, liberty, justice, steadiness, become this way objects of desire.\(^55\)

Moreover, the Ancients had appealed to usefulness in order to settle their disputes. They claimed that an act was "useful because laudable," but Tucker preferred the reverse of that notion:

\[ \ldots \text{the truth appears to me to be that actions are therefore laudable because useful: for I cannot conceive how any practice can be laudable which will never do the least service to the performer nor any body else.} \ldots \]^66

**Ethics Based on "the Light of Nature"**

When Tucker had reached this point in his interpretation of ethics, he thought it would be worthwhile to sketch out a tentative "plan of morality" for his readers. What ethical principles could be deduced from his discussion of the *summum bonum*, the nature of virtue, and from moral action and conduct? Tucker would allow only two general principles; first, that we submit all of our desires "to the ruling passion."\(^67\) Naturally a virtuous man would make his ruling passion the general "advancement of happiness." But paradoxically, many who gave the highest qualities of service to mankind seemed utterly unconcerned about virtue as a ruling passion. How could Tucker overcome this dilemma? His prudent answer was that we should never ignore a skilled but unvirtuous artisan:

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 185. \(^{66}\) Ibid., p. 192. \(^{67}\) Ibid., p. 260 [my italics].
A man that wants shoes, will sooner resort to a clever workman, than one scrupulously honest, that is a bungler in his trade: and when attacked by a distemper, had rather call in a debauchee physician, skilful in his profession, than one strictly conscientious, but of dull capacity and little experience. Were all our artisans and professors to barter their knowledge and dexterity for a proportionable degree of virtue, the world would suffer greatly by the exchange: we should all be ready indeed to help one another, but could do no good for want of knowing how to go about it.68

He granted that knowledge, sciences, and the trades often were acquired with little deference to moral virtue. But since all of them contributed to the general good, Tucker conceded that they also could be ruling passions. Apparently Tucker was attempting to re-interpret the Republic, in which Plato defined justice as that work which best expressed our native capabilities:

Our principle that the born shoemaker or carpenter had better stick to his trade turns out to have been an adumbration of justice.69

The second rule for any ethic based solely upon the light of nature was not to set objectives too high, to do that which was in your power:

It is one characteristic of policy, that it aims at things feasible rather than at things desirable, never attempts impossibilities, but applies its endeavours always to drive the nail that will go, and lays aside its most favourite schemes when the tide of popular dislike sets most strongly against them.70

Tucker deprecated those "very righteous people" who set their eyes on

68 Ibid., p. 262.


70 Tucker, op. cit., p. 263.
Virtue's sublimest heights but had no idea of how to reach their goal. Rather, the prudent moralist considered "what may be done with the materials he has to work upon..." Such moralists also should keep their motives to themselves; if Bernard Mandeville were correct, that private vices became public benefits, then such a truth should never be admitted in public:

Therefore he will lock it up among his esoterics for the use only of adepts, and think the sacredness of the rules of virtue cannot be too strongly inculcated upon the vulgar, who, being apt to take that for good which suits their own interests, would make mad work, unless restrained by the authority of rules.

On the other hand, even if a person based his moral conduct solely upon the light of nature, he could follow the rule of thumb of diffusing virtues "as far and wide as [he had] opportunities for so doing."

At the very end of this section, Tucker qualified his whole statement by pointing out that he was only "in the midway of [his] journey." In his next volume he would consider how the future life influenced ethics. For this reason, he asked his reader to be patient: "if this conclusion... were my real ultimate opinion, I should not be so inconsistent... as to divulge it."

The Theological Sanction for Ethics

The moral philosophy which Tucker had now sketched out was based "solely upon the view of human nature, without any consideration of

71 Ibid., p. 264.  
72 Ibid., p. 266.  
73 Ibid., p. 267.  
74 Ibid., pp. 273f.
Religion or another world." But how could such a creed by recommended to his readers? It possessed no final authority and could not be binding upon men. As a matter of fact, Tucker called this first section of his work (that is, "Human Nature") the "creed of an atheist" because he never mentioned God. Because of this lack of authority he felt driven beyond the present life to seek a "theological sanction," that is, a control which could impel moral action:

It is their emphasis on this sanction which constitutes Gay, Brown, Tucker, and Paley theological utilitarians, and which, starting as they did with the selfish theory of the moral motive, renders their system of utilitarianism alone consistent.75

Theological Utilitarianism was a conventional expression of eighteenth century ethics before Jeremy Bentham. Tucker adopted the theological sanction for two reasons: first, because of the shortcomings of his ethic resting on the light of nature; and secondly because religion was necessary to avert atheism: "were there a nation of Atheists, I apprehend they could not flourish long..."76

In the first section of the Light of Nature Pursued he had stated his case for Virtue; but why were we obligated to seek it? Why not be a despot? Tucker unknowingly re-affirmed John Gay, who had first argued that we were obliged to seek Virtue. Gay's Preliminary Dissertation: Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality (1731) "... was the first definite statement of the utilitarian position."77

75 Hastings, op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 559.  
reasoning is as follows: "obligation" is the "necessity of doing or omitting any Action in order to be happy"; that is, if a person [a "moral Agent"] cannot be happy without doing or omitting a certain action, "then the Agent is said to be obliged to do or omit that Action."\(^{78}\) For these reasons, Gay founded obligation upon the "prospect of Happiness. . .."\(^{79}\) He then affirmed four kinds of obligation; the natural, virtuous, civil, and religious; but the latter was most important for ethics. Only God Himself could provide an adequate sanction for ethics:

\[\ldots\] from the consideration of these four sorts of obligation (which are the only ones) it is evident that a full and complete obligation which will extend to all cases, can only be that arising from the authority of God; because God only can in all cases make a man happy or miserable. . ..\(^{80}\)

Abraham Tucker expounded the theological sanction when he analyzed the behavior of the Roman general, Regulus (ca. 250 B.C.), who was captured by the Carthaginians. Regulus "was a kind of standing puzzle for the moralists of the time."\(^{81}\) Earlier Tucker charged him with "imprudence," because he gave his life for his country: surely "he that takes a course, how satisfactory soever to his own mind, which must destroy him, acts imprudently. . .."\(^{82}\) But when Tucker acknowledged that moral conduct


\(^{79}\) Ibid.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., p. xix.


was determined by rewards and punishments, he approved of Regulus' decision to return to Carthage rather than deny his principles. The Roman general would be "squitted" by "the jury" if they would consider his decision with reference to the future life: Regulus acted as a "citizen of the universe," so that his sacrificial death contributed to the universal fund of happiness. Furthermore, he knew that his sacrifice would be rewarded in the next existence:

He was persuaded likewise that all the good a man does, stands placed to his account, to be repaid to him in full value when it will be most useful to him: so that whoever works for another, works for himself; and by working for numbers, earns more than he could possibly do by working for himself alone. . . . Upon these allegations, supported by the testimony of far-sighted philosophy and confirmed in the material parts by heaven-born Religion, I doubt not the jury will acquit him with flying colours, and the judge grant him a copy of the record, to make his proper use of, whenever he might be impeached or slandered hereafter.83

Tucker's use of rewards and punishments is in contrast to William Paley. Paley's epigrammatic definition of Virtue was

... virtue is ... doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.84

On the one hand, Abraham Tucker the conservative philosopher only brought in the theological sanction at the conclusion of this section of thought. On the other hand, Paley rested his whole system upon his definition of

---

83 Ibid., pp. 665f.
84 William Paley, The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy (London: J. Faulder and others, 1811), Vol. I, p. 42. However Muirhead, to mention only one critic of Paley, called his definition "naive" and approved of the epigram which described Paley as combining "the maximum of error in the minimum of space." John H. Muirhead, The Elements of Ethics; An Introduction to Moral Philosophy (London: John Murray, 1897), p. 108n.
virtue. When he placed rewards and punishments in the foreground, he tended to bring out the egoistic element in his ethics.

Tucker's Theory of Equality

Before we leave the present subject, we must mention Abraham Tucker's singular theory of "Equality." Leslie Stephen called this notion a "strange whim," and indeed Tucker seems to have become involved in a glaring paradox. He affirmed not only the doctrine of divine rewards and punishments which we have mentioned, but also a philosophical hypothesis of equality. Sidgwick has summarized the latter argument well: "men having no free will have really no desert; therefore the divine equity must ultimately distribute happiness in equal shares to all..." Tucker was eclectic here and apparently borrowed this train of thought from Hartley, who was also a determinist. God, said Hartley, was either infinitely good or infinitely bad; but the latter conclusion was absurd. Therefore God willed that if one person "be made infinitely happy upon the balance, all will be made so." Tucker paraphrased Hartley by claiming that all men were of "equal value": since moral inequalities exist in the present life, then they will necessarily be corrected in our "future conditions"; therefore,

---


... it follows unavoidably that there must be an exact equality of fortunes among us, and the value of each person's existence, computed throughout the whole extent of his Being, precisely the same.57

In typical fashion, Tucker then added a corollary to his theory of equality which he called a "doctrine of rotation." Pythagoras\' principle of Transmigration showed him the way to effect moral equity. Each person would be required to make at least two journeys through "matter" in order to balance the moral accounts; but the "balancing period" would be such an enormous length of time that our finite minds would comprehend only one journey. As a comforting thought, Tucker added that if a person passed through a "hazardous state" in the present life, then his next journey would be "safe."88 William Paley, of course, omitted this theory when he adapted Tucker's ethics.

B. Tucker's Application of Ethics

We have now reviewed all of the main features of Abraham Tucker's ethics. But could he apply these principles to actual conditions? To begin with, he admitted that his "fundamental rule" of increasing happiness in nature was "too general for common use..."89 For this reason he divided it into "duty to ourselves (Prudence)," duty "to our neighbor (Benevolence)," and "duty to God (Piety)."90 Paley commented,

58 Ibid., pp. 600ff.
"In modern times we are most accustomed" to this scheme of morality.\textsuperscript{91} Moreover Tucker did not apologize for putting "duty to self" at the forefront. He did not feel that in so doing he degraded God, because many things which men "prized above the originals" had only a secondary value. For this curious reason he did not feel that he had neglected the duty to God.\textsuperscript{92}

After Tucker had commented upon these three rules, he directed his attention to revealed theology; he elaborated a while system of revealed theology before returning to the "practical" in his last volume:

It is now time to issue forth from the sanctuary into the open world, that we may exemplify in our practice the good sentiments we have stored up in our hearts. . . .\textsuperscript{93}

C. Summary and Criticism

Once again in this chapter on ethics, Abraham Tucker illustrates our central thesis. He has shown us both the strengths and weaknesses of eighteenth century moral philosophy. Tucker had the independence to ask what was virtuous and right; but he answered with that external view of morality which was characteristic of the mid-eighteenth century. Alfred Plummer has summed up both Tucker and the existing moral philosophy for us:

The morality of the age exhibits the same features as its religion: it is good common sense and no more. . . . All men are not equal, and

\textsuperscript{91} Paley, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{92} Tucker, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, pp. 8f. Paley inverted the order and placed the theological duty first; duty 'towards God,' "towards other men," and "towards ourselves."

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 503.
the first lesson that we have to learn is subordination. The established order of things is not perfect; mend it, if you can. But meanwhile make the best of it: work and don't whine. However serious the imperfections may be, they are better than anarchy. . . . It is perhaps not a very high theory of life, but it is very practical, and it is in the right direction.94

More specifically, we find both similarities and differences when we compare Abraham Tucker with his contemporaries. For example, he was interested in personal ethics, whereas William Paley was concerned about social ethics. Tucker moralized about such matters as "Vanity," "Indolence," "Self-Denial," "Habits," and many other themes. On the other hand, Paley quickly passed over the "Duties to Ourselves" in order to consider property, contracts, slavery, political knowledge, and other social questions. Again, Tucker repudiated David Hartley's optimism: Hartley asserted that even though we could experience only Sensation and Reflection at birth, we "ought" to end life in "perfect self-annihilation, and the pure love of God."95 But Tucker believed that no such beatitude was possible in this life. We would attain such moral perfection only beyond the next existence. In the third place, Tucker disagreed openly with Ralph Cudworth and the intuitionists: he believed that intuition or the moral sense could not be trusted implicitly as an ethical guide.96 For one reason, when men judged the same

propositional truth, quite often they reached differing conclusions. Moreover, Cudworth's affirmation about "the nature of things" was incorrect; this metaphysic was a false basis for ethics. Even if there were an "uncreated nature of things," we discerned it only partially because our Reason was faulty and changeable. Therefore we should rely upon the empirical data furnished by usefulness, satisfaction, and expedience. We might discover a worthy goal by Reason, but in general the latter would never motivate us. With excellent insight Tucker pointed out that moral motivation depended upon the Imagination and affections.  

We must now pass on from these brief comparisons to criticize Tucker's main positions and the more obvious imperfections in his ethics. Because there are so many matters which could be appraised, we shall have to confine our remarks to a few central themes.

(1) First of all, Abraham Tucker's harmonization of the theological sanction with his theory of "equality" is, at most, a verbal and artificial solution. He involved himself in a glaring paradox. He persuaded himself that he had accommodated a doctrine of divine rewards and punishments to the concept of Transmigration; but his result is syncretism. How can a theology (or a metaphysic) affirm, on the one hand, that we must seek Virtue and obey God's will in order to be rewarded with eternal life; and on the other hand, undercut this very doctrine by a further claim that God eventually rewards everyone

97 Ibid., pp. 127, 261.
equally irregardless of their moral conduct? These two conflicting interpretations cannot be affirmed in the same theology. Tucker makes nonsense of both. Moreover, he is mistaken on another count: the logical conclusion to his doctrine of equality is that he could not have exhorted men to seek either self-satisfaction or the general good. Such exhortation would be meaningless. As Leslie Stephen once stated, "this singular inference . . . would prove that, as in the long run all actions are indifferent, rational self-love could not prompt one course of conduct more than another."\(^98\) For these reasons we contend that Tucker convinced only himself that this harmonization was true.

(2) Secondly and more fundamentally, we seriously question hedonism as a first principle of ethics. "Whether love for pleasure is an adequate principle of unity among the virtues may be doubted. . . ."\(^99\) Ernest Albee defended Utilitarianism, hedonism's modern expression, by the "essential logic of the theory itself"; but Utilitarianism cannot regain a dominant position in ethics.\(^100\) Both Utilitarianism and Tucker's

\(^{98}\) Stephen, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 120.


\(^{100}\) Hastings criticized Utilitarianism on the following counts: (a) it failed signalty to understand "duty"; that is, Utilitarianism tended to identify duty with coercion, and so left no place for moral obligation; (b) the Utilitarian ethic did not resolve the historical controversy as to whether "motive" or "intention" was the object of moral praise and blame; (c) Utilitarians could not supply the scientific calculus which they promised, and which was the keystones of their ethics; (d) finally, as an ethical end, Pleasure lacks both the quality of virtue and motive efficiency. "Utilitarianism as an ethical theory is weak, but as a principle of political action it is not without its working value." Hastings, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, pp. 565-567.
hedonism, in their negative senses, may imply a mere egoistic convenience ("expedience" in its debased sense) or bourgeois usefulness ("utility" in its popular sense).

Tucker thought he had explained away these shortcomings of hedonism by arguing from the principle of Translation. By means of Translation, sordid lower pleasures were transformed inexorably into the desire to cultivate that which was elegant. He observed repeatedly that a mature person was analogous to a beautiful flower which had its roots in the dirt but retained no trace of its origin. It follows that if Tucker's principle of Translation were in error, he would need another justification for his hedonism. But we pointed out in the conclusion of the previous chapter that present-day psychological theory has gone far beyond Associationism; Association Psychology gives a very imperfect account of the development of mind and human nature. Therefore Tucker's main argument for his hedonism is based upon an error.

Again, Tucker did not see the logical fallacy in psychological hedonism. You cannot argue that if each person desired his own happiness, then the aggregate of people would wish the general happiness:

\[ \ldots \text{every person might desire his own happiness without any person desiring the general happiness. In that case, the aggregate of all persons would desire the general happiness only in the sense that each person would desire a part of the general happiness, i.e., his own.}^{101} \]

Furthermore, Tucker's hedonistic account of self-sacrifice is feeble. Why should Regulus' calm consideration of his enduring fame

---

101 Thomas, op. cit., p. 398.
and the thought of his being an example to the race outweigh his opportunity for freedom? Prudent naturalistic calculation could just as well advise him to keep his life. Tucker goes on to say that Regulus was "persuaded" that he would be rewarded in the future life. But Regulus could have died for the honor and glory of Rome just as well as for a divine reward. It appears that Tucker has read back into Regulus' action his own faith in a future existence. Moreover, Tucker did not account for the nobility of self-sacrifice by using another circular argument: that is, Regulus sacrificed himself to the Carthaginians because he knew he would be rewarded; and conversely, he was rewarded because he sacrificed himself; but this argument answered nothing.

For the above reasons we believe that Abraham Tucker's hedonism is an insufficient basis for ethics. Psychological hedonism seeks to abstract the pleasures which accompany purposeful activity and to exalt them as an end in themselves; but this means illusion. Furthermore, the doctrine that all men ought to pursue pleasure (ethical hedonism) is equally as misleading. The artist or musician does not create "... to 'please himself,' but to 'be himself' in creating that which will embody his vision and feeling."102 We conclude that hedonism sets up a false goal when it attempts to abstract pleasure from our creative personal activity.

(3) Our third remark is that Abraham Tucker neglected the very

real possibility of making Christian Love the foundation of ethics. He was more a moral philosopher than an expositor of Christian ethics; in fact, he accommodated the distinctive Christian Virtues to Classical moral philosophy. In Scholastic manner he juxtaposed the Christian Virtues upon the natural Virtues; but he continued with the latter as the main support for moral action and conduct. This was quite unfortunate, because the scheme of "natural Virtues" and "supernatural Virtues" tends to divide our loyalty. It has been pointed out that "... prudence remains, to a degree, independent of charity's leadership, and character is sundered between them."

But Tucker did not equate Prudence with Charity (as Aquinas). Instead he identified Prudence with Faith. Perhaps he felt that he avoided this separation by naming Faith as the chief supernatural Virtue. But Tucker only made his ethical humanism the more clear. For him Faith was essentially a persuasion, but by this attitude he shut off the possibility of creating an ethic based on Christian Love.

On the other hand, Tucker did not ignore the Christian Virtue of Charity. He wrote nearly as much about it as about Faith. He deeply regretted that his natural Virtue of Benevolence did not possess enough motive power to affect the whole society. But that was one of his fundamental ethical dilemmas: his two principles of the "increase of happiness in nature" and "good will" were too nebulous and abstract. They could not substitute for an incarnated Christian Love. Tucker

103 Ramsay, op. cit., p. 208.
disregarded the Christian claim that Jesus Christ embodied his abstract principle of general benevolence. Many systems of ethics and most world religions possess this same general benevolence; but in the New Testament . . . Jesus substitutes for this general idea a very precise and definite one by assuring us that each one of us is the object of the particular, definite, and detailed love of God. . . . His love is entirely unsentimental. It extenuates no fault, and yet is merciful and compassionate. . . . It is independent and unconditional; above all, it can never fail or come to an end.

... [Jesus] does use abstract terms, but these cannot be understood outside the personal reference. "Love" is not some impersonal quality in things; it is simply a convenient abbreviation for a loving God, a God whose love is always manifest in redeeming action.  

(4) Many other passages of Tucker's ethics could be discussed, but we shall conclude with this observation: Augustine of Hippo's critique of Graeco-Roman moral philosophy also applies to Tucker's hedonism. For one thing, Augustine opposed hedonism because Pleasure enslaved the other Virtues. His unforgettable analogy was of a vain woman, a "luxurious queen [Pleasure] on a royal seat" who commanded her slaves (the Cardinal Virtues) to attend to her every real or imagined need.  

Furthermore, Augustine dissented from the belief that virtue is its own reward. Because Classical ethics drew only upon a subjective resource, that is, only from within man himself, they could never measure

---


moral excellence by an objective canon. For this reason, Augustine detected beneath the Stoic's virtue a thoroughgoing self-love:

... although some suppose that virtues which have reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtue, the fact is even then they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues.\(^{106}\)

This egoism was not only the shortcoming of the Stoic, but also of Abraham Tucker. Neither of them recognized the problem of sin being lodged in the very center of our will. Tucker and the Stoic used the doctrine of *apatheia* to repress this sin of pride. Tucker also believed that Translation removed the problem, but we now see that neither method deals with the problem in a significant manner.

Moreover, after Augustine criticized Classical morality he went on to offer a constructive theory of Christian ethics. For him, Virtue was re-valued by the Christian and became "nothing less than the perfect love of God." Augustine did not cast out the pagan Virtues, but reorganized them around Christian Love. The Cardinal Virtues then became a "fourfold division of virtue," expressing a prior Christian Love:

... temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it. The object of this love is not anything but only God, the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony.\(^{107}\)

\(^{106}\) Ibid., Vol. II, Bk. XIX, Sec. 25.

Tucker might have chosen to reinterpret ethics by means of this methodology, that is, by taking the best in the moral philosophers and transforming it by the criterion of Christian Love. Perhaps he thought he had re-appraised the Ancients effectively. Association Psychology and Utilitarianism were forms of thinking which had to be considered. However, Tucker reversed Augustine's method and placed Christian Love in the service of the Cardinal Virtues.

To conclude our chapter: again we have found that Abraham Tucker began in all sincerity to write a meaningful system of ethics; but now we see that his interpretation is dated and has little more than an historical value. The final result is more a series of eclectic reflections than a well-ordered moral philosophy or Christian ethic.
This was the Golden Age of natural theology and deistical freethinking: the age of Spinoza and of Bayle, of the Cambridge Platonists, of Locke, Toland, Blount, Collins, Clarke, Wollaston, Shaftesbury, Tindal, and the rest. During the Christian centuries religion had rested upon revelation; now it rested largely upon 'Nature,' and even the orthodox, who retained the supernatural basis, felt that faith must be grounded firmly upon Nature before one had recourse to super-nature.\(^1\)

If this statement is the mature judgment of one who understands the intellectual development of England from 1680 to 1750, then the same conclusion may be true of Abraham Tucker, for Tucker is one more example of eighteenth century natural theology.

In this chapter we intend to show how Abraham Tucker grounded the Christian religion upon Nature, for he too was committed to that via media between Church dogmatics and the "atheism" of those like David Hume. As a preface to Tucker's natural theology we will define and illustrate briefly its history and offer some examples of the Deistic literature in England. Following that we shall notice several parallels between Tucker and the Deists. After these preliminaries, we shall then outline his natural theology, with particular attention to his treatment of its problems. We shall conclude the chapter by

\(^1\) Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (London: Chatto and Windus, 1940), p. 3.
summarizing "The Vision," a very readable myth or analogy which Tucker composed, and by offering a criticism of his natural theology.

Natural Theology: The natural theologian attempts to exhibit systematically the content of natural religion. But in present-day theological writings the long-standing distinction between natural and revealed religion is not nearly as easily defended as it was prior to the nineteenth century. For example, William Temple remarked that what we ought to look forward to in these days is "the deliberate and total repudiation of any distinction of spheres as belonging respectively to Natural and Revealed Religion or Theology." This assertion marks a radical departure from the traditional view of natural and revealed theology. While a significant number of present-day theologians accept this view, in this chapter we are obliged to return to the traditional formulations of Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastic theologians, which was also the accepted creed of the eighteenth century in England.

What then are the sources of knowledge available to one who

---

2 William Temple, Nature, Man and God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 16. John Baillie also has written: "What do we mean by revelation? . . . there is a general awareness among us that it is being answered in a way that sounds very different from the traditional formulations. . . . It is thus very evident that during the course of the nineteenth century the time-honoured conception of revelation, which defined it in terms of an absolute distinction between the deliverances of the unaided intellect and the acceptance of divinely communicated information, had lost its meaning for many of the leading thinkers." John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 3, 18.
would be a natural theologian? From whence does he derive the content of this natural religion? Briefly, from the elements common to all religious faiths and to all religious experience, whether this be the personal observation of natural phenomena (Nature) or from the feelings and ideas which physical nature arouses in mankind (Man). Consequently natural theologians have been involved continually with such profound questionings as (a) the nature of God as known only through his works; (b) the question of theodicy; (c) the doctrine of providence; (d) human freedom, (e) and immortality of the soul.

History: Natural theology appears very early in the history of Western civilization, in the pre-Socratic cosmologists, when the Ionian philosophers published treatises entitled peri phuseos historis, an "inquiry concerning nature."\(^3\) In that early period, such writers as Thales, Anaximander, Herakleitos, Parmenides, Empedokles, Anaxagoras, the Pythagoreans, Democritus, and others engaged in metaphysical speculation about the origin of physical phenomena and about the development of the cosmos. After these first attempts, Socrates and Plato gave a more thorough treatment of natural theology. One of the best-known sources to which natural theologians have referred is the tenth book of Plato's "Laws," a

\(^3\) John Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), pp. 10ff. "The spirit of the Ionians in Asia was . . . thoroughly secular; and, so far as we can judge, the Milesians wholly ignored traditional beliefs. Their use of the term 'god' for the primary substance and the innumerable worlds had no religious significance." Ibid., p. 80. Cf. Chap. II, "Science and Religion."
passage which has exerted great influence upon the West. In that book Plato attempted three things; to refute atheism, to uphold the moral code by vindicating the righteous actions of individuals, and to defend the sacredness of the gods by showing that they were never swayed by crass offerings or gifts.

As we pass on into the Christian era, certain men stand out as those who contributed directly or indirectly to the development of natural theology. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), offered an "exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei, that is, an object-lesson in reflection upon the logical structure of belief we already possess" in his famous *Monologion*; and his better-known *Proslogion* was an example of "fides quares intellectum, 'belief in search of understanding.'" In the twelfth century, Abelard (1079-1142) compiled conflicting passages of the Church Fathers and set them opposite each other (*Sic et non*). Moreover, by his critical spirit he contributed to the further development of scholasticism in the next century. Of course, the *Summa Contra Gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274?) was

---

4 Notable examples are Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.), Anselm of Canterbury, Abelard, and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine, in the *City of God* (Book VI, Chaps. III, V) also gives a valuable picture of an earlier natural theology in his description of Varro's three *genera* theologiae, that is, the *mythicon*, *physicon*, and *civile*. "Civil theology" was traditional religion as practiced in the various civil communities, while "Natural theology" was the more philosophic and scientific inquiry about the nature and origin of the gods and physical phenomena. Cf. Clement C. J. Webb, *Studies in the History of Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), pp. 139ff.

the classic expression of natural theology in the thirteenth century. The writer who first mentioned "natural theology" was Raymond of Sebond (d. 1436?), in his *Theologiae Naturalis sive Liber Creaturarum*. Shortly thereafter, Pietro Pomponazzi (1462-1525) published a controversial physico-theological work entitled *de Immortalitate Animae* (1516), which was placed on the Roman Catholic Index because of its heterodoxy. Generally speaking, during the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, natural theology encroached more and more upon revealed theology. With the break-up of the Middle Ages and the development of rationalism in the seventeenth century, natural theology came more and more to be relied upon, until finally in the *Saeculum Rationalisticum*, the eighteenth century in England, it was asserted to be a superior method of knowledge to the Biblical revelation. As we shall soon see, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) is a bridge between the earlier continental natural theology and eighteenth century English Deism.

A. Deism and Natural Theology

The Rise of Deism:

English Deism, then, was one of the main expressions of the natural theology which arose after the Renaissance and the Reformation.\(^6\)

---

Deism is the "belief in a God known by the light of nature apart from revelation." John Leland, the Nonconformist scholar and minister, claimed that the word was first used in the sixteenth century "by some gentlemen in France and Italy, who were willing to cover their opposition to the Christian revelation by a more honourable name than that of Atheists." He noted further that the Helvetic Pierre Viret mentioned Deists in his *Instruction Chretienne* (1563), adding that these men professed belief in God but ignored Christ and considered the New Testament writings as only fables and dreams:

He [Viret] adds, that they laughed at all religion, notwithstanding they conformed themselves, with regard to outward appearance, to the religion of those with whom they were obliged to live. . . . Some of them . . . professed to believe in the immortality of the soul; others were of Epicurean opinion in this point, as well as about the providence of God with respect to mankind, as if he did not concern himself with human affairs. . . . Many among them . . . were looked upon to be persons of an acute and subtil genius.

**English Deism**

In England, Lord Herbert of Cherbury also wished to set himself off from the Atheists. He is purported to be the first to use

---


the word "Deist" in English literature. As is well known, his purpose in De Veritate was to demonstrate that notitiae communes, or "common notions," existed apart from revelation, and that they were in fact independent of particular religious faiths. He contended that common notions were necessary to knowledge: "If we do not advance towards truth upon a foundation of Common Notions, . . . how can we hope to reach any but futile conclusions?" One important class of these notions was religion. The religious notions which he accepted as universal are as follows:

(1) There is a Supreme God. (2) This Sovereign Deity ought to be worshipped. (3) The connection of Virtue with Piety . . . is and always has been held to be, the most important part of religious practice. (4) The minds of men have always been filled with horror for their wickedness. Their vices and crimes have been obvious to them. They must be expiated by repentance. (5) There is reward or punishment after this life.

10 Adam Storey Farrar, A Critical History of Free Thought in Reference to the Christian Religion (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), pp. 118f, 415. "Prior to the seventeenth century ['theism' and 'deist'] were used interchangeably with the terms 'theist' and 'deist,' respectively. . . . Theologians and philosophers of the seventeenth century began to give a different significance to the words 'theist' and 'deist' . . . . The theist taught that God remained actively interested and operative in the world which he had made, whereas the deist maintained that God endowed the world at creation with self-sustaining and self-acting powers and then abandoned it to the operation of these powers acting as second causes." John Orr, English Deism: Its Roots and Fruits (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Company, 1934), pp. 13f. Cf. Chap. XIII, "The Rise of English Deism (1624-1695)."


12 Ibid., pp. 291-303.
What was new in Herbert of Cherbury was his insisting that natural religion need not be supplemented by any revealed knowledge. "Revealed truth exists; and it would be unjust to ignore it." But at the same time he gave four criteria by which revelation should be tested. His claim that all men could experience direct communion with God tended to set the Christian revelation aside. "I firmly maintain," he wrote, "that it is and always has been possible for all men to reach the truths I have described." For this reason it seemed uncalled-for to accept a religion which was mediated through other persons or by established institutions:

Such then are the Common Notions of which the true Catholic or universal Church is built. . . . The only Catholic and uniform Church is the doctrine of Common Notions which comprehends all places and all men. This Church alone reveals Divine Universal Providence, or the wisdom of Nature. This Church alone explains why God is appealed to as the common Father. And it is only through this Church that salvation is possible.

In other words, a natural religion based upon Common Notions could stand on its own merit, beside any revealed religion, and judge the latter on the basis of its own theology and ethic.

**Chronology of English Deism:** Lord Herbert of Cherbury's writings were strongly questioned, notably in the first book of John Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, which he devoted to the conception of "innate ideas." Moreover, Lord Herbert's prejudice toward

---

the Church and his insistence on reasonableness in religion were
developed to the utmost when Deism came to its fullness of time
between 1720-1740. The movement followed closely after the Bangorian
Controversy (over the nature of the Established Church) and then
faded away after the 1740's. This important intellectual movement
moved through four general stages: (1) during the rise of Deism
in the seventeenth century (c. 1624-1695), Herbert of Cherbury, John
Locke, Archbishop Tillotson, Anthony Collins, William Chillingworth,
Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Hobbes, and others considered the general rela-
tion of the Christian revelation and reason. (2) That which has
been called "constructive Deism" then flourished in the eighteenth
century (c. 1696-1741), questioning the Biblical prophecies and
miracles, probing at the Orthodox ethics and faith, culminating in
1730 with Matthew Tindal's Christianity as Old as the Creation.
(3) After that came a further change of attitude, a critical and
destructive Deism which used irony and invective in an open assault
on the Orthodox faith; however, this effort soon expired because
of its negativism and also as the result of the counter-attacks of
the Orthodox and Sceptics. (4) Finally, the Deist controversy passed
from public interest because of religious evangelicalism, and also
because of British concern about possible war on the Continent or
in the Colonies. 16 Politics became the public concern in the latter
part of the century.

16 Cf. Orr, op. cit., Chaps. III-V.
Deism was reaching its height during Abraham Tucker's student days at Merton College, Oxford, and later when he attended the London Inner Temple. In 1721, the year he enrolled in the University, Parliament passed the Blasphemy Bill in an attempt to quiet religious polemic. Archdeacon Waterland's *Case of Arian Subscription* was published that year. While Tucker was a student at Oxford and London several other important Biblical and theological works were circulating: William Whiston published his controversial *Essay . . . Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (1722), in which he defended the thesis that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not exactly fulfilled in the New Testament. Then, much to the dismay of the Church, he attempted to restore a true Old Testament text. William Wollaston's *Religion of Nature Delineated* was a very popular book also published that year. Bernard Mandeville's cynical *Fable of the Bees* circulated in 1724, in which he attempted to demonstrate that neither Deists nor Churchmen held a realistic view of human nature. That same year, as Tucker moved on to study at the Inner Temple, Anthony Collins released his *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*. In this writing he urged that Christians could not rest the "proof" of their religion solely upon Old Testament prophecy. The year following, Edward Chandler answered Collins with a *Defense of Christianity from the Prophecies of the Old Testament*. By 1726 Tucker had completed his formal studies and purchased Betchworth Castle in Surrey; that year Voltaire arrived in England; Joseph Butler preached and published his *Fifteen Sermons at Rolls Chapel*; and William Law completed his
Practical Treatise on religion. Tucker moved to his country home the year before Thomas Woolston’s scathing Six Discourses on the Miracles (1727-1730). A plethora of replies and comments were stirred up. Those of note were Thomas Sherlock’s Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ (1729), and for Deism, Tindal’s Christianity as Old as the Creation (1730). When Tucker married (1735), George Berkeley was publishing The Querist, and the year following Joseph Butler readied the first edition of his widely-read Analogy of Religion. By that time, of course, Deism had reached and passed its peak.

Constructive and Critical Deism: Let us now pass on and characterize Deism in its constructive and in its critical phases. Doing more than this would lengthen unnecessarily this chapter.

What made Deism in its constructive phase such a threat to the Orthodox faith? We have found one reason already in Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the so-called father of English Deism; basically it was the challenge for the Church to reform its doctrine. Lord Herbert of Cherbury suggested that worship was "natural" for all men in all times. Because of this a priesthood had developed. But unfortunately they had practiced priestcraft, and "introduced much under the pretext

---

of Religion which [had] no bearing upon Religion." 18 The result: a
corruption, defiling and prostitution of the pure name of religion.
Therefore he felt that what was needed was reform within Orthodoxy
and a return to original, simple religion. Matthew Tindal used this
same theme in the next century. Tindal was the most vigorous of the
Deistic writers. He did not claim to oppose the Christian faith
directly; by no means. He asserted that his "religion of nature" and what
he conceived to be essential in Christianity were one and the same
thing. In fact that was the theme of his book, Christianity was as
old as the creation; that is to say, the original Christian faith and
mankind's natural religion were identical in content:

God, at all times, has given mankind sufficient means of
knowing whatever he requires of them. . . . The Religion
of Nature consists in observing those things which our
Reason, by considering the nature of God and man, and
relation we stand in to him, and one another, demonstrates
to be our duty; and that those things are plain. . . .
The perfection and happiness of all rational beings,
supreme, as well as subordinate, consists in living up
to the dictates of their nature. . . . God requires
nothing for his own sake; no, not the worship we are to
render him, nor the faith we are to have in him. . . .
The religion of nature is an absolutely perfect religion;
. . . external revelation can neither add to, nor take from
its perfection; . . . true religion, whether internally,
or externally revealed, must be the same. . . . Natural and
revealed religion having the same end, their precepts must
be the same. . . . They who, to magnify revelation, weaken
the force of the religion of reason and nature, strike at
all religion: . . . there can't be two independent rules
for the government of human actions. 19

18 Herbert of Cherbury, op. cit., p. 294.
19 Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation: or
the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature (London: n.n., 1732),
Chaps. I-III, V-VII, XII.
Tindal preached the constant theme of the Deists, that they had tried Orthodox Christianity and found it wanting, either in its Biblical claims, in its morality, or in its worship.

Moreover, in this constructive phase of the controversy it was not easy to determine how Deistic a particular writer was. Tindal himself was a member of the Established Church and so was criticizing the faith from within. Both Tindal and the eminent Samuel Clarke called themselves "Christian deists."\textsuperscript{20} Strictly speaking, only Tindal was a Deist, because he alone believed that men should follow only the light of nature: "We, certainly, ought to adhere strictly to the light of nature..."\textsuperscript{21} But because Deists and many others within the Church believed in the primary importance of reason, their respective outlooks were quite similar:

As a matter of fact, the difference between the Deists and the avowed apologists was far less than has been commonly supposed. There was a vital kinship between them, more significant than any differences. They were on opposite sides... not so much because of any great disagreement in religious beliefs and in ethical ideals, as because of a difference of attitude toward the ecclesiastical establishment and the ecclesiastical authorities.\textsuperscript{22}

Unfortunately not all Deists were as scholarly or as ethical as Tindal. Deism regressed in the third phase of the controversy, from covert insinuation to destructive criticism and outright attack


\textsuperscript{21} Tindal, \textit{op. cit.}, Chap. XIII, pp. 298f. Cf. ante, p. 155n.

on Orthodoxy. First the Old Testament prophecies, then the New Testament miracles, and finally even the motives of the Apostles themselves were suspected or declared untrue. Many examples of this invective circulated after 1727 in the pamphlets of Thomas Woolston, Thomas Morgan, Thomas Chubb, Peter Annet and others. Woolston, perhaps the most resented of any Deist, will show adequately the tone of these writings.

Woolston (1670-1733) was primarily a theological student. While he was a Fellow at Sidney Sussex, Cambridge, he pored over the literature of the Apostolic Fathers in great detail. Soon he became convinced that the allegorical method they used to interpret the Scriptures was correct and much needed in his own day. Because of this conviction, he criticized his fellow clergymen in writing (1722), condemning them all as slaves to the letter of the Scriptures. He was so hostile that presently he was deprived of his Fellowship. In bitterness and poverty he soon sent to press an abusive series of pamphlets, Six Discourses on the Miracles (1727-1730), ironically dedicated to six of the Church's Bishops. They were so offensive that Bishop Gibson of London had Woolston prosecuted and imprisoned, where he died as a martyr for Deism in 1733. The sale of the Discourses was immense. Bishop Gibson answered him with a pastoral letter, as did Bishops Zachary Pearce and Richard Smalbrooke. Woolston's thesis was that the Gospel writings were to be interpreted only in a mystical and allegorical sense. If they were supposed to be true literally or correct historically, then they must be regarded
only as fictitious, absurd and false. The Orthodox Leland commented that "this attempt he hath carried on with greater rudeness and insolence than any of those that appeared before him." His attack on the Christian faith was two-fold: first he tried to show that the literal meaning of Christ's miracles was explicitly denied by the Apostolic Fathers; second, he attempted proving that the literal meaning of the miracles was absurd. In his fourth Discourse he came to the following conclusion:

The gospel is in no sort a literal story. . . . The history of Jesus' life is only an emblematical representation of his spiritual life in the souls of men. . . . The Gospels were [like] Gulliverian tales of persons and things, that out of the romance never had a being; that neither the fathers nor the apostles, nor Jesus himself meant that his miracles should be taken in the literal, but in the mystical and parabolical sense. . . . If Jesus' miracles, literally taken, will not abide the test of sense and reason, they must be rejected, and Jesus' authority along with them.  

But even that was not all: he hurled his final abuses by using Celsus' literary device, which was to introduce a fictitious Jewish rabbi who also raised many doubts about the Christian religion.

23 Leland, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 102. Note also how this critical Deism affected the Continent: "In his later years, Voltaire plainly adopted the entire spirit and method of the extremists in the English controversy. . . . But next to the historical argument, it was the moral argument that Voltaire stressed most, and here he was inspired by Woolston, Tindal, and Annet, and turned to their works again and again for his important material." Norman L. Torrey, Voltaire and the English Deists (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 203. Cf. ante, Chap. IV, p. 133.

Reactions to English Deism

Three attitudes were taken historically to Deism. On the one hand, many Orthodox believers heartily supported William Law: the Christian religion did not need to submit itself to any criteria of reason. In reply to the Deists, Law reasserted the dogmatic superiority of revelation over reason. The Scriptures had no need to be defended by reason. The Bible was the Word of God and true because the prophecies and miracles were true. Law answered Tindal with *The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion Fairly and Fully Stated*:

... human reason cannot possibly be a competent judge of the fitness and reasonableness of God's proceeding with mankind, either as to the time, or matter, or manner of any external revelation. ... All the contradictions and absurdities that are to be found in human life, and human opinions, are strictly and precisely the mutability, disorders, corruption and absurdities of human reason.25

His rejoinder to Deism was unequivocal: in an argument either abandon reason or abandon revelation. Law chose to give up the former.

On the other hand a second attitude was less dogmatic, more accommodating toward Deism. We have seen that the Apologists agreed with their opponents on the importance of reason. Many of the Apologists held a high estimate of reason; they also felt that men should have a reasonable religion. But the major difference between

---

the Apologists and Deists was that the former would not discard the traditional revelation. Reason, they felt, was an insufficient guide for morality. It needed a religious sanction. Depending on the writer, reason had to be supplemented by great or small amounts of revelation. Samuel Clarke is an example of an Apologist who had a very high estimate of reason. Leslie Stephen describes Clarke as believing that reason could "raise a strong presumption, but [required] to be checked, corroborated, or perhaps supplemented, by direct revelation." Joseph Butler, on the other hand, did not allow reason as much strength as did Clarke. Butler did not reject reason, as William Law, but he did confine and limit its function. To him human reason was incapable of conclusive decisions in religious matters. If the Deists objected to the evidences and content of the Christian faith, then they were also judging themselves:

... the particular parts principally objected against in this whole dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of Nature, or Providence; ... the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former, are no other than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; ... this argument from analogy is in general unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion.


In this manner Butler subtly qualified Tindal's work, by showing that the religion of reason and nature was never a complete and perfect system. If revealed Christianity were imperfect, by analogy, the religion of reason and nature also was imperfect. However, even though both were imperfect, nature and revelation each originated in the Author of Nature.

The third attitude to the Deists came from the skeptics, those who stood apart and questioned if anything important was being argued by any of the parties in the debate. Conyers Middleton, Lord Bolingbroke, Bernard Mandeville and David Hume are representative of this cast of mind. We will select David Hume's religious position as an example. He concluded that neither Deists nor Apologist's argued very well. He was concerned also with the attributed of God, Providence, immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments and miracles. Hume did not openly assault these doctrines; but he was skeptical of Orthodoxy and he committed his doubts to paper. His essay "Of Miracles" provoked Churchmen to great activity. John Leland wrote six of his thirty-six "Letters" on Hume's religious views. He pointed out that the Scottish philosopher was a "subtil writer of a very metaphysical genius... But it is obvious to every judicious reader, that he hath in many instances carried scepticism to an unreasonable height." 28

In the first section of his essay about miracles Hume strongly

---

questioned the conventional assumption, that miracles may be proved by human testimony. The testimony to the uniformity of nature is universal; but that which testifies to a miracle's occurrence is only partial; consequently, since the former testimony outweighs the latter, no miracle has taken place:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. . . . Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happened in the common course of nature. . . . But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be an uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle. . . .

The second section of Hume's essay was an examination of particular miracles (such as those attributed to the Abbe de Paris), upon which he also cast doubt: religious people, he asserts, had been entirely too liberal in claiming to have witnessed miracles. Too few men of integrity and excellence had been witnesses to them. Furthermore, many spurious miracles had been discovered. We deemed them credible because of our passion for surprise and wonder. Miracles abounded in past ages among the ignorant, but with enlightenment the marvellous had decreased. But Hume ended his controversial essay paradoxically, by capitulating to faith. If one wants to believe in

divine interpositions, then he must abandon reason and cleave only to faith:

... we may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience. 30

Such was David Hume's treatment of the Church and miracles. But he also struck out at the Deists in his Natural History of Religion. He asserted therein that there never could have been a natural state of enlightenment in primitive mankind, and that there was no single faith common to all men. The savage was an idolater and polytheist, not as the Deists believed, a worshipper of a monotheistic god: "it is a matter of fact incontestable, that about 1700 years ago all mankind were polytheists." 31 Was it not a strange notion, Hume asked, that men originally believed in one god who was the Author of Nature and then departed from their common worship to serve many gods? He saw throughout history a flux and reflux between polytheism and monotheism. His "general corollary" to this survey of religious history was that ignorance was the mother of devotion. Belief in a divinity appeared as a universal instinct, but how it was perverted in religious practices! His rebuttal to the optimism

30 Ibid., p. 150.
of the Deistic writers was that

The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment, appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarcely be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarreling; while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy.\(^{32}\)

This was the logical, and skeptical, outworking of the Deist controversy in Great Britain. Hume's arguments were prime ones in breaking down the claims of both the Orthodox believers and of the Deists.

B. Tucker's Similarity to Deism

In a general sense constructive Deism, that is, the search for a moral order independent of revelation, continued on past David Hume. This attitude endured not only in America and on the Continent, but also in Great Britain. Abraham Tucker and William Paley are examples of a continued but lessened interest in natural theology after 1750. We will now enumerate the parallels between Tucker and Deism. We have mentioned that Tucker took his stand as a reconciler of opinions; by his moderation he believed it possible to synthesize the claims of revelation and reason.\(^{33}\) He belonged to that group of liberal eighteenth century interpreters who moderated the dispute between the

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 493.

\(^{33}\) Cf. ante, Chap. II, pp. 60 f.
conservative Orthodox and radical Deists. Because he was an Apologist, he resembled the Deistic writers in several ways which we shall now mention:

(1) The very title of his volumes was a reminder of the Deistic polemic which had abated only recently: the Light of Nature Pursued might have led some readers to suspect that he considered reason alone a sufficient guide to morality and religion. As a matter of record, that is exactly what his grandson once commented about Tucker's first edition (1768):

> Their title was unfortunate, and contributed to raise prejudices against them. At the time of the publication many fanciful theories were afloat on subjects of religious controversy: these had disgusted the public, and a work professing in its title-page to pursue the Light of Nature might reasonably be suspected as unfavourable to the doctrines of Revelation.34

(2) Again, we see a similarity to Deism because of his theological liberalism. In a very real sense, Tucker was a free-thinker, independent of Church dogma. Because of his accommodating spirit, Tucker would have accepted Lord Herbert of Cherbury's five principles for a universal and natural theology. (3) A third parallel between Tucker and the Deists is his individualism. He agreed with the

---

34 Tucker, op. cit., Vol. I, p. xi. Moreover, Tucker's theology was so deistic that he did not have any conception of the objective presence of God. We shall see in Chapter VII that he could not allow the objective presence of Divinity either in worship or in the sacraments. He accepted the deistic view that God had created the universe and then retired, leaving it to be controlled by secondary causes. This is a constant theme of Tucker's revealed theology.
rationalistic individualism of another country gentleman, Anthony Collins, who declared that others than the clergy had both the right and duty to interpret such theological matters as

... the nature and attributes of the eternal Being, ...
... the truth and authority of books esteemed sacred, and of the sense and meaning of those books; or, in one word, of religious questions.35

Tucker fulfilled completely Collins' idea. He believed his main duty was to exercise his reason upon religious questions. (4) The title the Light of Nature Pursued, is strikingly similar to another volume which was published in 1722 near the height of the Deist controversy, The Religion of Nature Delineated, which was very popular and widely-read. William Wollaston, the author, set out to discover what a "Heathen philosopher, without any further help, ... may be supposed to think."36 Wollaston was indirectly helpful to Deism, because his objective was the definition of a religion solely by the light of nature or reason. Claimed Wollaston, reason alone could demonstrate the existence of God, Providence, that evil was the cause of some good, and that men could infer a future existence by the light of nature. But in his conclusion he bowed to the Orthodox faith:

... here I begin to be very sensible how much I want a guide. But as the religion of nature is my theme, I must at present content myself with that light which nature affords.37

36 William Wollaston, The Religion of Nature Delineated (London: B. Lintott and others, 1725), Sec. IX, Par. VIII:5.
37 Ibid.
Wollaston's literary effort was not considered heretical because the Church believed that truth was the sum total of the truths of reason and of revelation. Therefore it was but a simple step for Tucker to adapt such a scheme to his own use. In his own work he merely juxtaposed "Theology" and "The Lights of Nature and the Gospel Blended" to his first section on "Human Nature." Tucker's first section, "Human Nature," is very similar to Wollaston's book. Both authors were on the Deistic platform, when they commenced with the light of nature. Wollaston asserted that the religion of a heathen philosopher was incomplete; Tucker then merely added that the light of nature needed to be supplemented by the truths of the Gospel. Some kind of revelation was needed. In other words, Tucker also stood on the common ground of reason with the Deists, so that we would describe him as "deistic." But he went beyond their creed when he recognized the need for some type of divine revelation and some kind of divine institution. For these reasons he was neither a conservative Orthodox nor a radical-type Deist, but a moderate Apologist.

C. Tucker's Interpretation of Natural Theology

Having now discovered a significant relationship between Abraham Tucker and Deism, let us next summarize the important articles in his natural theology. We shall outline them under the following topics: First Principles, the definition of God, the question of Theodicy, and the doctrine of Immortality.
In the second general section of the Light of Nature Pursued, Tucker gave his attention to "(Natural) Theology." We have reviewed the first portion in which he was particularly concerned with human nature and ethics. In the first six chapters of "Theology," he began with "external nature" and developed, in a labyrinthian manner, his archæ, or first principles of natural theology. To these chapters we shall now turn. The general subjects considered are "Substance," "Matter," "Mind," and "Spirit."

**The First Principles of Natural Theology**

**Substance:** What did ousia or substance mean to Tucker? He was more concerned with knowing how a substance existed than with knowing that it existed. He followed John Locke in affirming that the existence of a substance was known by its qualities. Tucker's maxim was that "substances discover themselves to us only by their qualities. . . ." 38

---

38 Tucker, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 277. Etymologically, "substance" comes from the Latin substratum, sub "under" + stare "to stand." "In metaphysics substance may denote: (a) The subject; that which is, or of which something may be predicated . . . (b) The essence; that which makes a thing what it is, or gives it its essential nature. Substance in this sense is always the essence of an existent thing. . . . (c) The substratum; that which supports attributes or modes, or exists as the material of individuation; matter. Substance in this sense is totally indeterminate; all that can be said of it is that it is the basis of determinations of realities. (d) An individual reality or being considered as an existent entity. . . ." Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Second Unabridged Edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1934), p. 2514. Tucker uses the second and third meanings most often. Prichard says substance is "a rather baffling subject." Harold Arthur Prichard, *Knowledge and Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), p. 131.
That is, substance and quality could not be separated. For this reason, the essence or existence of a thing turned, not on examining that substance, but on the inquiry into primary and secondary qualities.

What we term qualities, as Mr. Locke observes, are powers of affecting us, or of causing alterations in other substances, making them affect us differently from what they did before; thus, whiteness in snow is the power of affecting us with the sensation of white, heat in fire is the power of affecting us with the sensation of warmth, and of melting wax, whereby it is made to exhibit another appearance than it did while cool and hard. But an act of power is the operation of some agent, of which therefore it gives as full evidence as of the power thereto belonging; for there cannot be power with nothing to exert it. So that naked quality is no more comprehensible than naked substance, and you might as well undertake to lay whiteness, squareness, softness, coolness, without laying something white, or square, of soft, or cool: now if this assertion be intelligible, . . . you must have an idea of every term employed in it, and consequently of the word Something; if then there be a meaning in the word, you may take that for your idea of substance.39

Tucker further reasoned that (1) the Primary Qualities of "solidity" and "resistance" gave us the most simple demonstration of substance (other Primary Qualities were "impulse" and "mobility"); (2) qualities not only affected persons but also altered other substances; (3) if by definition there were a necessary connection between quality and substance, then the existence of qualities proved the existence of the latter:

I am not unapprized that Plato supposed qualities might subsist without any substance to possess them, because while we

39 Ibid., pp. 277f.
can form an idea of them they may have a reality in our thoughts; but I beg leave to observe that our idea of a thing is not the thing itself. . . . I know well enough what the toothache is though now quite free of it. . . .40

As Hatchet the carpenter could construct a table out of pre-cut parts in Tucker's presence, so also could nature compound objects out of existing substances. Things were composed and compounded in three ways, "by nature, by the hand of man, and by the imagination."41 But each selected the materials at hand and formed them into a compound which struck our senses as one object. Tucker followed Lucretius in asserting that production and destruction in physical nature occurred with the unifying or separation of atoms. No matter how much variety compounded objects possessed, there was nothing new in them but their order and situation, which came from Secondary Qualities.42

Matter: Here Tucker directed his attention against those who believed in the infinite divisibility of matter. He ignored the debate between the philosophers and Christians, as to whether hyle had been created or existed eternally. Tucker contended that if we divided up any element (air, fire or water) as long as we pleased, we could never reduce it to nothing: "their minutest divisions will still be body, having figure and magnitude."43 For this reason he believed in the atomic theory of matter, that nature had determined a minimum size below which no particle could be reduced. Therefore these atoms were

40 Ibid., p. 278.  
41 Ibid., p. 282.  
42 Ibid., Chap. II, par. 6.  
43 Ibid., p. 292.
"the first matter whereout all bodies of the universe are compounded." 44

Mind: The relationship between the individual mind and one's self was of utmost importance to Tucker. If individual minds existed, then we as persons actually existed. Tucker agreed with Lucretius only on the point that, if the mind were a compound, it would grow and decay with the body. But no, the mind would not decay with the dead body because of the Primary Qualities of "perceptivity" and activity." He contended for the individual mind's existence by an argument-to-the-man and further by empirical evidence:

I wish every one would consider . . . whether he has not a real existence distinct from every other being whatever, and whether Self be not an indelible character which cannot be taken from him nor exchanged with any other person. . . . 45

In other words, our own perceptions definitely convinced us of our individual existence. We realized our own being long before we could make an abstract statement such as "I see, I feel, therefore I am." 46 Even if we were transmigrated, he fancied, the same self would continue throughout every different state of being. Tucker therefore concluded that if we could not discover individuality now, we should never find it. Personality was not half-formed: "we cannot half-be, but must either be completely ourselves or not be at all." 47 To him individual persons were real, existing, and like atoms, indivisible.

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 304.
47 Ibid., p. 303.
So for these reasons he inferred that the mind would endure perpetually:

... the powers of nature can neither increase nor diminish the stock of Beings; they may throw them out of their assortments, and so dissolve the compounds formed thereby, or destroy the secondary qualities resulting from their composition; but what has existence cannot be annihilated, and what is one cannot be divided, nor can primary qualities, essential to the subject possessing them, be taken away.48

*Spirit:* We have just seen that Tucker followed Aristotle in believing that the mind was imperishable. But a further question also pressed him: in what form or manner would it endure after the dissolution of the body? He considered this in the chapter on "Spirit." To his way of thinking, Spirit meant the perpetual existence of mind and individuality, which were distinct from body or matter. The unique qualities of spirit were "penetrability," "unextendedness," "perceptivity," and "activity." We find a quaint supposition about spirit, that it was "naturally penetrable" but also it could become solid when in contact with particular bodies. He disagreed with Ralph Cudworth's saying that spirit was dependent upon body for its actual existence. Spirit was locomotive and would carry the Primary Qualities of perceptivity and activity into the next existence.

In this chapter Tucker first mentioned the doctrine of "animalcules." He later developed this into the idea of a spiritual vehicle which, after being released from the body, continued its

---

existence in the next state. In his summary of "Spirit," Tucker hinted that our present deportment had bearing on our spirit in the future state. 49

The Definition of God

First Cause: After Tucker considered these First Principles of natural theology, he then turned to his doctrine of God: "particular things" gave no hint as to what the future would be like, so perhaps the "general laws" of nature would help. 50 As he surveyed the external world "nature" remained a mystery. What was its cause? What kept it in motion and constant operation? In Chapter VIII he rejected the earlier philosophers who suggested Chance, Necessity or Design. Furthermore, he could not believe Aristotle's hypothesis that motion (kinesis) and time (chronos) always existed. 51 He affirmed with Plato that time and the physical universe were created together. Locke's oft-quoted maxim that "the works of Nature everywhere sufficiently evidence a Deity" was also a gospel for Tucker. 52 The Primary Qualities were "effects" which owed their existence to some originating "cause (Cf. Chapter VII)." Tucker's reasoning here followed that of Samuel Clarke and many others:

49 Ibid., p. 316.  
50 Ibid., p. 317.  
There is not a more evident truth or more universally acknowledged among mankind than this, that nothing can produce nothing: therefore ... something has existed from all eternity. ... Thus we must needs acknowledge there is a Being somewhere existent without a cause, for till we find such an one we shall have no cause whereon to found the existence of other things: and such we may safely assign for the First Cause of all existences, modes of existence, properties, and order of succession in the universe.\(^53\)

He rested a great deal of his proof of the existence of God also on the argument from design. To him these two proofs were so well-accepted and irrefragible that any other argument seemed superfluous. But Plato's citation of the consensus gentium for the existence of a God was not "contemptible."\(^54\) Moreover, he affirmed that the First Cause "necessarily existed," but it did not create the universe by necessity; no, it proceeded by choice. Consequently "this choice we must call Intelligence, ... and from this Choice or Intelligence the First Cause is denominated God."\(^55\) In affirming this he ignored Hume's criticism that causes could not be inferred which were greater than particular effects. But this definition was very important to Tucker. He declared that belief in a God of Intelligence was what separated the theists from the atheists.\(^56\)

---


\(^54\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 329.


\(^56\) \textit{Ibid.} But also see Hume: "In a word, Cleanthes, a man who follows your hypothesis is able perhaps to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from something like design: but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance. ..." Hume, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," Pt. V, p. 464.
If the light of nature could demonstrate this kind of a God, then could we make any deductions beyond this? Could we deduce the Attributes of God? At this point Tucker made less positive claims than Samuel Clarke. Clarke asserted that "many of the Essential Attributes of his Nature, are strictly Demonstrable, as well as his Existence." But Tucker was less confident. He declared only that "there are some propositions we may affirm with certainty concerning the . . . divine nature." Up to this point he would make only a Newtonian affirmation about God's predictability, that

. . . the power of God is the same in America as in Europe, the same yesterday and to-morrow as to-day, . . . that he was not born of parents, . . . nor shall grow old and decay like ourselves; that all created substances take their stations, from whence fortune arises, by his appointment. . . .

But on the other hand, if God were predictable then certain Attributes could be discovered by the best exercise of our reason and by the analogy of human personality. Therefore by taking whatever powers and endowments we find in human nature and "heightening them to the utmost pitch imagination can reach, the aggregate of all these makes our idea of God." Tucker believed that the Divine essence was incomprehensible: "at best we are all idolaters, and the materials making up our golden

---

59 Ibid., pp. 333f.
image are drawn from our own fund. . .”

For this reason, our idea of God should be kept as free from grossness and impurity as possible.

Using this method, Tucker then made the following "affirmations" which he expounded as God's Primary and Secondary Attributes and God's Characteristics.

**Primary Attributes of God:** Tucker proposed seven, which are:


That God is One seemed self-evident and too clear to Tucker to need proof. Tucker likened God's Omnipresence in the universe to Plato's World-Soul in the *Timaeus*. He affirmed that God was present "alike everywhere throughout all the immensity of space." He then paraphrased Psalm 139 in order to interpret this attribute for the Newtonian age. As for Eternity, this followed from God's being the First Cause: it was also self-evident that "something" (God) always had existed. Here it is interesting that he defined eternity as the "succession of time, with a negation of beginning or end." Furthermore God was Omnipotent, by which he meant a total aggregation of power into Almightiness. Did Necessity or "the nature of things" ever limit God's power? Tucker thought not so. He disagreed with the

---

Free-thinkers who claimed that the nature of things limited God, and also with the Church of England writers Beveridge and Sherlock. God proved his omnipotence to Tucker by running the universe by Secondary Causes. Omniscience identified God's perfect intelligence. The mystery which we humans find in nature is perfectly understood by the Author of Nature. Both Tucker and Joseph Butler believed that the mystery of nature was an evidence of the wisdom of God. Tucker was also close to the Stoic doctrine of Providence at this point: "how stupendous must be that wisdom which directed infinite power, and by which every thing was established in number, weight and measure!" The moral world and human freedom furnished further evidence of God's Omniscience. The attribute of Goodness was the most difficult for Tucker to understand accurately. Of course, here the problem of evil was thrust into the center of his scheme. This will be discussed later, but his practical solution was that if God were the cause of every effect, then also some evil was intentionally created. But if God had created some evil, then we could also trust to Providence:

... we must needs acknowledge that God created evil as well as good, and that nothing of either happens to his creatures unless by his appointment or permission: if

---

64 Ibid., p. 344.
65 Ibid., p. 348.
this seems to derogate from his goodness, let us consider whether we have an adequate idea of goodness.  

His final Primary Attribute was a further qualification of Goodness: God also was Equitable. Equity was simply a species of Justice which meant "a perfect impartiality inclining God to be good alike to all, and to spread his mercy over all his works."  

**Secondary Attributes:** As far as Tucker was concerned, these seven attributes were "essential to the Divine Nature," and adequately set forth his doctrine of God. Three other attributes had been named, but they were only secondary in God's nature. For this reason, Divine Purity, Majesty, and Holiness were "exoteric" doctrines, while the seven Primary attributes remained "esoteric." But if a philosopher used "long-winded, uniform, correct, refined language" to describe God, then he was not inconsistent if, by analogy, he employed the "loose, figurative, fluctuating manner" of common discourse. Therefore "exoteric" or Secondary attributes were not improper:

**Divine Purity** meant to Tucker that God was dissociated from "all external objects of nastiness and impurity." He was incensed

---


by the Enthusiasts of his time who insisted that men ought always to have God in their thoughts:

For if every time we shifted or washed our hands, or cut our corns, or did other things I do not care to name, we were to do them with direct intention to please him; it would be more likely to debase and contaminate than ennoble and sanctify our minds, to degrade him below ourselves, than raise us to a nearer resemblance with him.⁷⁰

Majesty expressed God's secondary attribute of "uncontrollable authority and absolute dominion" in the universe.⁷¹ It meant greatness and pre-eminence beyond our comparison. Majesty tended to protect God from defiling "works" or "objects" which might be unbecoming to such an exalted Being. Tucker's treatment of Holiness is by far the longest of the Secondary Attributes. He affirmed with Plato and Epicurus that man's personal holiness implied "an exemption from all tastes, desires, and trains of thought, excited in us by our corporeal appetites..."⁷² But if this were man's holiness, then God's attribute also was negative: "holiness in him is no more than a negation of those moral impurities, whereto our nature lies liable."⁷³ God was in actuality beyond Holiness, because he had no human desires or passions. But Tucker believed that Holiness was a very practical attribute. For the reason that men often disguised their vice as

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 29. ⁷¹ Ibid., p. 30.
⁷² Ibid., p. 37.
holiness, this attribute judged their lives. 74

In summary, we notice that these three Secondary Attributes were juxtaposed to the seven Primary Attributes of God; but both types were to "conduct [us] to one and the same end, namely; to give us the purest idea of our Governor, and the most heavenly disposition of mind we are capable of attaining." 75

God's Two Characteristics: Tucker's doctrine of God was not exhausted even after reviewing ten Attributes. No, a footnote to all the above was appropriate: the being of God could be known best by considering it under the two Characters (characteristics) of Creator and Governor (Chapter XVIII). Tucker felt that we could have no idea of God as Creator because we could find nothing similar in our own experience. Therefore we should withhold our thought from God as Creator; the more we considered that Character, "the more we . . . [found] ourselves entangled in perplexities and contradictions." 76
A better way was to give our attention to God as Governor; this characteristic was much more understandable:

. . . the Governor of the Universe is a more discernible object, easier for our imagination to comprehend, clothed with milder rays of glory, the subject of our hope and confidence as well as of our admiration. For we may behold him provident, wise, gracious, and beneficent, protecting us against the confusion of Chance and hard

74 Ibid., p. 39.  
75 Ibid., p. 68.  
hand of Necessity, having all nature under command, so that no disturbance or disorder can intrude against his liking. 77

In summing up this section on Tucker's doctrine of God, we notice that he compares with Plato before him and William Paley afterwards; God is essentially a Divine Artificer:

... the curious structure of our bodies, the wonderful agility and variety of ideas in our minds declare his wisdom, the blessings poured daily around us manifest his goodness, the sun that rules by day, the stars that twinkle by night, the vast expanse of heaven, display his power and greatness. 78

Paley incorporated such arguments from design, the watch analogy, and many other illustrations from Tucker's works. The Governor (which Tucker later equated with the Mundane Soul), similar to the Platonic Demiurge and the traditional divinities, worked upon the nature of things eternally after the creation. Tucker did not think this interpretation destroyed divine Unity for the reason that often we express our beliefs analogically.

Problems of Theodicy

Since Tucker wanted to be both an enlightened philosopher and

77 Ibid., p. 367. In this passage we see Tucker's hesitation about describing God the Creator. Perhaps this originates in his purpose to mediate between Deism and Christianity. He certainly did not give this sufficient consideration. He preferred to concentrate only upon God as Governor. Cf. the summary and criticism, pp. 223ff.

78 Ibid., p. 365. But also see Hume: "Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out; ... and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making." Hume, op. cit., Vol. II, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," Pt. V, p. 462.
an Orthodox Christian, he could not accept David Hume's dictum that God was an incompetent Creator of the universe; that for all we know this world "was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance." Tucker replied that God was good and omnipotent. Therefore he was confronted with the dilemma of God's righteousness in an evil world, or with the question of theodicy. If God is good and omnipotent, then why must we experience the evils of suffering and pain? Why do natural and moral evil exist? Tucker filled many pages and gave much thought to theodicy, the righteousness of God. Apparently this enigma bothered him as much as the recluse Wollaston. At least he did not ignore it because Tucker also felt constrained "to justify the ways of God to men." He reviewed the solutions of the Ancients and moderns with dissatisfaction. The "inscrutable mystery which has perplexed the thoughts of men ... from Job down to the present time" still remained unsolved. Let us now summarize Tucker's working solution:

(1) He began with the assumption of Plato's Timaeus, that both the world and its maker were good:

---


The world is the best of things that have become, and he is the best of causes. . . . He was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself.82

But only the major premise in Plato and Tucker is identical. Whereas Plato explained natural and moral evil by the traditional gods who created men from inferior materials, Tucker boldly proclaimed that God also created some evil.83 But did not this creation of necessary evil indicate that God was an inferior Being? Tucker thought not so. He defended God's omniscience, goodness and equity in several ways:

(1) He continually preached that familiar text, that evil quite often was the cause of greater good. Before him Mandeville had made this theme famous with his thesis that private vices were the source of public benefits. Tucker's version was that

Much of our good springs out of evil. . . . If there was no such thing as danger, want, or satiety, we should have little to do, and life would become insipid for want of employment. . . . As a foil sets off a beauty, so the disappointments we have experienced or distresses we behold others labour under, give us a just estimation of our present good fortune. . . . Thus want, weakness, imperfection and evil, tend to display goodness, and without them we should scarce have known what it was.84

He defended two maxims here to the uttermost: his optimistic view that the proportion of good greatly surpassed evil in the universe; and that "good is given for its own sake, but evil never sent unless as

---

82 Plato, Timæus, Sec. 29a,e; pp. 17, 19.
84 Ibid., p. 360.
a means productive of some greater good."\textsuperscript{85} (2) His second answer was that some of the evil which we believe to exist is illusory. He did not affirm that all evil was illusion. His sense experience would not justify this as a fact. But he believed that we created some evil with our minds; unfavorable views of the world could be the product of "disordered imaginations"; even the "errors of nature" must be part illusion because God was "unspeakably happy" with the universe.\textsuperscript{86} At best, men had imperfect understanding of the creation. Besides, God had other creatures to attend to in other sections of the universe.

(3) Furthermore, Tucker had his own version of Leibniz' theodicy, that the world was created according to the best of all possible plans, therefore containing the correct amount of evil and good. Tucker asserted that the necessary evil was "confined to particular forms of Being, so that a few regions share the whole of it amongst them."\textsuperscript{87} He speculated further that evil was scattered very thin in all other regions of nature; in fact, he hoped that our present gross, corporeal state might be the only seat of evil in nature.\textsuperscript{88} As far as he was concerned God had exactly adjusted all events; but if there seemed to be inequities in personal or social life, the rewards and punishments of the after-life would redress any such wrongs.\textsuperscript{89} Ultimately however, evil was unexplainable:

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 361.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., pp. 357, 350.  
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p. 379.  
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., pp. 378f.  
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp. 355, 364.
... we must necessarily conclude there is some other attribute to moderate between goodness and omnipotence, to set the proper limits of imperfection ascertaining how near it may approach towards perfection, and what distance it must always keep therefrom, and to be the origin of evil.\(^90\)

Consequently, Tucker placed all the unresolved problems of theodicy beneath his favorite doctrine of Providence. \(^4\) This was his final comment to any objection that the world was not created in proper fashion. Tucker asserted both a general Providence and also variations which he called "disposing" and "interposing" Providence. He surmised that, if the First Cause knew how both matter and spirit would interact, then such a First Cause intended certain universal effects:

This choice and adjustment of the proper causes to work their destined effects, we call Providence: for as a man provides for his children by furnishing them with the education, portion, and other means, which may enable them to live a useful and happy life; . . . so whatever God designs to produce by the operation of second causes, he provides sufficient agents, gives them the powers, the impulses, and the motives, requisite exactly to answer his purpose.\(^91\)

He believed that no one could deny what he called Providence "respecting mankind in general," because arts, sciences, discoveries, and inventions all were bringing nations into closer association.\(^92\) But belief in only a general Providence was insufficient. He also claimed a particular Providence with a dual nature, as both a "disposing" and

\(^90\) Ibid., p. 362.  
\(^91\) Ibid., p. 521.  
\(^92\) Ibid., p. 537.
"interposing" agent. Previously he described God as both Creator and Governor; now likewise Providence had a dual character. "Disp¬
posing Providence" was parallel to God the Creator, while "Inter¬
posing Providence" corresponded to God as Governor. This dual
document was necessary, wrote Tucker, because certain "very pious
persons" believed in a God who watched continually over His works
and directed the life of every person.\(^93\) Therefore the idea of an
interposing Providence was needed. But Tucker claimed that all
"theists" agreed only upon a disposing Providence, in which God as
First Cause brought about the physical effects in the universe. At
any rate, he found in God's Providence the final resolution of the
paradox and problems of theodicy:

Our view of Providence must be partial and imperfect at
best, wherefore much of the wisdom of God will appear
foolishness to man; and so does wisdom always appear to
such as have not capacity to discern the justness of her
measures, nor the ends for which they were pursued; but
the more attentively we observe the luminous tracts, we
shall find them spread further and further into the dark
and exceptionable; and they will quickly open before us
an ample field of contemplation. For we may discover
wheel within wheel, trace an admirable connection between
many of them, discern an exact adjustment of them with
each other, and perceive one contrived to serve various
purposes.\(^94\)

A logical corollary to this doctrine was that he also expounded content¬
ment. If God's will were done, then we had better submit to Providence
and be content with our present lot.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., p. 525.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. 536.
Doctrine of Immortality

After grappling with the First Principles of natural theology, the definition of God, and the problem of theodicy, Tucker then turned to a question in which he demonstrated more originality. We are now referring to his doctrine of immortality, which is found in three chapters entitled "Hypotheses," "Vehicular State," and "Mundane Soul." (Chapters XX-XXII) These chapters go beyond Wollaston's conclusion. They attempt to give in some detail that which the light of nature could affirm about a future existence; then in a fourth and succeeding chapter, "The Vision," Tucker composed an allegory to give his hypotheses color and warmth.95

Tucker's methodology was similar to Plato's when considering the future: the latter gave a particular myth credibility by "making it explain facts, or what he [accepted] as facts, . . . bringing it, as far as possible, into conformity with the 'modern science' of his day."96 Plato used the myth to give ultimate meaning to current

95 Opinions vary as to how much credibility Tucker gave to "The Vision." On the one hand, a nineteenth century reviewer summed up the myth as follows: "This amusing fiction is strictly metaphysical . . . . It professes, indeed, as it behaves, to be nothing more than a conjecture. But the interest is made to arise, in a great part, from the plausibility of the reasons." "Analysis of Tucker's Vision," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. XXXIII, No. LXXIV, March, 1823, pp. 331f. On the other hand, we recall that Tucker himself wrote, "... I must confess myself fond enough to fancy these hypotheses not confined to bare possibility, nor without a degree or probability too. . . ." Tucker, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 674. Cf. Fyvie, Chap. VI, p. 232.

scientific conceptions, at the same time trying to keep them from being too fantastic; in the same manner Tucker used eighteenth century science for his analogy about a future life. He felt that the Ancients were not totally in error when they used "figure, allegory, fable and parable" for that purpose. But he eliminated the fables and parables. To him a valid "hypothesis" was only that which was a sort of continued allegory. Allegory differed from fables and parables. It would not have too many particulars, because such details gave the critics more grounds to disagree.97

Before writing his intended allegory, Tucker grounded it in current science. Chapter XXI, the "Vehicular State," contains his central idea for a future existence, which is his concept of the "vehicle." His version was similar to other seventeenth and eighteenth century writers, who theorized that the oceums or vehicle passed through three stages of existence.

The Hypothesis of the Animalcule: Tucker documented the first or earthly stage of the vehicle with the microscope studies of the Dutch scientist Anthony Leeuwenhoek. In 1674 Leeuwenhoek looked through his new microscope and discovered bacteria or microbes, to which he gave the name "animalcule."98 Tucker preferred that name to


Ralph Cudworth's and Henry More's term, the "terrestrial vehicle." 99 Tucker accepted Leeuwenhoek's observation that this animalcule was only the size of an atom. 100 Each person's soul resided in this atom-sized vehicle. For this reason, Tucker disagreed with Epicurus, who claimed that nature could not form a reasonable creature unless he were in human shape. The observations of Leeuwenhoek seemed to discount that theory. Tucker then theorized that these animalcules were part of the sperm in the reproduction process, so that they passed into the foetus, where one eventually took up residence in the "arched medulla encompassing the cavity of the ventricles" in the brain. 101 He took this supposition directly from the medical


100 "And the motions of these animalcules [was] . . . wonderful to see; and I judge that some of these little creatures were about a thousand times smaller than the smallest ones I have ever yet seen, upon the rind of cheese . . . and the like." Nicholson, op. cit., p. 17. Cf. Tucker, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 385.

101 Ibid., p. 389. Tucker quoted "section 574" of Boerhave's medical lectures. Hermann Boerhave (1688-1738), Dutch physician, spent his professional life at Leyden, where he was professor of practical medicine and chemistry. His eminent reputation was known throughout Europe, and he was primarily responsible for the modern method of medical instruction, which is based upon clinical teaching rather than scholastic disputation. "Through his pupils he was the founder of the Edinburgh school and through it of the best medical teaching in English-speaking countries." Charles Singer, "History of Medicine," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1954 edition), Vol. XV, p. 201. Cf. Vol. III, p. 776. Tucker also mentioned Stahl, the German physician, in the "Vision." Georg Ernst Stahl (1660-1734) expounded a medical philosophy
lectures of Boerhave on the foetus. Wollaston also had expounded
a similar doctrine in which he supposed that "this animated vehicle
[had] its abode in the brain, among the heads and beginnings of the
nerves."\textsuperscript{102} Actually Tucker was going no further than Wollaston or
Dr. David Hartley, who also alluded to the same theory.

\textbf{The Vehicular State:} In the second stage of existence, the
animalcule passed from its residence in the brain into the \textit{oxema}
of the vehicular state. Cudworth called this the "spirituous" and
More the "aerial" vehicle. Tucker preferred "Etherial" vehicle,
and inferred that it passed only into an \textit{Intermediate State} between
present life and its later existence in the Mundane Soul. Here
Tucker followed the Platonists in assuming that the soul was composed
of attenuated matter:

Therefore, by virtue of the privilege constantly claimed in
making an hypothesis, I may fairly assume, what nobody can
disprove, that the spirit, upon quitting her present mansion,
does not go out naked, nor entirely disengaged from matter,
but carries away with her an integument from among those
wherewith she was before invested. And I am far from being
singular in this notion, for many wiser men have assigned a
fine vehicle for the habitation of the spirit, after its
being divested of flesh and blood.\textsuperscript{103}

---

\textsuperscript{102} Wollaston, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 197. Cf. Henry More, \textit{op. cit.},
Bk. II, Chap. VII, Sec. 18, where the "fourth ventricle" of the brain
was named as the "chief seat of the perceiving soul."

\textsuperscript{103} Tucker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 384. Cf. \textit{ibid.}, Vol. II, pp. 219f.,
and Plato's "Phaedo," 113d.
He speculated that although the vehicle in this intermediate existence would be very small, nevertheless it would be tough and strong; its adaptability and changeability would be nearly beyond our present imagination. These vehicles would adapt much more than the organs and limbs of our present body. The means for such rapid and radical change would be certain "vehicular fibres" of the atom-sized body. Moreover, all of our senses would be heightened in the next state. In fact, the mind would give many of its commands directly to the vehicle, because no bodily parts would interfere. Tucker quoted Boerhave and Leeuwenhoek for this authority:

The great Boerhave assures us that the human foetus was once no greater than an ant, that the doctrine of animalcules is generally received among the moderns, that he has seen them himself, that his friend Leeuwenhoek has demonstrated them to be ten thousand times, and believes them ten million times less than a grain of sand. Who then can doubt that this ant and this animalcule were our very selves, or that that living principle, appearing to actuate the animalcule with great vigour and sprightliness, is the same perceptive individual which afterwards acts, and feels, and understands, in the full grown man?

Facility in conversation and rapid locomotion would be other characteristics of the vehicular state. In fact, that existence would be totally different from the present. Only our inner sensory, which was part of our nature before birth, would remain united with the soul after death. As we entered this life as a blank paper, so likewise our souls would enter the next existence: "since many learned divines admit an intermediate state . . . , I hope that what has been offered . . . will not

---

104 Ibid., p. 388. 105 Ibid., p. 389.
be counted heterodox." Although this vehicle or "rational soul" survived the present body, it would not necessarily live forever. Tucker theorized that individual vehicles grew and developed just as we do now. Eventually each soul became too large for its atom-sized vehicle. Then the vehicle would burst and release the spirit, which flew off naked and alone into yet another existence in the Mundane Soul.

The Mundane Soul: Tucker remembered that the doctrine of the World-Soul (he translated the original term as "Mundane Soul") went back to the Ionians. He likened the Mundane Soul to a universe filled with a spiritual ocean; as an ocean or sea was composed of unnumerable multitudes of water molecules, so the Mundane Soul consisted of multitudes of spiritual vehicles:

... and as the rivers continually discharge into the sea, so the vehicular people upon the disruption of their vehicles discharge and incorporate into that ocean of spirits making the mundane soul.107

Curiously, he contended only for the post-existence of vehicles because the doctrine of pre-existence had been "universally exploded." The space for this multitude of vehicles which were absorbed into the Mundane Soul was no problem. It was provided either as a result of the angels who fell from heaven or else by new space which was constantly created for them.108 Tucker made several other assumptions

106 Ibid., p. 384.  
107 Ibid., p. 402.  
108 Ibid., p. 403.
about the Mundane Soul; perceptions could be communicated from spirit to spirit; comparing with Cudworth's "plastic nature," all space not occupied by matter would contain Mundane Soul; the disembodied spirits of that state would be united in sentiment and action; the Mundane Soul was the agent of creation. Tucker felt that such a belief gave us an exalted concept of God himself. He concurred with the Ancients who viewed the Universal Soul as "immortal, unchangeable, completely intelligent, wise and happy."109

In other words, Tucker considered that the Mundane Soul was both a Creator and a Heaven: on the one hand, it was the necessary Secondary Cause between the First Cause and the present world. The Mundane Soul mediated motion and communicated perceptions from the First Cause to the universe.110 The "Universal Soul," as Tucker sometimes also called it, was always a perfect instrument of God. But the evil present in the universe taught the Universal Soul a lesson, "that he is not omnipotent, but under control of a higher power by whom that necessity was imposed."111 Yet the Universal Soul comprehended infinite goodness and therefore could accept the permission of evil by the First Cause. This was the first of the Mundane Soul's functions, as Creator; it was furthermore a heaven and probable ultimate goal beyond the Intermediate State.112 Tucker hoped that his reviving the World-Soul doctrine would not offend his countrymen.

109 Ibid., p. 414.
110 Ibid., pp. 415f.
111 Ibid., p. 416.
112 Ibid., pp. 416f.
At least in his own thinking, the Mundane Soul offered a way by which some of the most important Articles of the Church could be reinterpreted in the eighteenth century:

For one cannot well imagine a more intimate communion of saints than that above described: the exemption from evil implies a release from punishment, and full forgiveness of sins; the unchangeableness and immortality of this soul are but other words to express a life everlasting; our incorporation thereinto, whereby we shall have the whole frame of material nature to supply us with objects and serve as instruments for us to act with, may be reckoned a resurrection of the body; for though this body were existent before, yet we may be said to rise again upon our admission into it, by being restored to our perciption and animal functions. Indeed, the vehicular state is a resurrection too, therefore that may be reckoned the first, or resurrection into the kingdom of Christ, and this of the mundane state of the second, when he shall deliver up all to the Father. . . . Lastly, the occupation proposed for us there is the glorifying our Maker, which cannot better be performed than by steadily fulfilling his Will, constantly attending his services, carrying on his appointed courses, executing his laws of nature, and heartily concurring in his beloved work, the general good and happiness of his creatures. This seems a more acceptable praise than singing hymns and psalms to all eternity: for obedience is better than sacrifice, and to do the Will of God than the fat of lambs.113

D. "The Vision"

We now have arrived at the section of the Light of Nature Pursued in which Tucker summed up all his theorizing about the after-life in an interesting allegory. Chapter XXIII, "The Vision," is a

113 Ibid., pp. 419f. But compare Hume's view of the World-Soul: "If the universe bears a greater likeness to animal bodies and to vegetables, than to works of human art, it is more probable that its cause resembles the cause of the former than of the latter, and its origin ought rather to be ascribed to generation or vegetation, than to reason or design." Hume, op. cit., Vol. II, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," Pt. VII, p. 473.
popular treatment of the hypotheses in Chapters XX-XXII.

Tucker mentioned no specific literary resource for "The Vision." He knew Plato's dialogues, so we may assume that he read the "Myth of Er" near the end of the Republic, in which Er's soul was separated from his body for twelve days. There are many parallels between the "Myth of Er" and the "Vision." However, Tucker did recall the Timaeus' doctrine of the World-Soul. "The Vision" is similar to both the Timaeus and the "Myth of Er." Tucker took the liberty of remodeling the doctrine of the World-Soul "in some few particulars, which . . . may render it more intelligible . . . to our present purpose."\(^{114}\) Leslie Stephen described "The Vision" as "an amusingly characteristic passage" of Tucker's work.\(^{115}\) William Hazlitt, on the other hand, believed this allegory was Tucker's "boldest and most successful flight."

This is the most singular part of the work, and that by which our author's reputation as a man of genius must stand or fall.\(^{116}\) It is also significant that, when William Paley studied Tucker's works, he stripped off "The Vision." Apparently it was too fantastic for Paley. It represented the imaginative and poetical side of Tucker's nature rather than that of logical analysis and definition.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., p. 400.


Tucker's apocalypse takes the form of a dream at night; he attended a London party one evening in which the guests debated politics, history, necromancy, and the doctrines of certain philosophers with a very lively spirit. But the dinner party ended early, for the reason that some of the guests had a considerable distance to travel that night. Tucker returned home (he lived on Great James Street in London during the winter) and eventually fell asleep. A short time later, as if he were in a dream, something seemed to break in his head as in the stroke of death. Immediately he lost all sensation and perception; yet after being insensible for an unknown length of time he regained his "existence and perceptivity."

Since these faculties were useable, he tried to contact whatever reality surrounded him:

Immediately I seemed to stretch out a hundred arms all around me, but with no better success than a man who should thrust his arms out a window, while the bricklayers are sweeping down tile sherds, brickbats, and pieces of mortar, from the gutters above him: for I felt my limbs knocked about incessantly by a shower of hard balls, which ... turned me round by the violence of their strokes, as a chaff is whisked about in a whirlwind. ... I do not know what might have been the consequence if I had not presently perceived something hold me and draw me aside from the troublesome stream of bullets: but as some of them still struck against my fingers, I judged it prudent to draw in my arms and give myself to the management of my new protector. 117

After that shaking experience Tucker remained inert and quiet for awhile. But he was soon curious to know what saved him from such a buffeting. If he were in a new existence, he knew not how to contact

whatever was present. But upon experimenting he found, to his amaze-
ment, that he was able to form a set of eyes. Then he had his first
view of that new existence:

I then beheld a kind of sack or bag filled out like a bladder
with air, uniform everywhere excepting that from one place
there came out the arm which held me, and from another a
longish neck with a head upon it, having a meagre lank-jawed
face, very like the prints I have seen before some editions
of Locke’s works. It looked upon me steadfastly with a mild
and benign aspect, and the lips moved as in speaking.118

Tucker had made visual contact with his protector. He then discovered
that he could do more than form eyes; he also could create a set of
ears. He was very clumsy in the beginning in the new state. When he
wished to hear, his eyes disappeared and vice-versa. He mismanaged
his organs terribly. But finally he formed a set of ears with which
he heard the following:

Welcome, Ned Search, into the vehicular state: you are in the
hands of one who is not an utter stranger to you, though not
your contemporary: for know that I am John Locke, with whose
writings you are not unacquainted. . . . I have already given
you a seasonable relief when you were tossed about among
those flying balls yonder, and am ready to do further service
in any way you shall want. Consider you are but a baby just
born into this new world, and you may find it expedient to
put yourself under some tuition.119

He wanted to thank Locke, but then he discovered that he could
not form a mouth in the same manner as eyes or ears. Mouths were of
no use in the vehicular state: in their stead all vehicles were
covered with little fibres which bounced up and down, "in a kind of

118 Ibid., p. 423. 119 Ibid., pp. 423f.
net-work, consisting of various shaped meshes."120 These fibres were the instrument of communication. Tucker wanted to learn this art of speech. After many attempts and failures, Locke suddenly turned himself into a ferocious lion. His ward was so shocked that he forgot his clumsiness and screamed "0!" at the top of his voice. Then having discovered how to pronounce the vowel "0," his tutor rechanged his appearance and straightway taught him the other vowels and consonants. Actually, two languages were used in the Vehicular State, the "Sentient," and the "Vocal." New vehicles began with the latter. Later on in their spiritual life they mastered "Sentient" by one vehicle touching sides with another and thus permitting both to "feel" each other's thoughts.121 The latter way of conversing was much more accurate, but since it took a great amount of practice Locke did not take the time to teach it to Tucker.

Our subject was profoundly grateful for this help in adapting to his new existence. Actually, Locke mentioned that Tucker was his adopted son because Locke had left no issue on earth. Because of this new family relationship, Locke gave a short history of the lineage into which Tucker was now adopted: all philosophers in the Vehicular State were divided into two groups, the "Searches," and the "Knowals." The latter, the inferior branch, included the Sophists, Academics and the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages. Modern members which Locke mentioned were the Methodists and Freethinkers. "The Knowals," recalled Locke,

120 Ibid., p. 424.  
121 Ibid., p. 426.
... confident in their abilities, soon thought themselves masters of whatever they undertook: they scorned to examine their principles minutely as betraying a want of genius and penetration, so they commonly took up their tenets at haphazard, and then pleased themselves with showing how dextrously they could maintain them: more solicitous to gain the applause than to promote the benefit of mankind: assuming, peremptory, and overbearing, proving everything by demonstration, or expecting their word should be taken in lieu of demonstration: impatient of contradiction themselves and delighted to overthrow all who but seemed to differ from them.122

Both of them, of course, had little use for "Knowals." On the other hand, Locke praised the other branch of the family: he would have known immediately that Tucker was a "Search," because he had a pliable neck. By contrast "the Knowals have a wonderful stiffness in the vertebrae, ... and having most of them pretty loud voices they despise the rest of us as so many pygmies."123

Now that the two vehicles could communicate, the newcomer plied his tutor with many questions such as, "I found an easy passage from the other world. ... Pray, is the stroke of death always so gentle, or was I favoured in a particular manner?" Again, "How came I among that river of stones? What are they?"124 Locke answered that he was not actually dead; Tucker's body was still functioning on earth but his spirit was in the Vehicular State. The "stones" were streams of light corpuscles: in the Vehicular State spirits were but the size of an atom in comparison to earthly bodies. Therefore light on earth was an object of touch in the new existence.

Tucker was extremely pleased with his vehicular body. It was "a thousand times better than that great clumsy carcass I was stifled up in upon earth." He rejoiced in the fact that he had complete physical and moral command of it: he could form it into any shape which he imagined; but what was even better was that his Imagination, Passions and Desires were also perfectly controlled. However, his present visit to the Intermediate State was not permanent. It was a special journey, "in order to carry back an idea of this place and people to your countryman." The visit was part of Tucker's divine appointment, similar to Socrates' calling. At that very moment his body was sound and entire, asleep in his London residence; but his thought and sensation were in his present vehicle.

He also asked other questions early in his visit. Would Locke explain further his "theory of the blank paper"? He did, adding that the body given to each person at birth always became clogged with "terrene concretion":

Our vehicles, by lying so long enclosed in human bodies, receive a change in their texture from the continual action thereof, so that we come out diversely modified with different talents, natural parts and genius, according to the way of life we had followed before; we leave indeed all our old acquisitions behind, but bring with us a particular aptness to make new ones similar to those we possessed before. . . . As no man is perfectly virtuous, none arrives here without a mixture of terrene concretion, which proves very troublesome and a hindrance to his operations. 127

---

125 Ibid., p. 433.  
126 Ibid., p. 434.  
127 Ibid., p. 435.
Tucker was also puzzled about time in the Vehicular State. How was it measured? His teacher answered that time passed only by means of the succession of ideas. The Vehicular State had such an inexhaustible number of activities that vehicles never had a chance to get sleepy or bored. Tucker also wanted to know how long vehicles continued in the Intermediate State. Locke knew that their duration was "longevous, but not eternal"; their sole purpose in the Vehicular State was to purge away all the "terrene concretion" before they were "advanced" to the Mundane Soul, the "third world beyond." Ultimately all vehicles were absorbed into that state.

Now that all these introductory curiosities and answers were satisfied and the newcomer was somewhat habituated to the Intermediate State, he wanted very much to visit his wife. Locke and his ward set off to see her, travelling on the corpuscles of light at the "rate of forty thousand miles in a minute of Paul's clock." This is one of the most amusing scenes of the "Vision." As they travelled, Locke warned him that everyone in the Vehicular State was "Isangeloi"; therefore he had to be a complete gentleman in her presence. They arrived very shortly at a place where one vehicle was using a needle intently, removing the terrene concretion from another vehicle. When Locke spoke to her, Tucker immediately recognized his wife. Both were overjoyed with their meeting. They struck up a lively conversation in

---

128 Ibid., pp. 437f.
129 Ibid., p. 443.
the Vocal language. On hearing that her husband was going to visit her in the afterlife, Dorothy Tucker adopted the name "Euridice," after the Greek myth of Orpheus and Euridice. She reported attending lectures on science, nature, and philosophy, which were given by eminent Vehicular State teachers. So Euridice instructed her husband, whom she called "Orphy," on the attributes of God. On a more practical subject, she had received many reports about the earthly upbringing of her daughters "Serena" and "Sparkler." Of course, Tucker had taught them a number of academic subjects, but the problem of marriage was one on which he needed help. He needed "Riddy's" advice; he was much more at home in his library. After such tender conversation, Tucker's emotions began to overpower him, and forgetting that vehicular people were "Isangeloi," he attempted to hold Euridice's hand:

There came out a taper arm and pretty hand, having on one of the fingers the semblance of our wedding ring, that pledge of our plighted troth and seal of our union. I shot forth half a dozen eager arms to take hold of it: and now perhaps had eagerly grasped it so fast that nothing could have parted us without disruption of our vehicles, and perhaps the course of fate had been broken, had not that severe, relentless pedagogue, that hard-hearted old bachelor, Locke, who never knew the tenderness of love, been too nimble for me. For he darted out a great brawny arm and mutton fist, with which he caught up the skin of my vehicle, as one catches up a dog by the nape of his neck, and away we flew with incredible swiftness.130

His visit with his wife ended very abruptly, and Tucker was reproved for acting in such a human manner. When he had regained

130 Ibid., pp. 443-447.
control of his passions Locke had to leave him in order to send a message down to earth; Aulus Gellius, another Vehicle, had been sent down to Tucker's body to engrave his Vehicular State experience on his sensory: "for else when you awake you would think you had slept sound all night, without anything extraordinary happening to you."131 During the interval that Locke was absent, Tucker was seized by many horrible temptations and evil ideas: "resentment, cruelty, avarice, injustice, lewdness, debauchery, blasphemy, terror, shame, regret, and despair, poured upon my imagination, and pierced me to the very soul."132 When Locke returned they ceased, but Tucker was dazed by the experience. The reason was soon found: his evil imaginations had been in the Sentient language. They had been imparted to him when a great black-bottled spider, the vehicle of Caesare Borgia, had touched Tucker's vehicle. Locke then displaced the horrible thoughts with pure ones by applying his own vehicle to Tucker's.

After such an evil surprise in the Intermediate State our subject had another of his wishes granted. He was going to see several philosophers who were still in the Vehicular State. The first would be Plato. As he and Locke travelled along the rays of light they conversed about the fate of such "unhappy vehicles" as Caesare Borgia. Locke told him that they had to remain in the "regions of Darkness," in the caverns of the earth or the foggy atmosphere around them.

131 Ibid., p. 440.
132 Ibid., p. 448.
Rarely did one come up to the spot where Tucker encountered Caesare Borgia. The evil vehicles were exactly like all others, except that they had accumulated a great deal more "terrene concretion" during their earthly lives. They were infected so greatly that their desires all had turned into wants. Locke and all the other vehicles had tried to help them, but such "moral concretions" had to be discharged by the vehicles themselves. If they could not effect this, Locke lamented that "we are forced to abandon them to their wretched fate."\footnote{Ibid., p. 451. This is a paraphrase of the Platonic judgment, that only the incurables would be punished eternally. Cf. "Phaedo"; Stewart, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 110.} Would they suffer eternal misery? This question was still debated among the vehicular people. The Divines generally agreed that their misery would be eternal, but some of the Philosophers asserted they would be reinstated into mortal bodies again on earth.

The rest of the journey the two friends did not converse. Tucker was absorbed in seeing how the vehicles skated along the corpuscles which made up the light rays. He also got an excellent look at the vibrations of ether, and was much amused at being carried on Locke's back like a bone tied on a dog's tail.

Very soon they stopped in front of a vehicle engaged in profound meditation, Plato. Locke introduced his friend, and Tucker asked the philosopher for a lecture on love, so that he could "learn to love like a philosopher."\footnote{Ibid., p. 453. Cf. the "Symposium."} Plato granted the special request.
He started by describing the Thalassian and Uranian Venus' and their relationship to the Psyche: Psyche once was born in the garden of Self under the care of "gardener Selfish"; he coddled her desires and made her a chariot which was drawn by the two horses "Concupiscible" and "Irascible." But soon the garden of Self was too small to hold Psyche. Then the garden gate flew open and she sped forth into the wide world:

She finds an open champaign before her, and the passengers obliging to give her way. The horses gambol about without rule or guidance, for she knows not how to manage them, but looks to the gardener upon the foot board behind, who knows as little how to manage as she. He has gotten a basket of his wild fruits, with which he wantonly pelts the people on each side. They find them harsh to their taste, and some are hurt by their hardness. This makes them clamorous, upon which the horses are frightened, grow rampant and quickly overturn the car, dragging poor Psyche along until she is torn to pieces, unless some conductor luckily step in to her rescue.135

Fortunately, continued Plato, Psyche was rescued by the Thalassian or Sea-born Venus, who soon restrained Concupiscible and Irascible with the whip of Desire. Thalassian Venus was the first to show Psyche how to look a little beyond herself. However, she also was too tempestuous, too eager and interested in her own pleasure to consider the good of others. Consequently Psyche again was brought into imminent danger. But again she was rescued. The Uranian or Heaven-born Venus, who never refused aid to those who called on her, stepped into the car and showed Psyche how to handle the whip and reins

135 Ibid., pp. 453-456.
together. Urania purged Psyche with euphrasia and rue, instructing her "to follow good principally, and pleasure only when not interfering with the other." Only then did Psyche ride steadily through the country, in spite of terrors and apparitions which would have frightened others. Finally they arrived where Elpis, the second daughter of Jove, lowered a golden anchor from heaven and all three figures, Psyche, Thalassia and Urania, mounted up "into the blessed abodes." As "the divine Plato" was finishing his lecture, Tucker noticed the crowd which had gathered around. All were enchanted by Plato's poetic discourse. But one vehicle in the crowd particularly fascinated Tucker. As he looked him over he realized suddenly that he gazed upon none other than Socrates!

His nose was flat with wide open nostrils, his features large and hard, his whole face the plainest I ever set eyes upon; nevertheless there was such a sensible simplicity, such a good-natured humourousness, in his countenance that one could not help being prejudiced in his favour. Immediately Socrates and Tucker were complimenting each other. The Ancient philosopher was delighted that another Search had entered into the Vehicular State:

It is no wonder I am smitten when I see before me the Disp - play er of the Light of Nature, the hope of the Searches, the ripened fruit of our illustrious branch. For every age improves upon the former, and the sons successively grow wiser than the fathers. The divine Plato here has put finer

---

136 Ibid., p. 455.  
137 Ibid., p. 456.  
138 Ibid.
words into the mouth of Socrates than ever he could utter himself: your father Locke has refined upon the ideas of Plato; and you like another Achilles have proved yourself a better man than your father.¹³⁹

Such flattery embarrassed him. He did not know whether Socrates had his tongue in his cheek, whether he was truly a philosopher or an "errant sophist." But after the lecture by Plato they continued the same subject with a Socratic dialogue on love. Socrates soon led his friend into a dilemma from which Tucker begged to be extricated. "I can extricate nothing," answered Socrates; "I only practice my mother's trade of midwifery to bring your thoughts to birth; you must deliver them by your own efforts."¹⁴⁰ Then they changed the subject.

Tucker wanted to know more about Socrates' alleged Daemon:

Tucker: We were all willing to allow you as much light as human reason can give, but we did not think you pretended to revelations.

Socrates: Did you never hear that I had a Demon constantly attending me?

Tucker: Ay, but as we knew you were a joker, most of us thought you in jest. The very orthodox divines insist positively that you dealt with the Devil, that you died an idolater, having in your last moments directed the offering of a cock to Esculapius, that your virtues were so many shining sins; . . . Those who entertained the most favourable opinion of you, could never believe you in earnest, for none of us but would be frightened at the thought of having such an imp at his elbow.

Socrates: I am surprised you should be so much afraid of them. Are they not common among you?

Tucker: So uncommon I do not know anybody that ever saw one.


Socrates: Strange! It was the current persuasion among the Searches in my time, that Jove sent down his guardian Demon to every man to protect and warn him against mischief. Did you never hear these voices?

Tucker: Never myself; nor did I ever meet a man in his senses who said he had. I know a madman who sees and hears them too frequently.141

Later on Tucker admitted that he heard an intimation similar to that which Socrates described. But he was still puzzled: how could you know which whisper was from the Daemon? "It seems to speak to me in a different manner from what it used to you."142 They agreed that the Daemon never impelled anyone to action; it could only dissuade. Then Socrates recommended that Tucker take any other curiosities over to the "Heaven-born Teacher," Pythagoras. His Daemon also agreed:

Socrates: What says the still voice?

Tucker: Something, I cannot tell what.

Socrates: Cannot you tell whether it says Forbear?

Tucker: No, that is not the word, I am sure: nor can I make out any other.

Socrates: Shall I try my Demon? They all speak the same language, though they are not equally heard by everybody. Oh! now I have it. . . .

Tucker: What does he mean then by Listen?

Socrates: That you should not pick up everything delivered, but listen carefully to himself in case he should whisper the word Offence.

Tucker: I'll do as well as I can, but sometimes my ears are a little dinny. Oh! now I hear the loud voice again urging me to go this minute.

Socrates: What says the other?

Tucker: He is quite silent.

---

141 Ibid., p. 459.  
142 Ibid., p. 460.
Socrates: So is mine; therefore get ye gone, there is no time to lose.

With such abrupt advice from Socrates, Tucker, Locke and Plato set off again over the light rays to hear a lecture by Pythagoras. He was found usually out in the inter-mundane spaces where he could hear in full-concert the music of the spheres. As they travelled, Locke and Plato debated the latter's doctrine of Ideas. Their conversation was far from the polemic usually heard in eighteenth century England. Both agreed that this matter was still beyond their comprehension. Quickly they arrived where Pythagoras was scheduled to give his lecture. The venerable father of philosophy had a grave appearance as he dictated his precepts to the gathered crowd with all the authority of a magistrate. Plato spoke to Timaeus who in turn whispered to Pythagoras, that a special guest was present from earth who wished to hear a lecture. Pythagoras nodded and with a faint smile began a special lecture:

Adore the sacred Quaternion: the Quaternion containeth under it One, Two, and Three: but One, Two, Three, and Four compose Ten, and from Tens are all higher numbers produced. The Quaternion Four alone is One and uncompounded. One had no father, but One produced numbers and numbers are all things. One is unchangeable, but numbers generate numbers, they fluctuate and migrate into one another: yet they perish not, neither was there a time when they were not. . . .

Revere the Oath. For the Oath cometh from One, and bindeth all things: it cannot be broken, neither is it good that it should be broken.

143 Ibid., p. 461.
Stand firm upon the golden thigh: let that be thy support: nevertheless use also the thigh of flesh when thou goest forth among men. . . .

Worship the immortal Gods according to the rights of thy country: for the same Gods made the wise and the ignorant, and thou thyself, if thou hast a thigh of gold, hast also another of flesh, neither livest thou for thyself, nor by thyself. 144

When Pythagoras concluded this esoteric lecture, the crowd stood frozen, with mouths agape, "in a kind of stupid astonishment." 145

When the friends had recovered somewhat from the flow of words, Locke asked his pupil if he had been enlightened. Tucker felt that most of the lecture passed him by. Because of this, Plato and Timaeus had another conference with Pythagoras and asked him to lecture again and explain the first address. Pythagoras was not offended, but spoke on the names of God, the Mundane Soul, animalcules, the soul's existence and journey through matter, evil, and on the worship of the immortal gods. Immediately upon completing the second lecture the speaker withdrew into his vehicle and there was nothing for the audience to do but to leave. Tucker heard his Daemon whisper "Offense" two or three times during the lectures. Nevertheless, their whole content was communicated down to the earth. He would have to examine the offensive doctrines later at his leisure.

Having heard the great Pythagoras, Tucker then wondered if he could meet any of the Apostles. Locke regretted that such a meeting was impossible because they had been "advanced" long ago to the

---

144 Ibid., pp. 462f. 145 Ibid., p. 463.
Mundane Soul. St. Paul had been the last of that group to be released from the Intermediate State. Plato remembered him well:

He had great knowledge, but no very happy facility in expressing himself; so though he was fond of disputing among us, we were very little edified, for he talked in a language peculiar to himself; till we put him in mind of his own rule, Become all things to all men, if by any means thou mayst gain some; he then began to conform himself to our ideas and figures, and when we could understand him we learned a great deal from him. . . . His education at the feet of Gamaliel led him, and the general taste of his countrymen obliged him, to deal in far-fetched, extravagant figures, which, as that taste subsided, lost all resemblance with the things signified, but were understood literally, thereby leading men quite wide of his meaning, involving them in useless subtleties, inextricable difficulties, and endless disputes. If he had stayed among us till my brother Locke here came up, he would certainly have been a great favourite with him.146

St. Paul's favorite doctrine was "Pistis," which remained below on earth to help mortal Psyche. He regretted that many persons had replaced Pistis with a counterfeit, "Pseudo-Pistis"; the latter was a most furious passion which completely misguided men by its arbitrary commands and fear and terror, whereas the genuine Pistis used fear only as a beginning for wisdom. Many "modern Methodists" quoted St. Paul to justify themselves, saying that if a person believed himself one of the elect, "it is not a farthing what his morals are."147 But the Apostle would have said "Thou fool, knowest thou not that faith is manifested by works, as the tree by its fruit?"148

146 Ibid., pp. 468f.
147 Ibid., p. 469.
148 Ibid.
Locke added that St. Paul's description of the Uranian Venus had been a long-time favorite of Socrates, that is, Chapter Thirteen of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Tucker's visit so far in the Vehicular State was beyond his greatest hopes. He had visited with his wife and with many of the Ancients. He wondered then if he could see some of the famous modern inhabitants of the Intermediate State. Many were busy visiting the regions round about; but Tucker was not disappointed. He was particularly anxious to find the famous German professor, Dr. Stahl. Locke patiently explained that Stahl was very temperamental, quite impossible to live with, but if Tucker insisted he would take him over for a short conversation. Of course, the worst that could be expected happened: Tucker offended the celebrated scientist and the two had no choice but to withdraw. Locke was curious to know what Tucker would have asked the learned physician:

That part ... relating to the formation of the foetus . . . Perhaps it might furnish . . . an argument from analogy . . . that our conduct upon earth may naturally have an effect upon our condition afterwards. For if it could be made to appear by the labours of an eminent physician . . . that our terrestrial happiness is affected by our behaviour in the uterine state, a probable inference might be drawn from thence, that all the several forms of Being we pass through are by the laws of nature made dependent upon one another, and each of them preparatory to the next.149

Because their interview had failed, Locke went over Stahl's experimental results in the Vocal language, carefully enumerating the theory of

149 Ibid., p. 476.
animalcules, reproduction, heredity, and the (supposed) effect of the mother's imagination on the foetus. Suddenly Locke summed up with a grave lecture on morality and theology. Tucker stood amazed at the sudden change of topic, but soon discovered why this was so. He was to be "advanced" immediately to the third state, the Mundane Soul. Many vehicles congratulated him on his good fortune: "in a few minutes my vehicle burst, and I became instantly absorbed into the Mundane Soul." 150

Again, this existence was totally different from the Intermediate State or earthly life. He soon noted that he had not been translated into another species; he had been restored to his real self:

I had perfect command of my limbs, and their motions were familiar to me; I had that knowledge and judgment which is the result of experience. My body was immense yet I could manage it without trouble, my understanding extensive yet without confusion or perplexity: for the material Universe was my body, the several systems my limbs, the subtile fluids my circulating juices, and the face of nature my sensory. In that sensory I discerned all science and wisdom to direct me in the application of my powers which were vigorous and mighty, extending to every member and fibre of my vast composition. . . . I rolled the bulky planets in their courses, and held them down to their orbits by my strong attraction. . . . I beheld the affairs of men, discerned all their springs of action, and knew how to set both them and the courses of events, so as to guide the wheels of fortune with unerring certainty. 151

Here Tucker discovered that all the good attributes of his soul had been perfected. His constant motive was the good; he was happy beyond

150 Ibid., p. 482. 151 Ibid., pp. 482f.
all human expression; yet with all that power and privilege he had no desire to abuse them. He was now united with a great multitude of souls in the final existence. Each one had the same discernment, apprehension and purpose: the thought and action of each was the thought and action of the whole Mundane Soul. "As we had but one mind and one Will, everything happened according to that Will. . . ." But neither the individual soul nor the collective thought they were God. The Mundane Soul still performed as a Platonic Demiurge:

For though we could move and range the particles of matter as we pleased, we were sensible that we did not create them, but they owed their existence, their solidity, their mobility, and other primary qualities to a higher Power.  

The Mundane Soul was the artificer, but not the creator, of physical nature.

In this section of "The Vision" Tucker gave an interesting account of the "plastic nature" of the Mundane Soul. This doctrine was very important in such Cambridge Platonists as Henry More and Ralph Cudworth in the seventeenth century. Tucker has popularized Cudworth's plastic nature hypothesis in this section; it gave a convenient explanation of the providence of God:

With our plastic virtue we worked upon the multitude of habitable globes rolling round their appointed centres through the fields of ether: we clothed their surfaces with the green herb, the flowery shrub, and tree yielding fruit; caused them to produce fossils and minerals below, dews and vapours and benign influences above. We wove the little

152 Ibid., p. 483.  
153 Ibid.
fibres of vegetables in curious textures, sorted them into a thousand various species, and fitted them for a thousand different uses. . . . We guided the sensitive tribes by instinct, directing them unerringly to the necessary means of their preservation and increase, and to answer the purposes they were designed for with regard to other creatures . . . . The proper station was marked out to every creature, from when it could not be spared without detriment to the whole. . . . Thus by directions issued from above, and our faithful ministry thereof, it was brought to pass that all things, animate and inanimate, co-operated in displaying the wisdom and goodness of that Power which first ordained their motions. 154

As Tucker further participated in the Mundane Soul he learned that it was also the agent by which supernatural events were mediated to earth.

But he did not go into detail here:

Upon some extraordinary command received, now of us were found ready at hand to throw the particles of matter into various forms and appearances for producing any supernatural effect. But whether we act ordinarily or extra-ordinarily, we do both invariably according to the general plan assigned or occasional decree issued. 155

Therefore all events, even "miracles," were within the plan of Providence. No human prayers would alter the purpose of the Mundane Soul unless the First Cause so willed it.

After Tucker had participated in the enormous events of the Mundane Soul, he was returned to his vehicle in the Intermediate State. But he had one final and unforgettable experience in the Mundane Soul: he was recreated as a man and then taken by an Angel to the boundary of the universe. In that "illusion" (he did not call this portion of the story an allegory) the Angel gave him the power to create

---

154 Ibid., pp. 485f.  
155 Ibid., p. 486.
space and time. But it was not in the nature of things for space
and time to be void of worlds. Consequently, Tucker received more
power to create worlds and persons from matter. He was then given
even further illumination to distribute the exact quantity of evil
in that created world. But he was unable to dispense it correctly
among people of every station of life. As he hesitated, the half-
formed world dissolved before his very eyes. His illuminating
powers were taken from him and the Angel addressed him in a stern
voice:

Hear, O Man, and remember. This is the lesson thou art to
learn from all that has passed in thy sight. Thou couldst
not create a world even though thou hadst almighty power
and infinite wisdom to assist thee: for power and wisdom
do not suffice for the work of creation. Power performs
nothing without wisdom to direct it, nor does wisdom
direct without goodness to move it: goodness may permit,
but will not produce evil, and wisdom is not herself
without pre-existent ideas to contemplate. Yet there was
nothing prior, nothing external to God, which might
exhibit ideas, but they were suggested by his own pure
act precedent to themselves and to the wisdom they
generated. . . . The necessity of evil compelleth not
the Lord to admit it, for necessity bindeth him not, but
his decrees make necessity. . . . He establisheth the
nature of things to be an unalterable rule for his own
proceedings, and determineth what shall be absolutely
impossible, setting bounds as it were to his own
Omnipotence. 156

When the Angel completed this sermon he escorted him back to the Inter-
mediate State and injected him again into his vehicle. The residents
marvelled that he returned. They importuned Tucker to describe the
next existence, but he could not. He had no recollection of the

156 Ibid., p. 489.
Mundane Soul because the whole experience had been communicated to his body on earth. He had been gone for a whole week of Intermediate State time.

Mentioning that subject reminded Locke that they would soon have to leave for earth. Daybreak was very near in the British Isles. Tucker would have liked to remain, but his daughters needed his guidance in earthly matters. Before the return journey Tucker was taken, not to the rivers of forgetfulness, but to the "ambrosial streams." A sip of ambrosia would fortify him for his return trip. Locke and Tucker then left the Intermediate State; passing through a section of the shadowy cone of night where they heard the howling and shrieks of the "unhappy vehicles" vexing one another, they soon arrived at the latter's London house. When they had entered in they became fascinated with a burning candle which the maid had lighted. It looked like a "prodigious torrent rushing directly upwards in circling eddies with a tremulous motion." Locke invited his pupil to leap into the flame with him. They suffered no harm, but were only jostled about because of the particles of heat and light. After this little experiment Tucker had to return to his earthly body. The two cast themselves into Leeuwenhoek's animalcules and travelled up into the brain's anterior ventricles, where Locke took leave of his friend. He departed with this final advice to Tucker:

Frithee! . . . no words. Reverence the Oath, for it is the Oath of Jove. Be ready upon call either to enter the

---

157 Ibid., p. 491.
body or to quit the body. In matters put within thine own
power, use thy judgment and discretion: but when thou seest
whither the laws of nature or dispensations of Providence
point, revere, resign, and obey.  

Shortly afterwards Tucker awoke. He started straight up in
his bed, full of all these memories and wonders of the night before.
He tried to compose himself that morning; but finding his head too
confused, he spent his time idling in the coffee-houses and at
auctions. Every now and then he would mutter some word such as
"vehicles," "Caesare Borgia," "riding on rays," or "Euridice."
But because he attracted strange attention he had to be more careful
about his comments. He returned to his study later (so he wrote)
and then committed to paper everything which Gellius had engraved
on his sensory:

I thought it very obliging in my kind patron to lead me
through a variety of entertaining as well as instructive
scenes: no doubt he had the latter principally in view,
but interspersed the former to make the others the more
palatable to my compatriots, who it must be owned are
too squeamish in their taste, and fonder of the tooth-
some than the wholesome.  

E. Summary and Criticism

Now that we have surveyed Abraham Tucker's extensive writings
on natural theology and his "Vision," let us conclude with several
observations and criticisms. We shall comment upon four main themes
which have emerged in the chapter: (a) Tucker's similarity to Deism;
(b) his use of the argument from design and his consideration of God

\[158 \text{ Ibid., p. 493.}\]

\[159 \text{ Ibid., p. 494.}\]
as the First Cause; (c) his solution to the problem of evil; and
(d) his doctrine of immortality.

(1) We have noticed several times that Abraham Tucker adopted
both the Deistic methodology and theology. He was thoroughly committed
to the re-examination of the central feature of the Deistic contro-
versy, which was the sufficiency of reason. Tucker intended to "try
what may be done" by the exercise of reason. Moreover, he also
accepted the Deistic metaphysics which in turn had been shaped by
the Newtonian science, the doctrine that God had created the world
as a great machine and, having set it running, had retired to control
the universe thenceforth by secondary causes. As we shall see again
in the next chapter, Tucker labored long and hard to harmonize
Christian doctrine with this Deistic metaphysics. He encountered
great difficulty in hewing out a via media between Deism and Christian
document. But we must criticize his program because he labored from
a false premise. There was no theological or philosophical via media
between Deism and the Christian faith. The Deists claimed that
revelation could be dispensed with, whereas the Christians did not.
When Tucker assumed there was a middle ground, he did justice to
neither of them.

(2) A second objection to Tucker's natural theology is his
conception of God as the First Cause and his use of the argument
from design. If he had been aware of Hume he might have benefitted
from the latter's incomparably better arguments. Although the
Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion were published the year after
Tucker's death, Hume's Treatise, Enquiry, and other publications were available. Some of the passages in Tucker's work hint that he might have been familiar with Hume's famous essay "Of Miracles," but Tucker neither mentioned his name nor alluded to him.

As for Tucker's conception of God as the First Cause, Hume's rejoinder to this argument has been regarded as a classic. The thesis of the Dialogues is that experience by itself will not permit the inference of a First Cause. Early in the Dialogues he wrote:

Our ideas reach no further than our experience. We have no experience of divine attributes and operations. I need not conclude my syllogism. You can draw the inference yourself.\(^\text{160}\)

Hume then developed this passage in his dialogue between Philo, Cleanthes (who is like Tucker), and Demea. It is true, he wrote, that when a stone falls or when we experience the solidity of the earth "... the exact similarity of the cases gives us a perfect assurance of a similar event."\(^\text{161}\) But, Hume pointed out, if one should depart from this exact similarity of cases, then "... you diminish proportionally the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak analogy, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty."\(^\text{162}\)


\(^{161}\) Ibid., p. 433.

\(^{162}\) Ibid. Cf. ante, p. 217.
his reader: for one thing, the blood circulating within our bodies leaves no doubt that blood also circulates in other persons; but he pointed out that "... from its circulation in frogs and fishes, it is only a presumption, though a strong one, from analogy, that it takes place in men and other animals." Moreover, he countered Tucker's argument for the First Cause directly in the following passage. It is true that when we see a house we may conclude that it had a builder:

But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause. . . .

In the argument for God as First Cause, Tucker was accepting "custom" and "habit" instead of the testimony of his experience. As Norman Kemp Smith has pointed out, Hume repeatedly asserted that there could be no causal inference:

When the mind passes from an idea or impression of one object to that of another, it is the imagination which is operating, not the understanding. It is custom and not reason, habit and not evidence, which is at work. Custom or habit here operates in and through the laws of association; and it is upon this associative union of ideas that the 'inference' rests.

Moreover, Hume also criticized the argument from design and the First

---

163 Ibid. 164 Ibid., p. 434.
Cause because in them we were turning our ectypal analogies into archetypal analogies. Tucker did this consciously when he advised his readers to keep anthropomorphisms as pure as possible, so that the knowledge of ourselves could be heightened to the "utmost pitch" of our imagination and so make up our idea of God. Furthermore it has been pointed out often that this favorite eighteenth century argument actually was dependent upon religious faith, and not empiricism alone, for its cogency:

They were quite unconscious, for example, that in fact the cosmological argument is not really one which supplies theism with a scientific demonstration but, on the contrary, one which brings the religious idea of God to the rescue of mere naturalism at precisely the point where the latter inevitably falters. The fact that nature . . . is not and never can be self-explanatory . . . does not really prove that God exists, but our religious belief in God does enable us to give an intelligible account of the existence of nature. . . . Unconsciously, therefore, eighteenth-century philosophers drew freely upon the surviving traditions of Christian thought.

If these criticisms hold for Tucker's notion of the First Cause, then what may be said about his argument from design? He was also very fond of citing it. In both of these arguments Tucker re-introduced the notion of final causes which, in turn, tended to cut away his own metaphysical foundations. Repeatedly he claimed that we cannot have knowledge except by examining secondary causes. In affirming this he accepted the Baconian inductive and experimental methodology:

\footnote{166 I am indebted to Professor T. F. Torrance for this suggestion. Cf. ante, pp. 180ff.}

Modern natural science came into being as the result of a growing determination to banish purposive explanation from scientific procedure. Bacon and Descartes . . . are one in their attack on what they call final causes in physics . . . . This did not mean, however, that there are no final causes, but only that natural science has no business with them. It did not mean that there is no purpose in nature, but only that this purpose is not discoverable by empirical methods.168

But Tucker did not follow this counsel as strictly as did David Hume. In his enthusiasm for the Newtonian science he converted the inductive and experimental method into a universal method and so carried it beyond its own proper function. As a consequence of this, we have seen that Tucker tended to ignore God the Creator in favor of God the Governor. In the chapter which follows he will attempt to reduce Grace to Nature, thus again denying the Reformation distinction between them. On the other hand, Hume answered Tucker once more by saying that it was as easy to conceive of a world as self-existent and eternal as to assume an external First Cause. Hume further suggested that order might be as natural as chaos, so that Tucker's doctrine of God as Governor could be reduced to the principle of harmony and universal law.

(3) Tucker's working solution to the problem of evil, which also incorporates his theodicy and doctrine of providence, must also be scrutinized more closely. To sum up his extensive argumentation: Tucker claimed that since this was the best of all possible worlds,

God must have created some evil on purpose; that some good might result from this evil; that we failed to understand God and evil because of our disordered minds; and that above all God was providential. Let us look at his assumptions closely. In the first place, his argument is based wholly upon moral philosophy; but surely this whole question is a proper concern of the Christian religion which he professed. Tucker omitted completely the Christian doctrines of Creation and Redemption; that God in His grace chose to create a universe and world utterly distinct from Himself which was good; that sin was not created by God, but that sin and moral evil were the consequence of man's wilful disobedience to God, which engendered estrangement and the need for divine grace. Tucker had little patience either with the Bible or with Saint Paul. As we discovered in the "Vision," he preferred the opinions of Plato and Locke to those of the early Christian missionary. Tucker went on to argue that some other attribute was needed to arbitrate between God's goodness and His omnipotence; but this tended to release Tucker and other men from the personal responsibility for sin. We must suggest that what Tucker needed was not a new attribute for God but a new theology. Could he harmonize his claim that God created evil with the Christian doctrine that God in His grace created the world out of nothing and redeems man by His active grace? At least Tucker might have suggested the doctrine of Augustine of Hippo, that evil was the absence of good.

Tucker also tended to identify evil with error, that is, what
seemed evil was not truly evil when viewed as part of the greater whole; this was Alexander Pope's maxim of "All Discord, harmony not understood/ All partial evil, universal good." However, Tucker's main argument was that the world contained the proper amount of evil, and that what we must do is to submit to this providential arrangement by God. But this theory must be criticized for several reasons:

... it has a serious fault in regard to the amount and distribution of evil. That some evil is the condition of the highest good seems clear, but why should there be so much of it? Would not a more modest amount suffice? Moreover, the evil does not seem to be spread in such a way as to achieve the highest moral ends. Some people have too much suffering and some too little. And the theory seems to be most earnestly espoused by fairly comfortable people who point out to others how much worse their lives would be if they had less to combat.

Of course, this view of evil was denounced even in the eighteenth century. Perhaps the most outstanding satirization was Voltaire's Candide.

(4) Finally, let us comment upon Tucker's doctrine of immortality which he expounded in the "Vision." We notice immediately that he reverted to the seventeenth century interpretation of Greek cosmology as found in the Platonism of Cudworth, More, Burthogge, and others. The so-called scientific basis for his analogy was the animalcule, or spiritual vehicle, which was incarnated in the foetus


and then released into the Mundane Soul at the time of death. Two things may be observed here about his hypothesis. First, our altered views of anatomy and physiology immediately date the hypothesis. Few persons today would accept a theory which located the soul in a bacteria or protozoa. For this reason, Tucker's myth can have little more than historical value today. Secondly, Tucker felt that his analogy was more than a bare possibility, that is, his hypothesis was probable. But the question is, how probable? Hume again directly criticized this kind of analogical thinking, saying that such theories as Tucker cited had no basis in our experience. In his essay "On the Immortality of the Soul" he remarked:

The physical arguments from the analogy of nature are strong for the mortality of the soul; and are really the only philosophical arguments which ought to be admitted with regard to this question . . . . Nothing in this world is perpetual . . . . the world itself gives symptoms of frailty and dissolution. How contrary to analogy, therefore, to imagine that one single form, seeming the frailest of any . . . . is immortal and indissoluble? What theory is that! how lightly, not to say, how rashly entertained! . . . . By what arguments or analogies can we prove any state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no way resembles any that was ever seen? . . . . Some new species of logic is requisite . . . . and some new faculties of the mind. . . . 171

Therefore we conclude with the observation that, if Tucker intended to ground his faith "firmly upon Nature," then his effort was mostly unrewarded. We now accept his system only as another example of that eighteenth century natural theology which has passed into limbo.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: RIDDLE AND ENIGMA

In this chapter we intend to examine that which is the ultimate test of Abraham Tucker's philosophy, the synthesis of the Christian revelation with the light of nature. We recall again that in the Introduction to the Light of Nature Pursued Tucker wished to test the strength of reason, to make the best use of it which was in his power. After he had built up a substantial body of philosophic thought (seventy-three chapters) he faced the hard task of synthesis, of reconciling as much Christian theology as possible to his philosophy. He raised this specific question in "Religion" (Volume II, Chapter VII), which is the beginning of his revealed theology. Could Tucker bring together the doctrines of Orthodox Christianity and his philosophy? Would the Rationalist creed, that the necessary parts of religion were few and plain, hold together as he considered Anglican theology? On the other hand, could he give the Church an interpretation of Christian doctrine which would do justice to its faith? The following chapter attempts to discover how far he succeeded in synthesizing Christian doctrine and his philosophy.

It has been said that Abraham Tucker's revealed theology is "less valuable" than the earlier sections which deal with human nature and philosophy.¹ We believe this is true, but we hope to discover the

reasons for the claim. This chapter will reveal a most vulnerable facet of our subject's thought; and yet once again it will illustrate our central thesis, that in Tucker we find the strengths and weaknesses of eighteenth century rational theology. He expounded an extremely Latitudinarian theology. To Tucker's mind, and to many others in this period, the Christian faith was both a riddle (contradiction) and an enigma (full of ambiguity and obscurity).

One piece of external evidence that his revealed theology is less valuable is quite patent: one of Tucker's doctrines was not even published in the first edition of the Light of Nature Pursued. His exposition of the Prologue to St. John's gospel ("Word, or Logos," Chapter XXII) was omitted by his daughter because it was too unorthodox. But it is to the credit of his grandson, Sir. H. P. St. John Mildmay, that it was restored when the Light of Nature Pursued was published in toto. Even Tucker himself did not mention the chapter in his own conclusion.

Before we review his revealed theology, it is advisable for us to hold in mind that which Tucker was attempting. At the beginning of his chapter on "Religion" he warned his readers not to expect a complete and systematic treatment of theology. Rather, his aim was limited to developing a "Christian philosophy, or a rational Christianity"; for this reason he intended to investigate only the conformities of reason

and revelation. 3 After addressing those who believed either in reason or revelation he began to search out their common points:

Having now apologized with both parties for my attempt, I may hope for their candid reception of what I shall offer in the prosecution of it, and that they will believe me a well-wisher to both in all matters that do not tend to injure the other. As I have professed a strict neutrality, I shall not wittingly take part on either side, but make it my business to search for such points as may be agreed to consistently with both their principles; wishing I could bring them both to join under one banner, because conceiving more good might be done to mankind by their united efforts, than by their divisions. . . . 4

Tucker mentioned that in this area of Christian philosophy he was entering on to "slippery ground"!

A. An Outline of Revealed Theology

Now let us outline Abraham Tucker’s Christian theology under the three following headings: on "The Trinity, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ"; on "Salvation, Redemption and the Future Life"; and on "The Christian Scriptures." After that, we shall review a minor controversy over his theology which happened shortly after his death. Finally, we shall conclude the chapter with an estimate of that controversy and an appraisal of Tucker’s theological position.


The Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ

The Trinity, Source of Controversy:

This Church doctrine was a stumbling-block to eighteenth century theology. The Trinity was debated continually throughout this period in Great Britain. The individualistic approach which Tucker took toward Orthodox dogma had much precedent. In the previous century, for instance, such esteemed laymen as John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton had published private religious tracts which questioned the dogmatic authority of the Church. We shall mention just one outstanding instance here in the plethora of debate: in 1712 Dr. Samuel Clarke, who was greatly respected both for his metaphysical and his theological knowledge, hoped to quiet the Trinitarian debate with his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. His aim was simply to discover what the Bible said about the Trinity. He wanted to know if the Orthodox interpretation, as professed in the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-Nine Articles, was given clearly in the New Testament. He examined some 1,250 Biblical texts, including every one in the New Testament which had even the remotest bearing on the Trinity. He concluded that neither the Athanasian Creed was Scriptural, nor the Arian nor Socinian Christology. In effect, Clarke's exegesis accused all Orthodoxy of Sabellianism and indirectly supported the Unitarian position, that the Scriptures do not hold that Christ is consubstantial with the Father. Clarke affirmed the following about God the Father in proposition XLIII of the

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{5}}\] For Tucker's doctrine of God, see the previous chapter.
Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity:

Upon these grounds, absolutely supreme honour is due to the person of the Father singly, as being alone the supreme and original Author of all being and power. . . .6

As for the Second Person of the Trinity, Clarke further maintained (in proposition XXXIV) that

. . . whatever His metaphysical essence or substance be, and whatever divine greatness and dignity is ascribed to Him in Scripture; yet in this He is evidently subordinate to the Father, that He derives His being and attributes from the Father, and the Father nothing from Him.7

In addition, he contended that in the Scriptures not only the Son but also the Spirit was subordinate to the Father:

The Holy Spirit, whatever His metaphysical nature, essence, or substance be: and whatever divine power or dignity is ascribed to Him in Scripture, yet in this He is evidently subordinate to the Father, that He derives His being and powers from the Father, the Father nothing from Him. . . .8

Clarke's original good intentions worked out in the storm of opinion over the Trinity becoming even greater. Little good had been accomplished for Orthodoxy. In fact, Clarke was indicted by Convocation and silenced. In 1717 he declared that he would write no more on the Trinity. He did not surrender his position, but merely promised to keep silent from henceforth on the subject of the Trinity. But he stood firm: he asserted that a person either must "understand with his


7 Prop. XXXIV, p. 146.

8 Prop. XL, p. 147.
own understanding, and believe with his own, not another's faith," or else submit to the authority of the Church of Rome. The controversy became so acrimonious that the Blasphemy Bill was enacted in 1721 as a measure to silence critical debate. Later on, with the circulation of Deistic tracts and pamphlets, the Trinitarian controversy quieted down, only to be revived because of Unitarianism.

**Tucker's View of the Trinity:** We cannot determine to what extent Tucker was aware of all this debate over the Trinity. But he was with many when he declared that article the "most mysterious . . . of the Christian faith, the hardest of digestion to the reasoner, esteemed most sacred to the orthodox, and acknowledged incomprehensible by both. . .

Tucker, who as Clarke, affirmed the right of individualistic interpretation, hoped to use the "spirit of solid reason, and the spirit of grace, . . . a sincere desire of doing service, an unaffected humility," and "courage tempered with more than filial reverence" as his spiritual resources to bring out a proper view of the Trinity.

He wished to present a "rational construction" of this and other Orthodox doctrines. He had discovered that men had strong feelings for or against the Trinity, but he still hoped to remain a friend to all concerned. He could not approve Bishop Beveridge's dictum, "I believe because it is impossible"; rather his aim was to remove as much mystery as possible

---

9 Ibid., p. 132.


11 Ibid.
from the Trinity and revealed theology. 12

He began his exposition of the Trinity by asserting that it was a stumbling block to reasonable men; both the New Testament (I John 5:7, Authorized Version) and the first of the Thirty Nine Articles "impose upon us the belief of three being one, which is contrary to the clearest principles of our reason." 13 But numbers were the clearest and steadiest of our ideas. Consequently, this Article as stated was directly contrary to our reason. Tucker continued with a review of what the vulgar thought of the Trinity. He was dissatisfied with them; many were either Tri-theistic or Unitarian. 14 Most of them did not realize their heresy because, like the Papists, they merely took the Trinity on faith. But the main issue involved, he rightly affirmed, was not the unity of the Godhead. That was "clearly enough understood on both sides not to admit dispute." 15 No, as far as he could determine, theological differences appeared when scholars interpreted the word "Person." He wanted to avoid defining Person as a substance, because if it were understood in that manner the Trinity would be most assuredly

12 Ibid., p. 184. "In his tract On the Flesh of Christ [Tertullian] declares, 'The Son of God died: it is absolutely worthy of belief because it is absurd. And having been buried he rose again: it is certain because it is impossible.' . . . Certum est, quia impossible est (De carne Christi, 5). The particular words Credo quia absurdum often attributed to Tertullian are not his." Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), Vol. II, p. 16.


14 Ibid., p. 186.

15 Ibid., p. 187.
an enigma. Tucker asserted that "Person," "Trinity," and "Unity of substance" were not Scriptural expressions, but chosen on human authority to express the meaning of the Scriptures.\(^\text{16}\)

He made a short digression next to examine what he thought was Plato's trinity before giving his own "rational construction" of that Christian belief: Plato had used \textit{hypostasis} for "person." He also combined the three attributes of Goodness, Intelligence and Activity (\textit{agathon}, \textit{nous} and \textit{psyche}) into a unity. Tucker was impressed that the early Christians considered that "the Trinity was so rational a doctrine as to have been discovered by the human reason of Plato."\(^\text{17}\)

Yes, Plato had conceived of a trinity in unity by the light of nature; but his exposition was not satisfactory. The Christian Trinity was a better indication of the nature of God.

Tucker was more impressed by the possibilities in the Latin word \textit{Persona}. It had been adopted in the early Christian centuries by the Church Fathers. Tucker seems to have written in innocence, "we may presume the Latin fathers... chose a term whereunto \textit{Hypostasis} might be properly translated without losing anything of the

\[^{16}\] \textit{Ibid.}

\[^{17}\] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 188. Paul Shorey's comment on this passage is that Tucker "confounds Plato with neo-Platonism. ..."; he "actually quotes Plato as using words that do not occur anywhere in his writings." Paul Shorey, \textit{Platonism Ancient and Modern} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), p. 216. This is a passage which Tucker could have derived from Ralph Cudworth. Cf. Ralph Cudworth, \textit{The True and Intellectual System of the Universe} (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845), Vol. II, p. 340.
original used before . . . " He recalled that "persona"
originally meant a vizard used by Classical actors to represent certain
characters in a play. Tucker was certain that this Latin meaning was
more acceptable than the Greek *hypostasis*, because it was obvious that
everyone could act in several roles in everyday life and still be the
same individual:

... if he be invested with authority, he may still behave
familiarly and with freedom among his friends in his private
character, but always keep a distance and dignity when act-
ing in his character as magistrate, and may instruct his
family or intimates with what decorum and forms of respect
to appear before him in the exercises of his office. Our
laws consider a justice of the peace or a constable as
different persons in the execution of their authority, and
in their private dealings.\(^19\)

If it were possible to regard men this way, then why not God? If we
knew Him already as Creator and Governor by the light of nature, then
was it not conceivable to know Him through a revealed Trinity? If
this were so, then His Trinitarian nature would be as follows:

By these distinct manners of operation, God appears to act
in three characters, easily separable from one another in
our conception, but joining mutually in advancement of
general design, and executing the principal strokes in the
plan of Providence respecting the moral world. The Father
acted in the character of King or Governor, controlling the
courses of nature and actions of second causes by immediate
exertions of His power, and by his signs and wonders pre-
pared the minds of men for reception of the benefits
imparted from the other two. The Son acted in the character
of a co-agent or partner, not controlling the mental or
bodily powers of Jesus, but adding a force and vigour which
could not have been furnished by natural causes: supplied


what had been left deficient in the Plan of Providence, and rendered mankind capable of reaping advantage from the effusions of the holy Spirit. This last acts in the character of a friend and monitor, not working with the power and majesty of a monarch, nor dwelling inseparably with the mind of man, but imperceptibly throwing in assistance from time to time, as wanted, and thereby filling up the last lines in the divine plan.20

We see that Tucker maintained substantially the early Christian heresy of Sabellius and the Modalistic Monarchians. Sabellius also believed that God is one; that He was known by means of three operations or energies in this world, three "personae" which operated successively: God the Father acted first as the Creator and Governor of the universe; God the Son acted next as the Redeemer of mankind; and God the Holy Spirit acts even now as the Regenerator and Sanctifier of men. Actually, the Sabellian interpretation of the Trinity was widespread in the Established Church during the Age of Reason.

The Holy Spirit

We have now reviewed Tucker's economic doctrine of the Trinity, that the one God revealed Himself to the world by three modes; it is now in order to expound how the Third Person of the Trinity regenerates and sanctifies men.21

Tucker was one of many of his time who abhorred "enthusiasm," that form of religious belief which claimed that men could experience

20 Ibid., p. 193.

21 Tucker's Christology was the more controversial article, so we shall expound the Spirit first.
the Spirit directly in their lives. The Methodists and Quakers were particularly prominent in claiming the possession of the Spirit. But Tucker would have agreed thoroughly with Joseph Butler, the Bishop of Bristol, when the latter made his famous remark to John Wesley, "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelation and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing." But once again, the Orthodox faith was a riddle to Tucker: how could he acknowledge this "main doctrine of the Church that the Holy Ghost still operates on men," and yet avoid the Methodistic belief in the immediacy of the Spirit? His solution was ingenious: it was dangerous to believe that "divine interpositions" actually affected human beings. Those who so believed very often went to "wild lengths of superstition and enthusiasm," which debased the majesty of God, created spiritual pride of self, and also a "superlative contempt for their fellow creatures." These characteristics were not all; such spiritual extravagances also surpassed the boundaries of moderation. Why, even women were tempted toward immodesty because of enthusiasm. Therefore pious Christians could never be too much on their guard against this notion of the "immediate operations of the Holy Ghost." Therefore the Spirit was limited to indirect and


24 Ibid.
secondary methods. We must "remove the finger of God as far from us as possible" and yet not let Him go. The Spirit could initiate nothing in us, but only cooperated with our endeavors. Tucker mistakenly equated the grace of God with the Third Person of the Trinity; such grace was found in the "disposition and habit of the mind," and also "in the spontaneous workings of a habit." He illustrated his point by comparing God's grace with a summer shower falling on the parched Surrey countryside:

I would compare the effusion of grace to a plentiful shower in a dry summer: if you go out immediately you will see the turfs still russet, the leaves hanging lank, and the fruits wrinkled; but look again a day or two after, and everything appears lively, vigorous, and flourishing. Therefore, if a man, after long confinement to his bed by sickness, should, upon looking out at window, discover an unusual verdue, he may conclude that it has rained, not that it actually does rain: so if, after a season of thoughtlessness, you perceive your understanding on a sudden lively to discern, and your will vigorous to pursue heavenly things, you may orthodoxly conclude there has been an effusion, not that there is one now.26

In other words, Tucker believed the Holy Spirit was active only in this indirect and secondary manner. The Third Person of the Trinity did nothing more than "assist nature when she falls deficient; it never counteracts nor controls her."27

Jesus Christ, Man and Son of God

We are now approaching what are undoubtedly the knottiest

25 Ibid. 26 Ibid., p. 179.
27 Ibid., pp. 213f.
portions of Tucker's theology, in this and the next section. As he considered Jesus of Nazareth he was consistent with his interpretation of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit; here again he was faced with a numerical and logical contradiction. How could two entities be one? To claim that "God was changed into man, or man into God, or that both made one person in the modern philosophical sense of the word, is as flat a contradiction as that number two is number one." 

He began his argument by citing as a fact the unity of a person's soul and body; but this unity was not effected by converting spirit into body. No, it was rather the reverse, "by taking body into a participation of functions with spirit; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person." If our souls and bodies were united in this manner, then by the same token the body of Jesus of Nazareth was taken up into the Second Person of the Trinity. He was born a human being in Nazareth and later made divine by God the Father. Tucker used an Adoptionist Christology, but refrained from using any form of the word "to adopt"; Jesus' manhood was

... taken into God, that is, God being pleased perpetually to supply what was wanting in human nature, Jesus was united to the Son, which together became one Christ; whose whole conduct was of a piece throughout, running in one constant tenor and character, and his actions were those of the united agency. For all the acts of Jesus were acts of the Son, and the Son performed nothing but by the instrumentality of Jesus: as the spirit of man performs nothing but by the instrumentality of his bodily powers.

---

28 Ibid., p. 194. 29 Ibid. 30 Ibid.
No ordinary man could have acted so constantly at the high level of morality which Jesus Christ demonstrated. But we should remember that such moral wisdom, innocence, and resistance to pain, terror and temptation "belonged solely to the Deity." Tucker followed Theodotus the elder, but he did not concur that Jesus was adopted by God at His baptism. On the contrary, the Son had invigorated the human soul of Jesus from early life; in fact, "the filial character accompanied the Soul of Jesus from his birth." Paul of Samosata also advocated this view. The Adoptionists and Tucker both emphasized the humanity of Jesus. He believed that the word "begotten" was only figurative: St. Luke proved Jesus was the Son of God by tracing His genealogy to Adam, who was the first "son of God"; but "in this sense we are all so too"; therefore Jesus was called only "by way of eminence the Son of God and Son of Man." Tucker next went into the reason why "the office of a Christ" (a Socinian expression) was needed on earth. Here he appealed to God's foreknowledge. God the Creator designedly left a "gap" in His providential plan, so that men would lapse into sin and require the office of Christ. Consequently, when Adam sinned the remainder of the Trinity was called forth: ". . . the second Persona was generated by the first, . . . and the third Persona proceeded from the other two."
The Question of the Logos: After Tucker expounded the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ, he attended to a "rational construction" of the Logos as the Son of God. But once again he faced a dilemma: if he maintained that God is One, and that the Spirit and Son were subordinate to the Father (being either "generated" or "proceeding" from the Father), then how would he interpret the Prologue of St. John's gospel? Here again Tucker's previous theological beliefs countered the meaning of the Logos passage:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. . . .

He confessed that he had not understood the passage "until recently." Bishop Thomas Sherlock's discourses on the subject had helped him to understand. In fact, the Bishop's interpretation of the Logos had prompted Tucker to write his own commentary. Here he also adopted Woolston's Biblical method; "the Word" appeared to be only a metaphorical device:

By the Word, I do not apprehend St. John understood a distinct substance, or agent, or person, the same with Jesus Christ, but employed it as a figurative term well known among the Jews and primitive Christians.

The Logos, of course, was not essentially a Hebrew term, but a Greek philosophical conception having many nuances of interpretation. Tucker side-stepped the purpose of the Prologue, which was to state

---

that the Logos was God, co-creator, and was incarnated in a person. Perhaps, he theorized, we might understand the passage better if we substituted "Charity" for "the Word"; then he made a tentative paraphrase using that as its basis. Or again, a better way to understand the passage was to consider the terms "Christ" and "Word" as a metonymy:

	Christ, therefore, being the centre and principal object in the plan, is called the Word, by a metonymy of a part for the whole; the same figure whereby we frequently speak of so many hands on board a ship, or of a general taking a town. By this light we may see how Christ is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God, which by the Greeks was counted foolishness.

But in all his surmising on the Logos, Tucker was certain that the Second Person of the Trinity (or Jesus as Logos) "could not in any sense be the agent or operator in creating." He already had assigned that operation to the Mundane Soul, which he equated with the First Person of the Trinity. Consequently, only by a "far-fetched metonymy of taking the whole for a part" could we state that the Logos came down from the Father, was made flesh and dwelt among us. Tucker attempted to clear up these opinions on the Logos by making a new translation of the Prologue. His paraphrase was "an attempt to guess how St. John would have expressed himself had he been writing now":

Prior to Adam was the Word; and the Word was ever before God: and it was the Word of his mouth. From the beginning God

---

37 Ibid., p. 465.  
38 Ibid., p. 466.  
39 Ibid., p. 467.  
40 Ibid.
departed not at any time from the Word which he had spoken. By it were all his dispensations made: and without it was not any of them made which was made. In it was life; for the light of the mind is life unto men. And the light brake forth upon men of dark understandings, and their darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for an evidence unto them, that he might bear evidence of the light. He was not the light himself, but came to point out the object wherein the light was to be found, that they might rest their dependence thereon. This was the true light, which is displayed to every man who cometh out into the world. He was in the world, and the world was fashioned by him, as a shoemaker fashioneth a shoe by the foot; and the world knew him not. He came unto his own peculiar people, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he means of becoming the children of God by the new birth; to such as confided in his name. Their birth was not by ceremonies, nor by descent in a peculiar lineage, nor by their human powers, but by special Providence of God. And the word was made visible in one of the chosen lineage, and dwelt among them, abounding in love and truth. And such of them as had eyes beheld his glory, the glory as of an only child in the sight of the father.

So far we see two emphases in Tucker's Christology: first, his practical interest in ethics and morals, which meant that he emphasized Jesus' humanity. Jesus was Tucker's example of perpetual virtue and "right action"; while on earth he effectively resisted all "pleasure, indulgence, desire, pain, terror, and other uneasiness." Jesus was very sympathetic to the human lot. "He has shown us how to perform the hardest service with the same tranquility that He did." Who knows, Tucker asked, but that Jesus of Nazareth "might actually be that Wise Man which the philosophers sought in vain, and which was nowhere else to be found but in imagination?"

---

41 Ibid., p. 470.  
42 Ibid., p. 213.  
43 Ibid., p. 216.  
44 Ibid., p. 213.
protected the unity of God; because the Son and Spirit were subordinated to the Father, Tucker consistently kept an Adoptionist view of Christ. Our present observation is, that in his "rational construction" of the Trinity and the Logos, that Tucker appears not only to have explained them, but to have explained them away.

**Salvation, Redemption, and the Future Life**

Under this heading we shall continue with Tucker's synthesis of certain themes which were common to philosophy and theology: his aim was to present the "orthodox scheme of Redemption" in such a way that it would be reconciled to the discoveries of reason. Christian redemption for Tucker was not salvation by grace through faith: rather he followed the pattern of Platonic ethics. Redemption was bringing our lower appetites and passions under the higher control of reason. To the extent that we accomplished this we would not fall into sin. Therefore to Tucker it made no difference whether a man was a good Christian or a good *kosmopolites*, citizen of the world. The only difference was the way he arrived at such a moral condition: the practical goals of philosophy and Christianity were the same.  

But salvation was an important emphasis in Christianity; Christ upon His cross was plainly "the grand stumbling-block of a suffering God."  

What was His place in the scheme of redemption?

---

Tucker affirmed that His sufferings operated for our benefit in several ways: first, as we mentioned above, He set an example for the whole human race; but by His suffering we were not redeemed in actuality. We were only "made redeemable." 47 Many of us were still captives to sin, but a key had been placed in our hands which would unlock our padlocked chains. 48 Furthermore, Jesus descended into Hell to save those in the Vehicular State who were outside the Christian faith, the "Mahometans, heathens, and savages" who had not heard of Him. 49 But perhaps faith in Christ was not the sole way to salvation; the Law of Moses, the law of nature, and the Christian gospel were in fact fulfilled in our practical love of God and neighbor. 50

Moreover, the death of Jesus effected a universal redemption. All men would be saved because He left disciples to carry out His work, and also descended into Hell to influence a few of those Vehicles for the better. St. Paul's expression in I Corinthians 15:22, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive," apparently intended that no man would perish. But even the "most glowing Christian charity" would not dare to be so optimistic. Paul must have meant the human race collectively, and not every individual. Tucker felt that universal redemption would be accomplished if Christianity were present in all races and cultures; but not every individual would have to be

48 Ibid., p. 216.
49 Ibid., p. 219.
50 Ibid., p. 226.
a believing Christian. Nevertheless, if every soul had to profess his faith in Christ to be saved, Tucker had given reasons elsewhere (in "Redemption") "tending to prove that those who have had no opportunities here, may find them in another life."\(^5\) St. Paul's preaching of the resurrection of the body disturbed him; in contrast, he held to the idea of the immortality of the soul. Although our souls would endure into the future, the inequalities of this life were still a vexation. Injustices would have to be corrected in the future life. His answer was a "doctrine of rotation" by which men would migrate again through matter and adjust the moral accounts; but only one more incarnation would be needed. The next migration would be through a "safe" state, because the present one was "hazardous."\(^5\) Moreover, future punishment could not be endless in duration; that view was only advocated in the Scriptures, but it was not "natural."\(^5\) Punishment would be only as long as was needed to reform a person's sin.

The Christian Scriptures

On Revelation and Reason

Another area which Tucker attempted to harmonize was the relationship of the Scriptures to philosophy. On the one hand, this involved the question of revelation and reason, to which we have

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 379.

\(^5\) Cf. ante, Chap. IV, p. 138.

referred above. But on the other hand Tucker had a further way to assimilate these two, his dual doctrine of knowledge, of "Esoteric" and "Exoteric" truth. Esoteric knowledge was essentially philosophical, consisting of the philosopher's opinion which was "rational, consistent, and wholesome." But such esoteric truth would not undermine or overthrow exoteric belief. Only this latter knowledge, exoteric truth, was within the mental grasp of the common people. In contrast to the former, it was practical, conventional and religious, while esoteric knowledge was theoretical, private, and philosophical. Tucker did not believe there was any contradiction in having one set of beliefs for the study and another for the world. In fact he committed himself as a philosopher to work between both kinds of belief. He was like a wholesale trader who dealt in great lots of ideas and had to break them down for exoteric and public use. Both exoteric Scriptural knowledge and esoteric philosophy assisted and cooperated with each other; both ultimately merged in the same goal. His double standard of knowledge, however, seems to be reversed: religious truth, which had been given by special Christian revelation, was the exoteric doctrine of the masses, while philosophical truth, which was discerned by the common light of nature, was the private possession of a few philosophers.

54 Cf. ante, Chap. II, pp. 52f.
55 Cf. Vol. II, Chap. II.
56 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 22.
57 Ibid., p. 23.
On Miracles

Tucker worked out his rational construction of the New Testament here to a skeptical conclusion. He neither affirmed the miracles with Butler nor denied them with Hume; but if miracles happened, frequently or rarely, they were assuredly predetermined by the Creator. He did not invoke the miracles of Jesus as the main external evidence to prove the Christian revelation true. We cannot tell how familiar he was with the controversies over prophecies and miracles, but they had left their mark on his thinking. After certain qualifications he came to the conclusion that miracles were "highly improbable," but they were not impossible. In fact, the interposition of God to rescue man from sin was not "repugnant to reason." However, after the incarnation of Jesus further interpositions were not needed. He concluded that no miracles had occurred for a thousand years, except for the actions of the Comforter:

... miracles were most plentifully employed in the earliest and ignorant ages, and have gradually decreased as men improved observation and knowledge. ... Prophecy ceased upon the coming of Christ, and some doctors hold all other supernatural powers died with the Apostles; at least, I may say, ... there has been nothing of miracle, prophecy, or revelation for the last thousand years, but we are left to the records of ancient days, and those subject to many disputations upon their authenticity. From this ... we may gather that mankind in successive generations stands less and less in need of signs and wonders. ... 58

58 Ibid., p. 175.
On Prophecy

This is the only debate on which Tucker did not comment at some length. He avoided a detailed examination of the prophecies because that was the task of Biblical scholars. He merely commented that, whatever the original basis of the multitude's belief that Biblical prophecies were fulfilled, whether because of craft, delusion, enthusiasm, or rational conviction, "all those springs of persuasion must be acknowledged to lie under the control of Providence." The only specific prophecy which he mentioned was the general "expectation of a Restorer" by the Jews:

... there wanted the designation of some particular person in whom that general expectance might centre, and this was effected by a comparison of the prophecies with events, and by signs and wonders believed to have been worked by Jesus, and those delegated under him.

Tucker actually favored the view of his contemporary, Soame Jenyns, who stressed the internal evidence of the Christian religion rather than external evidences of prophecy and miracle. "For this reason," Tucker wrote, "I apprehend it very material to take the internal evidence of Religion into account in judging of the external."

B. Controversy Over Abraham Tucker's Theology

In the year 1771 Abraham Tucker became blind. In spite of this affliction he completed writing the last chapters of the Light of

---

59 Ibid., p. 331.  
60 Ibid., p. 330.  
Nature Pursued by inventing a machine to guide his hand. His daughter, Judith, then transcribed his ungainly writing for the publishers. Apparently Judith suspected that some of her father's theological opinions did not agree with what she heard in the parish church on Sunday. When she supervised the posthumous publication of the first complete edition of the Light of Nature Pursued in 1778, she suppressed her father's chapter on the "Word, or Logos." She apparently feared that the paraphrases of St. John's Prologue were too far out of line to be accepted by the Church or the public. Tucker's theological views were well represented in other chapters; therefore the expunging of one passage would not make a great difference to the general theological position. But at a later date Tucker's grandson, Sr. H. P. St. John Mildmay, felt that his uncle's integrity demanded that the chapter be restored, so that the "Word, or Logos" appeared for the first time in the 1805 edition.

But a controversy over Tucker's theology developed even without the omitted chapter. Other sections contained enough theological fancies to lay open the country gentleman to attack. Consequently, his name appeared in 1783 in Theophilus Lindsey's An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship. ... 62 Lindsey used Tucker and other writers as advocates for Unitarianism. His thesis was that Tucker was "a complete Unitarian, but out of good

62 Theophilus Lindsey, An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship from the Reformation to Our Own Time (London: J. Johnson, 1783).
though mistaken motives, endeavoured to quiet himself and others, by giving a Unitarian sense to Trinitarian language." 

Theophilus Lindsey is one of the significant religious figures in the latter half of the eighteenth century in England. He was eminent in Unitarian circles, being a close friend of Joseph Priestly, Dr. Richard Price, and a relative of the anti-Subscriptionist, Francis Blackburne. About the year 1763 he became convinced that the Athanasian Creed was "unscriptural." He circulated a petition supporting Blackburne, which asked that the Established clergy be relieved from subscribing to the Articles of Religion. He proposed instead that they pledge their faith to the Scriptures alone. Over two hundred qualified persons signed the resolution (named the Feather's Tavern petition), but its passage was unsuccessful in the 1772 Parliament. For this reason and for conscience's sake, Lindsey gave up his living in Catterick, Yorkshire, went to London, and formed the first Unitarian chapel in Essex Street. In 1774 he published an Apology which contained his Unitarian creed, and then his major work in 1783. The latter portion of the Light of Nature Pursued had appeared five years previously. Those chapters, which contained Tucker's exposition of Anglican theology, were the target of Lindsey's Historical View.

---

Theophilus Lindsey's Criticism of Tucker

In the preface to *An Historical View*, Lindsey not only stated his apologetical purpose, but also how Tucker had aided Unitarianism. Lindsey complimented Tucker; he recognized the intellectual merit of the *Light of Nature Pursued* and printed a good number of extracts from it because it was a valuable work. He felt that Tucker should be more widely known. But after the compliments Lindsey set out to demonstrate that Tucker was a Unitarian who used the Trinitarian form of worship only because of custom.

Lindsey's argument is as follows: (1) in the first place, Tucker was akin to Unitarianism because he professed the Divine Unity:

He struck out a vast variety of knowledge and useful truths concerning the Great Creator, ... especially in inculcating that glorious truth, that all things flow from and are constituted by the will and appointment, and are under the absolute, unerring guidance and direction of a Being of boundless wisdom, power and goodness, the benevolent parent of the universe, and are tending to and will not fail in terminating in the virtue and final endless happiness of all his rational off-spring.64

Since Tucker actually held a Unitarian conception of God, it was regrettable, Lindsey continued, that he did not use his writing ability in "exploding" the unscriptural language of the Athanasian Creed. Instead Tucker was satisfied to give it merely a Unitarian flavor. But we should credit Tucker for having no worldly motives in his writing of the *Light of Nature*. But his fears were groundless if he thought he

---

would upset ordinary folk by showing them that early Christians had been mistaken about "the object of Christian worship." 65

(2) In the next place Lindsey agreed with Tucker that the vulgar did not understand the Trinity. Most of them accepted it totally as an article of faith:

But if the vulgar, great and small, were taught the knowledge of God, from the sacred writings only, there would be no need for any of this left-handed caution in instructing them; as the unity of God is no mystery there, but a plain doctrine. And surely it is high time to get rid of human articles grafted on the gospel, which thus, to say the least, endanger men's belief, as our author frankly owns, of the "Unity of God, that grand and fundamental article both of natural and revealed religion." 66

Furthermore, argued Lindsey, if all Christians followed Tucker's example and protected the Trinity, then that "would prove of most pernicious consequence, in preventing the reformation of these polytheistic doctrines...." 67 He alleged that Tucker's Trinity was nothing more than a description of one God having three different operations, the one Supreme Being acting in three different characters. Tucker would have been better off if, instead of "adopting the Platonic scholastic language of Divines, of three Persons constituting one God," he had discarded the terms entirely:

How much is it to be lamented that this worthy and sensible Christian should adopt such language ...., from which common readers will imagine our Lord to be something very different from what he himself thought him to be. For all that he intended by it was, that the man, Christ Jesus, had extraordinary powers and assistances from God, above all other

men. It would not be fair thus to pass sentence on our author's endeavours to exhibit the Athanasian Trinity in an Unitarian light, without giving him leave to make his apology for it in his own words. . . .

(3) Lindsey also went beyond specific proof texts to substantiate his argument that Tucker was Unitarian: he listed general parallels between the Light of Nature and Unitarian theology. He intended to prove that Tucker expounded the Scriptures "exactly in the same manner of Unitarians." His examples were, first, that "Jesus was the Son of God in the same way as the rest of mankind, though more highly favoured"; secondly, that "Christ wrought miracles by the same power as Moses, and in the same way"; in the third place he compared Tucker's account of St. John's Prologue with the Unitarian theology (Lindsey used the passage in Tucker's chapter on the "Trinity," not the omitted "Word, or Logos" passage); and his last parallel was "how Christ had glory with the Father before the world was."  

(4) To round out his analysis of Tucker, Lindsey shifted finally from theology to the country gentleman's practical ideas on public worship. He contended that another reason for Tucker being Unitarian was that he wished to liberalize worship, to have church services "as free from imperfection as they be made"; Lindsey cited one example from Tucker that

68 Ibid., pp. 416f.  
69 Ibid., p. 420.  
70 Ibid., pp. 420ff.
there should be no majesties nor highnesses, nor most noble patrons, reverends nor right reverends, nor by what style or title soever distinguished. . . . 71

We have now surveyed the important points of Lindsey's argument about Abraham Tucker.

Tucker's Defense by "A Layman"

Theophilus Lindsey's Unitarian apologetics caused considerable resentment and opposition, not only from friends of Abraham Tucker, but also from many other people. We have now arrived at the second part of this minor controversy, which we see is a lesser example of one of the theological enigmas of the eighteenth century. Shortly after the publication of Lindsey's Historical View, one of Tucker's friends circulated a pamphlet defending the latter's orthodoxy. 72

The anonymous author signed his letter "A Layman" (his name was Thomas Kynaston 73). He and others were shocked that anybody would think the Light of Nature was tainted with Unitarianism:

What, think you, was my surprize, when . . . I saw the words "Tucker, Abraham, Esquire, author of The Light of Nature Pursued, An Unitarian Christian."--I solemnly declare, Sir, I could not have been more amazed, if, on my happening to

71 Ibid., p. 434. Tucker's conception of worship is discussed in the next chapter.

72 A Layman, A Letter to Theophilus Lindsey, A.M., Occasioned by his Late Publication of An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship (London: T. Payne and Son, 1785).

cast my eye over a modern Tuckish publication . . . I had seen his venerable name enrolled amongst the disciples of Mohamet.74

Kynaston's answer to Lindsey is primarily on the basis of practical theology and experience, because he was not trained in divinity:

(1) first of all, Kynaston urged, Abraham Tucker had an open and frank attitude on every subject; he was truly without reservation. Many of his friends knew his views on the Trinity because he held nothing back from them. Furthermore, his daughter Judith could attest that her father "lived and died a Trinitarian."75 Then what about the charge that Tucker believed Christ was a mere man? Kynaston pointed out the fact that he worshipped in his parish church regularly and always received Holy Communion. In addition to these facts

He undertook as a magistrate to support the doctrine of the Trinity as by law established; and . . . he lived on the most benevolent terms with his idolatrous neighbors. . . .76 Was Tucker a disguised Unitarian who used the Trinitarian form of worship because it was convenient? Kynaston again pointed out that his friend was "not at all distinguishable" from any other Christian who worshipped in his own parish church.

(2) Tucker's orthodoxy could not only be vouched for by his friends and attested to by his habit of worship; Kynaston argued further that one of Tucker's main concerns in the Light of Nature was

74 Layman, op. cit., p. 67.
75 Ibid., p. 71.
76 Ibid., p. 75.
to remove theological contradiction and to commend the rationality of the Scriptures. Contradiction was a formidable enemy of religion, and Tucker expounded the Trinity to expose this foe:

... in which wisely declining any attempt to explain the mystery (for that is impossible), he delivers it from all that supposed absurdity, which disgusts the reasoning, and from all that supposed criminality, which affrights the ignorant believer; and shews the reader . . . that the doctrine taught by the Church . . . is capable of a rational construction. 77

Tucker knew that Jesus was more than a mere man: He was the proper object of our worship as well as God the Father. Kynaston asked Lindsey to re-read Tucker’s passage on "essential" and "remote" fundamentals; Tucker's version of the wager-argument was that "many things apparently of no moment in themselves may become highly valuable in their connections, and draw consequences of the utmost importance." 78 Kynaston concurred with Lindsey that his friend believed in the Divine Unity. Of course! Such knowledge marked believers off from the Heathen.

(3) Lindsey charged Tucker with using the "Platonic scholastic language of divines" to expound the Trinity: Kynaston was not familiar with that knowledge. But, he countered, Tucker's attempt to put a "rational construction" on the Trinity did not imply any "contradiction" in the latter; Tucker did not insinuate that the Orthodox account of the Trinity was polytheistic. He was not objecting in any way to that

77 Ibid., p. 82.
78 Ibid., p. 86.
doctrine as an article of faith. Furthermore, Kynaston could not
assent to any of the parallels which Lindsey had listed between
the *Light of Nature* and Unitarian theology. (a) As to the first
parallel, that Jesus was a son of God in the same way as the rest of
mankind only more highly favored, "what says the quotation itself
for or against the divinity of Christ?"79 He criticized Lindsey
for not making his own position clear as to whether Jesus existed
before He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Besides, Tucker had
warned his readers that they should not "depend on the literal con-
struction of figurative expressions."80 (b) The second so-called
parallel was Christ doing miracles by the same power and in the
same manner as Moses: but Tucker said we could hardly imagine Jesus
Christ needing any assistance to perform His office; "a strong proof,
by the way, what he (Tucker) thought of his divinity."81 (c) On the
third parallel, the interpretation of the Logos in St. John's gospel,
Kynaston replied:

I have always understood that this word was from the first
applied to Christ, as a title, or proper name; that it was
perfectly familiar to the Jews, and by them received in
that sense. If this be so, there seems to be an end of
the controversy, for St. John declares in no very inex-
plicable language, that the Logos or Word was made flesh
and dwelt amongst us and the Word was GOD.82

(4) After he had stood up to Lindsey in this fashion, Thomas
Kynaston closed his argument with several quotations which were

supposed to demonstrate Tucker's firm belief in the Orthodox Trinity: (a) Tucker spoke of all three Persons in the Godhead as "Divine"; he expounded what Kynaston also took to be the Orthodox doctrine, that "God united himself to one particular man, so as to become the same person with him from his birth."\(^{83}\) (b) He also understood the Athanasian Creed to describe God as the "almighty eternal, uncreated Being, acting in several capacities."\(^{84}\) (c) Tucker affirmed plainly that Jesus' divinity was an "essentially fundamental" belief.\(^{85}\) (d) In "Redemption," he described Jesus of Nazareth as "God as well as man," "God everlasting," and also mentioned the Christians as "His worshippers":

In many subsequent pages he tries to reconcile the orthodox scheme of the redemption with the discoveries of reason, and amongst many others, endeavors to answer the objection raised against it, from the circumstance of a God undergoing punishment.\(^{86}\)

(e) As a matter of fact, Tucker never did set philosophy over against revelation and faith. He repeated this assertion quite often. He was not primarily concerned with what he personally rejected or approved; his sole intention was "to examine the Christian doctrines, and penetrate if he [could] into the true spirit and design of them."\(^{87}\) Kynaston summed up his pamphlet against Lindsey with the following quotation from the Light of Nature:

---

\(^{83}\) Ibid., p. 114 [my italics].

\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 115 [my italics].

\(^{85}\) Ibid.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 118.

\(^{87}\) Ibid., p. 122.
... the Gospel operates to our benefit chiefly by its sacredness, and having the authority of a law established in heaven; which authority must depend upon our reverence to the Lawgiver. Wherefore ... there resided a Divinity within him; that his words were the words of God; and that his acts were the acts of God; in the performance whereof his human powers were only instrumental. This I take to be the fundamental article of the Christian faith. 88

C. Summary and Criticism

Summary of the Controversy

The above exchange of opinion seems to have moved between two foci: on the one hand, Theophilus Lindsey attempted to prove that Tucker logically held a Unitarian conception of God. The latter repeated often that the "grand fundamental of both natural and revealed religion" was, God is Unity, God is One. This belief, Lindsey asserted, led logically to Jesus being a "son of God" as other men, except that He was the more highly favored. Not only was Jesus subordinate to God the Father, but also the Holy Spirit was a secondary Being. Consequently, Lindsey concluded that Tucker's actual theology, if not his public profession of religion, was Unitarian.

On the other hand, Tucker was defended on the ground that he did not "explain" the Trinity, but only offered to his readers a "rational construction" of that doctrine and of Christian theology. His whole intent was to remove as much of the mystery as possible

88 Ibid., p. 123.
from the Trinity, and to get rid of "contradiction" in religious belief. Tucker commended the rationality of the Scriptures. Of course he believed Jesus was a man, but He was also divine.

**Estimate of the Controversy**

Our present estimate of this debate is that Theophilus Lindsey would be sustained, not only because of his better argument, but equally because of the very theological temperament of the time. As we have mentioned, a characteristic of this age was that it was constantly puzzled by the Trinity. Arian, Sabellian and Socinian Christologies were common even among Church leaders. In this respect, Tucker was little different from many others. He had followed the direction of Samuel Clarke and others, who stated substantially the same doctrine of God in which Tucker believed:

There is One Supreme Cause and Original of Things; One simple, uncompounded, undivided, intelligent Agent, or Person; who is the Author of all Being, and the Fountain of all Power. This is the Great Foundation of all Piety; the First Principle of Natural Religion, and every where supposed in the Scripture-Revelation. And the acknowledge¬ment of this Truth in one Faith and Worship, is the First and Great Commandment, both in the Old Testament and in the New. . . .

A second observation is to ask Thomas Kynaston to make more clear the difference between "explaining" the Trinity and giving it a "rational construction." If "explain" means "to make plain, to give an interpretation, to give the sense of or clarify something,"

---

89 Clarke, *op. cit.*, Pt. II, Prop. I.
then it appears that Tucker had that very purpose in mind when he interpreted the Trinity. His exposition is quite inadequate, but seen in another light it has a value. Once again he was contending for the right of private theological judgment. Perhaps Tucker also saw that the only other alternative to freedom of religious thought was submission to the theology of Rome.

In the third place, present-day interpretation of the Trinity has advanced considerably beyond the eighteenth century. Abraham Tucker totally confused the various kinds of Trinities which we consider today, the "Trinity of Experience," the "Trinity of Dogma," the "Trinity of Revelation," and the "Trinity of Speculation": further,

It is important to recognize at once that the Trinity is ... not a dogma of theology at all but a datum of experience; we need to hold fast to that recognition through all our discussion. Historically the TRINITY OF EXPERIENCE long antedated the TRINITY OF DOGMA. In Canon Hodgson's striking epigram: "Christianity began as a trinitarian religion with a unitarian theology."91

The Trinity of Speculation, on which Tucker labored, cannot possibly be understood without knowing something of the nature and development of the other Trinities. Not only that, but we also see that Tucker completely ignored certain New Testament passages which have direct or indirect bearing upon the Trinity: the Great Commandment and baptism formula in St. Matthew 28:19, and the Great Benediction

90 Cf. ante, pp. 237ff.

(II Corinthians 13:14) are nowhere considered in his exposition. Instead, he began with I John 5:7, a Scriptural gloss in the Authorized Version of the Bible which has not been found in any of the most ancient Greek manuscripts. New Testament authorities now say that passage was interpolated into certain fourth century Latin Vulgate texts and later translated into the Authorized Version.92

Finally, a comment is in order about Theophilus Lindsey: mere opposition to the Trinity as interpreted by the Athanasian Creed is insufficient for a theology which is supposedly based upon the Scriptures alone. He would have to come to grips with the New Testament emphasis on God's Spirit, with the 335 passages in which "Spirit," "the Spirit," or "the Holy Spirit" are mentioned. If he did place his faith in the Scriptures alone, as he claimed to, then he would have to find an adequate interpretation for the New Testament experience of the Holy Spirit.

An Estimate of Tucker's Christian Theology

To conclude this chapter: we have tried to develop the argument that Tucker's revealed theology is definitely heterodox. In his practice of the Christian religion he conformed to the Thirty Nine Articles, but in his study he was a thinker independent of the Church and the historic Creeds. We have seen that his Christology was Sabellian both in tendency and in fact. Instead of being a friend

to all, his Christian theology, if published earlier in the century, would have supported anti-Trinitarian sentiment. As for his idea of the Holy Spirit, he was in no sense near to the New Testament meaning: therein the Spirit is not limited nor only indirectly effective. Tucker's soteriology and conception of the future life are more related to Graeco-Roman than to Judaeo-Christian thought.

It seems inevitable that someone would challenge his opinions. His rationalisms could have satisfied few people besides himself. We conclude that he failed to reconcile the doctrines of Christian revelation with the light of nature, and that it would have been better to omit Christian doctrine entirely unless he had studied it with some thoroughness.
CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH AND RELIGION

Introduction

In this final chapter we intend to set forth and document Abraham Tucker's conception of the Established Church in mid-eighteenth century England and, following that, we will expound his reflections on personal religion. We shall expect to find him a conservative in regard to the external practices of religion, but Latitudinarian when interpreting the creeds of the Church. Occasionally we shall make comparisons and contrasts between Tucker and John Wesley. By this method we shall see how two contemporaries dealt with religious conditions in England in mid-eighteenth century.

A. Tucker's Association with the Church

Abraham Tucker was baptized and reared in the national Church and was exemplary in his regular attendance at the parish church in Dorking. On his occasional visits to London he attended Divine Services at St. Paul's Cathedral. He was decidedly opposed to an intellectual fashion of his day, the gentry's practice of disparaging the Christian faith. Tucker emulated Samuel Johnson in the respect that his personal faith was not embarrassing to him; in fact, he

---

1 The material in this chapter is to be found throughout "Divine Services," "Sacraments," "Discipline," and "Articles," Chapters XXII, XXIII-XXV, of the Light of Nature Pursued.
discussed theology seriously with his close friends. He regretted deeply the cynicism among his peers, and believed that servants and the vulgar often had a better appreciation of Christianity than their masters:

To our shame it must be owned, that the common people are better behaved in this respect than their superiors, for though they gather in knots in the church-yard to talk of their private affairs, of news, of fairs, of cricket-matches, yet when entered the doors, they throw aside all those amusements, and . . . preserve at least an appearance of seriousness: whereas the polite vulgar nod, and laugh, and giggle, and fidget to and fro, and whisper, or play antic tricks, and loll about with an affectation of carelessness, resolved to do wrong rather than not to assert their liberty of doing what they will: I suppose the difference is owing to the meaner sort standing in awe of the parson, . . . but the gentry esteeming themselves above him, stand in none.2

Not only did Tucker criticize the behavior of the gentry in Church, but also in the following description of grace at mealtime, he gives us his summary of a typical family's attitude toward religion:

Our forefathers used to regard [grace at meals] as a serious affair, but it is now growing obsolete. The master of a family, or parson, . . . mumbles over a few words which nobody can hear, as if he was ashamed of his office: the ladies adjust their dress, the citizen eyes the smoking viands, the beau pretends to rise from his chair just when it is over, the servants clatter the plates and glasses, everybody looks upon it as an antiquated ceremony still kept up . . . In polite assemblies, gentlemen of fortune and knowledge of the world scorn submitting to vulgar customs whereof they see no use.3

---


3 Ibid., p. 445.
Religious Leaders of His Lifetime

To our knowledge, Tucker was never intimately acquainted with any major religious figure. Yet it is in order to recall some of the men who affected the society in which he moved. John Potter (later Archbishop of Canterbury, 1737-1747), was the Bishop of Oxford while Tucker attended Merton College. When he studied at the Inner Temple, Edmund Gibson was Bishop of London and one of the most influential of English prelates. Tucker also attended the congregation at St. Paul's Cathedral while Thomas Sherlock was Bishop of London. Moreover, Abraham Tucker deprecated Methodism, but his life was never far from its influence. Both he and John Wesley were undergraduates at Oxford in the academic years 1721-1723; Wesley entered Christ Church eight months before Tucker went up to Merton. He knew Wesleyanism only by report because he left the University in 1724, nearly five years before Methodist activities were publicized. In 1726, at the time that Tucker purchased Betchworth Castle, Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College; in the year Tucker married (1735), Samuel Wesley died and his sons John and Charles sailed for Georgia as missionaries. One other connection between the two men is Wesley's itinerant preaching: during Tucker's life, Wesley preached in the open-air at Dorking in 1764, 1771, and 1772. On December 23 of the

---

4 Respectively, June, 1720, and February, 1721.

5 Wesley wrote in his Journal for Friday, January 13, 1764: "I went at noon into the street; and in a broad place, not far from
latter year, Wesley wrote that he "opened the new House at Dorking, and was much comforted both [that] and the following evening." 6

Finally, Tucker might have had some contact with Thomas Sherlock but he did not cultivate the close friendship of any religious leader.

Religious Conditions in England

To describe Abraham Tucker's religion is an easier task than to present an adequate picture of the Church of England in the eighteenth century. This history, especially during the reigns of George I and II, has been much disputed over in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Alfred Plummer, after considering this difficult question, has likened the early Georgian period to a black-and-white chessboard:

Is it of that chessboard character, which can be called either black or white, according to the squares to which we direct our attention? If the last view is nearest to the truth, it would seem as if, both at the time and during the century that followed, it was the black squares which attracted most attention. 7

The Roman Catholic historian, Father M. Piettie, also has pointed to the problem of generalizing about that period. It has been very easy

---

6 Ibid., p. 484.

to take sides: "... is there any half-way place—between stupid admiration and ... biting irony? ... Are not both sides right and both wrong?" Economists have pointed to the opening decades of the eighteenth century as a time of excellent farm prosperity, calling them the "golden age of the agricultural labourer." Yet Churchmen have excoriated the very same period as an age of degradation, giving as their examples the increase in gin-drinking and the general poverty of the common people. The Evangelical or Methodist historian tends to interpret the period as a journey from darkness to light, while the "genuine Anglican omits that period from the history of the Church altogether." But some historians now regard the early Georgian period as less demoralized than has been assumed. The nineteenth century historians have tended to overstate their case. For this reason the present view of the eighteenth century Church is that it was, of course, excessively indolent; but the age itself threw up many exceptions to any generalization which

---


might be made. "No age has a uniform texture, and the immense variety of the eighteenth century, a variety which verges on the paradoxical, is one of its attractions." 12

But regardless of changing historical judgment of the period, it is true that when contemporary Church leaders assessed the times, the Established Church seemed "to have reached its nadir." 13 As we have seen, Abraham Tucker also followed this pattern of deploring the low estate of religion, feeling that few leaders, if any, could rout the indolence. The population reacted to this lack of zeal by spurning the clergy who tended to be secular and worldly. Moreover, another common abuse was the practice of seeking pluralities in Church appointments. Obviously the cleric who held pluralities

---


13 John H. Overton and Fredric Relton, The English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the Eighteenth Century, 1714-1800 (London: Macmillan and Company, 1906), p. 7. Bowmer gives a convenient summary of conditions: "In less than two hundred years the Church of England had suffered at least four purges in which she had been deprived of her best servants, so that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the state of religion must have been most unsettled. The first of these purges was when the Roman Catholics were driven out under Henry VIII. Then during the Commonwealth, ... many who upheld high church principles were expelled. ... Finally, in 1688, when William and Mary ascended the throne, there were many who, ... having once sworn allegiance to James II 'his heirs and lawful successors,' withdrew from the Church. ... At any rate, at each stage, it was men of calibre and conviction who were lost to the Church, and the drain upon her vitality was sorely felt at a time when she might have been strong to combat the forces of lethargy and evil ... in the eighteenth century." John C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (London: Dacre Press: Adam and Charles Black Limited, 1951), p. 4.
could reside only in one location, and so his other parish was poorly-supervised. For this reason, non-residence and neglected parishes were common across the face of England. It has been observed that in the Georgian era, "there was a general lowering of the whole tone of the Church and of its moral and spiritual standard." We will now give a few examples of how the Bishops and clergy assessed the ethical life of the country. Joseph Butler, Bishop of Bristol, in the preface to his *Analogy of Religion*, wrote a well-known passage in 1736, which indicates one mood of the Church's leadership:

> It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is . . . discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if . . . this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remaineth, but to set it up as a principle of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. . . .

Butler also repeated this indictment of skepticism and irreligion in

---


1751. At about the same time in Ireland (1733) Bishop George Berkeley gave out his first charge to his colleagues. It is also similar in attitude to Butler's preface:

... it is but too visible that we live in an age wherein many are neither propitious to our order nor to the religion we profess—scoffers, walking after their own lusts, which St. Peter foretold should come in these last days.\textsuperscript{16}

Moreover, John Wesley felt there was a lack of unity and purpose within the Established Church; in 1755 he wrote to his brother Charles:

If ... all outward establishments are Babel, so is this establishment. Let it stand for me. I neither set it up, nor pull it down. But let you and I build up the city of God.\textsuperscript{17}

Another critic of the age, but not in the Establishment, was William Law, the notable non-Juror and mystic. He shook a few of the leaders of the country from their apathy and cynicism. In his powerful book, \textit{A Serious Call to A Devout and Holy Life}, he accused his countrymen of being Christians at public prayers only; he charged them with never intending to lead the life of holiness which the early Christian community possessed:

... the loosed part of the world generally make a jest of those that are devout, because they see their devotion goes no farther than their prayers, and that when they are over, they live no more unto God, till the time of prayer returns again. ... And if you will here stop, and ask yourselves, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through


\textsuperscript{17} Wesley, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. XII, p. 112.
ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it.\textsuperscript{18}

But priests and prelates were not the only ones who were alarmed, pessimistic, and cynical. An influential portion of the gentry in this period lampooned the Church, both in their writings and in their drawing-rooms. Lord Bolingbroke, who was loud in his public profession of orthodoxy, at the same time composed essays which, if published immediately, would have undercut the spiritual and temporal authority of the Church:

\begin{quote}
My parson grows impertinent when he would persuade me, like those in your church, to remain in voluntary blindness. . . Resignation to authority will appear more absurd, if we consider, that by it we run two risks instead of one. . . . Is the divine, is the philosopher, infallible? We shall not mean to deceive ourselves most certainly, but the divine, or the philosopher, may intend to deceive us: he may find his account in it, and deceit may be his trade.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

In fact, as we survey the early Georgian period, we see that few men could agree with the optimistic death-bed prophecy of Samuel Wesley in 1735: "The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not."\textsuperscript{20}

We need not cite further opinions about the Church and religion


\textsuperscript{19} The Philosophical Works of the Late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke (London: David Mallett, Esquire, 1754), Vol. II, pp. 246f.

\textsuperscript{20} Telford, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 72.
previous to the 1760's. The purpose of these quotations has been to provide the background for an exploration of Abraham Tucker's relationship to the Church in this period.

B. Tucker's Idea of the Church

Conservative and Latitudinarian Assumptions

Conservatism

Abraham Tucker possessed that common human characteristic of being both a conservative and a liberal. The object towards which he directed his attention helped to bring out his conservative or liberal response. A very good example of his conservatism is in his thinking about the national Church. His legal training tended to make him quite conservative about ecclesiastical polity. Tucker had no desire to change either the legal status or the liturgical forms of the Church. In fact, he defended the legal establishment of the national Church to the uttermost. He assumed that the polity of a Church was "right" until it was challenged; certain ecclesiastical rules were necessary for convenience's sake; therefore some public regulations were proper for a national Church.21 In other words, his sympathy was totally with the attitude of the Church before the Evangelical movement. Moreover, his polity also followed his moderate Whiggism. He also abided by Sir Robert Walpole's dictum, quiesa non movere, and agreed that the obedience of the vulgar had to be gained

---

by means of an Established Church: "when Bolingbroke and Walpole agreed on a principle, . . . the governing class as a whole acquiesced in it." This also was the policy of Jonathan Swift, who defended the established religion as essential to the nation's welfare; if the Church were abolished, either popery or superstition would take its place. Thomas Secker and William Warburton, who were Tucker's contemporaries, also felt that the Church of England was the middle way, and that the slightest alteration of her legal status would mean disaster.

The Articles of Religion: Again, we see Tucker's conservatism in his high regard for the Articles of Religion: he referred to the eighteenth century Subscription Controversy when he wrote that a "great outcry [had] been made against imposing articles of belief upon men's consciences." But Tucker did not believe that anyone's conscience was bound. The Articles were not a hindrance to free thought. In fact, "an English gentleman may believe the world was made by chance, or the moon made of cream cheese, if he pleases." The English could form freely into religious, political and social

---


societies if they so desired. On the other hand, the country was both a religious and civil community, and so national control over Church polity and doctrine was imperative; "nor could it be otherwise," Tucker affirmed. 26 If the masses had no rational and authoritative guidance they would "run after conjurors, diviners, tales of fairies and apparitions," and listen to any religious deceiver who could get their hearing. 27 For this reason, it was "highly expedient" that the Church should administer a national religion with "due order":

... the polity of a nation would be defective, if there were no provision made for instructing the ignorant, warning the thoughtless, and educating children: but how can such provision be made without a summary of doctrine and set of articles composing the system to be taught? For would you have a law enacted that the people shall be duly instructed, and that parents should educate their children, without giving the least direction in what manner, or upon what points the instruction and education shall be carried on? 28

But what should be done with those who disagreed with the Established Church, such as the Dissenters, Methodists, Unitarians, and Papists? They should keep contrary opinions to themselves and not try to influence the public. 29 Tucker was of the opinion that Roman Catholics had been proscribed, not because of their personal faith, but because the nation had to be protected legally against Rome. 30 Moreover, he accepted the current interpretation of

26 Ibid., p. 496.  
27 Ibid.  
28 Ibid., p. 497.  
29 Ibid., p. 496.  
30 Ibid.
Non-conformism. Those who would conform to the Establishment "occasionally, just enough to satisfy the law," should be encouraged to do so because this act would allow them to serve in responsible public positions.\(^{31}\) Did some citizens criticize the Articles of Religion because they contained certain "occasional" provisions? Tucker cited Article XXXIV, which states that Church traditions and ceremonies may be altered by the proper authority. If some practices were obsolete, they could be modified by a "legislator always in being who may rectify whatever, upon proper judgement, might be found amiss."\(^{32}\) [Did Tucker know that Convocation, which considered such matters, had been silenced in 1717?] In summary, his main defense of the Articles of Religion was that if they were of general religious benefit to the country then it was "natural and incumbent" that they should be supported by the law of the land.\(^{33}\)

**Criticism of Non-Conformity:** We have seen that Tucker held to the conservative Church policy of Warburton, Secker, Swift and Walpole. That is, "common sense showed that religion [was] needed, and the best plan [was] to adopt the generally accepted creed."\(^{34}\) Tucker further defended this policy by looking with disfavor on anyone who would change the conditions. "Anything that savoured of originality, of indecorous fervour, was an object of alarm and

\(^{33}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{34}\) Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
suspicion, and was denounced as 'enthusiasm.'" 35 Consequently, he too defended the Church by criticizing the Dissenters, Quakers, Freethinkers, Roman Catholics and Methodists. The latter were especially Tucker's target; his hostility also adds to the anti-Methodist literature: (a) if he had a strong desire to eat, neither Wesley nor Whitefield could "bellow out" enough exhortations on abstinence or self-denial to stop him. (b) The leaders of religious sects and parties chimed their tenets into your ears until you nearly believed them. (c) "Irreverent Methodism" and "lion-skinned Freethinking" were threats to English liberty. (d) Wesleyans "regaled" so much about the Day of Judgment that it shocked Tucker:

For my part, I cannot help being shocked to hear with what calmness the most pious people will talk of the innumerable multitudes that are to perish in everlasting flames; and with what glee the Methodists regale upon the thought, that at the day of Judgment, the rich and the mighty of this world shall be dragged by devils, for Whitefield and his mob of carmen and basket women to trample under foot. 36

(e) Methodism was not only arid and despondent, but also charmed by the last judgment in the Book of Revelation. (f) Tucker did not possess the "knack of inward feelings" even though he had spent as much time in quiet as either the Quakers or the Methodists. (g) Providence did not provide an unexpected night's lodging for George Whitefield, nor prevent his horse from stumbling! (h) Too many Freethinkers


got their childish religious notions from the "extravagances of the Methodists" or the "tyrannical policy of the Papists." (i) Wesley and Whitefield thought that their "terrors and rantings" had saved many; that if they preached the Gospel in "Tartary" they would also save others from perishing. (j) Too many Methodist hymns set Jesus Christ above God the Father; consequently, Tucker had directed his chapter on the "Word, or Logos" against their extreme theology:

This dissertation upon the Logos ... exhibits a prospect of ... preventing those enthusiastic, and I may say idolatrous, notions perpetually inculcated among the Methodists; who in ... their passion for Christ, extol him above the Father, and would have us place our whole dependence upon ecstatic acts of faith in his name, to the utter contempt and neglect of that degree of righteousness, attainable by faith, which was the purpose and end of his mission.37

(k) Finally, Papists and Methodists still believed that God worked miracles on earth; but Tucker congratulated the Church of England divines, who did not pretend to such supernatural illuminations. They maintained their cause by using only the Biblical miracles:

... whoever will drudge through the journals of our Methodists cannot help seeing they endeavour to persuade the world of Miraculous Providences, and a divine interposition perpetually accompanying them, as well in their spiritual as common transactions; so you must needs venerate them as Apostles, not for the sacredness of their doctrine, but because the hand of God manifests itself so signally in their favour.38

Tucker's Latitude

We have seen that Abraham Tucker, as a magistrate, believed it was imperative to preserve the legal status of the Church of England; and in his defense of the Articles of Religion he lifted his pen against the Non-conformists. But another fact of equal importance is that he was a Latitudinarian. He was quite liberal within the Church as an active Christian layman. Such a posture was thoroughly in the spirit of the times. If he felt that he had to defend the Church in public, in his study he could propose change. The Church was a necessary institution, but he wanted to make it much more inclusive and much more tolerant than in its present state:

For my part, I am for enlarging the pale of orthodoxy as wide as possible without breaking the enclosure, and for that purpose would contract the number of fundamentals, for it is by multiplying them that the walls of partition have been run across, dividing the ground into so many little scanty closes. Therefore if a man inadvertently or in private confidence gives me suspicion that he is not perfectly Athanasian, I can give him the right hand of fellowship, if I have none other reason to withhold it. Nay, . . . if he only esteems the introduction and propagation of Christianity as an event eminently providential, doubting of the supernatural facts recorded, and consults the Scriptures jointly with his own reason in forming his idea of the Supreme Being, . . . still I am inclined to admit him into the brotherhood, provided he leaves other people in quiet to believe as much more as they please. . . . But if he shows a fondness to impugn or ridicule things generally holden sacred, I must regard him as an adversary . . . and defective in that regard to order . . . which is one of the principal moral duties.39

Tucker advocated the upbuilding of religion-in-general as a benefit to

39 Ibid., p. 203. Cf. p. 496.
the nation; then having effected this policy, he would study how
to use that condition for everyone's advantage. He upheld the
principle of "comprehension," and for that reason he would not
inquire too closely into people's religious beliefs unless required
to do so: "heaven is big enough to hold us all." Unfortunately,
Tucker's latitude moved him very close to Archbishop Herring's bland
optimism:

I think it happy that I am called up to this high station at
a time when spite and rancour and narrowness of spirit are
out of countenance, when we breathe the benign and comfort¬
able air of liberty and toleration, and the teachers of our
common religion make it their business to extend its
essential influence, and join in supporting its true
interest and honour. So likewise Abraham Tucker tended to overlook the actual social condi¬
tions, the grinding poverty and other evils of the eighteenth century.
He used that too-familiar method of defending his society by comparing
its enlightened condition with the bickering and dogmatic seventeenth
century. As far as he was concerned, England had much less scandal
and controversy, much more enlightenment and good religion, than in
the previous period. "I cannot but congratulate my country," he wrote,
"for that I believe those evils have never run shorter lengths in any
age or nation, than our own." He also counted it good that society

40 Ibid., p. 427.
41 John Stoughton, History of Religion in England from the
Opening of the Long Parliament to 1850, Volume VI, "The Church in the
had been liberated from the superstitious belief that there was intrinsic virtue in keeping all the religious commandments. In fact, he lauded the liberty of thought which was now permitted in England:

Hail, glorious Liberty! thou choicest privilege of imperial man! the prerogative by which he exercises his dominion over this sublunary kingdom! Inspire a spark of thy spirit into thy votary. . . . But where better delightest thou to dwell than in this my native land, the happy Britain? whose sons in former times have struggled hard for thee, enduring distresses, toils, and bloody conflicts, that they might transmit thy blessings to us their children. . . . Thou hast dragged tongue-tyed Superstition at thy chariot wheels, and bound in fetters that dastard slave, implicit Faith, that used to fetter the very thoughts of man. Thou openest the chambers of science, bursting asunder the Ipse dixits that had barred up more than half the avenues. Thou clearest away the films from our eyes, that we may see for ourselves; and strengthenest our feet, that we may walk without the leading-string. 0! let us never part with the valuable inheritance our ancestors have left us.43

Thus he praised liberty of thought; but the Church did not encroach upon freedom because it was customary to support some kind of religion. Moreover, it was an excellent policy for a nation to inculcate a "sense of religion among the people."44 Consequently this duty had been assigned to the Established Church.

We have seen that, depending on the subject Abraham Tucker considered, his attitude was either conservative or liberal; that he wished to preserve the legal status of the Church but to liberalize her doctrine. As he summed up these debatable matters, he advised his readers to

44 Ibid., p. 496.
avoid hardness of heart and to be tolerant as they sought to change
the Church:

... we may say to the rigid and censorious, as Jesus did
to the disciples who wanted to call down fire from Heaven,
Ye know not what spirit ye are of: certainly not the spirit
of Christianity, which is a doctrine of peace and love...
... So it is no proof of our orthodoxy, that we are forward
to judge other persons, but a direct opposition both to the
letter and spirit of the Gospel....

The Church at Worship and Work

Let us now turn to the passages which demonstrate Tucker's
interest in the practical problems of Church life, such as Divine
Services, the liturgy, Church furnishings and architecture, the
ministry and the religious observance of Sunday. In this section
we shall bear in mind that Tucker is not writing primarily about the
religious life of a cathedral city, but of his country parish.

Divine Services

To begin with, the public services of the Church marked off
religion from mere morality. One's loyal participation each week
demonstrated his obedience to the Faith: "certain things indifferent
in themselves are enjoined, that we may have an opportunity of
exercising our obedience in performing the injunction." Nor were
the public services merely to develop such a personal discipline. The
Christian also regarded them as a primary obligation. We did much
mischief to ourselves and to the society if we neglected attending.
After all, Tucker observed, many of our actions were dictated by

obligation. For this reason the obligation to worship was no different from any other claim upon us. Moreover, obedience and obligation were supported by a third reason for Divine Services, the example which we set for all society, especially the masses:

If any man imagines Sundays of no use to himself, for that he can think of Religion as much as becomes a gentleman without them, yet it is an unpardonable negligence to take no concern for other folks. . . . If I stay away from Church, I may probably apply to my Chapters, which often turn upon matters not wholly unsuitable for a Sunday's employment; if my neighbor the Cobbler stays away, he goes to the alehouse, . . . and he thinks he copies my example herein, because we both agree in that circumstance of absenting from the public service.  

But what if the Gentleman and Cobbler habitually neglected to attend? What measures should the Church take? The only way to bring "people of no religion" into the Church was by using "terror and necessity." Indifferent people saw little use for the Church, because religion did not fill their stomachs or increase their incomes. Consequently the clergy was forced to present public worship "as an indispensable duty, which they must aquit themselves of at their utmost peril."  

On this basis, terror and necessity could be used to discipline the indifferent.

**Worship:** Christians who attended Divine Services, then, were setting an example, were discharging their obligation, and were being obedient to the Church. But what was the purpose of public worship? Tucker believed that it developed our trust in the Almighty. The

subjective part of worship, that which the person himself brought to the worship experience, was stressed unduly by Tucker. On the other hand, the objective presence of God (He who exists independent of the mind) and His action toward man was nearly omitted. Tucker believed that the worshipper's offering of himself, his habits, attitudes and participation, gave content and meaning to the service. As we worshipped, it was far better to hold the motives of hope and advantage in our minds than those of fear or obligation. For these reasons, Tucker asserted that public worship moved us as participants in two ways, by its outward affect and by its inward effect. In the former, the environment of the Church itself, the type of sanctuary, the order of worship, the music, the manner of the priest, and the total impression of the Church fabrics impinged on our sensations and changed us as we worshipped:

... their operation is not like a charm, by supernatural efficacy, but by mechanical influence of language, gestures, and objects, upon the imagination; and if the Holy Spirit be aiding, it is not so much by giving additional force to the means of grace, as by co-operating with the endeavours of the recipient.49

On the other hand, the inward effect of worship was equally important: in public devotions, God would not change the inner man radically and directly, but He did intend the service to have a secondary, or consequential, effect upon us; for this reason public worship created an inward and indirect effect by developing a general attitude of

49 Ibid., p. 423.
trust in our imagination:

... they are determined divine services, not that we can suppose them of any service to God, but because being of no direct apparent service either to ourselves or our fellow-creatures, we perform them upon an opinion of their being pleasing in his sight. ... Therefore they are consequentially of important service, both to ourselves and all whom we may have to deal with, as they nourish in us an habitual trust and dependence upon the Almighty.50

Tucker included several other general remarks about Divine Services: for one thing, they were "considerably long"; occasional additions had been made to the liturgy, but never any "retrenchments!" For this reason, he murmured, "every generation grows more giddy than the former."51 He disliked the Enthusiasts and Sectaries for using terror and damnation—the same methods of the Priesthood. It was far easier, he commented sensibly, for a preacher to play upon fear than on other motives:

By this management Religion becomes a melancholy burdensome thing, which nobody would submit to if it were not for the dreadful miseries consequent upon the neglect of it.52

But how much better to live according to God's love than by His fear: "so fond are some folks of fear, that they would make it do everything, and extract the flame of love out of this chilling principle..."53

Tucker stood enough apart from the Church to see that many Christians were so immersed in their religion that their "excess of devotion"


51 Ibid., p. 423. 52 Ibid., p. 425. 53 Ibid.
developed easily into "a dead form, without any alacrity of mind to give it life. . . ." But even if this were a danger, the vulgar should be encouraged to worship. Because they lived "almost wholly by imagination and very little by understanding," they had to be permitted to believe that their devotions "moved God" directly, and that their public worship wrested favors from Him. Although they worshipped in partial delusion, Tucker still claimed equal rights for them. The privileged were not to bar them from public worship:

The Church is the most improper place in the world for asserting privileges, and keeping up distinctions: when we come there we are not squires and ladies, shopkeepers, ploughmen and dairy-maids; we are Christians, and nothing else; all equally entitled to the privileges and benefits of that place, according as we comport ourselves in it. Therefore if I were Pope, I would decree that the poor man should put on his best clothes and the rich man his worst, that there might be the nearer expression of equality. For the same reason I would prohibit all pompous titles and courtly epithets. . . .

Tucker deplored the social stratification of worshippers. On the other hand, he asserted that there should be little cheer or gladness in the house of God, and certainly not from games or recreation. He would never "play at cards, join in a country dance, bargain for a horse, or apply to any other profane employment in a Church." In regard to such diversions he stood on his dignity: such personal conduct, he claimed, might "prove an unconsecrating [of] the place with respect to myself."

---

54 Ibid., p. 428.  
55 Ibid., p. 441.  
56 Ibid., p. 449.  
57 Ibid., p. 450.  
58 Ibid.
Liturgy, Church Arrangements, Ceremonials: Since the environment of worship helped to instill in us a trust in the Almighty, then it followed that "forms, ceremonies, external appearance, example and sympathy" were necessary as liturgical aids. Tucker believed that the national Church could not have existed without a common form of worship to bind its members together. For this reason he defended the Act of Uniformity and the Prayer Book:

... there is no irreverence in a common form of liturgy: for we must not expect to please God by the novelty and copiousness of our diction, but by the sincerity and heartiness of our application.59

The Book of Common Prayer provided this common denominator for public worship. But another needful aid to common worship was good Church architecture. Those who designed Churches should attempt to cast "something of an awe and solemnity" upon the people as they entered for worship. Moreover, Tucker thoroughly approved of consecrating Church buildings. This ceremony did not conjure down a supernatural influence from Heaven, but it began an "association between the place and devout ideas to be connected therewith."60 Moreover, well-kept church furnishings helped him to worship more easily. If someone doubted the importance of the setting of worship, then let him try

... whether he can throw his thoughts into whatever posture he pleases, while kneeling down upon a dunghill in the midst of cows, and hogs, and poultry: therefore he need not despise the aid of external appearances, but let him remember they are only aids. ...61

59 Ibid., p. 441. 60 Ibid., p. 450. 61 Ibid.
Keeping of Sunday

From our previous exposition we might deduce that Tucker's attitude toward the keeping of Sunday was also conservative: "the command to keep holy every seventh day had a rational foundation in human nature. . .". To him there was nothing intrinsically sacred about observing a sabbath either on Saturday or Sunday. He even suggested that a sabbath on Thursday would be as effective as Sunday if the nation could be persuaded to cease from work! But in a less theoretical passage, he advocated a high ethical standard for Sunday conduct. No one should take liberty with Sundays unless he could "say grace with full devotion, in the midst of gaieties immediately before and after." If the festivities affected his prayer, then he was not ready to be more liberal in his religious practices.

The Clergy

In the next place, how did Tucker regard those who were serving in the national church? On the whole he was sympathetic toward the clergy. He felt that they should be set apart by "some distinction of dress, and some little reserve of behaviour." At a time when many of the clergy were indifferent to their duties, Tucker admonished the candidates for Orders to heed their calling. Had they committed themselves to God? Above all else, they should know their relationship to their Maker. For this reason, the Bishop's inquiry into the calling

---

62 Ibid., p. 447.  
63 Ibid., p. 447.  
64 Ibid., p. 451.
of candidates was no "insignificant or useless ceremony. . . ."65

Every young man, declared Tucker, should make "a serious and thorough examination of his talents, his education, his taste and disposition of mind, and his situation in life" before he decided to serve in the Church.66 Deacons usually were not called to specific duties; for this reason they should be ready to accept "any work that may offer." Every person thought he was important, but even the clergy had to remember that all could not be "Apostles, nor Tillotsons nor Barrows."

The Church especially needed qualified men in the lower ranks; "and in this, as in all other professions, every man does well, who does his best, be it ever so little."67 Moreover, when the Bishop ordained a Priest with the words "Receive the Holy Ghost," he was not giving the Priest powers which he lacked beforehand. To Tucker the words were merely a cordial wish: "may you receive that assistance of the Holy Spirit without which no good thing, more especially not this sacred office, can be performed effectually."68

65 Ibid., p. 488.  
66 Ibid., p. 489.  
67 Ibid. Hart concluded that provided the eighteenth century country parson "helped to relieve the necessities of the sick and poor, and conducted the minimum number of services which times required, he felt that he had more than adequately discharged the functions of his office, and could devote himself to such serious occupations as farming; presiding over the affairs of the Vestry; . . . and making himself pleasant to the Squire. . . ." Arthur T. Hart, The Eighteenth Century Country Parson (Shrewsbury: Wilding and Son Limited, 1955), p. 123.  
68 Ibid., p. 490.
In 1722, Thomas Stackhouse published a unique book entitled *The Miseries and Great Hardships of the Inferior Clergy in and About London.* The title is self-explanatory. Perhaps Tucker was familiar with it or with similar writings. At any rate, he felt that "some temporal encouragement" should be given to the average clergyman:

... it is a great thing, too great to be compassed, for a man mature in years, experience, and judgment, to act invariably with a cheerful industry upon the sole motive of doing service to his fellow-creatures without aid of private interest; for we are but sensitiv-rational animals, incapable of attaining the Stoical love of rectitude for its own sake; to require it of us would be expecting to find us angels instead of men. ... 69

In an age of preferment-hunting, when the superior clergy often advanced because they had "dissected a Deist," Tucker called for Church leaders who were more than politicians or scholars. Priests were required who possessed both intellectual vigor and the courage to interpret the Christian faith for the common life:

Neither will acuteness of parts and depth of learning answer the purpose completely. ... Men of a scholastic turn ... cast religion into a form which is fit for nobody's wear but their own: therefore it is requisite there should be some mingled among them, who by a competent knowledge of human nature, ... may be able to turn the labours of the others to general use, to render speculation practical. ... But discretion and knowledge of the world ... must be gotten at home, if gotten at all, from the parents or persons with whom they used familiarly to converse. 70

Tucker's primary advice to any divinity students who might read his

---

69 Ibid., p. 491.

works was to acquire a "thorough knowledge of the Religion [they were]
to teach others."\textsuperscript{71} All candidates for Orders should "ruminate
seriously" on their call to the sacred office; by so doing the Church
would yield excellent fruits.

**The Sacraments**

Tucker prefaced his exposition of this subject with a very
general statement, to the effect that he was not acquainted with the
recent debates of the scholars over the Sacraments. Anyway, he did
not wish to take sides. His aim was simply to "proceed quietly my
own way, . . . collecting whatever . . . may appear pertinent to the
subject upon the best exercise of my own judgement."\textsuperscript{72}

At this point, Tucker paused to review his readers again on
his rationalizing method. He was using the power of reason to inter-
pret theology and the sacraments, to which he added the significant
comment, "by which must be meant my own reason."\textsuperscript{73} In other words,
he re-affirmed his policy of examining the doctrine and beliefs of
the Church by means of his private conscience.\textsuperscript{74} But Tucker would not
go into any evidences for the divinity of the Sacraments. He assumed
their divinity, thereby indicating his Orthodox faith:

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 493. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 476.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. Cf. ante, Chap. VI, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{74} This passage on p. 476 is one of the best statements of
his methodology.
... therefore taking such institution for granted, I shall make it my business to consider what rational idea can be entertained of them, their design and effects, presuming that if such can be found, it is the genuine and true one. 75

The Catechism

Tucker used the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer as his commentary on the Sacraments. To the question "What meanest thou by this word Sacrament?", Tucker answered that it was a "sign," that is, a reminder of something we had forgotten. For example, a lifted finger was enough to caution a person and remind him not to repeat something which he knew was a secret. So with the Sacraments:

... as signs they are not efficient causes of any external event that may concern us, and as monitory signs they are not declarations of any operation performed upon us; but being ordained by Christ himself, the sight of them solemnly administered serves naturally to impress a strong remembrance of him, and remind us of the inestimable benefits received by his procurement... The priest... acts ministerially, not authoritatively, herein, declaring or expressing a former act of Christ, not performing an act of his own.

76

In the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper we received grace from God; it was "given" to us, not something "operating" on us. If people did not understand these details then let them believe the Sacraments were generally helpful and not trouble with the particulars. 77

Again, the two Sacraments were "generally necessary" for salvation; this phrase meant to him that they were available to every

75 Ibid. 76 Ibid., p. 477. 77 Ibid., p. 478.
kind of people, "laics as well as clergy, the poor, the low, and the ignorant, as well as the rich, the noble, and the enlightened."\(^78\) Tucker also stated that the Sacraments were "remotely" necessary; that is, they did not directly produce salvation in the participant, but they were "necessary preliminaries conducting to something else whereby we may attain it."\(^79\) Consequently, the Sacraments were necessary equipment for the Christian life, but not needed universally in the world:

Thus the Sacraments are rather Christian than divine services, efficacious to invigorate our Faith in Christ, which is called saving Faith, because introductive of that which is directly and immediately so. . . . The Church pronounces them necessary, as being necessary equipments for our journey, rather than an actual progress in it: . . . we are not to look upon ourselves as a whit more in possession of salvation, but better provided with the means of attaining it. . . . Or, to use the Stoical allegory, we are still in as much a state of drowning as before; but we have laid hold on the cords, by which with hearty lifts we may raise ourselves into the pure air of rectitude and holiness.\(^80\)

Infant and Adult Baptism

Tucker's interpretation of Infant Baptism is quite ambiguous. The first purpose of his argument was to show that the rite could do no spiritual harm. Since it was a hallowed custom, it should be continued. On the other hand, Tucker trusted that his rational interpretation would demonstrate that it was more than a mere ritual:

Perhaps it may be alleged, that if Sacraments operate none otherwise than upon the mind and imagination, then Baptism

\(^{78}\) Ibid., p. 479.  \(^{79}\) Ibid.  \(^{80}\) Ibid., p. 480.
is a mere empty form, being administered to infants, who can have no imagination of what is doing to them.81

He recognized the danger in this position, but he defended the rite by stating that, if baptism did not change the soul of the infant, then surely the ceremony was a means of grace for the adults who were present. For this reason

... it would remind them of their own admission by the like ceremony, and engage their charity to a new fellow-traveller to whom an entrance has just been opened into the same road of salvation with themselves.82

This is the only allusion which Tucker made to the doctrine that Infant Baptism was the accepted means of admitting children into the body of Christ.

Tucker believed that the Church was wise in making baptism a public service. Yet he wanted to liberalize the present practice. He proposed to cancel winter baptisms because of the damp physical conditions in many sanctuaries. The rubric instructed parents to present their infants "the first or second Sunday next after their birth," but Tucker would have postponed most of them until the next spring:

... indeed, as our places of worship in this humid climate are stone vaults, many times half under ground, and our children born with more delicate constitutions than those of our forefathers, ... there may be a good reason against exposing them to the damps of a quarry in winter season: but since the rubric has not limited the time, why might not the ceremony be deferred till vernal suns have exhaled the dangerous vapours and blunted the cutting edge of Eurus?83

81 Ibid. 82 Ibid. 83 Ibid., p. 481.
This interpretation was much more free than that of the seventeenth century. For a considerable time after the Restoration many infants were baptized the same day they were born. But Tucker's view made common sense if the ceremony affected only the adults present. Nothing would be lost if they presented a child for baptism in the spring. Actually the rite might have a stronger psychological effect then than during a cold winter ceremony.

On the other hand, Tucker also had certain doubts about his position. He did not believe in delaying baptism if an infant were near death:

... I am for a speedy administration in cases where life is in danger, were it for none other reason than a little to open the minds of the vulgar, ... and making it received as a popular doctrine, that a soul may be saved without actual faith in Christ... 84

Moreover, he also affirmed that Infant Baptism washed away original sin. While this doctrine should not be interpreted rigorously, the rite of Infant Baptism definitely affected the future condition of the child's soul:

... I apprehend the effects of Baptism ... are not the same with those of water, having respect to the future rather than the past, working a deliverance from condemnation none otherwise than by the prevention of sin: the original, or other sin washed away thereby, being not an actual guilt, but a sinfulness or depravity of nature, which the inward and spiritual grace, given to us by this outward sign, removes by helping to produce a thorough

repentance or Metanoia; that is, a change of mind from a carnal or sensual habit to a spiritual or rational.\footnote{85} Once again Tucker placed himself in a dilemma: if Infant Baptism helped change the child from carnal and sensual habits to a spiritual and rational nature, then the rite affected it directly. Therefore baptism was more than a mere sign and it would be advisable to baptize all infants; and consequently the rite would be primarily for the infant’s spiritual benefit and only of secondary importance to the parents and godparents. We would conclude that Tucker’s rational interpretation of Infant Baptism was ambiguous and involved him in a dilemma.

Although Infant Baptism might degenerate into a mere formality, Tucker would not abandon the Church of England position in favor of the adult baptisms of the Anabaptists: "there might be many inconveniences in delaying the celebration until children were grown up."\footnote{86} What were these defects? Some would never believe they were well enough instructed; some would delay baptism until their death-bed, in order not to double their guilt; multitudes would procrastinate or omit the rite because they were careless; and youth probably would be very impious in their attitude toward the Sacrament:

\ldots as a great deal of wickedness may be committed before seventeen, \ldots many sprightly young people would imagine they had a license to do as they pleased, presuming upon the laver of regeneration for washing away all former scores.\footnote{87}
For the above reasons, Tucker claimed that Infant Baptism and Confirmation as practiced in the Church of England were necessary and right.

The Lord's Supper

In previous generations this Sacrament had been a source of conflict within the Christian Church. Thousands, Tucker claimed, had been "vexed, ruined, persecuted, tortured, and murdered, and the Prince of Peace made the authoriser of havoc, desolation, and carnage" because of the constant contention over transubstantiation and consubstantiation.\(^88\) With this condition in mind, he affirmed that what the eighteenth century needed was a re-interpretation of the Sacrament. That is, they should compare the New Testament account with the Mass:

Christ says, This is my body which is broken, This is my blood which is shed; the priest says, This is his body which is whole, entire, and unbroken, containing the mass of blood unshed within it. Christ says, Drink ye all of this: the priest says, I will drink this myself; so there is none to be had for the communicant. . . .\(^89\)

Tucker was certain that eighteenth century Christians had outgrown the earlier belief that the Divine was infused into the Sacramental elements by the priest's words. But the very popular book of devotion, A Week's Preparation, which was in its forty-third edition in 1728, described the Lord's Supper in this way: "In this thy Holy Sacrament, thou communicatest Body and Blood, Flesh and Spirit, thy whole Manhood,

\(^{88}\) Ibid., p. 483.  
\(^{89}\) Ibid.
yea, thy very Godhead too." But Tucker believed that the Prayer of Consecration itself tended to prolong the notion that Christ's body and blood were transubstantiated into the bread and wine.

Then how should Christians interpret "This is my Body," and "This is my Blood of the New Testament?" The best way was to understand the words figuratively and hyperbolically, in the same manner that we would speak of "feeding the thoughts," "digesting what we read," or "cramming down divinity." The Jewish people at Christ's time had many "far-fetched figures current among them. . . ." Perhaps they carried this hyperbole just a bit beyond their usual manner of speaking; "and where we should express ourselves by 'swallowing the doctrines,' they might talk of 'eating the man himself.'"

We see that Tucker interpreted the Lord's Supper metaphorically. On the other hand, he wanted to retain the doctrine of the "real presence" of Christ because it was affirmed in the prayer book. Here he followed the XXVIII Article of Religion, in which the proper means for receiving this Sacrament is faith. Tucker remained true to his former interpretation. The benefits of the Sacrament were received only by the faithful, because if the priest mediated a "supernatural virtue" into the bread and wine, then the unfaithful also would benefit. But the "real presence" meant nothing without faith:

---

90 Legg, op. cit., p. 69.
92 Ibid., p. 483.
93 Ibid., p. 484.
... the real presence here is the same with that of God in places where two or three are gathered together in his name: if there be a man among them who ... looks upon the Church services as an idle, insignificant parade, but must come to qualify himself for a place upon the test act; to him God is no more present at the communion-table, than the gaming table.94

For this reason, the Lord's Supper was mainly a memorial: taking the Sacrament worthily confirmed our faith and trust in God and strengthened us to act virtuously by "quickening our remembrance of all he has done and suffered for us ... ."95

What was required to receive the Lord's Supper in faith? Tucker concurred with the Prayer Book Exhortation, that we should examine ourselves seriously beforehand; but those who spend a whole week in acts of affliction and humility were overdoing their spiritual preparation. He had no objection, however, if some persons felt that they needed to debase themselves; but they should throw aside their mournful attitude when they came to the Lord's Table:

... for they are to bring thither a lively sense of God's mercies, with a thankful remembrance of their Redemption; but the voice of thanksgiving is the voice of joy, and melancholy is utterly incompatible with liveliness.96

Did some dread that they might receive the Sacrament unworthily, thereby damning themselves? If so, they should consult John Locke's paraphrase on I Corinthians 11:27ff. They could also repeat a cheerful prayer which Tucker recommended for the Lord's Supper: "Assuredly, O God, thou wilt

be merciful to me a sinner." He agreed that one should not receive the Lord's Supper unworthily. But the Pauline threat of damnation was out of fashion. The real reason for spiritual preparation was that we did not want to encourage a bad habit. If men were not spiritually prepared, "they will be utterly debarred [from] the benefits intended . . . by this sacred rite." 98

C. Personal Religion

We have now completed our first intention, namely, to outline Tucker's general conception of the Church; we shall turn next to our second objective and picture briefly his personal religion.

The reason for considering "Personal Religion" is that Tucker had no social gospel; that is, he had no belief that the Church, in and of itself, might find ways to deal with national conditions which did not depend upon legislation. That method was soon to come from other sources, such as the Methodist and Evangelical movements. With Tucker, Christianity was a private matter between the individual and his God. But realizing that a great deal of the Church's spiritual life was gone, he also attempted to remedy its shortcomings. We shall maintain in this next section (1) that his cure for religious apathy in the Church was to revive all its spiritual exercises and ceremonies; they must needs be restored, studied over, and practiced. (2) Moreover, Tucker took up his pen to demonstrate their pertinence for the spiritual

---

97 Ibid. 98 Ibid., p. 486. Cf. ante, p. 285.
life. His most important reflections are on the practice and theory of prayer. But before coming to that subject we shall advert to other spiritual exercises by which he proposed to revitalize the Church.

Various Spiritual Exercises

(1) Mealtime Grace: Tucker went beyond his colorful description of grace at meals to recommend it as an excellent spiritual exercise. In this practice we glanced "beyond the stream of second causes up to their original fountain." If grace at meals were a habit, then we would exercise our religious thoughts regularly. Unfortunately, most religious thoughts were "stiff and heavy things." (2) Humiliation and Self-Examination: He regretted that both of these exercises were out of fashion in mid-eighteenth century England. Humiliation was particularly misunderstood, because most Englishmen thought too highly of themselves to "cast their eyes willingly upon an object that may tend to mortify them." But they were overlooking real spiritual benefits, because humiliation converged upon self-examination, and the latter led into self-knowledge. At this point Tucker wrote down one of the most remarkable passages in his whole work. As a backwoodsman would check his log cabin and muskets if he heard Indians nearby, so we should take inventory of our inner selves:

\[\text{Cf. ante, p. 271.} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 445.} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 428.}\]
... it is highly expedient for us ... to take ourselves into close examination, particularly on the worst side of our characters; but we ought to do it impartially, not thinking to merit by making matters worse than they are. ... Nor is there any Religion in trying to afflict ourselves at the discovery: our groanings make no sweet melody among the heavenly choirs. ... Some displeasure will naturally arise upon the view of our disorders the first time we turn our reflection that way, but he that has been used to the exercise knows beforehand what he is to expect; ... the particular examination ... is rather a cheerful work, because giving him hopes that he shall gather information from thence how to proceed in the rectifying it. ... These inquiries will teach him not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, ... yet neither need they make him despond. ... They will convince him that he is not completely a rational creature, nor entire master of his own thoughts and actions, ... and will give him a candour, a compassion, and a fellow feeling towards imperfections he sees in other persons.\(^{102}\)

Here he also came to the heart of personal religion: he felt that these two exercises revealed our selves to us so deeply that both Humiliation and Self-Examination should be conducted as devotions to God. (3) Fasting, in contrast to the above exercises, had little appeal to Tucker; but he did not cast it aside. No, it was reserved for those who needed such a discipline. Fasting was not to be understood as in earlier times, when people often endured it in order to purchase a dispensation from the Church. He himself had fasted, but it had been of no benefit to his spirit:

... had I continued it till this time, I believe my Chapters would have dissolved into a water-gruel style, and been still more deficient than they are in a rational, cheerful strain of piety [\(\wedge\)]\(^{103}\)

\(^{102}\) Ibid., pp. 429f.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., p. 430.
(4) Conversion vs. Growth in Grace: Tucker was careful not to go to extremes on this matter. On the one hand, he strenuously opposed the Wesleyan doctrine of instantaneous conversion. Early in his ministry, John Wesley asserted that "this faith should be given in a moment: ... a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin ... to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost." Of course, this shocked Tucker. In contrast, he favored a gradual spiritual growth which came by means of Church attendance. Tucker claimed that we were not changed instantly into mature Christian faith, but that we were converted by degrees into better men:

I do not doubt there are many persons who have experienced, that on coming out from their devotions, they feel themselves in a manner new creatures; they seem above the world and all its allurements. ... They are inspired with the stoical love of rectitude for its own sake, and could almost do and suffer anything. ... And though they find those impressions quickly obscured by the common business of life as soon as they begin to engage in it again, yet will they gather some additional strength upon every renewal, until at length they come to have an influence upon the general tenor of mind and practice, moulding them into the frame wherein solid happiness and usefulness of character consist.

Prayer

Perhaps the key to Tucker's personal religion and his theology is his conception of prayer. Here again, his rationalizing method met an ultimate test by the manner in which he considered the whole question

of the supernatural. His theory and practice of prayer is strongly bent toward autosuggestion. That is, his prayer tended to become a soliloquy, either a talking to an unanswering Unknown, or else a monologue to himself. Yet for him prayer was a valuable self-discipline; he never abandoned it. Moreover he claimed that it was a chief means of grace. Tucker defined prayer as a "serious meditation and expression of our desires in the sight of God, and as it were in conversation with him," 106 By it we developed virtues which could not be acquired by means of "reason and instruction." Here is one of his key reflections on the subject:

... we cannot believe otherwise than that God, who is the Author of all powers, ... will of his own free Bounty give unto his creatures all the good that is proper for them, and has already provided measures ... requisite to produce it: therefore prayer does not operate upon him, but upon ourselves. For there is no room to expect that our importunities should prevail upon him to depart a tittle from the determinations he has made in perfect Wisdom. ... We are not to look for miraculous interpositions among the motions of matter on our behalf, neither does the office of the Holy Spirit lie in turning the course of events ... but solely in working upon the minds of men. 107

What was the objective of prayer? To increase grace and virtue in men. It was not improper to make petitions and intercessions to the Almighty. But the answers probably would not be what we expected; they might be "in value, though perhaps not in specie." 108

Tucker was then confronted with the question, "Of what use

was Christian prayer": specifically, the practice of concluding a prayer with the phrase "for the sake of Jesus Christ?" He answered obliquely; he did not wish to "condemn the literal sense of Intercession in persons who [could] not understand any other"; but we could never move God "to do a thing he was indifferent to before" merely by asking through Jesus Christ.\(^{109}\) He underlined this again when he wrote, "we are not warranted to expect that Christ will do anything for us at a distance in heaven."\(^{110}\) In an earlier chapter he had claimed "Equality" as one of God's Attributes. Consequently prayer through Jesus Christ could not mean that Christians were favored. God treated all men equally. He did not bless certain societies in order to satisfy His Son; He did not favor some "to whom he [had] happily taken a liking"; indeed, God could not be conceived of as arbitrary:

I need not take pains to show how repugnant this notion is to reason and rational Faith: neither do I believe it was in the thoughts of the compilers of our Liturgy, nor designed to be inculcated in the Scriptures.\(^ {111}\)

This emphasis led Theophilus Lindsey to claim Tucker for Unitarianism. Tucker also reviewed the other aspects of prayer and once again defended God's unity with an emphatic rejection of intercession by means of the saints:

... if God had no bowels of compassion for us since the disobedience of Adam, yet He might be moved to give us

\(^{109}\) Ibid., p. 436.  
\(^{110}\) Ibid.  
\(^{111}\) Ibid.
eternal happiness by the Intercession of his Son: the Son too, after we had forfeited his favour by actual transgressions, might re-instate us upon the recommendation of St. Peter, or St. Mary, or St. Benet Sheerhog, or St. Vedast, alias Foster, or some other prime favourite: but if we happen to be strangers to the foresaid Saints, still it is likely they, in imitation of their Master's example, will take us under protection, if we can get some priest or holy man upon earth to present our petition. Thus have man been led to imagine, that in the Court of Heaven, as in some Italian Court, points are carried by interest and favour: and thus Religion has been turned into an infamous trade.112

D. Summary and Criticism

Now that we have presented Tucker's conception of the Established Church and religion, we shall conclude with several observations:

(1) It is apparent that he did not have an adequate picture of the actual religious practices of Hanoverian England. Of course, Tucker was a layman. Perhaps we should not expect him to know the state of the Church as well as the eighteenth-century Bishops. Because of this fact, his treatment of worship, Sacraments and Church polity tended away from rigorous analysis and toward generalization. He did not deal with specific religious conditions as did Thomas Stackhouse in the 1720's; nor did he have in mind, as did George Whitefield, such disgraced men as the coal miners in Kingswood and Bristol in the 1730's. Because he was optimistic, Tucker tended to look at the Church externally. He held his Church ideal before men, but he did not go into detail about the actual situation in which they were

112 Ibid., p. 437.
involved. For instance, he lauded the Church for making the Lord's Supper available for all. But he never mentioned the actual difficulties under which it was administered. After the Restoration, "it was exceedingly uphill work to carry out the Church's instruction of a celebration on every day for which a collect, epistle, and gospel were provided." Some have called the infrequency of this highest service of the Church "one of the worst features" of the age. Therefore we must go somewhere else besides the pages of the Light of Nature Pursued to discover actual religious conditions. Furthermore, Tucker seems never to have heard of the charges of the Bishops, which often gave specific and authoritative data on the social and religious conditions in each diocese.

(2) In spite of his lack of religious awareness, and even when most of the Spirit was gone out of the Church, Tucker clung to the forms and ceremonies. By this action he was attempting to keep to the mean between Puritan (and Methodist) zeal and Roman Catholic "superstition." He believed as other conservatives of the time: "the presumption was that any change would be for the worse." Tucker felt that his apology for the Church would be effective upon the rational mind of the eighteenth century, and that his interpretation of Church Doctrine and the Sacraments was sufficient. But

---

113 Legg, op. cit., p. 21.
114 Overton and Relton, op. cit., p. 293.
115 Ibid., p. 268.
... in an age of reason, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and all that it implied, was disparaged. ... A sense of the supernatural had been lost in both the Established Church and Non-conformity. What could the Lord's Supper, which is essentially a mystery, mean either to the high-church party ... or the low-church party. ... ?116

(3) Finally, a more serious criticism of his whole religious platform is that Tucker had no conception of the objective presence of God, either in worship or in the Sacraments. He interpreted well the subjective side of public worship; the need for proper personal preparation, which is the man-to-God movement in the service. Yet he omitted the opposite movement, the action of God-towards-man. Therefore, there was no communion of man with the Holy in Tucker's worship, only a feeling after the Unknown. For him public worship became a religious exercise. We have pointed out already Tucker's dilemma over Infant Baptism. Moreover, we noted in an earlier chapter that his deistic doctrine of God also limited the objective presence of the divine.

On the other hand, the supreme historical fact in Christian worship has been the communion between God and man, and the knowledge that the Christian God has moved-toward and met man. One interpreter of Christian worship has described this as follows:

... we are stressing God's communion with us rather than ours with him—not that both are not true, but that the former needs special emphasis. We find it easier to think of our approach to God than of his to us. But the basic assumption of Christian worship is that he meets us. ...

116 Bowmer, op. cit., p. 5.
Stand firm upon the golden thigh: let that be thy support: nevertheless use also the thigh of flesh when thou goest forth among men.

Worship the immortal Gods according to the rights of thy country: for the same Gods made the wise and the ignorant, and thou thyself, if thou hast a thigh of gold, hast also another of flesh, neither livest thou for thyself, nor by thyself. 144

When Pythagoras concluded this esoteric lecture, the crowd stood frozen, with mouths agape, "in a kind of stupid astonishment." 145

When the friends had recovered somewhat from the flow of words, Locke asked his pupil if he had been enlightened. Tucker felt that most of the lecture passed him by. Because of this, Plato and Timaeus had another conference with Pythagoras and asked him to lecture again and explain the first address. Pythagoras was not offended, but spoke on the names of God, the Mundane Soul, animalcules, the soul's existence and journey through matter, evil, and on the worship of the immortal gods. Immediately upon completing the second lecture the speaker withdrew into his vehicle and there was nothing for the audience to do but to leave. Tucker heard his Daemon whisper "Offense" two or three times during the lectures. Nevertheless, their whole content was communicated down to the earth. He would have to examine the offensive doctrines later at his leisure.

Having heard the great Pythagoras, Tucker then wondered if he could meet any of the Apostles. Locke regretted that such a meeting was impossible because they had been "advanced" long ago to the

144 Ibid., pp. 462f. 145 Ibid., p. 463.
Mundane Soul. St. Paul had been the last of that group to be released from the Intermediate State. Plato remembered him well:

He had great knowledge, but no very happy facility in expressing himself; so though he was fond of disputing among us, we were very little edified, for he talked in a language peculiar to himself; till we put him in mind of his own rule, Become all things to all men, if by any means thou mayst gain some; he then began to conform himself to our ideas and figures, and when we could understand him we learned a great deal from him. . . . His education at the feet of Gamaliel led him, and the general taste of his countrymen obliged him, to deal in far-fetched, extravagant figures, which, as that taste subsided, lost all resemblance with the things signified, but were understood literally, thereby leading men quite wide of his meaning, involving them in useless subtilties, inextricable difficulties, and endless disputes. If he had stayed among us till my brother Locke here came up, he would certainly have been a great favourite with him.146

St. Paul's favorite doctrine was "Pistis," which remained below on earth to help mortal Psyche. He regretted that many persons had replaced Pistis with a counterfeit, "Pseudo-Pistis"; the latter was a most furious passion which completely misguided men by its arbitrary commands and fear and terror, whereas the genuine Pistis used fear only as a beginning for wisdom. Many "modern Methodists" quoted St. Paul to justify themselves, saying that if a person believed himself one of the elect, "it is not a farthing what his morals are."147 But the Apostle would have said "Thou fool, knowest thou not that faith is manifested by works, as the tree by its fruit?"148

146 Ibid., pp. 468f.
147 Ibid., p. 469.
148 Ibid.
Tucker would also have to answer those who said, as Elijah, that his God was not providential, but only indifferent to supplications: "either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."\textsuperscript{122}

Over against this kind of prayer is the manner of Jesus Christ. But his assumptions on prayer would tend to shock the rationalism of both the eighteenth century and of the modern mind. It is most significant that Jesus did not argue that men needed to pray. In several ways He assumed its infinite worth: first, that men lived in a universe in which they had enough freedom to make prayer possible; "apparently Jesus had no doubts of human freedom: man [had] his Magna Charta, his royal grant of liberty..."\textsuperscript{123} Furthermore, He quietly affirmed that God is "personal" and prayed to Him as "Father." Again, He assumed a matter true which we often consider as enigmatic, that "the universe is both flexible and faithful to man and God." Finally, He transformed these affirmations into reality by prayer itself and by His faith:

The faith of Jesus that man is free, God "personal," and the world a sphere for their creative comradeship was not naive. His apparent "begging the question," and his refusal to argue, imply no lack of understanding and sympathy. The world has dealings with us, and there is always enough evidence for Jesus' basic postulates. \textit{Enough} evidence, but never too much. Too much would not be proof: it would be coercion. Proofs that battered the mind to pulp, leaving it helpless, would spell the death of courage and the end of growth. Jesus had no time for dialectic, for to dialectic the world is always in balance. Jesus lived in faith. ... He met his world divinely, and "it showed itself divine." He met his world through prayer.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} I Kings 18:27 (Authorized Version).

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Buttrick}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54. Cf. pp. 54-69. \textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 69.
CONCLUSION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM TUCKER

In this dissertation we have presented seven themes around which we have reviewed the life and thought of Abraham Tucker. We have analyzed his biography, philosophy, psychology, ethics, natural and revealed theology, and his conception of the Church. As we conclude our work it is in order to offer some remarks about Abraham Tucker's significance.

To begin with, we believe that our central thesis has been established, that in Abraham Tucker we have discovered the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of eighteenth century British thought, and that the primary value in studying him is to analyze those strengths and shortcomings. Abraham Tucker is another example of that eighteenth century liberal spirit which affected both Great Britain and America so profoundly. He was a religious Latitudinarian, preached political tolerance, and trusted that his empirical method would unify philosophy and theology. Moreover, he had faith in his reason. He was thoroughly convinced that reason "could do something," and so he attempted to follow it wherever it might lead. Unfortunately, Tucker's wandering mind often led him to the most unpredictable results. He reminds us of the dictum of Lessing, that a heretic was one who wished to see with his own eyes, but the question was whether the eyes were good.¹

Again, Abraham Tucker is an example of a person who is very necessary in philosophy. He was primarily a mediator of thought rather than an original philosopher. He does not compare at all with Francis Bacon or John Locke, or even with his contemporary David Hartley. But Tucker's objective was to apply and mediate the philosophy of John Locke to eighteenth century England. George Berkeley went against the stream and criticized Locke, but Tucker accepted him and many of the common assumptions of the Enlightenment. "Nature," "reason," and "revelation," being commonly understood by many, produced a plethora of religious and philosophic material.

In summarizing Tucker's strengths we would call to mind his tolerant spirit, his attempt to use the powers of reason constructively, and his adopted role as a mediator of philosophy. On the other hand, we must also call to mind his shortcomings, which so date his work that he has little but historical value for the twentieth century.

For one thing, Tucker placed himself in an untenable position when he attempted to be a neutralist and a reconciler of opinions. His integrity as a philosopher and as a theologian often suffers because he produced shallow and artificial solutions. We have discovered several instances in which he avoided rigorous criticism of a problem and preferred a solution which professed to reconcile diametrically opposed positions. Moreover, he plainly shows us the limitations of a synthesizing methodology. A proper synthesis would have to incorporate both the critical method of philosophy and the tension between philosophy and theology. It could never ignore them;
but Tucker's method was often to turn his back upon rigorous criticism and cleave to a synthetic methodology. Thereafter he would claim optimistically that he had established a harmony between philosophy and Christianity. Yet in other moments he doubted whether his synthesis was genuine. His ambivalence originated in his self-appointed role as a neutralist.

Another shortcoming in Tucker is that his work is not unified and coherent. How much more effective he might have been in the world of letters if he had written only one-half the amount of material. Tucker admitted that his volumes were more a series of essays than a coherent, unified work. Many chapters are quite needless because he merely elaborated an earlier passage. We cannot agree that the "exercise of reason" is the primary qualification of a philosopher. A philosopher ought to emphasize quality and unity of work as well as quantity. Perhaps this love of quantity may be laid to his wish to cover over the defects of his system. At any rate, he did not imitate Socrates in the rigorous asking of questions. As a philosopher he was poles apart from David Hume, whose skeptical conclusions were based upon the philosophical method of empiricism. But Tucker was not nearly so rigorous. Eventually he threw over his philosophy for Pascal's "reasons of the heart," and his heart was very satisfied with his work.

In this study of Abraham Tucker and his significance we have discovered again how far-removed present-day thinking is from the Enlightenment. The three disciplines with which Tucker was concerned,
the Sciences, Philosophy, and Theology, all have changed radically.
On the one hand, the conception of physical science has been modified
drastically, from the Newtonian belief in a Great Machine set running,
to a universe of natural law which allows for change within itself.
Professor Whitehead has described this gradual change in the following
words:

... this quiet growth of science has practically recoloured
our mentality so that modes of thought which were exceptional
are now broadly spread through the educated world. ... The
new mentality is more important even than the new science and
the new technology. It has altered the metaphysical presup¬
positions and the imaginative contents of our minds; so that
now the old stimuli provoke a new response.2

Not only has science gradually altered attitudes, but also the
Newtonian world-view has passed into limbo. The universe is not now
conceived of as a machine running perpetually, but as a universe which
is running down. Moreover, after the death of Abraham Tucker a great
stirring of intellectual waters was caused by many nineteenth and
twentieth century developments such as the development of physics,
chemistry, psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology, and other physical
and social sciences. All of these disciplines have contributed to the
marked change to which Professor Whitehead refers. We have passed,
perhaps, from an eighteenth century "scientism" to a scientific method
which is curious, patient, and humble.

In philosophy, Tucker was related distantly to theism. As we

2 Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 3.
have noted, he was more of a deist than a theist. But a theist today would not necessarily accept Tucker's neutral stance. He would not attempt to reconcile all beliefs and thereby create a superficial harmony; but he would ask, does theism recommend itself not because it harmonizes all enigmas, but because it possesses fewer than other philosophies? The Christian philosopher hopes to apply a "logic of events" and a "logic of belief" to his argument. A theistic cumulative argument now is not a "proving of God," but a seeking of significant evidence and analogies which suggest such a conclusion. To mention only one radical philosophical contrast to the eighteenth century, the discussion evoked by linguistic analysis today would make Tucker's methodology virtually impossible. Moreover, philosophers today do not expect to find a safe middle ground between the claims of revealed and secular thought, but by logical and insistent inquiry they must seek out the truth.

Moreover, we may also observe that great changes have taken place in theology since Tucker published his first edition two centuries ago. We are in the midst of a remarkable theological renaissance today. Instead of satisfaction and complacency we find great theological questioning. It is not an age of synthesis, but an age of independent study and investigation. Since the eighteenth century the general status of religion has been greatly modified. The Christian Church has expanded from European shores to a world mission; the pervasive impact of Biblical Criticism, Liberalism, Fundamentalism and Neo-Orthodoxy has been felt; twentieth century world political crises,
the Ecumenical Movement, radical forms of skepticism and existentialism have influenced theology in such marked ways that the eighteenth century is now mainly a bridge of thought between medieval and modern theology. Moreover, since Kant in the nineteenth century an objection—which has grown to conviction—has been raised as to whether we can "prove God" at all. Neo-Thomism has attempted to re-establish the traditional proofs as expressed in Thomas Aquinas, but other theologians have questioned the whole method. In the twentieth century for example Karl Barth affirms that "all we can know of God according to Scripture testimony is His acts. All we can assert of God, all attributes we can assign to God relate to these acts of His. And not to His essence as such." Moreover, John Baillie has asserted that we cannot infer the existence of God even in analogical terms: "It is not as the result of an inference of any kind, whether explicit or implicit, ... that the knowledge of God's reality comes to us. It comes rather through our direct personal encounter with Him in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son our Lord." Again Martin Buber, a writer of a different background, has reminded us eloquently that our relationship to God is not as an "I" to "It," but as an "I" to "Thou":


Men have addressed their eternal Thou with many names. In singing of Him who was thus named they always had the Thou in mind; the first myths were hymns of praise. Then the names took refuge in the language of It; men were more and more strongly moved to think of and to address their eternal Thou as an It. But all God's names are hallowed, for in them He is not merely spoken about, but also spoken to.5

In closing, we see that science, philosophy and theology have moved a great distance beyond the thought-world of Abraham Tucker; and yet he has been worthy of study, if only to complete another detail in the history of British thought. A remark once made about William Hazlitt would apply also to Abraham Tucker:

... we often feel when we take up one of Hazlitt's glowing Essays, that here, too, was a man who might have made a far more enduring mark as a writer of English prose. . . And yet he deserves the study of both the critic and of the student of character.6


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books

Abbey, Charles J., and John H. Overton. The English Church in the
Eighteenth Century. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and
Company, 1878.

——. The English Church and Its Bishops, 1700-1800. 2 vols.
London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1887.

R. Dodsley, M. Cooper, and J. Cotton, 1752.

Sonnenschein and Company, 1902.

by the English Dominican Fathers from the latest Leonine Edition.

Aristotle. The Basic Works of Aristotle, edited and with an Intro¬

——. Aristotle, selected and translated from the original Greek
into the English of today by Philip Wheelwright. New York: The
Odyssey Press, 1951.

Augustine, Aurelius. The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of
Hippo. Vols. I, II, V. Edited by the Rev. Marcus Dods, M.A.,

——. Basic Writings of Saint Augustine. 2 vols. Edited, with
an Introduction and notes by Whitney J. Oates. New York: Random
House, 1948.

Allen, Joseph Henry. An Historical Sketch of the Unitarian Movement
Since the Reformation. New York: The Christian Literature Company,
1894.

Ayer, Alfred J. Philosophical Essays. London: Macmillan and Company,
1954.

——, and Raymond Winch. British Empirical Philosophers, Locke,
Berkeley, Hume, Reid and J. S. Mill. London: Routledge and Kegan
Paul Limited, 1952.


———. The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures. London: Awnsham and John Churchil, 1696.


Middleton, Conyers. *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are Supposed to Have Subsisted in the Christian Church, from the Earliest Age through several Successive Centuries*. London: R. Manby and H. S. Cox, 1749.


London: T. Payne, 1768, 1778.


Seth, James.  *English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy*.  


Tindal, Matthew. *Christianity as Old as the Creation: or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature.* London: 1732.
Toland, John. Christianity not Mysterious: Or, A Treatise Showing That There is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above It; And That no Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Call'd a Mystery. London: Samuel Buckley, 1696.


**B. General Reference Works**


C. Articles and Essays


_____ "Locke," Vol. VIII, 116-120. Ibid.


D. Other Sources


Gentleman's Magazine, XLIX, October 1779, p. 494.
APPENDIX: "THE LIGHT OF NATURE"

(Selected Passages)

The Republic of Plato: Chap. XXV (VII.514 A--521 B), "The Allegory of the Cave."

Aristotle: "De Anima (On the Soul)," Bk. III, Chap. 5, 430a, 15.

The Bible (Authorized Version):

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another.

... "The Epistle to the Romans," I:20f., II:14f.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius:

Nature has furnished us only with some feeble rays of light, which we immediately extinguish so completely by evil habits and erroneous opinions, that the light of nature is nowhere visible. The seeds of virtue are natural to our constitutions, ... but now, as soon as we are born and received into the world ... we are imbued with so many errors, that truth gives place to falsehood, and nature herself to established opinion." The Tusculan Disputations: Bk. III. "On Grief of Mind," p. 364.

Augustine, Aurelius:

... The whole nature of the universe itself which surrounds us, and to which we also belong, proclaims that it has a most excellent Creator, who has given to us a mind and natural reason, whereby to see that things living are to be preferred to things that are not living. ... We must needs confess that the Creator both lives in the highest sense, and perceives and understands all things. ... On The Trinity. Bk. XV, Chap. IV, "What Universal Nature Teaches Us Concerning God."

These [Platonists] ... have distinguished those things which are conceived by the mind from those which are perceived by the senses, neither taking away from the senses anything to which
they are competent, nor attributing to them anything beyond their competency. And the light of our understandings, by which all things are learned by us, they have affirmed to be that selfsame God by whom all things were made. The City of God, Bk. VIII, Chap. VII, p. 109.

Being Son by nature he was born uniquely of the substance of the Father, being what the Father is, God of God, Light of Light. We are not light by nature, but we are illumined by that light, according as we are able to shine in wisdom. Faith and the Creed. Vol. VI, p. 356.

Paracelsus (Theophrast Bombast von Hohenheim, c. 1490-1541):

It is nature that teaches all things, and what she herself cannot teach, she received from the Holy Ghost, who instructs her. For the Holy Ghost and nature are one, that is to say: each day nature shines as a light from the Holy Ghost and learns from him, and thus this light reaches man, as in a dream.

Everything that comes from the light on nature must be learned from the light of nature, excepting only the image of God, which is learned from the spirit that the Lord has given to man. The spirit instructs man in the knowledge of supernatural and eternal things, and after the separation of matter from spirit, it returns to the Lord. . . . There are two schools for man. The school of the earth teaches earthly things and has its schoolmaster from nature; indeed, it is nature herself. . . . Then there is the other school, that from above. There, the teacher is our Father in Heaven. He from whom we are. . . . He teaches heavenly wisdom. . . . He who teaches us the eternal also teaches us the perishable; for both spring from God." Selected Writings, pp. 255f.

Thomas Aquinas:

For certain things that are true about God wholly surpass the capability of human reason, for instance, that God is three and one: while there are certain things to which even natural reason can attain, for instance that God is, that God is one, and others like these, which even the philosophers prove demonstratively of God, being guided by the light of natural reason. Summa Contra Gentiles, Vol. I, Chap. III, p. 5.

The Larger Catechism (1648):

Question 2. How does it appear that there is a God?

A. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; but His Word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal Him unto men for their salvation.
Question 60. Can they who never heard of the gospel, and so do not know Jesus Christ, or believe in Him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature?

A. They who, having never heard the gospel, do not know Jesus Christ, and do not believe in Him, cannot be saved, no matter how diligently they order their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of religion which they profess.

Question 121. Why is the word "Remember" set in the fourth commandment?

A. . . . partly, because we are very ready to forget it, for the following reasons: that there is less light of nature in it, although it restrains our natural liberty in things at other times lawful.

Question 151. What is it that aggravates some sins, making them more heinous than others?

A. Sins are aggravated by the nature and quality of the offence; when they are against the express letter of the law . . . when they are against means of grace, mercies, judgements, the light of nature, conviction of conscience.


Descartes, Rene:

When I speak of being taught by nature in this matter, I understand by the word nature only a certain spontaneous impetus that impels me to believe in a resemblance between ideas and their objects, and not a natural light that affords a knowledge of its truth. But these two things are widely different; for what the natural light shows to be true can be in no degree doubtful, as, for example, that I am because I doubt, and other truths of the like kind. . . .

Now, it is manifest by the natural light that there must at least be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect; for whence can the effect draw its reality if not from its cause? Meditation III: "Of God: That He Exists." Pp. 47, 49.

Locke, John:

The Law is the eternal, immutable Standard of Right. And a part of that Law is, that a man should forgive, not only his Children,
but his Enemies; upon their Repentance, asking Pardon, and Amendment. And therefore he could not doubt that the Author of this Law, . . . would forgive his frail Off-Spring. . . . This way of Reconciliation, this hope of Atonement, the Light of Nature revealed to them. And the Revelation of the Gospel having said nothing to the contrary, leaves them to stand or fall to their own Father and Master. . . . The Reasonableness of Christianity. Pp. 256f.