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Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius

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Pierre Bayle
*Dialogues of Maximus
and Themistius*

Translated, Edited, and Introduced by

Michael W. Hickson



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Preface

Just over 300 years ago Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) died pen-in-hand while putting the final touches to his last work, the *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste*¹ (henceforth *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, or simply *Dialogues*). The completion and publication of this book, translated into English for the first time below, was important to Bayle, for he offers herein his last and fullest attempt to set the record straight about what he believed and what he did not believe concerning the issue that occupied him more than any other and embroiled him in several debates throughout the last decade of his life. That issue is the problem of evil, or why a perfectly good God would permit suffering and moral wickedness to enter the world.

A few people will be curious enough about the last words of the Philosopher of Rotterdam that no further justification for this translation will be needed. But for others the question will naturally arise: why do we need an English translation of Bayle's *Dialogues* three centuries after its publication? In the remainder of this Preface I offer three answers to this question.

The first answer is suggested by Henri Basnage de Beauval below in his foreword to the *Dialogues*. Explaining to the reader why he will not give an intellectual biography of the recently deceased author of the *Dialogues*, Beauval writes: "Those who do not know [Pierre Bayle] by the large number of works he published are total strangers to the Republic of Letters."² So connected was Bayle to the scholarly community, so widely read were his works by learned and popular audiences alike, that to lack familiarity with Bayle and his oeuvre seemed to Beauval equivalent to being a complete stranger to the intellectual milieu of the day.

Three centuries of greater historical perspective confirm and enlarge Beauval's assessment of Bayle's importance. Not only were Bayle's works instrumental to the development of the thought of his contemporary citizens in the Republic of Letters, but today's scholars also widely agree that Bayle's writings were foundational for the subsequent French Enlightenment. Bayle's influ-

¹ The work has two parts (see Note on the Text below, 108–112, for more information about the writing, printing, and order of these parts): Pierre Bayle, *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste, ou Réponse à ce que Mr. Le Clerc a écrit dans son x. Tome de la Bibliothèque Choisie contre Mr. Bayle* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1707); Pierre Bayle, *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste, ou Réponse à l'Examen de la Théologie de Mr. Bayle par Mr. Jaquelot* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1707).

² See below, 123.

ences on Voltaire, Diderot, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant, for example, have been well documented. Histories of skepticism commonly identify Bayle's thought as an expansion and culmination of a renaissance of the ancient Pyrrhonian and Academic schools of thought, and histories of religious toleration place Bayle alongside Spinoza and Locke as one of the most important early advocates of the wide freedom of religion that Western democracies enjoy today.

Yet, despite the unquestionable importance of Bayle in the history of modern philosophy, to my knowledge only five of Bayle's dozens of books³ have ever been published in English translation: *Pensées diverses sur la comète* (1683) [*Various Thoughts on a Comet*];⁴ *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique sous le règne de Louis le Grand* (1686) [*Wholly Catholic France*];⁵ *Commentaire philosophique* (1686–1688) [*Philosophical Commentary*];⁶ the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697–1702) [*Dictionary*];⁷ and now the *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste* (1707), which is only the second new addition in over 250 years to the list of Bayle's books available in English.

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- 3 For a complete list of Bayle's writings see Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 347–352. Of course, while only five of Bayle's books have been translated, these five works contain roughly half of the words Bayle published in his lifetime.
 - 4 This work has been translated twice, first in 1708 and most recently as Pierre Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, translated and with an Introduction by Robert C. Bartlett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
 - 5 Pierre Bayle's *The Condition of Wholly Catholic France Under the Reign of Louis the Great* (1686), translated and introduced by Charlotte Stanley and John Christian Laursen, in *History of European Ideas* 40:3 (2013), 1–48.
 - 6 This work has been translated in its entirety only once (in 1708), and reprinted recently as Pierre Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary on These Words of the Gospel, Luke 14:23, "Compel Them to Come In, That My House May Be Full,"* introduced by John Kilcullen and Chandran Kukathas (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000). Parts I and II (but not III or the Supplement) of the work were recently translated as *Pierre Bayle's Philosophical Commentary. A Modern Translation and Critical Interpretation*, translated by Amie Godman Tannenbaum (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).
 - 7 The entire *Dictionnaire* was translated into English three times within fifty years of Bayle's death, and has not been translated into English in its entirety since. The first translation was printed in 1710 in London in four volumes. The second translation was printed in the period 1734–1738 in London in five volumes. The third translation was printed in the period 1734–1741, also in London, but in ten volumes. The 1734–1738 edition, which is the best, has been reprinted twice in recent times: first by Garland Publishing in New York in 1984, and then by Routledge/Thoemmes in London in 1997. Richard H. Popkin has given us the most recent, but only a partial translation: *Pierre Bayle: Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1991). The main articles treating the problem of evil, however, can be found in Popkin's readily available edition.

The first reason for translating and publishing these *Dialogues*, therefore, is to increase the access of Anglophone scholars to the works of one of the most important thinkers of the early modern period, and thereby to facilitate a greater understanding of that important era in the history of philosophy.

However, the above reason does not address why this particular work, the *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, should be published at this time, nor does it address why the currently existing English translations are insufficient for understanding Bayle and his period. After all, one might argue that especially the *Various Thoughts on a Comet*, *Philosophical Commentary*, and *Dictionary* are Bayle's most original and influential works, so it is unsurprising that Bayle's first translators set to work on these, and that subsequent translators have revisited them with new editions. Moreover, these three most popular and most often translated works of Bayle also contain substantial treatments of all the subjects that occupied him throughout his life: skepticism, atheism, toleration, superstition, the problem of evil, historiography and the history of the Reformation, Rationalist metaphysics, especially the variations by Descartes, Spinoza and Malebranche, conscience, religious controversy, and conversion. Anybody who lacks French, but who would like to enter deeply into Bayle's mind, has only to consult these three books already available in English.

So, again: why the *Dialogues*, and why now?

After the appearance of Elisabeth Labrousse's landmark two-volume study of Bayle in 1964,⁸ European as well as Anglo-American philosophers and historians took renewed interest in Bayle. Publications on Bayle have been increasing in number rapidly over the past fifty years, such that the last decade of the twentieth century, for instance, saw the appearance of over one quarter of all publications on Bayle in that century. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw even more articles, books, conference proceedings, and informal writings on Bayle than the decade before. The most remarkable feature of this recent scholarship is the focus on what has come to be called "the Bayle enigma." Thomas Lennon, who has given the enigma its fullest treatment,⁹ has also given us the most memorable summary of it:

To take just the twentieth-century literature, the suggestions are that Bayle was fundamentally a positivist, an atheist, a deist, a sceptic, a fideist,

8 Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle*, Vol. 1: *Du pays de Foix à la cité d'Erasmus* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963); Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle*, Vol. 2: *Hétérodoxie et rigorisme* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

9 See, especially, Thomas M. Lennon, *Reading Bayle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 12–41.

a Socinian, a liberal Calvinist, a conservative Calvinist, a libertine, a Judaizing Christian, a Judaeo-Christian, or even a secret Jew, a Manichean, an existentialist ... to the point that it is tempting to conclude that these commentators cannot have been talking about the same author, or at least that they have not used the same texts. There can be overlap among these classifications, so that not all of the interpretations entirely exclude one another. Implausible as it may seem, moreover, all of these suggestions have at least some plausibility.¹⁰

While it may be the case that the existing English translations of the *Dictionary* and several other works provide readers with a representative sample of Bayle's thought, the problem is that Bayle's thought is deeply enigmatic, and thus stands in need of historical contextualization and insightful interpretation. It is always clear what Bayle is arguing *about* in his works (i.e. the problem), but it is not always as clear what he is ultimately arguing *for* (i.e. the thesis), or exactly how he takes his argument to support his thesis. In some cases it even appears as though Bayle's arguments in fact undermine the thesis he claims to support by those arguments. These interpretive problems are never more apparent than in the case of Bayle's treatments of the problem of evil at the conclusion of which Bayle claims that people ought to believe firmly in God's *unity* and perfect *goodness*, yet in the process of which he argues repeatedly against monotheism and on behalf of Manichean dualism, which posits *two* gods, one of which is supremely *evil*. What are we to make of this?

With such interpretive puzzles in mind, it is surprising that a class of Bayle's writings has been largely neglected, even though this class is especially relevant to the Bayle enigma. We might call these neglected works the *self-interpretive texts*. The most famous example of such a text, and the one that has received some scholarly attention,¹¹ is the set of five *Éclaircissements* [*Clarifications*] appended to the second edition of the *Dictionary*. These are responses by Bayle to various charges of impiety and impropriety that were brought against his *Dictionary*. Bayle explains in great detail to readers how to read the relevant articles of the *Dictionary* such that they will not appear scandalous. The *Clarifications* together comprise a text, therefore, in which Bayle himself explains how to read Bayle. There are other such works which have not been studied in much detail, including the *Addition aux Pensées diverses sur les comètes* (1694) [*Addi-*

¹⁰ Lennon, *Reading Bayle*, 15.

¹¹ See especially Hubert Bost and Antony McKenna (editors), *Les "Éclaircissements" de Pierre Bayle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010).

tion to the *Various Thoughts on a Comet*], in which Bayle interprets via responses to objections his *Various Thoughts on a Comet* and his *Philosophical Commentary*; as well as *La Cabale chimérique* [*The Chimerical Cabal*] and other related writings of the early 1690s written in defence against Pierre Jurieu's attacks. But the most important self-interpretive text for understanding Bayle's thought is the *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*.

The *Dialogues* is by far the most revealing and important self-interpretive text in the Baylian corpus for several reasons. This book was the last one written by Bayle, and in it he is forced by the objections that occasioned it to address nearly every controversial aspect of his life's work. The other self-interpretive texts address only one work or only a few particular objections to Bayle. The *Dialogues*, on the other hand, have both breadth and depth: they treat a wide range of Bayle's works and arguments, but they nevertheless focus on the one issue that is central to every discussion of the Bayle enigma, the problem of evil. Those who view Bayle as a skeptic, but also one who believes in God, see his critique of reason as focusing mainly on this problem: "Bayle's skeptical arguments are directed not just against reason, or even against reason on behalf of faith, but in particular against reason's ability to solve the problem of evil."¹² Likewise, those who see atheism, not merely skepticism, as the logical conclusion of Bayle's thought claim that this is clearest in his reflection on evil: "[Bayle] arrives at atheism (perhaps above all) by posing the question of the origin of evil ..."¹³ The *Dialogues* comprises over 100,000 words by Bayle on how to read his arguments on the problem of evil in the *Dictionary* and other writings. It is difficult to imagine, therefore, a more promising starting point from which to approach the Bayle enigma.

Moreover, as its title suggests, the *Dialogues* is not a scripted soliloquy by Bayle, but a conversation. A word of clarification is in order, however, for Bayle did little to bring the characters of this book, Maximus and Themistius, into a compelling dialogue; they simply report what Le Clerc and Jaquelot had last written, and then take turns responding on Bayle's behalf. So it is hardly an artful dialogue and from a literary perspective the book is rather weak, bearing far greater resemblance to Leibniz's staid *New Essays* than to Hume's extraordinary *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. The dialogues that *will* grip the reader, however, are not those between the characters Maximus and Themistius, but those between the conflicting ideas of Bayle and Le Clerc, Bayle and Jaquelot. If Bayle chose to make Maximus and Themistius hollow it was not

¹² Lennon, *Reading Bayle*, 10.

¹³ Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe* (Paris: Honoré champion), 189.

for lack of creativity, but rather to make the characters transparent, providing readers with an unobstructed view of the more important dialogues that were at stake.

Le Clerc and Jaquelot should be the envy of contemporary Bayle scholars, for they could demand of Bayle straight answers to tough questions about the meaning and intent of his views. Le Clerc in particular is adept at backing Bayle into a corner, forcing him to enumerate, for example, the core religious beliefs underlying his position on the problem of evil, pressing him to explain how his skepticism does not destroy religion, challenging him to distinguish his arguments from those of atheists, and to name one single theologian who thinks the way he does about Providence. Bayle was sensitive to the public's judgment, he was aware that many intelligent readers were following his debates and that they would sense if he was evading his opponents' questions; so rather than risk being accused of bad faith, he answered every charge put to him. And these charges—of atheism, political subversion, Pyrrhonian skepticism, indifference toward religion—correspond to the most radical options that contemporary Bayle scholars entertain as providing interpretive keys to Bayle's texts. So the conversation happening today among Bayle scholars already began 300 years ago with Bayle literally at the center of the dialogue.

The second reason for this translation of the *Dialogues*, therefore, is that it promises to shed light on the Bayle enigma. A word of caution is in order here, since I do not want to suggest that this or any other work will ever *solve* the Bayle enigma completely and to everyone's satisfaction. If one takes that enigma to be the problem of how to classify the whole of Bayle's thought, or how to read between the lines of a text in order to peer into Bayle's heart, then I am certain that the Bayle enigma will remain forever insoluble. But there is nothing surprising about that; given that conception of the term 'enigma', we should also expect the Descartes enigma, the Hume enigma, the Kant enigma, the Any-Author-Still-Worth-Reading enigma, to remain equally unanswered. But if by the 'Bayle enigma' we simply mean widespread confusion and misunderstanding about Bayle's works because of apparent contradictions within them, then I am confident that reading the *Dialogues* can lead to considerable progress in cracking the Bayle enigma, for the simple reason that the *Dialogues* is devoted to clarifying and elaborating Bayle's most notorious arguments. We can make progress, however, only if we first understand the historical context of the *Dialogues*, of Bayle's reflection on evil generally, and of his debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot. The purpose of the lengthy Introduction below is to provide that context.

The third reason for translating Bayle's *Dialogues* at this time is that there has been a resurgence of interest in G.W. Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée sur la*

bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal [*Theodicy*] since 2010, which was the 300th anniversary of that work, the only book that Leibniz saw fit to publish in his lifetime. All readers of the *Theodicy* recognize that the work is at least in part a response to Bayle's reflection on the problem of evil, but what most readers overlook is that the *Theodicy* responds at length, in particular, to Bayle's *Dialogues*. This is easy to miss, since Leibniz refers to Bayle's book throughout the *Theodicy* not by its main title, but by the subtitles of the *Dialogues*' two parts: "Bayle's response to Le Clerc," and "Bayle's response to Jaquelot." Anglophone Leibniz scholars would not only benefit from having an English translation of Bayle's *Dialogues* at hand while they read the *Theodicy*, but also from having the history of Bayle's debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot related and analyzed (as I do in the Introduction below), since it is abundantly clear from the Preface and Preliminary Discourse to his *Theodicy* that Leibniz had followed these debates very closely and assumed familiarity with them in his readers.¹⁴

¹⁴ There is an English translation of the *Theodicy*: G.W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, translated by E.M. Huggard, and edited with an Introduction by Austin Farrer (Chicago: Open Court, 1985). Another translation, with substantial Introduction, has been undertaken by Sean Greenberg and Robert Sleight, Jr.

Acknowledgments

The idea of this project arose in the course of conversation with Thomas Lennon, to whom I am grateful for his scholarly example and for his encouragement throughout the years I worked on the book. In particular, I learned a great deal about the art of translation from Tom's excellent translations of Malebranche and Huet, but especially from two separate sets of very detailed comments that Tom made on my entire translation of the first part of the *Dialogues*, and from a set of comments on parts of my translation of the second part. My research at home was made easier by Tom's generous gift of Bayle's *Oeuvres diverses*, and my first research trip to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France was made easier by Tom's hand-drawn map, sketched from memory on scrap paper in my living room in South Bend, Indiana, of much of the interior of the BN and of the surrounding arrondissement. I am familiar enough with the BN that I will not need the map again, and time has not been kind to the paper on which it was written, but I have kept it filed away nonetheless as a reminder that I would know very little about historical research or French philosophy or Bayle if I had not had the privilege to know and work with Tom.

I received an email out of the blue in 2010, just after I had undertaken this project, from a very distinguished philosopher whom I had never met—Adam Morton, then Canada Research Chair in Epistemology and Decision Theory at the University of Alberta, now Visiting Professor at the University of British Columbia—who noticed that I had just published an article on Bayle and who asked me whether I knew anybody who could use the third (1720) edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*: Professor Morton had a copy, but wasn't reading it much and felt that it would get more use in the hands of a young Bayle scholar. I spent a day wondering whether it would be moral to nominate myself for the gift, and naturally I decided that it would be. The books arrived a week later in a carefully packed box. I continue to be humbled by this gift and very grateful to Professor Morton, who asked for nothing in return except that I make a small donation to Oxfam.

The translation and much of the research for the Introduction were completed while I held a Templeton Fellowship in Early Modern Philosophy in the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame during the 2010/2011 Academic Year. I am grateful to Samuel Newlands and Michael Rea for their work organizing conferences, talks, seminars, and informal discussions surrounding the problem of evil in Early Modern Philosophy, which were all beneficial to me while working on this book. In addition, Sam offered many helpful criticisms of my work on Bayle and expanded my understanding of

Early Modern Philosophy, as did Todd Ryan and Ryan Nichols. During that Fellowship year I spent time in Paris where I had helpful conversations about Bayle and his *Dialogues* with Hubert Bost and Victor Bedoya Ponte. I am also grateful to the staff at the Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français for providing me with access to rare works by and about Isaac Jaquelot during that same trip to Paris.

I am grateful to all those organizations that have made Bayle's works, and those of his contemporaries, freely available and searchable on the Internet, especially Google, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for Gallica, and the University of Chicago for its ARTFL Project (including its searchable edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*). The capacity afforded by these resources to scan in an instant the use of particular words or phrases in Bayle's period was invaluable to me while working on this translation.¹ For help with the remaining translation problems I have two other people to thank: Kristen Irwin offered helpful comments on selections from my translation of the second part of the *Dialogues*, and Jean-Luc Solère's assistance was invaluable in the final days of translation when a few words and phrases remained elusive.

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I am also indebted to two anonymous referees, to Professor Andrew Fix, and to the staff at Brill for helpful comments and suggestions that led to improvements of the work that follows.

I have spent nearly a decade immersed in the "ocean of Bayle's texts concerning evil"² and in the adjoining seas of criticism of those works. I have my

¹ While working on this project I did not have access to the Pierre Bayle Corpus, recently made available by Classiques Garnier under the direction of Antony McKenna and Gianluca Mori, but my subsequent experience with this digital resource has convinced me that it is the most important contribution to Bayle scholarship in recent decades.

² Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Pierre Bayle, ou l'obsession du mal* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1977), 39.

family to thank if I have mostly remained afloat these years. In particular, I must thank my parents, William Hickson and Barbara McCulloch, for their continued encouragement and generosity; my wife, Andréanne, for occasional assistance with the translation but especially for years of support and friendship without which I could not have completed this book; and my three children, Isaac, Arthur, and Elisabeth, whose laughter, wonder, and innocence have provided me with the most persuasive refutations of Bayle's pessimism that I have yet to encounter.

List of Abbreviations

There are two sets of abbreviations below: the left column contains acronyms or contractions that will be used only within footnotes; in the right column, after the full original titles of works, English abbreviations in square brackets are given that will be used in the text. These are the most important works in Bayle's debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot; other works cited less often will be cited first by their full title in the original language, and subsequently by an English abbreviated title.

- BC* Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque choisie* [*Choice Library*] (Amsterdam, 1703–1713); reprinted (Genève: Slatkine, 1968).
- CFR* Isaac Jaquelot, *Conformité de la foi avec la raison; ou défense de la religion, contre les principales difficultez répandues dans le Dictionnaire historique et critique de Mr. Bayle* [*Conformity*; full translation: *The Conformity of Faith and Reason, or a Defence of Religion against the Principal Difficulties Spread throughout the Historical and Critical Dictionary of Mr. Bayle*] (Amsterdam, 1705); reprinted in *Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke Materialien und Dokumente*, Band 96 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006).
- DHC* Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* [*Dictionary*] (Rotterdam: R. Leers, 1697, 2nd ed. 1702). The most complete and authoritative edition, and so the one that I will cite, is the so-called “fifth edition” (though it is really the eighth), the 1740 edition of Amsterdam, Leyde, La Haye, and Utrecht in four volumes. Citations will be given in the standard way, including the volume number, article title in French, remark (if applicable), page number, and if applicable, ‘a’ or ‘b’ after the page number indicating the left or right column of a remark. Within the main text I will translate the *Dictionary*'s article titles into English.
- EMT* Pierre Bayle, *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste* [*Dialogues*] (*OD* IV, 1–106). The abbreviation ‘*EMT*’ will be used in the footnotes to refer to the French text of the *OD*, while the title ‘*Dialogues*’ will be used in the text and footnotes for internal references to this translation.
- ETB* Isaac Jaquelot, *Examen de la théologie de Mr. Bayle, Répandue dans son Dictionnaire Critique, dans ses Pensées sur les Comètes, et dans ses Réponses à un Provincial; où l'on defend la Conformité de la Foi avec la Raison, contre sa Réponse* [*Examen*; full translation: *Examination of Bayle's Theology as it is Spread throughout his Historical and Critical Dictionary, his Various Thoughts on a Comet, and in his Responses to a Provincial's Questions, in which the Conformity is defended against Bayle's Response*] (Amsterdam, 1706).

- OD* Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses*, four volumes (La Haye, 1727–1731). Citations will include the volume number, page number, and ‘a’ or ‘b’ corresponding to the left and right columns of text. Additionally, the title of the work cited as well as chapter number may also be given.
- Par* Jean Le Clerc, *Parrhasiana: ou pensées diverses sur des matières de critique, d’histoire, de morale et de politique avec la défense de diverses ouvrages de Mr. L. C., par Theodore Parrhase* [*Parrhasiana*; full translation: *Parrhasiana: or Various Thoughts on Matters Relating to Criticism, History, Morality, and Politics, with a Defence of Various Works by Mr. Le Clerc, by Theodore Parrhasius*] (Amsterdam, 1699). There is a complete English translation of the *Parrhasiana* by an unknown translator: *Parrhasiana, or, Thoughts upon several subjects, as criticism, history, morality, and politics, by Monsieur Le Clerk* (London, 1700).
- RBL* Pierre Bayle, *Réponse pour Mr. Bayle à Mr. Le Clerc au sujet du 3. et du 13. article du 9. tome de la Bibliothèque choisie* [*Response to Le Clerc*] (*OD* III, 989–1009).
- RQP* Pierre Bayle, *Réponse aux questions d’un provincial* [*Response to a Provincial’s Questions*] (*OD* III, 501–1084).

Chronology of Bayle's Life and Main Philosophical Works

- 1647 Pierre Bayle is born the 18th of November at Le Carla (now Le Carla-Bayle) in southern France.
- 1666 Bayle completes his Humanities education at the Protestant Academy of Puylaurens.
- 1668 Bayle leaves Le Carla in November, never to return; begins to study Philosophy at Puylaurens.
- 1669 Bayle arrives at Toulouse the 19th of February, converts to Catholicism the 19th of March, and continues to study Philosophy at the Jesuit College of Toulouse.
- 1670 Bayle completes his study of Philosophy with the Jesuits, leaves Toulouse the 19th of August, abjures Catholicism, returns to Calvinism the 21st of August, and flees to Geneva.
- 1675 Death of Bayle's mother, Jeanne.
Bayle takes up post as Professor of Philosophy at the Protestant Academy of Sedan.
- 1681 Closure of the Protestant Academy of Sedan; Bayle moves to Rotterdam where he takes up post as Professor of Philosophy and History at the *École Illustré* ["Illustrious School"].
- 1683 Publication of Bayle's *Pensées diverses écrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne, à l'occasion de la comète qui parut au mois de décembre 1680* [*Various Thoughts on the Comet*] (Rotterdam: R. Leers).
- 1684 The *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* [*News from the Republic of Letters (NRL)*] (Amsterdam: H. Desbordes, 1684–1687) begins to appear in the spring with Bayle as editor and principal author.
Death of Bayle's younger brother, Joseph.
- 1685 Death of Bayle's father, Jean.
Death in prison of Bayle's elder brother, Jacob.
Revocation of the Edict of Nantes
- 1686 Publication of the first two parts of the *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ: contrain-les d'entrer* [*Philosophical Commentary on Luke 14:23*] (Amsterdam: A. Wolfgang), followed by the third part in 1687 and the *Supplement* in 1688.
- 1687 Bayle falls ill, gives up editorship of the *NRL*, temporarily ceases writing and teaching.
- 1689 Beginning of years of dispute with the Theologian of Rotterdam, Pierre

XXIV CHRONOLOGY OF BAYLE'S LIFE AND MAIN PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

- Jurieu, during which Bayle published his most controversial critiques of organized religion, including the *Réponse d'un nouveau converti à la lettre d'un réfugié* [*Response by a New Convert to the Letter of a Refugee*] (Amsterdam: A. Wolfgang, 1689), and *Avis important aux réfugiés sur leur prochain retour en France* [*An Important Warning to the Refugees concerning Their Eventual Return to France*] (La Haye: A. Moetjens, 1690).
- 1692 Bayle begins working on the *Dictionary*.
- 1693 At the behest of Jurieu, Bayle is removed from the *École Illustre* by the Rotterdam city council, and prohibited from teaching privately in the city.
- 1694 The *Addition aux Pensées diverses sur les comètes* [*Addition to the Various Thoughts on a Comet*] (Rotterdam: R. Leers) is published to thwart Jurieu's efforts to have Bayle condemned for heresy by the Rotterdam Consistory.
- 1696 The two volumes of the first edition of the *Dictionary* are published in October.
- 1699 Publication of Jean Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana*; beginning of the Bayle-Le Clerc dispute (see subsequent Chronology for the remainder of the texts of that debate).
- 1701 Publication of the second edition of the *Dictionary* in late December.
- 1703 The first volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* appears (five volumes in total were printed between 1703 and 1707).
- 1704 Publication of the *Continuation des Pensées diverses écrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne* [*Continuation of the Various Thoughts on a Comet*] (Rotterdam: R. Leers, printed in August 1704, but dated 1705, two volumes).
- 1705 Publication of Isaac Jaquelot's *Conformity*; beginning of the Bayle-Jaquelot dispute (see subsequent Chronology for remainder of texts of that debate).
Publication of the second and third volumes of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.
- 1706 Bayle completes Part 1 of the *Dialogues*, devoted to Le Clerc.
Bayle dies the 28th of December, putting the final touches to Part 2 of the *Dialogues*, devoted to Jaquelot.
- 1707 Posthumous publication in February of the *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*.

Chronology of the Bayle-Le Clerc Debate

Below I have given all titles in their original languages so that scholars wishing to do further research on Bayle's debates will easily find the relevant works. If not given below, English translations of the titles and bibliographic information can be found above in the "List of Abbreviations." It is important to note that works published in the latter half of a year (usually in August or later, depending on the printer) sometimes bore the *millésime* of the following year. This makes sense of 6 and 7 below, for example, where Bayle responds in 1704 to a work of Le Clerc's dated 1705.

1. Bayle publishes the first edition of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), including the articles "Manichéens," "Marcionites," and "Pauliciens."
2. Le Clerc publishes *Parrhasiana* (1699), in which chapter VI is devoted to answering Bayle's Manichean objections.
3. Bayle publishes the second edition of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702), including a new remark E to the article "Origène," which seeks to refute the arguments of chapter VI of Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana*.
The debate concerning the problem of evil is suspended and the debate concerning plastic natures begins.
4. Le Clerc discusses Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) and Nehemiah Grew's *Cosmologia Sacra* (1701), giving Bayle access to the idea of plastic natures.
Le Clerc discusses Cudworth in *Bibliothèque choisie* (BC), tome I (1703), article III, 63–138; and BC, tome II (1703), article II, 78–130. Le Clerc discusses Grew in BC, tome I, article VI, 228–314; and BC, tome II, article XIII, 352–411.
5. Bayle attacks Cudworth's and Grew's systems in *Continuation des pensées diverses* (printed in August 1704, dated 1705), chapter XXI (OD III, 215b–217b), thus beginning the debate over plastic natures. Bayle then cites Le Clerc (tongue-in-cheek) in support of his views on Manicheism, in chapter LXXVII (OD III, 301a).
6. Le Clerc clarifies and defends Cudworth's and Grew's doctrines in BC, tome V (printing began in August 1704; issue dated 1705), article IV, 283–303, in response to Bayle's CPD.
7. Bayle responds in the learned journal edited by Henri Basnage de Beauval, the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans* (HOS), dated August 1704 (but it must have been printed somewhat later in 1704), article VII, pp. 369–396.

8. Le Clerc responds in *BC*, tome VI (dated 1705), article VII, 422–427.
9. Bayle responds in *HOS*, dated December 1704 (but obviously appeared after item 8 immediately above), article XII, 540–544.
- 10a. Concerning plastic natures, Le Clerc responds in *BC*, tome VII (1705), article VII, 281–289.
- 10b. Le Clerc reopens the debate concerning the origin of evil once again in *BC*, tome VII (1705), article VIII, 330–352.
- 11a. Concerning plastic natures, Bayle responds in *RQP* II (December 1705), chapters clxxix–clxxxii (*OD* III, 881a–893a).

The debate over plastic natures comes to a close. The focus of the remainder of the Bayle-Le Clerc debate will be on the problem of evil.

- 11b. Bayle responds to Le Clerc's latest treatment of the origin of evil in *RQP* II (December 1705), chapters clxxii–clxxvi (*OD* III, 863b–873b). Bayle also responds in *RQP* II to works relating to the origin of evil written by other Rationalist theologians: Jacques Bernard, William King, and Isaac Jaquelot.
- 12a. Le Clerc publishes "Défense de la Bonté et de la Sanctité Divine, contre les objections de Mr. Bayle" ("Defence of the Goodness and Holiness of God, against Bayle's Objections"), in *BC*, tome IX (1706), article III, 103–171.
- 12b. Le Clerc responds to the arguments concerning him in 11b above in *BC*, tome IX (1706), article X, 361–386.
13. Bayle publishes his penultimate reply to Le Clerc, *Réponse pour Mr. Bayle à Mr. Le Clerc, au sujet du 3. et du 13.¹ articles du 9. tome de la Bibliothèque choisie (RBL)* (*OD* III, 989–1009).
14. Le Clerc publishes his last reply to Bayle in the latter's lifetime in *BC*, tome X (1706), article VIII, 364–426.

Death of Bayle on 28 December 1706.

15. *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, Part 1, printed in February, 1707.
16. Le Clerc responds to the *Dialogues* in *BC*, tome XII (1707), article V, 198–386.

¹ The discrepancy here between Bayle's numbering of the article and the one given in item 13 above (Bayle replies to the XIIth article, whereas I have cited the Xth article in the chronology) is due to a discrepancy between the table of contents of *BC*, tome IX, which lists Le Clerc's article against Bayle as article XIII, and the actual body of *BC*, tome IX, in which the Xth article is devoted to Bayle, and in which there is no XIIth article.

Chronology of the Bayle-Jaquelot Debate

1. Bayle publishes the second edition of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702).
2. Jaquelot publishes *Conformité de la foi avec la raison* (1705).
3. Bayle replies to the *Conformité* in *RQP II* (1705), chapters cxxviii–clxxi (*OD III*, 760–839).
4. Jaquelot responds to Bayle in his *Examen de la théologie de Pierre Bayle* (1706).
5. *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, Part 2, printed in February, 1707.
6. Jaquelot responds to the *Dialogues* in his third book against Bayle, *Réponse aux Entretiens composez par Mr. Bayle, contre la Conformité de la Foi avec la Raison, et l'Examen de sa Théologie* [Response to the *Dialogues* written by Bayle against the *Conformity* and the *Examen*] (Amsterdam: François L'Honoré, 1707).

Introduction

The *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius* is divided into two parts: the first part, which is much shorter than the second, is Bayle's final response to Le Clerc after many rounds of debate between the two over nearly seven years; while the second part is devoted to answering Jaquelot, who had just published his second book against Bayle just several months before Bayle died. Though the debates are for the most part independent, they both focus above all on two aspects of Bayle's thought: on a general level, they focus on Bayle's treatment of the conformity of faith and reason, and more particularly, the debates concern Bayle's thesis that the problem of evil is insoluble by reason alone, and that we must therefore have recourse to faith to solve it. The goal of this Introduction is to give readers the background needed to follow the arguments of the *Dialogues*. Consequently, the Introduction has three parts: (1) a summary and analysis of Bayle's thought on the problem of evil and the conformity of faith and reason which occasioned the debates; (2) a summary and analysis of the Bayle-Le Clerc debate up to the *Dialogues*; and (3) a summary and analysis of the Bayle-Jaquelot debate up to the *Dialogues*.^f

Part 1: The Problem of Evil in Bayle's *Dictionary*

The Calvinist and Cartesian Contexts of Bayle's Thought

Why a supremely perfect, and more precisely, a supremely *good* creator of the universe would permit suffering and sin to enter the world—the problem of evil—is one of the oldest and most frequently discussed problems in the history of Western philosophy, and consequently, the search for a theodicy,²

¹ I will not assume along with Beauval (in his Foreword below) that anyone who can read will be familiar with the life and works of Pierre Bayle. However, like Beauval I will omit any intellectual biography of Bayle beyond the Chronology given above since there are brief English sources available. For a short biography by one of the best Bayle scholars in recent memory, see Elisabeth Labrousse, *Bayle*, translated by Denys Potts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). For a brief intellectual biography focused on Bayle's philosophy, see Thomas M. Lennon and Michael W. Hickson, "Pierre Bayle," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/bayle/> (last accessed 5 January 2016).

² The term 'theodicy' was coined by Leibniz in the late seventeenth century, but it has become a common general term used to refer to any explanation of God's reasons for permitting

or solution to the problem of evil, is one of the oldest philosophical quests. The problem of evil finds its source in two of the main original influences on Western philosophy, the Platonic dialogues (especially *Timaeus*) and the Judeo-Christian Bible (especially the first chapters of *Genesis*, the entire book of *Job*, and Paul's letter to the *Romans*).³ Hence both unaided reason as well as revealed religion independently (it seems) gave rise to this problem in the early days of Western philosophy. Later in the seventeenth century it was again the accidental reinforcement of reason's and religion's confrontations with evil that led to the problem of evil becoming an obsession throughout the early modern period. No other era in the history of philosophy saw as much reflection devoted to this problem, not even the early days of Christianity when Augustine renounced and then attacked vehemently the sect of Manicheism (more on this sect below). The two causes of the renewed modern interest in the problem of evil were Calvinist theology and Cartesian philosophy.

In the case of Calvinist theology, the troublesome doctrine was Calvin's view of divine predestination, which is summarized in *L'Institution de la religion chrétienne* [*Institutes of the Christian Religion*] as follows: "[I]n accordance with what scripture clearly shows, we say that the Lord once established in His eternal and immutable counsel whom He would take to salvation and whom He would leave in destruction. We say that He receives those whom He calls to salvation by His free mercy, without any regard for their own worth; on the contrary, that the entrance into life is closed to all those whom He wishes to give over to damnation and that this is done by His secret and incomprehensible but righteous and fair judgment."⁴ Calvin was careful to leave the details of this doctrine unstated, but in doing so invited subsequent theologians to spell out the doctrine with all its paradoxical implications.

By the late sixteenth century a second generation of Calvinist theologians, led by Theodore Beza, were interpreting the passage just quoted and others like it as containing a doctrine of *double* predestination, according to which God not only predestined certain people to salvation and brought them to that state by grace without regard for their merit, but He also willed just as positively and effectively that certain people be damned, again without

any kind of evil to enter the world. I will use the term in this informal way throughout this Introduction, realizing that my use of the term is mostly *avant la lettre*.

3 For a more detailed historical survey, see Michael W. Hickson, "A Brief History of Problems of Evil," in *A Companion to the Problem of Evil*, edited by Justin McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 3–18.

4 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, translated by Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2009), 417.

regard for their merit or lack thereof.⁵ According to this doctrine, “God actively rejects some men and women; God does not simply permit them to be lost.”⁶ Beza’s doctrine was *supralapsarian* (or *antelapsarian*), which entails that God’s election of the saved and reprobation of the damned preceded God’s decree that the Fall (*lapsus*) take place. (“Precedence” here is to be understood logically, as in the mind of God, not temporally, since God transcends time.) The consequence of this logical order of decrees is that it was not ultimately because of the Fall of humankind that God saved some and damned others; those elective decrees were made logically prior to and independent of the Fall.

Doctrines of predestination are intimately intertwined with doctrines of free will, and on Beza’s view, free will of a libertarian sort is out of the question. Neither the saved nor the damned are free to do or not to do God’s commands; the universe of Beza’s God, rigorously regulated by the sovereign divine will, is deterministic. Any account of human free action must be upheld (if at all) in compatibilist terms, as action done in the absence of constraint, or action that is the expression of prior deliberation. What leads the elect to salvation and the reprobates to their damnation is not their own wills, but the grace of God or the lack thereof. Consequently, divine grace is, according to Beza, irresistible; those who have it, the saved, are led ineluctably to heaven, while those who are damned must not receive any share of God’s grace at all. Relatedly, the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ was intended and effective only for the elect, not for the damned. These views of the narrow scope of grace and redemption became known as Particularism.

Beza’s interpretation of Calvinist theology was inspired largely by Scripture and Calvin’s own writings, but it is worth noting that the interpretation had important philosophical motivation.⁷ If we understand divine providence as God’s direction of the universe toward the end that He had in mind when creating it, then Beza’s theology, with its emphasis on the sovereign divine will, lays a solid foundation for providence. To direct the universe to some end God must be omniscient; He must know all that will happen, how it will happen, and when it will happen, otherwise He cannot govern infallibly. Beza’s emphasis on the absolute and eternal character of the divine decrees grounds divine

⁵ For a detailed overview of Calvin’s view, see Fred H. Klooster, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977).

⁶ David Curtis Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 119.

⁷ See Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* 11, 388.

omniscience conveniently, for God knows all that will happen through the necessary knowledge that He has of His own decrees, which logically precede creation.

To critics of Beza and his followers this set of interrelated doctrines seemed monstrous, for it seemed to imply that God freely-willed to create certain people just *in order to* damn them. As one historian puts it, “[t]o many non-Calvinist Christians, Beza’s interpretation of the whole human story after the Fall in Eden savoured suspiciously of a divine put-up job; one could accuse God of being the author of Adam and Eve’s fault and hence of all human sin ...”⁸ An erstwhile defender of Beza’s orthodoxy, Jacobus Arminius, began to teach and preach his doubts about this dominant interpretation of Calvinism around the turn of the century. In the early seventeenth century followers of Arminius published their famous Remonstrance in opposition to Beza’s theology. The most important error according to the Calvinist Arminians was that Beza’s “insistence ... upon God’s omnipotence and man’s helplessness ... led immediately and necessarily to the conclusion that God Himself was responsible for man’s sins and was the cause of his damnation.”⁹ This implication was unacceptable to the Arminians, since it seemed to conflict with everything that reason teaches about the nature of goodness. The Arminians consequently afforded human free will greater power and responsibility in matters relating to salvation in order to place the authorship for sin squarely on human beings, and not on God. They also distinguished themselves from followers of Beza by their belief in the resistibility and universality of divine grace. The reason for the damnation of the wicked, according to the Arminians, is that they freely turn away from the grace of God, which is universally given to all humankind.

The Arminians were *postlapsarians* (or *infralapsarians*); that is, they believed that God decreed that certain people would be saved and others damned *because of* the Fall, which was foreseen by God but brought about solely by human free will. God foresaw and permitted the Fall, He did not positively decree that it should take place. Arminians were also Universalists, holding that both divine grace and Christ’s redemption were intended for all people, who could either accept or reject these gifts. The Arminian position, especially concerning free will and universalism, had significant Scriptural support, but the position also had philosophical advantages over Beza’s theology by preserving the common notions of justice when explaining salvation and damna-

⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 375.

⁹ Walter Rex, *Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 80.

tion. Humans deserve these things to a certain extent by their virtuous actions or crimes (although to say that humans earn their salvation completely by their own efforts would be a form of the heresy of Pelagianism). However, the Arminian position is difficult to square with divine omniscience. If humans are genuinely free, in the sense of possessing a freedom of indifference, then how can God foresee human free actions, and how can God direct the universe infallibly toward His ends?

The Dutch Calvinist Church was split over the Remonstrance, and ultimately a Synod was held at Dordrecht in 1618 to decide whether Arminians, or so-called “Remonstrants,” with their beliefs in the freedom of the will and the universality of divine grace, could be considered orthodox. The *Acts* of the Synod demonstrate an effort to find middle ground wherever possible, but in time it became clear that the conservative orthodoxy of Beza and his champion Franciscus Gomarus, but not the liberal theology of the Arminians, had won the day.¹⁰ This validation by international Calvinist leaders of what seemed to many a scandalous interpretation of important Christian doctrines attracted additional criticism of Calvin’s theology, not only from within the now split Calvinist church, but also from Catholics and Lutherans. The accusations that Calvinists taught that God is the cause of sin and that God positively willed that certain people be damned became commonplace. Calvinists in turn retorted these accusations against their critics. A century of vitriolic, sectarian theological controversy over human freedom and God’s causal role in sin and damnation—all issues central to the problem of evil—had begun, as Bayle reports in his *Dictionary*:

Since Luther and Calvin appeared, I do not think that a single year has passed without someone accusing them of making God the author of sin. [The Calvinist theologian, Pierre Jurieu] argues that in the case of Luther the accusation is fair; the Lutherans today claim the same thing with respect to Calvin. The Roman Catholics make the accusation against both Calvin and Luther, and the Jesuits in particular have made the accusation against the Jansenists as well.¹¹

A few decades after the Synod of Dordrecht, the philosophical impetus for the renewed interest in the problem of evil was given by René Descartes in his 1641 *Meditations*. In his search for unshakeable certainty, Descartes settled

¹⁰ Rex, *Essays*, 87–88.

¹¹ *DHC* III, “Pauliciens,” rem. F, 628b.

his philosophical system upon God's perfect goodness. Since God is perfectly good, He is no deceiver, and since God is no deceiver, we can be certain that our mental faculties, which have their origin in God, are always reliable. The fourth Meditation raises a problem of evil that threatens to undermine this foundation of Cartesian philosophy: how does human judgment, which is part of God's good creation, err at all, let alone so frequently? The success of Descartes' metaphysical project hangs on the ability to answer this problem. The "theodicy of error" of the fourth Meditation is basically the traditional Augustinian free-will defence. God is not the cause of human error, humans are the cause of human error through their misuse of the supremely good divine gift of free will, which is the cause of all misjudgment. Admirers and critics of Descartes were thus encouraged by the *Meditations* to revisit the history of the problem of evil, focusing above all on the evil of error, and to evaluate the effectiveness of appeals to free will in answering that problem.

The Calvinist and Cartesian confrontations with the problem of evil in early modernity are especially crucial to bear in mind when approaching the thought of Bayle. Bayle's upbringing in a Protestant region of France, and his interaction with celebrated Cartesians such as Jean-Robert Chouet and later Nicolas Malebranche, immersed Bayle in the debates surrounding Calvin's theology and Descartes' philosophy, which are consequently the contexts necessary for approaching Bayle's thought on any subject, not just the problem of evil. Moreover, despite growing up in the home of a Calvinist minister and despite early excitement about Descartes' philosophy and Malebranche's development of Cartesianism, Bayle's earliest writings demonstrate ample skepticism about the Protestant debates surrounding predestination, and about Cartesian attempts to explain the origin of error.¹² For our purposes, what is important to bear in mind is that by the time he wrote the *Dictionary*, Bayle was decidedly anti-Arminian and anti-Cartesian in the articles that treat the problem of evil. These facts are important since both Le Clerc and Jaquelot were Cartesian-inspired Arminians who would have found their philosophical and theological views repeatedly attacked by Bayle.

In the article, "Arminius," remark E, for example, Bayle argues that Arminius never should have made his doubts about Calvin's view of predestination public, and that Arminius' remedies to soften that view were completely ineffective:

¹² For Bayle's pre-*Dictionnaire* engagement with the problem of evil, see Michael W. Hickson, "Reductio ad malum: Bayle's Early Skepticism about Theodicy," in *Modern Schoolman* 88: 3/4 (2011), 201–221.

[T]he Arminians can hardly respond to the very objections that they claim are irrefutable against Calvin's system; moreover, they are themselves susceptible to additional objections that can be answered only by appealing sincerely to the weakness of the human mind or to the infinite incomprehensibility of God. So was it worth it to object to Calvin? ... Why not just begin [with the weakness of reason and the incomprehensibility of God] if you must end up there in any case?¹³

The *Dictionary* includes numerous other articles devoted to figures and systems related to Calvin's views of human and divine causality in human affairs: "Calvin," "Gomarus," "Hall," "Luther," "Melanchthon," and "Synergistes," to name a few. In all of Bayle's discussions of the Protestant debates over sin, grace, predestination and free will, Bayle's message is the same: there is no progress in these debates, which always end with St. Paul's famous refrain in Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rather than end with these lines, Bayle would prefer if writers began their discussions touching the origin of sin and suffering with them: "All Christians ... must learn from these lines of St. Paul never to argue about predestination, but instead to offer these lines immediately as a rampart against all the subtleties of the human mind, whether our own minds present the subtleties to us during our private meditations on this great subject, or whether somebody else proposes them to us."¹⁴

Bayle's *Dictionary* shows similar pessimism about Cartesian attempts to resolve the origin of error. Though in his 1683 *Various Thoughts on the Comet* Bayle drew heavily upon the theodicy of Malebranche's recently published *Traité de la nature et de la grace* [*Treatise on Nature and Grace*], and though he said of that work that "[n]othing is more fitting than this supposition to resolve a thousand objections made against divine providence ...,"¹⁵ in the years that immediately followed Bayle lost confidence in Malebranchian theodicy. The reason can be seen in Bayle's reviews in the *News from the Republic of Letters* of the debates between Arnauld and Malebranche that the latter's *Treatise* occasioned. Arnauld ultimately convinced Bayle that Malebranche's system was just as susceptible to fatal objections as all previous philosophical systems.¹⁶

13 *DHC* I, "Arminius," rem. E, 335b.

14 *DHC* I, "Arminius," rem. E, 335a.

15 Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Comet*, chapter 234 (*OD* III, 141b).

16 See *RQP* II, clv (*OD* III, 825b), where Bayle credits Arnauld and Le Clerc for his abandonment of Malebranchian theodicy.

Bayle was forced to conclude that just as in theology, so too in philosophy, no real progress can be made in matters dealing with the origin of evil.

By the time of the *Dictionary* Bayle was ready to conclude that Cartesian philosophy was “brought to ruins”¹⁷ by questions concerning God and evil. The problem in particular is that human reason cannot be certain that deception is incompatible with divine goodness. The relevant article is “Rimini, Gregoire de,” in remark B, where Bayle recapitulates an argument found in the *Objections* to Descartes’ *Meditations*, and analyzes Descartes’ subsequent *Reply*. In the second set of *Objections* to the *Meditations*, those compiled or written by Mersenne, the possibility that God can deceive and has in fact deceived is raised in objection to Descartes’ insistence on absolute divine veracity as an effect of God’s perfect goodness: “Cannot God treat men as a doctor treats the sick, or a father his children? In both these cases there is frequent deception though it is always employed beneficially and with wisdom.”¹⁸ Mersenne cites the Medieval theologians Gabriel Biel and Gregory of Rimini for this view of a deceiving, yet loving and wise God, and points to several stories of the Bible, including the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and God’s promise through a prophet that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days, which suggest that God can deceive and has deceived.

In a rare act of engaging with theologians on theological matters, Descartes makes a distinction that will allow him to maintain God’s absolute veracity, but also account for the above-mentioned Scripture passages. The distinction concerns degrees of truth in Scripture. Some passages of Scripture contain truths that are merely “appropriate for ordinary understanding” and that are “relative to human beings.” The passages that suggest that God deceives contain this level of truth. While it may be true that God permitted prophets to utter lies, it is nevertheless not true that this deception stemmed from any “malicious intent to deceive,” which Descartes claims is incompatible with the divine nature. Other passages of Scripture, and all exact philosophy, aim at the “naked truth—truth which is not relative to human beings ...,”¹⁹ such as the truth that God cannot have any malicious intentions.

After summarizing this exchange, Bayle explains how Descartes’ distinction could be used by an able skeptic to argue that even our clearest and most distinct ideas might be false: “If I am deceived, the skeptic will say, by the

17 *DHC* IV, “Rimini, Gregoire de,” rem. B, 57a.

18 René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Douglas Murdoch (CSM) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), II: 90.

19 CSM II, 102.

ideas that represent matter to me as an extended substance, this is merely a deception that is exempt from all malicious intent, a deception that may even be beneficial to me in the state in which I find myself while my soul is united to a body, a state that in certain respects resembles that of a sick person or a child.”²⁰ Since Descartes conceded that God may have inspired prophets to lie, as long as this is not meant to imply that God himself is malicious or deceptive by nature, then the skeptic can argue against Descartes that the mind is like a deceiving prophet, inspired by God to tell us what is most beneficial to us, rather than to tell us the “naked truth.” Our errors, then, can be imputed to God in important respects, contrary to Descartes’ fourth Meditation theodicy, according to which only the human will’s lack of restraint is responsible for error.²¹

The above-mentioned articles of the *Dictionary* demonstrate Bayle’s anti-Arminian and anti-Cartesian convictions, but they are not the *Dictionary*’s principal articles dealing with the problem of evil, nor were they the articles heavily criticized by Le Clerc and Jaquelot. However, these neglected articles may help us to understand why Le Clerc and Jaquelot, who appear to be Bayle’s kindred spirits in many other respects (as we will see below), would attack Bayle so passionately. For as we will see, the wider theological and philosophical commitments, but especially the approaches to the problem of evil of both Le Clerc and Jaquelot, can be characterized as Arminian and Cartesian. Bayle’s debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot concerning the problem of evil, therefore, can and should be understood as important moments in the larger history of the Arminian controversy within Calvinism, and the rise and fall of Cartesian Rationalism within philosophy.

The Dictionary’s Most Notorious Articles: “Manicheans” and “Paulicians”

The articles of the *Dictionary* that are the focus of Bayle’s debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot are “Manicheans” and “Paulicians,” which are nominally devoted to the history of various sects of Manicheism. The Manicheans were a sect founded in the third century by the Persian philosopher, Manes, who taught that there are two fundamental causal principles in the universe: all the good in the world is the effect of a perfectly good deity, while all the evil flows from a thoroughly malevolent deity. The two gods work out their respective

²⁰ *DHC* IV, “Rimini, Gregoire de,” rem. B, 57a.

²¹ For a detailed analysis of Bayle’s article “Rimini, Gregoire de” within the context of the fall of Cartesianism, see Gianni Paganini, *Skepsis: Le débat des modernes sur le scepticisme* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2008), 359–384.

domains in a sort of divine state of nature, wherein each realizes the other's equal power, and therefore settles on a shared sovereignty over worldly affairs rather than waging all-out war. Bayle traces this thesis back to Zoroaster, and associates the thesis with Plato and his school, as well as with the second-century heretic, Marcion. The fame of the sect owes, however, to Augustine's early espousal, and later refutation, of the teachings of Manes, and so the thesis of the two principles bears Manes' name. The Paulicians were a group of Armenian Manicheans of the seventh century, under the leadership of a certain Paul.

The articles in the *Dictionary* devoted to Manicheans are scarcely important for their contribution to the history of those sects, and considered as history, they occasioned no controversy. Their importance and notoriety arose instead from the numerous philosophical footnotes treating the problem of evil to which these articles give rise. In these notes Bayle relies little, if at all, on the writings of historical Manicheans, but instead elaborates decades worth of his own original thought about the problem of evil. As usual, Bayle is anything but systematic in his philosophical reflection, but when eventually pressed by Le Clerc to enumerate clearly the principles of his "doctrine" concerning the problem of evil, Bayle reduces the pages of dense argumentation to the following three theses, which are useful for recapitulating the arguments of "Manicheans" and "Paulicians":

- [P1] The natural light and revelation teach us clearly that there is only one principle of all things, and that this principle is infinitely perfect.
- [P2] The way of reconciling the moral and physical evil of humanity with all the attributes of this single, infinitely perfect principle of all things surpasses our philosophical lights, such that the Manichean objections leave us with difficulties that human reason cannot resolve.
- [P3] Nevertheless, it is necessary to believe firmly what the natural light and revelation teach us about the unity and infinite perfection of God, just as we believe in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, etc., by faith and by submission to divine authority.²²

Nobody questioned Bayle's espousal of P1, an unfortunate fact according to Leibniz, since forcing Bayle to defend P1 at greater length would have "led him to say a thousand beautiful things that would have been advantageous both

²² Bayle, *RBL* iii (OD III, 992b–993a). The labels 'P1', 'P2', and 'P3' are mine; otherwise this is a quotation of Bayle's *précis* of his doctrine.

to religion and to himself.”²³ The debates between Bayle and Le Clerc, as well as Bayle and Jaquelot therefore centered on P₂ and P₃, as well as the logical and psychological transitions from the former to the latter. In the following paragraph I give an overview of Bayle’s arguments in defence of P₁–P₃, after which I devote separate discussions to a more elaborate analysis of the themes and arguments in “Manicheans,” remark D, and in “Paulicians.”

In “Manicheans” Bayle briefly defends each of P₁–P₃ through a feigned dialogue between the monist²⁴ philosopher, Melissus, whose partial victory in the debate motivates P₁, and the dualist philosopher (and hence representative of Manicheism), Zoroaster, whose partial victory in turn gives rise to P₂. The two interlocutors are personifications of *a priori* and *a posteriori* reason respectively, so their overall stalemate is intended to demonstrate the internal conflict of reason and the need for the supplement of faith when treating the origin of evil, i.e. P₃. In “Paulicians” Bayle expands his defence of the most controversial principle, P₂. The method Bayle employs is a survey and refutation of historical theodicies. Hence most of the arguments found troubling by Bayle’s critics are laid out in “Paulicians.” Before treating that article, however, a more detailed analysis of “Manicheans” will provide the best view of the overall logic of Bayle’s position on the problem of evil.

The Internal Conflict of Reason: “Manicheans,” remark D

Bayle’s philosophical reflection on the problem of evil in the *Dictionary* first appears in remark D of “Manicheans,” and is introduced by the following claim in the body of that article: “One has to admit that this false doctrine [Manichean dualism], which is much older than Manes and is unsustainable once we accept either the whole or just part of Holy Scripture, would be very difficult to refute if it were defended by pagan philosophers who were trained in the weapons of debate.”²⁵ Remark D is devoted to illustrating how the ablest pagan philoso-

23 G.W. Leibniz to Beauval, 19 February 1706; quoted from Hubert Bost, *Pierre Bayle* (Paris: Fayard, 2006), 487.

24 In this Introduction I use the word ‘monism’ to capture in a word what Bayle meant by “the system of one unique principle,” and to mean roughly what ‘monotheism’ means today (except that ‘monotheism’ entails belief that the first principle is a god, while ‘monism’ is more general and better captures what Bayle’s pagans would uphold). By ‘dualism’ I am referring to what Bayle called “the doctrine of two principles,” i.e. the view that there are two ultimate, coeternal first principles of the universe. By ‘monism’ I do *not* mean the belief that there is only one substance in existence. And by ‘dualism’ I am *not* referring to mind-body dualism.

25 *DHC* III, “Manichéens,” *in corpore*, 303–304.

phers might have developed Manichean dualism into a compelling philosophical system that could rival monism. The remark begins, however, with a brief defence of P1. Bayle claims that the pagan philosophers who could build a plausible rational system out of Manichean dualism would nevertheless be easily defeated if their debate with monists were restricted to *a priori* reasons. Here is the *a priori* argument that Bayle believes establishes the truth of monism and the evident falsity of dualism:

[*Defence of P1*] The clearest and most certain ideas of order teach us that a being that exists by itself [*par lui-même*], a being that is necessary and eternal, must be unique, infinite, all-powerful, and endowed with every sort of perfection. Thus, in consulting these ideas, we find nothing more absurd than the hypothesis of two eternal principles, each independent of the other, of which one principle possesses no goodness and can impede the designs of the other.²⁶

The argument is that any being that is self-caused (i.e. “exists by itself”), necessary and eternal must also be unique, infinite, all-powerful and possess all perfections, including goodness. But according to Manicheism, there are two independent principles, each of which is allegedly self-caused, necessary, and eternal, but neither of which can claim to be the unique first cause, infinite, or all-powerful, and one of which lacks the perfection of goodness. So Manicheism must be false, since it contradicts these “clearest and most certain ideas of order.” To most readers today this argument will seem weak, to the point that one might charge Bayle with insincerity. Bayle had to give Christian monotheism some rational support lest he be suspected of atheism, so he gave Christian monotheism this very slight *a priori* victory. Supporters of the atheist reading of Bayle will be inclined to this interpretation of the defence of P1.

Another plausible interpretation of the brevity of this defence, however, can be offered on the basis of work done by Jean-Luc Solère on the Medieval origins of Bayle’s philosophical reflection on first causes.²⁷ Bayle’s defence of P1 above is a mere *précis* of a Medieval argument with which most philosophers in Bayle’s time would have been acquainted, so there was no need for Bayle to expand it. The main missing premise, which is an axiom of Medieval metaphysics that also plays an important role in Descartes’ *Meditations*, is that “nothing is limited

²⁶ DHC III, “Manichéens,” rem. D, 305a.

²⁷ See Jean-Luc Solère, “Bayle, les Théologiens Catholiques et la Rétorsion Stratonicienne,” 129–170, in Antony McKenna and Gianni Paganini (eds), *Pierre Bayle dans la République des Lettres* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004).

by itself, but only by external agents.”²⁸ So a being that exists by itself, i.e. a necessary being that has caused itself to exist for all eternity, could not limit itself, and so would have to give itself every perfection in the act of causing itself. That the missing premise in the defence of P₁ above is the Medieval axiom of the impossibility of self-limitation is clear when Bayle restates that defence, this time putting it more succinctly into the mouth of his character Melissus: “a necessary being *cannot be limited*, therefore it is infinite and all-powerful, and therefore it is unique ...”²⁹

Further support for this interpretation is given by the fact that Bayle uses this same Medieval argument in a later work, the *Continuation of the Various Thoughts on a Comet (CPD)*, where he objects to the idea of a being that exists by itself but that lacks certain perfections: “it is against the ideas of order for such a being to lack an infinite number of perfections. Tell me why it is limited to the precise number of perfections it has ... Nothing stood in its way as an obstacle, so what could limit it?”³⁰ Furthermore, in the same work, Bayle employs the *a priori* Medieval principle, Ockham’s razor, to argue that a being that is infinitely perfect must also be unique. An infinitely perfect being would have the ability to bring about everything that we observe (otherwise it would lack perfect power), so it is metaphysically superfluous to assume that there are two such beings.³¹ We can fill in Bayle’s defence of P₁, therefore, using Medieval metaphysics that Bayle knew well and employed elsewhere in precisely the way that is needed to fill in the defence of P₁: existence-by-itself entails a lack of limitations; lack of limitations entails infinite perfection; infinite perfection entails uniqueness. It is likely that Bayle assumed his readers would not require the missing premises to be identified.³²

If P₁ is backed by the “clearest and most certain ideas of order,” then why does Bayle believe that Manichean dualism could be well defended if backed

28 See Solère, “Bayle, les Théologiens Catholiques,” 144. (Descartes assumes the axiom when he argues in the Third Meditation that the fact of his own limitation entails that he is not the cause of himself.)

29 *DHC* III, “Manichéens,” rem. D, 305b (emphasis mine).

30 Bayle, *CPD*, cxiv (*OD* III, 346b).

31 Bayle, *CPD*, cvii (*OD* III, 337a).

32 An interpretive difficulty concerning the defence of P₁ remains, however, for again in the *CPD* Bayle writes, “You and I find it evident that what exists by itself cannot lack any perfection, but there were no pagan philosophers who knew this truth” (*CPD*, cvii; *OD* III, 337b). The problem is that in remark D of “Manichéens,” Bayle puts this truth into the mouth of a pagan philosopher. The problem is resolved, I think, by interpreting the pagan philosophers Melissus and Zoroaster not as historical figures, but as personifications of reason that speak always on Bayle’s behalf.

by an able philosopher? Bayle's answer to this question turns the discussion in remark D toward the defence of P2: "For a system to be considered good, it requires two things: first, its ideas must be distinct; second, it must be able to account for experience. So now we must see whether the hypothesis of one principle accords well with the phenomena of nature."³³ The discussion turns from *a priori* reasoning, which supports monism, toward *a posteriori* reasoning, which will be the stronghold of the Manichean interlocutor Zoroaster. Not all experiences will provide the basis of Zoroaster's arguments, however, but only the experiences of human beings. Bayle explains the reason for this in one of the most quoted passages of the *Dictionary*:

[*Evidence for P2*] The heavens and all the rest of the universe preach the glory, power, and unity of God; man alone, that masterpiece of the Creator among things visible, man alone, I say, furnishes very great objections against the unity of God. Here is why. Man is wicked and unhappy: everyone knows these two things by what takes place within himself, and by the business he is forced to have with his neighbours. Five or six years alone are sufficient to be perfectly convinced of these two points. Those who live longer and those who are deeply involved in public affairs know these things even more clearly. Travels are perpetual lessons on the subject. They demonstrate man's condition by many monuments of human misery and vice, by endless prisons and hospitals, gallows and beggars. Here you see the debris of a once-flourishing city; elsewhere you cannot even find ruins ... The learned, without leaving their libraries, acquire the greatest appreciation of these two facts by reading histories, which permit us to survey all the ages and nations of humankind. Indeed history is, properly speaking, just the collection of the crimes and misfortunes of humanity. But let us note that these two evils, one moral and the other physical, do not take up the whole of history, nor the entire experience of individuals. We find everywhere both moral and physical goodness, several examples of virtue, and some instances of happiness; that is what makes the matter difficult. For if everyone were evil and unhappy, then it would not be necessary to appeal to the hypothesis of two principles. It is the mixture in human experience of happiness and virtue on the one hand, with misery and vice on the other that demands the dualist hypothesis.³⁴

33 DHC III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 305a.

34 DHC III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 305b.

I have labelled the famous passage above “Evidence for P2” and not “Defence of P2” for obvious reasons. We have here the data, as it were, upon which the dualist Zoroaster will later draw in his debate with the monist Melissus, but we do not yet have a proper argument. Nevertheless, the foundations of the argument are clearly laid. The idea is that on the basis of the hypothesis of one causal principle, the existence of the contraries good/evil, pleasure/pain, fortune/misfortune, happiness/misery cannot be explained. These contraries must all have their source in the same causal principle, since there is by hypothesis but one. This principle, however, is supposed to be supremely perfect, while half of these contraries are kinds of imperfections. Moreover, the problem with imagining both good and evil arising from the same source is clearer if we notice that several lines above the passage just quoted Bayle assumes that monism professes not only the unity of the first cause, but also the *simplicity* and *immutability* of that cause.³⁵ (The assumption that unity, simplicity, and immutability are tightly linked is evidence of another unspoken debt of Bayle’s to Medieval philosophy.³⁶) If the first cause is simple, then it seems impossible for contraries to exist simultaneously in that principle and consequently give rise to divisions within it; and if the first cause is immutable, then the possibility of contraries existing in the principle at different times is ruled out. All of these difficulties can be avoided, thinks Bayle, if we assume along with dualists that there are two principles of all things, one simply good, the other simply evil.

At this point in remark D Bayle introduces Melissus and Zoroaster as the proponents of *a priori* and *a posteriori* reasons respectively, and briefly repeats the defence of P1 through Melissus. Zoroaster concedes that the monist argument of Melissus is from the point of view of reason alone, independent of experience, superior to any *a priori* argument on behalf of dualism. However, Zoroaster claims that the most important part of a rational system is not its *a priori* element, but its ability to account for experience and observation, i.e. its *a posteriori* element. Zoroaster then poses a series of questions to Melissus to demonstrate the weakness of monism in accounting for human experience: “If man is the work of a single supremely good, holy, and powerful principle, can he be exposed to sickness, to cold, to heat, to hunger, to thirst, to pain, to sadness? Can he have so many bad inclinations? Can he commit so many

35 Bayle clarifies that the dualist is trying to raise “... an objection against the unity, simplicity, and immutability of God.” Bayle goes on a few lines later to say the monist’s goal is to “... save the simplicity and immutability of God’s ways ...” See *DHC* III, “Manichéens,” rem. D, 305a–b.

36 See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, qq. 3, 9, and 11, where God’s simplicity, immutability, and unity (respectively) are intricately connected.

crimes? Can perfect holiness produce criminal creatures? Can perfect goodness produce unhappy creatures? Wouldn't the combination of supreme power and infinite goodness completely fill its work with goodness, and keep away from its creation anything that might offend or sadden it?"³⁷

Melissus responds to Zoroaster with an argument that Bayle calls the "most reasonable" response to the ancient problem of the origin of evil. As we will continue to see, this response on behalf of monism is, in Bayle's view, the best theodicy within the bounds of reason alone. Bayle's first statement of the response will therefore be quoted in full:

[*Melissus' Free-Will Theodicy*] Melissus will respond that man was not wicked when God made him. He will say that man received from God a happy state, but since he did not follow the light of his conscience, which God intended to lead man along the path of virtue, he became wicked, and consequently deserved to feel the effects of the wrath of God, who is supremely just as well as supremely good. Therefore, God is not the cause of moral evil, though He is the cause of physical evil, which is nothing other than punishment for moral evil; punishment which, far from being incompatible with a supremely good principle, in fact emanates necessarily from one of His attributes, namely justice, which is no less essential than His goodness ... All that can be said, therefore, is that once he left the hands of his creator, man possessed [no inclination toward evil] but merely a power capable of determining himself toward evil, and that once he had determined himself toward evil, he alone was the cause of the crime he committed and of the moral evil that entered the universe.³⁸

Some key points of this free-will theodicy deserve to be highlighted. First, the theodicy claims that no *actual* evil was produced by the infinitely perfect God, but it does not deny that the *potential* for moral evil was present in human beings from the beginning. When humans were created, they were created morally innocent and happy, but they were created free and therefore able to turn away from this happy state. Second, God provided the first humans with conscience as a means of guiding them toward continued innocence and happiness, but this moral guide was evidently violable. Third, though humans possessed no original inclination toward sin, humans nevertheless employed

37 *DHC* III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 306a.

38 *DHC* III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 306a.

their power of self-determination (i.e. free will) to violate conscience and incline themselves toward evil. Finally, there is no denial in this theodicy that God is fully responsible for one class of evil, physical evil or suffering. However, suffering is alleged to be a necessary emanation of justice, which is in turn an essential attribute of the perfect divine nature.

Bayle offers two main objections to the traditional free-will theodicy at this point and promises that others will follow in remarks to the article “Paulicians.” Both are *a priori* objections. The first challenges the very concept of free will as it is used to exculpate God from any causal role in sin. The second is based in *a priori* reflections concerning the moral duties of an infinitely good first cause.

[*First Objection to Free-Will Theodicy*] [W]e have no distinct idea that permits us to understand how a being that does not exist by itself can nevertheless act by itself. Zoroaster will therefore say that the free will given to man is not able to give itself an actual determination, since it exists constantly and totally through the action of God.

[*Second Objection to Free-Will Theodicy*] [Zoroaster] will ask this question: did God foresee that man would make use of his free will in this way? If Melissus answers ‘yes’, then Zoroaster will respond that it does not appear possible for anything at all to foresee that which depends uniquely on an indeterminate cause. But I will grant you, he will say, that God foresaw His creature’s sin, and I will conclude that God should have prevented that sin; for the ideas of order will not tolerate that an infinitely good and holy cause that is capable of preventing the introduction of moral evil should not in fact prevent it, especially considering that by permitting sin, God will be obliged to heap punishment upon His own creation. If God did not foresee the Fall of Man, He at least judged that it was possible. God would have realized that if His creatures in fact sinned, He would have had to renounce His paternal goodness in favour of taking on the character of a severe judge in order to make His creatures miserable. So He would have chosen instead to determine man toward moral goodness, just as He determines him toward his physical good. He would not have left in man’s soul any power to commit sin, just as He did not leave in man’s soul any power to lead himself toward unhappiness considered as such ... [O]r, if God did give creatures the power of free will, He would have watched over them constantly to ensure that they did not sin.³⁹

39 For both objections: *DHC* III, “Manichéens,” rem. D, 306a.

Bayle's claim in remark D of "Manicheans" is *not* that these two objections in particular are unanswerable. In fact, he admits that Melissus would have much to answer to both objections. The claim instead is that "all that Melissus could answer would be opposed immediately by arguments just as plausible as his own, such that the dispute would never end."⁴⁰ Putting all of this together, we can conclude that Bayle's defence of P₂ in "Manicheans," remark D is the following (which is a reconstruction, not a quotation):

[*Defence of P₂*] The most reasonable response that can be offered in defence of monism when faced with the problem of the origin of evil is Melissus' free-will theodicy. If any theodicy can successfully respond to Manichean objections like those of Zoroaster, then this theodicy can. However, reason cannot ever fully vindicate Melissus' free-will theodicy (or therefore any other theodicy); there will always remain convincing Manichean objections to it.

This is merely an initial defence of P₂, which Bayle promises to expand in "Paulicians." Two aspects of the defence require further attention. First, Bayle has thus far sampled only a single theodicy. His claim that this is the best theodicy from the point of view of reason requires further support. Second, even if we grant that the free-will theodicy as sketched above is the best that reason can do against the problem of evil, nevertheless Bayle has not yet defended that theodicy against his two main objections to it. His claim that the dispute between the monist and dualist on this front would be interminable requires further support. As we will see, these two shortcomings of the initial defence of P₂ also indicate the lines along which Bayle's future debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot will run. Le Clerc will open his debate with Bayle by alleging that a theodicy that Bayle never considered, that of the ancient Church Father Origen, can answer all of reason's objections far better than any theodicy that Bayle has surveyed. Jaquelot, on the other hand, will work from the beginning to the end of his debate to defend a version of the free-will theodicy and prove to Bayle that the Melissus-Zoroaster debate can be ended in short order in favour of the monist.

The remainder of remark D is concerned with the transition from P₂ to P₃. Bayle outlines the sort of narrative that Zoroaster could tell about the contest between Good and Evil that his dualism proposes. He suggests that despite its hypothetical nature, the foundation of this narrative is more solid than that of

⁴⁰ DHC III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 306a.

monism, at least from an *a posteriori* perspective. All the duality experienced in the human condition points to an initial duality of good and evil, not to a simple, perfectly good first cause. Therefore, Melissus has decidedly won the *a priori* debate, while Zoroaster has won the *a posteriori* debate. The result is that reason alone is incapable of determining whether one all-perfect cause or two limited causes is/are responsible for the creation of the universe. The worry, of course, is that this conclusion seems to undermine the foundation of Christianity. However, this is where Bayle adds another of the *Dictionary's* most quoted passages, this time concerning the weakness of human reason, and the need for faith:

[*Defence of P3*] Human reason ... is a principle of destruction, not of construction. It is good only for forming doubts, for turning us around in circles, and for making debates endless. I doubt I will go wrong if I say of natural revelation, i.e. the light of reason, what theologians say of the Law of Moses. They say that it was good only for demonstrating to man his imperfection and his need for a redeemer and for a merciful law. It was a teacher (in their terms) meant to lead us to Jesus Christ. Let us say roughly the same thing about reason: it is good only for showing man his blindness, his weakness, and the necessity of another revelation. That other revelation is Scripture. There we will find something with which to refute the hypothesis of two principles and all the objections of Zoroaster. There we find the unity of God and his infinite perfection, the Fall of Man and all its consequences. Let someone tell us with an array of arguments that it was not possible for moral evil to introduce itself into a world created by an infinitely good and holy first principle; we will respond that nevertheless this happened, and consequently it is very possible. Nothing is more senseless than arguing against facts: the axiom, *ab actu ad potentiam valet consequentia* [the inference from actuality to potentiality is valid], is as clear as the proposition 'two plus two equals four.'⁴¹

Since reason is divided over the monism-dualism debate, reason cannot itself determine the truth of the matter. This much of Bayle's defence of P₃ is clear. However, the move from the defeat of reason toward the victory of Judeo-Christian Scripture is hasty. As it stands, Bayle's fideism appears unmotivated, and hence insincere. Leibniz was right, if we restrict our attention to remark

⁴¹ DHC III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 306b.

D of “Manicheans,” that Bayle silenced reason only after having made it speak too much. The transition from P₂ to P₃ will not be developed much further in “Paulicians,” and so it is not surprising that both Le Clerc and Jaquelot will challenge Bayle to clarify his understanding of the relationship between faith and reason that underlies this transition. However, as we will see, Bayle does expand the transition from P₂ to P₃ in his *Clarification on the Manicheans*, which was appended to the second edition of the *Dictionary*. So as was mentioned above, “Manicheans” should be read only as Bayle’s first pass at the issue of the problem of evil, and his overview of the logic of his doctrine; it is far from his final word. In what remains of this section of the Introduction, I will briefly review the additions to the defences of P₂ and P₃ that Bayle makes in “Paulicians” and in the “Clarification on the Manicheans.”

The Failure of Rational Theodicy: “Paulicians”

The philosophical treatment of the problem of evil is taken up again by Bayle in the *Dictionary* in “Paulicians,” remark E.⁴² Though Bayle’s treatment again lacks the appearance of a system, nevertheless he continues to unfold and elaborate the doctrine presented above—P₁, P₂, P₃. Nothing is added in “Paulicians” concerning P₁, and so the discussion delves immediately into P₂ and concludes with P₃. Before getting to the new arguments for these principles, it is important to note that remark E of “Paulicians” begins by making two modifications to the discussion of evil in “Manicheans.”

In “Manicheans” Bayle’s two interlocutors, Melissus and Zoroaster, were presented as pagan philosophers ignorant of revelation. Hence both *a priori* and *a posteriori* reason were understood to be completely independent of the revelation of the Bible. In “Paulicians,” however, and in most of his subsequent related discussions of evil, including Bayle’s debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot, only ‘*a priori* reason’ will continue to mean reason alone, independent of all revelation. That is because, from now on, Bayle will focus on debates between thinkers who accept all or part of the Judeo-Christian Bible, such as Christians, Manicheans, and Paulicians (the latter two of which accepted the whole of the Christian Scriptures, but only part of the Hebrew Scriptures). For these thinkers, the “data” given in the Bible count as facts that can inform *a posteriori* reason, and must be accounted for by it. Understanding *a posteriori* reason to include the “facts” of Scripture is the only way to understand this otherwise

42 Between “Manichéens” and “Pauliciens” there is a substantial contribution to the discussion in “Marcionites,” remarks F and G, which treat the compatibility of free will and divine grace. Bayle’s comments in “Marcionites” are repeated and expanded in the remarks to “Pauliciens” to be treated below.

puzzling early claim in remark E of “Paulicians”: “The Fathers of the Church ... responded poorly to the objections concerning the origin of evil. They should have abandoned all *a priori* reasons ... and contented themselves with *a posteriori* reasons.”⁴³ This claim is puzzling because the Fathers of the Church were monotheists, and according to Bayle’s discussion in “Manicheans,” remark D, the stronghold of monotheists is a *priori* reason, not a *posteriori* reason. But if we understand a *priori* reason now to mean reasons independent of experience and revelation, and a *posteriori* reason to mean reason informed by experience and revelation, then the claim is consistent with Bayle’s conclusion in “Manicheans,” remark D.

The second modification to the discussion is more significant. In “Manicheans” Bayle was content to prove that better-skilled Manicheans would be “difficult” to defeat in debate over the problem of evil; they could level objections against monists that were “just as plausible” as the responses given by monists. These are the ways that Bayle expresses P2 in “Manicheans.” The tone of the discussion in that article suggests a weak interpretation of the insolubility of the problem of evil for monists. That discussion proves at best the claim that dualists are formidable debate partners for monists in discussions over the origin of evil. But Bayle does not say anything about the *possibility of rational theodicy* considered in itself. Is there a true theodicy, discoverable by reason? Bayle’s discussion in “Manicheans” does not explicitly say. It merely argues that any theodicy put forward will be susceptible to an endless series of compelling objections. However, the presence of good objections is not always an indication of falsehood (before the invention of telescopes there were excellent, even unanswerable objections to innumerable astronomical truths). In any case, at the outset of remark E of “Paulicians” Bayle announces that his thesis P2 should be taken in a stronger sense to imply that there is no true theodicy discoverable by human reason, which is why there are invincible objections to every theodicy:

[*Strong Interpretation of P2*] [T]he manner in which evil was introduced under the empire of an infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely powerful sovereign being is not only inexplicable, but incomprehensible, and every objection that is opposed to the reasons why this sovereign being permitted evil is more in conformity with the natural light and the ideas of order than these reasons are.⁴⁴

43 DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 625a.

44 DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 625a–b.

However, in “Paulicians,” Bayle will not attempt to demonstrate the strong interpretation of P₂ just quoted. That is, he will not give reasons of a general nature that lead validly to the conclusion that no rational theodicy is possible.⁴⁵ Instead, he will make the thesis compelling and probable by treating numerous attempts at rational theodicy, and by showing how these fail. This argumentative strategy is one of the main reasons why Le Clerc and Jaquelot criticized “Manicheans” and “Paulicians,” which obviously claim more than they rigorously prove. These articles invite the invention of rational theodicies that Bayle failed to consider and further defences of the theodicies that Bayle claimed to refute. Yet, as we will see, Bayle’s case studies in “Paulicians,” though they do not comprise a demonstration of the strong interpretation of P₂, nevertheless anticipate nearly every theme and objection that Le Clerc or Jaquelot would later introduce, the most important ones of which I survey immediately below. Rather than continuing with my line-by-line analysis of Bayle’s texts (which would become repetitive and tiresome), I have organized the rest of Bayle’s arguments in “Paulicians” by theme.

Perfect Goodness

Bayle argues that monism cannot account for the mixture of good and evil because the perfect goodness that it ascribes to the first principle cannot give rise to such a mixture: “If we depend ... only on a single all-powerful, infinitely good, infinitely free cause that universally disposes of its beings according to the good pleasure of its will, then we should never experience any evil, all of our goods should be pure, and we should never encounter the least unpleasantness.”⁴⁶ Bayle’s concept of perfect goodness will always remain the same in his treatment of the problem of evil. By ‘perfect goodness’ he means not only *highest* goodness, but also *pure* goodness that does not tolerate the least mixture of evil. Perfect goodness is therefore a matter not only of *quantity*, but also of *quality*. Bayle’s interlocutors, especially Le Clerc, will press him to consider other definitions of ‘perfect goodness,’ but Bayle will remain committed to the purity condition, insisting at all times that “if the Author of our being is infinitely good, then he must take continuous pleasure in making us happy and preventing anything that might trouble us or diminish our joy. This is an essential charac-

45 I argue elsewhere that Bayle offers a metaphysical defence of the strong interpretation of P₂ in the article “Synergistes,” remarks B and C, of the second edition of the *Dictionary*. See Michael W. Hickson, “Theodicy and Toleration in Bayle’s *Dictionary*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51:1 (2013), especially 66–71.

46 *DHC* III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 626a.

teristic of the idea of perfect goodness.⁴⁷ Charges of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism will be hurled about in this debate: anthropomorphism will be charged by Bayle against Le Clerc and Jaquelot for their insistence on using impure human goodness as the model of perfect divine goodness; and anthropocentrism by Le Clerc and Jaquelot against Bayle for his insistence that God should serve the interests of humankind without ever subjecting the latter to the slightest disagreeable experience.

The Utility and Necessity of Evil

Bayle's concept of perfect goodness, and his belief that a world is possible in which no sentient beings ever suffer, lead him to reject any theodicy based on the alleged utility or necessity of evil in the divine plan. A God who must employ evil to bring about His plans is either weak or unwise. Bayle's first discussion of this point arises when he treats the theodicy of the ancient Church father, Lactantius, who responded to arguments ascribed to Epicurus against divine providence.⁴⁸ Lactantius argued that we must first know evil before we can become virtuous. Since the nature of virtue involves patiently overcoming adversity, there must necessarily be some adversity if there is to be any virtue. So God permitted evil in order to permit the realization of virtue. Moreover, since virtue is required before wisdom can be attained, evil is further necessary for the realization of wisdom. Both Le Clerc and Jaquelot will offer similar lines of reasoning.

Bayle opposes this theodicy first with *a posteriori* arguments based in Christian tradition, and second on *a priori* grounds. The first refutation goes as follows. If Lactantius is correct that some evil is required for the acquisition of wisdom and virtue, then it follows that Adam and Eve were deprived of these things before the Fall when, according to tradition, there was not yet any evil in the Garden. So the first humans, who are by tradition the most perfect humans that ever lived, were unable to be virtuous or wise. Moreover, it would follow that the angels are neither wise nor virtuous, since they are not subject to either physical evil (since they lack bodies) or moral evil (since they enjoy the beatific vision). But these claims that the first humans and all the angels lack virtue and wisdom are unacceptable. Therefore, moral goodness without any evil is possible.

The *a priori* argument focuses on a secondary point made by Lactantius, namely that pain is required before pleasure can even be experienced. Bayle's

47 *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. E, 626a.

48 This theodicy can be found in the thirteenth chapter of Lactantius' *De Ira Dei* [On the Wrath of God].

refutation of this claim involves a lengthy discussion of the epistemic independence of the knowledge of pleasure and the knowledge of pain whose details are too numerous to summarize here. The basic idea is that physical pleasure is agreeable in itself, not merely in comparison with pain, and it is possible that God could prevent the experience of pleasure from becoming insipid over time by reversing the dulling effects on the brain that are the cause of that insipidness. A life of constant pleasure, from beginning to end, is therefore a possibility within God's power to bring about. This thesis, in combination with the conclusion of Bayle's *a posteriori* argument, entails that there is a possible world in which humans live lives of uninterrupted pleasure, virtue, and wisdom. A perfectly good God would surely choose this possible world. So Bayle concludes that the experience of alternating pleasure and pain, virtue and vice in our lives is a strong argument for the greater probability of dualism, which accounts for it very easily.

Bayle raises another objection to theodicies that rely on the utility or necessity of evil when he discusses the Stoic Chrysippus, who made points similar to those made by Lactantius. The problem with both of these authors' theodicies is that the amount of evil in the world is surely more than what is needed to make pleasure or virtue possible. Bayle quotes Plutarch as his witness: "[A]ll human affairs are full of vice, and the whole of human life, from the preamble to the very end of the conclusion, is disordered, depraved, and disturbed; not one part of it is pure and irreprehensible. Human existence is the most wretched and disagreeable of farces."⁴⁹ If evil is necessary to render certain goods possible, then God would choose to actualize only the minimum amount of evil required for the purpose. But surely there is more evil than what is necessary to realize any good purpose.

Kinds of Evil

Throughout the majority of his writings on the problem of evil, Bayle will focus above all on two kinds of evil: physical evil, i.e. physical or emotional pain; and moral evil, i.e. vices, sins, and violations of conscience. But in remark L of "Pauliciens,"⁵⁰ Bayle uncovers a third kind of evil in the writings of the early Platonist, Maximus of Tyre, as well as a monist theodicy based in reflections on that third kind of evil. This third category of evil is not named by Bayle,

49 Plutarch, *Adversus Stoicos*; quoted and translated from *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. G, 63ob.

50 This remark first appeared in the second edition of the *Dictionary*, and was therefore unknown to Le Clerc when he wrote the *Parrhasiana*, which was the beginning of the Bayle-Le Clerc controversy.

but it bears a strong resemblance to what Leibniz refers to as metaphysical evil. According to Maximus, matter and the human soul both suffer from inherent deprivations which are the occasional causes of physical evils and moral evils respectively. The perfectly good artisan god was hence limited in what he could bring about from the material and animate substances upon which he set to work. Every good thing that comes about from matter or souls should be attributed to the artful work of the creator, but every bad thing should be ascribed to accidental side effects of the god's workmanship that arise necessarily from the imperfect quality of matter and soul. Maximus uses an analogy to clarify his theodicy. When the artist strikes hot iron, the artist intends to impose a form on the raw material, so all of the resulting form should be ascribed to the intention of the artist. But in the process of creating this form, sparks will fly due to the inherent nature of hot iron. None of these accidental sparks, which are Maximus's analogue for physical evils, are intended by the artist, and therefore he should not be held responsible for them or any damage they go on to cause elsewhere.

The inherent deprivation of matter, particularly that of the human body, is always the occasional cause of moral evil, according to Maximus, who borrows Plato's analogy to clarify his point. The soul was placed by god in a human body to lead it, as a charioteer leads a team of horses. But these horses (the body) are by nature unruly, and listen to only some commands of the charioteer (the will), while disregarding the rest. On some occasions the unruliness of the body infects the soul and inspires the inherently depraved will to indulge in sins. Bayle levels two principal objections against this theodicy based on metaphysical evil. The first objection is that the theodicy, while posing as monist, is in fact dualist since it recognizes a second principle, matter, not completely under the control of the good god.⁵¹ The inherent deprivation of matter is not the result of god's creative work, and so it must be treated in this theodicy as an independent first cause. The second objection is that the theodicy fails to justify the perfect goodness or holiness of god, as Bayle succinctly notes: "A good and virtuous father would never let his children ride unruly horses ..."⁵²

51 Bayle's refutation of Maximus of Tyre's theodicy perhaps anticipates how Bayle would have responded to Leibniz's *Theodicy*, had he lived long enough to read it. See David Fate Norton, "Leibniz and Bayle: Manicheism and Dialectic," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 2(1): 23–36 (1964).

52 *DHC* III, "Pauciciens," rem. L, 634b.

Five Further Objections to Free-Will Theodicy

Since Bayle identified the free-will theodicy in “Manicheans” as reason’s best attempt at resolving the problem of evil, it is not surprising that much of “Paulicians” is devoted to that argument, which Bayle describes as a “beautiful argument that contains a certain *je ne sçai quoi* that dazzles readers with its grandeur; but an argument that can ultimately be defeated by reasons that are more within the reach of commoners, more well-founded in good sense and in the ideas of order.”⁵³ There are five objections to free-will theodicy spread throughout the various remarks to “Paulicians.”

Bayle summarizes the free-will theodicy of St. Basil and then objects that the argument is guilty of begging the question against dualists.⁵⁴ Bayle’s objection applies, however, to any free-will theodicy. The dualists ask monists how, on their account, it was possible for evil to enter the universe, considering that it is governed by a single perfectly good and sovereign God. St. Basil answers that it was through the evil free action of humankind. But then the dualists will ask why or how humans were created evil by the perfectly good God. St. Basil responds that humans were created perfectly innocent, not evil, but then they abused the free will given to them by God, and this is how both moral and physical evil entered the world. But as it stands, this “solution” offered by St. Basil does not answer the problem of evil at all, but merely restates or refocuses it. Now the dualist will want to know how it was possible for an innocent creature to fall from goodness in a universe governed by a single perfectly good and sovereign God. As the free-will theodicy continues to give details to deepen his story, Bayle will continue to restate the original problem. According to Bayle, free-will theodicy cannot ever demonstrate the consistency of the existence of evil and of a single perfectly good God; it must always beg the question by assuming that consistency.

The second objection to free-will theodicies is that they usually assume that free will was a good, and perhaps even the best, gift that God made to humankind. The goodness of the gift of free will serves to explain why God ran the risk of introducing sin into the world when He gave this gift. But, Bayle argues, if we think rationally about the morality of gift giving, the way that Seneca does in *De Beneficiis* and the way that Cicero does through his character Cotta in *De Natura Deorum*, then we are led to the conclusion that free will is far from satisfying the conditions of a good gift. The first principle of gift-giving is that “it is part of the essence of a benefactor never to give a gift that he

⁵³ DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 627a.

⁵⁴ DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 626b.

knows the recipient will abuse in such a way that the gift will ruin the recipient. Only enemies would be eager to give gifts that will be abused and that will ruin their recipient. It is part of the essence of a benefactor to spare nothing to guarantee that his gifts will render their recipient happy.”⁵⁵ Having foreseen that human beings would abuse free will, God should have either withheld the gift altogether or accompanied the gift of free will with a greater purity of heart and a more ardent taste for goodness in human beings. But, some will respond, without free will human beings could not love God freely. Bayle responds by pointing out that even with free will, very few human beings love God as they should, and many more employ free will to act contrary to God’s commands. “With these reasons in mind, it is easy to demonstrate that the free will of the first man, which was preserved in its entirety in the circumstances in which he abused it in such a way that led to his own demise, to the ruin of humankind, to the eternal damnation of the majority of his descendants, and to the introduction of a terrifying flood of sin and suffering, was not a good gift. We will never understand how this gift could be preserved by an effect of goodness and the love of holiness.”⁵⁶

The third fault with free-will theodicies is that they fail to recognize, in Bayle’s view, that the capacity of the will to commit evil must itself be considered an evil, because “everything that can produce evil is itself bad, since evil can be born only of an evil cause.”⁵⁷ Whereas the second objection outlined immediately above seeks to show that free will is circumstantially evil, this new objection is that the will is inherently, though not completely, evil. Only the dualists can explain the mixture of good and evil that characterizes the faculty of free will. It is worth noting that Bayle’s objection here seems to assume that evil is something positive, and not merely a privation as many earlier thinkers had thought. In fact, Bayle shows only disdain for privation theory, and assumes throughout his writings on the problem of evil that “malice is no less a real being than goodness.”⁵⁸ It is a remarkable feature of Bayle’s debates discussed below that neither Le Clerc nor Jaquelot made use of the privation account of evil, which Bayle totally disregards, but which seems pertinent in all these instances where Bayle declares that evils are as real as goods and need just as positive a causal explanation.⁵⁹

55 DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 627a.

56 DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. E, 627b–628a.

57 DHC III, “Pauliciens,” rem. F, 628a.

58 DHC III, “Manichéens,” rem. D, 305b (see also note 53 in the margin).

59 The account of evil as a privation is used against Bayle, however, by Dom Alexis Gaudin, who wrote *La Distinction et la Nature du Bien et du Mal* (Paris: Claude Cellier, 1704). Bayle

The fourth new objection in “Paulicians,” found in remark M, begins by granting that once God decided to give free will to human beings, He had an obligation not to interfere with the use that humans made of that gift. Bayle recognizes in this objection only a *prima facie* divine obligation to respect the autonomy of human free will. However, Bayle stops the theodicy short by arguing that God does not have an absolute obligation to respect the choices made by humans; in some extreme instances He is obligated to interfere with, or remove altogether the gift He made. Bayle again uses an analogy to make his point. One nearly always has a duty not to pull the Queen’s hair. However, if the Queen is about to fall over a cliff and the only way to save her is by grabbing her by the hair and dragging her to safety, then one has a very strong duty indeed to pull the Queen’s hair. Similarly, the duties of perfect goodness far outweigh any privileges of non-interference of free will when humanity is about to fall into damnation. Reason leads to the conclusion, therefore, that God ought to have interfered with Adam’s and Eve’s freedom just prior to their succumbing to temptation. Theodicies that appeal to the “inviolable privileges of free will” consequently fail in those very cases they are meant to address—the extreme cases where the abuse of free will has devastating and eternal consequences.

While the previous objection was based on reflections on the nature of perfect goodness and the duties it entails, the fifth new objection to free-will theodicy appeals to the nature of infinite power and wisdom. Bayle begins by granting for argument’s sake that once God gave free will He had an absolute duty to refrain from interfering with it in any way. Still, Bayle argues, God could have found ways to lead human beings away from sin. Infinite power and wisdom entail that God could have inspired thoughts in the minds of Adam and Eve that would have thwarted their wills’ desires to sin. “It is infinitely easier for God to inspire in the souls of humans an act of the will that pleases Him than it is for humans to fold a napkin.”⁶⁰ Bayle’s disdain for Malebranchian theodicy is evident throughout the whole article “Paulicians” in which Bayle insists that an infinitely good and wise God would perform any number of particular volitions that would be required to keep His creatures safe and happy. The lack of simplicity in the ways of Bayle’s God would be challenged later by Jaquelot.

responded to this work and gave his longest refutation of privation theory in the journal *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans*, August 1704, article VII (reprinted in *OD* IV, 179a–181b).

60 *DHC* III, “Pauliciens,” rem. M, 635a.

Divine Permission and Divine Foreknowledge

Bayle's critique of Christian theodicy leads him to a surprising conclusion: Christians are in fact all "unreasonable Manicheans."⁶¹ He explains this by imagining a Manichean speaking to a Christian:

[I]f you examine your system carefully, you will notice that you adopt two principles, one good and the other evil, just as clearly as I do; but instead of placing these two principles in separate subjects, you combine them together in one single substance, which is monstrous and impossible. The unique principle that you admit willed from all eternity that human beings should sin, that the first sin should be contagious, that it produce endlessly and continuously all imaginable crimes on the face of the earth; after which He prepared for human beings in this life all the suffering that can be conceived—pests, war, famine, pain, sadness—and after this life a hell in which nearly all people will be tormented for all eternity in ways that make your hair stand on end when you read about them.⁶² If such a principle is perfectly good, and if He loves holiness infinitely, must we not also recognize that this same God is perfectly good and perfectly evil at the same time, and the He loves virtue no more than He loves vice?⁶³

The common response to such a charge is that God did not will that human beings should sin; He merely permitted the sin which humans alone freely willed. Bayle finds two problems with the "mere permission thesis." First, the mere permission thesis is incomprehensible, since it entails that creatures are the sole causes of their sinful actions. But, as Bayle argued in "Manicheans," we cannot conceive of a created being that is the cause of its own movement, independent of its creator's power. If the movement of the will is a mode identical to the substance of the soul, then the cause of the soul is also the cause of the will's movement. If the movement of the will is a mode not identical to the substance of the soul, then that movement is a created being and therefore

61 In remark I of "Paulicians," Bayle explains that to accuse a Christian of Manicheism is to accuse them of making God the author of sin.

62 Bayle's assumptions that hell exists, is eternal, and will house the majority of people for all eternity will be challenged by Le Clerc, who will offer a theodicy based on the assumption that all people are eventually saved.

63 *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. F, 629a. In addition, Bayle devotes the entirety of remark II of "Pauliciens" to the Manicheism of Christianity, emphasizing in particular the belief in Satan, who is elevated by some Christians to the status of a Princely rival of God who has the authority to cause evil.

requires the power of a creator. But all philosophers and theologians, Bayle claims, agree that humans lack the power to bring new beings into existence. So either the movement of the will is caused by God, or it is created *ex nihilo*. Perhaps the power of the will originates in God, but human beings have the power to direct or stop that power (and this redirection or stopping is the cause of sin). “That is contradictory,” Bayle argues, “for it requires no less force to stop that which moves, than is required to move that which is at rest.”⁶⁴

The second problem with the mere permission thesis is that it destroys divine omniscience. Mere divine permission of sin cannot serve as a foundation for divine omniscience. If humans alone decide that and when they will sin, then their sins must be unforeseeable by God, and so God evidently fails to be all-knowing. This is why “the majority of theologians” agree that God made a decree of all that would happen, and included in that decree the fact that the first humans would sin. Only by the necessary knowledge of such a decree could God foresee human sin infallibly. Other theologians argue instead that God’s decree was merely that human beings would be placed in a set of circumstances in which God foresaw that they would sin (Bayle ascribes this view to Luis de Molina, and refers to it often as the Molinist view). So on the Molinist view, there is a distinction made between God’s decree and the foreseeable consequences of God’s decree. God wills the former but merely permits the latter. On this view, therefore, not human sin itself, but the circumstances surrounding and occasioning the sin were part of God’s decree (e.g. Eve placed in the Garden near the Forbidden tree at the same time as the serpent). However, since God foresees sins, He includes in His decree subsequent punishment for those sins. Therefore, at least part of the divine Decree is made as a result of God’s foreknowledge that humans will sin.

In Bayle’s opinion, both views entail that God willed that human beings sin. It is clear why Bayle thinks this in the case of the first, supralapsarian view. But God wills sin on the Molinist view as well, according to Bayle, because God could have chosen to place humans in different circumstances, or to place different humans in the same circumstances, such that no human being would ever sin. (It is consequently an assumption of Bayle’s that there is a possible world in which humans exist but no human ever sins.) The success of the mere permission thesis will be a dominant theme in the Bayle-Jaquelot debate, particularly in these *Dialogues*.

It is possible to respond to Bayle’s arguments above by sacrificing divine omniscience (Bayle anticipates that the Socinians would do so), but in that case

64 DHC III, “Paulicians,” rem. F, 628a.

Bayle retorts that God should have either withheld free will altogether, since He would have foreseen at least the possible consequences of its misuse, or intervened in some natural or miraculous way in the Garden of Eden just before Adam and Eve were about to sin, at a time when humanity was still innocent, but at a time when God knew infallibly that they would lose that innocence without His extraordinary aid.

Scandalous Comparisons

A common theme in the attacks of Bayle's critics is that the most solid proof of Bayle's anti-religious intent in the Manichean articles are his comparisons between the actions of God and those of the worst human beings, especially bad parents and monarchs. The analogies were seen by readers of the *Dictionary* as irreverent at best, and scandalous at worse. Bayle would insist, however, that polemical writers had made use of even more scandalous analogies, and that he was merely copying their style in his Manichean articles.⁶⁵ He would also insist, however, that the analogies are solid from the point of view of our common notions of good and evil. The comparisons aim to demonstrate that God is guilty of actions that nobody would condone in a human parent or monarch, and therefore ordinary ideas of morality, grounded in reason, are inadequate for assessing the divine character.

For example, some argue that God permits evil in order to manifest His wisdom more clearly, perhaps by demonstrating His ability to repair the effects of evil actions or to bring about good effects from evil causes. But, Bayle argues, this attempt at theodicy likens God to a father who allows his child to fall from a great height when he could have prevented the accident just in order to demonstrate to the townspeople his ability to mend broken bones; or to a Monarch who allows plots, sedition, and violence to progress throughout his realm when he could have prevented them from ever taking root just in order to demonstrate his political savvy later in resolving these ills.⁶⁶ Nobody would count this father or this monarch among the wise. The truly wise father is the one who can foresee and prevent all harm from coming to his children; the truly wise Monarch is the one who rules in such a way that removes all motives for plots, sedition, and violence. So why would anyone consider God wise for allowing the Fall and other subsequent tragedies, assuming that He could have prevented them (which we must assume in order to uphold divine omnipotence and divine omniscience in Bayle's view)?

⁶⁵ See *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. F, 629a, note 50 in the margin.

⁶⁶ *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. E, 626a.

Some (including Jaquelot, as we will see) argue that God desired for a variety of reasons to give human beings free-will, and once He made this gift He was obliged to respect its autonomy and therefore neither withdraw nor impede it. Bayle's most daring analogy comes into play in order to refute this line of reasoning. This strand of the free-will theodicy likens God to a mother who allows her young daughter to go to a ball, knowing well that there will be some men there who will try to seduce her. (The story of Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden comes to mind.) Bayle goes further. Assume this mother follows her daughter to the ball and watches her carefully through the windows as a man corners her, charms her, and leads her upstairs into a bedroom. (If God is omniscient, He always sees what is happening and what is to come, even more clearly than this mother would have seen.) Assume, finally, that the moment arrives when the daughter is about to succumb to the man's advances and lose her virginity. (The Fall.) Who, Bayle asks, would excuse this mother for not interfering on the grounds that the mother had a duty to respect her daughter's freedom, which the mother granted the daughter for the evening? Nobody, Bayle believes. Instead, everyone would say that the mother loves neither her daughter nor virtue if she allows the scene to unfold before her eyes when only a tap on the window pane would have put it to a stop. But then why does anyone judge God differently for His permission of Eve's seduction at the hands of her tempter?⁶⁷

Others argue that God permitted evil in order to manifest not His wisdom, but His justice and His mercy. God's justice is manifested in the punishment of sin, and His mercy in its forgiveness through a Redeemer. Without punishment and forgiveness, these divine attributes would be unknown. But, Bayle retorts, justice could have been clearly demonstrated in a world without sin, where everyone always obeyed God's laws. Who could appear more just than a Prince who never punishes the innocent? The non-punishment of the innocent is just as clear a manifestation of justice as the punishment of the guilty. Moreover, God's justice is known *a priori* through the contemplation of "the mere idea of a supremely perfect being."⁶⁸ No proof of the attribute is needed for those who believe in a single creator. As for mercy, Bayle asks his reader to judge two Princes: one Prince allows his subjects to suffer for a time before he finally gives them all they need; another Prince always provides all that his subjects need so that they will never suffer. Which Prince is the more merciful toward his subjects? This is Bayle's response to what might be called the *Felix Culpa*

67 See *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. E, 627b.

68 *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. E, 627a.

theodicy, according to which the Fall in Eden was in fact a good thing because it led ultimately to the gift of the Redeemer. A happier state of affairs, Bayle argues, would have been the continuation for all eternity of the innocence and beatitude of Adam and Eve and their descendants.

Transition from P2 to P3: How the Failure of Theodicy Leads to Faith

The remarks to the article “Paulicians” contain no new defence of P3 beyond what Bayle already offered in remark D of “Manicheans.” However, the “Clarification on the Manicheans” contains new and interesting defences both of the strong interpretation of P2 and the fideist principle P3. These defences begin by noting that most of the critics of the first edition of the *Dictionary* grant Bayle that divine providence is ultimately mysterious. But these critics deny that the mysteriousness of providence entails the insolubility of the problem of evil. It is possible, in other words, to believe that divine providence is mysterious and that a true theodicy is nevertheless discoverable. Bayle denies this claim and shows why the admission of the mysteriousness of God’s ways entails the impossibility of rationally resolving the problem of evil. Bayle’s starting point is the equation of the notions that “x is a mystery” and “x is above reason,” which was common in Bayle’s time. Then the crux of the argument, as well as of Bayle’s view of the conformity of faith and reason, is the following passage:

If some doctrine is above reason, then it is beyond reason’s reach. If the doctrine is beyond reason’s reach, then reason cannot attain it. If it cannot attain it, then it cannot understand it. If it cannot understand it, then it cannot find any idea, any principle, which could serve as the basis of a solution to objections; consequently, the objections raised by reason against the doctrine will remain without response, or, what amounts to the same thing, reason will be able to respond only by means of a distinction just as obscure as the thesis under attack. Now, it is certain that an objection based on very distinct notions will be equally victorious whether nothing is said in response to the objection or the response given to the objection is impossible for anyone to understand.⁶⁹

In this single passage we have an argument both for the strong interpretation of P2 and also motivation for P3. Rational theodicy must fail, i.e. any theodicy will be devastated by rational objections, because the ways of God are mysterious,

⁶⁹ DHC IV, *Éclaircissement sur les Manichéens*, 630.

that is, above reason. For something to be above reason, in Bayle's view, entails that reason is incapable not only of understanding the thing, but also that reason is incapable of finding rational principles on which to base responses to objections. The passage just quoted leads from the concept of mystery to the implication that all mysteries are combatted by invincible objections. The argument appears to be that mysteries are above reason, and that whatever is above reason is also against reason. Bayle will be forced to clarify in the *Dialogues* whether he in fact believes that everything above reason is against reason. But assuming that something like this is his view, then Bayle has given motivation for abandoning reason in matters that are mysterious. These matters are above and against reason, so something other than reason (i.e. faith) is needed to access these truths.

Part 2: Bayle's Debate with Le Clerc

Since Jean Le Clerc's and Isaac Jaquelot's names have been all but forgotten even among scholars of Early Modern Philosophy, and since there are no readily available English introductions to their lives and works, some biographical context will be given for each. In this part I begin with a brief biography of Le Clerc, followed by an analysis of the main themes of his debate with Bayle. As the Chronology above shows, the Bayle-Le Clerc debate before the *Dialogues* was comprised of hundreds of pages of sometimes short, sometimes prolix, often disorganized journal articles. Rather than follow the debate chronologically, text-by-text, therefore, I have opted below to give some structure to the debate by dividing it up into its main philosophical themes.

*Jean Le Clerc*⁷⁰

An overview of the life and works of Jean Le Clerc leaves one puzzled as to why he and Bayle, leading figures in the Republic of Letters, became enemies rather than friends, collaborators, and allies. Both were forced to leave their

70 For background on the life and works of Le Clerc, as well as for background on his debates with Bayle, I have relied mainly on the following sources: Annie Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc et la République des Lettres* (Paris: Libraire E. Droz, 1938); Samuel A. Golden, *Jean Le Clerc* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972); Maria Cristina Pitassi, *Entre Croire et Savoir: Le Problème de la méthode critique chez Jean Le Clerc* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Stefano Brogi, *Teologia senza Verità: Bayle contro i "rationaux"* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1998); Stefano Brogi, "Bayle, Le Clerc, et les 'rationaux,'" in Antony McKenna and Gianni Paganini (eds.), *Pierre Bayle dans la République des Lettres: Philosophie, religion, critique* (Paris: Honoré

homeland early in life and ultimately establish themselves in Holland because of scandals surrounding early books they wrote. Both were influenced by the Cartesian Robert Chouet, but then later turned against Cartesian metaphysics as it was applied to theological matters. Early writings of both authors argue for extensive religious toleration, and consequently both gained an enemy in Pierre Jurieu. Le Clerc would contribute early on to Bayle's *News from the Republic of Letters*, and would later establish his own series of journals. Inventories of 18th-century libraries show that Bayle and Le Clerc were tied among the leading journalists of their period.⁷¹ Just as Bayle was preparing his *Dictionary*, Le Clerc was busy revising and re-editing Moreri's *Grand Dictionnaire Historique*. Even concerning the problem of evil, the issue that would divide them, the early biographies of Bayle and Le Clerc show many similar trends in thinking. Both demonstrated disgust at the *odium theologicum* in the debates over grace and predestination that raged throughout the 1670s in Geneva, and both became skeptical at the outset of their careers about attempts at theodicy by Cartesian metaphysicians, each devoting parts of their first works against such attempts.⁷² There were so many opportunities for fruitful collaboration; perhaps, however, they were *too* alike, and saw in the other only competition. It probably did not help that they were also both in dire need of money throughout most of their lives and desperately needed their books and journals to sell just to make ends meet. They could not have known that the market they were both targeting was large enough for both of them to flourish in, since their journals and Dictionaries helped create and expand that market.

Le Clerc was born in 1657 in Geneva, the citadel of orthodox Calvinism. His early education, unlike Bayle's, was carefully guided both at the schools he frequented and at home by his learned and eccentric father, Etienne Le

champion, 2004), 211–230; Elisabeth Labrousse, "Introduction," in *OD* IV, vii–xv; Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press), especially 63–94.

71 M. Mornet surveyed 500 private libraries from eighteenth-century Europe and discovered that Bayle's and Le Clerc's journals both appeared in 101 collections, placing them in a tie for second after the journals of Desfontaines. See M. Mornet, "Les Enseignements des Bibliothèques Privées," in *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* XVII (1910), 449–496; 479.

72 In Bayle's case the relevant work is the 1679 *Objectiones primae in libros quatuor de Deo, animo, et malo, cum responsionibus authoris* (*OD* IV, 146–161). Le Clerc's work that Bayle cites along with Arnauld's writings as having led him to abandon Malebranche's theodicy (see *OD* III, 825b, note t) is the second part of the *Entretiens sur diverses matières de théologie* (Amsterdam, 1685).

Clerc, who was a physician, philologist, professor of Greek and Philosophy, and finally an influential magistrate in Geneva. Le Clerc was first educated at the College of Geneva, and then later at the Genevan Academy (now the University of Geneva), both institutions founded by Calvin himself. If Bayle had accepted a position offered to him at the Academy in 1670, he would have been one of Le Clerc's teachers. Of the teachers Le Clerc did have at the Academy, the young philosophy professor, Chouet, had the greatest influence. Chouet's Cartesianism and scientific research left a lasting impression on Le Clerc which shows in his writings. Whereas Bayle shied away from reviewing scientific works in his *NRL*, Le Clerc distinguished himself as a journalist by popularizing the great scientific works published in his day.

Le Clerc was consecrated and became a Reformed Minister in 1680, which required that he sign the *Consensus Helveticus*, which affirmed Le Clerc's commitment to orthodox Calvinist teaching. Very shortly thereafter, Le Clerc, whose life was hitherto on a path toward a serene, prosperous and uneventful future, was shaken in his orthodox Calvinist faith when he obtained and read the work of his Arminian uncle, Etienne de Courcelles, the 1659 *Quaternio dissertationum theologiarum adv. Sam. Maresium*. Barnes identifies the reading of this work in 1680 as the event that led Le Clerc privately to convert to Arminianism: "He found therein the answer to all his aspirations for a lovable Christianity, which dared to proclaim that Christ died for all, that religious toleration is the first duty of Christian charity, and which left room for reason to approach the mysteries of the Trinity and original sin."⁷³ Further reading of influential Arminians, such as Simon Episcopius, confirmed Le Clerc in his conversion and led him to realize that he would have to renounce his ministry and any ties to his intolerant homeland of Geneva. Le Clerc left for England in mid-1682, where he lasted half a year before his own intolerance, of the weather, led him to look elsewhere. The time in England was not wasted, however, since Le Clerc picked up enough English during his sojourn that he was able to serve the rest of his life as a sort of cultural and scientific ambassador of England to continental Europe.⁷⁴ In this capacity Le Clerc is best known for his early French translation and abridgement of Locke's *Essay*, which made Locke famous outside of England. Le Clerc would ultimately settle in Amsterdam in 1683, where initially he preached in the Arminian Church, and where he would later obtain a post as professor of philosophy at the Arminian Seminary. During the last fifty years of his life, Le Clerc never left Holland.

⁷³ Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc*, 53.

⁷⁴ This is the focus of Golden's book, the only English work devoted entirely to Le Clerc.

Like many of his family members (and like Bayle), Le Clerc demonstrated from the time of his earliest writings a fierce independence of thought, which never failed to attract controversy. In 1681, therefore shortly after his private conversion to Arminianism, while living in Saumur, Le Clerc had a short anonymous work published, *Liberii de Sancto Amore Epistolae theologicae, in quibus varii scholasticorum errors castigantur* [*The theological letters of Liberius de Sancto Amore, in which several errors of the Scholastics are corrected*]. The second letter contains an ingenious argument for religious toleration which, however, scandalized many. Le Clerc imagines educating two boys in classical languages and philosophy, and then sending them off to separate wings of a house for several years to study the Bible on their own. When Le Clerc has the two boys re-emerge after their years of study, both have become heretics, and one has even become a Socinian. The argument is essentially the same as one that Bayle employs in the *Philosophical Commentary*: since the Bible is so vague on most doctrinal points, even to those who are well educated, we must adopt a wide spirit of toleration toward those whose views differ from our own.⁷⁵ Le Clerc never admitted publicly to writing the *Liberii de Sancto Amore*, but he did confess his authorship to close friends, and he was suspected by many others of penning the work. It was on account of this book's plea for toleration and its radical claim that the Trinity was not an essential doctrine of Christianity that Le Clerc was first accused of Socinianism, a charge against him that would become common and that gives unity to his many polemics and controversies.

For a number of reasons it was not uncommon in the period for Arminians to be suspected of Socinianism.⁷⁶ Since the latter is a subject frequently raised by Bayle, some background will be given here. Socinianism has its roots in the thought of two Italians, the humanist Laelius Socinus (1525–1562), and his nephew, Faustus Socinus (1539–1604). The latter is the better known because of his theological influence on the Polish Brethren. Socinianism is associated mainly with the denial of the Trinity and affirmation of the unity of God (for which reason they are also called 'Unitarians'), as well as with their denials

75 Brogi argues on behalf of a more general similarity between Bayle and Le Clerc, claiming that both adhered to a kind of "theological hypotheticalism" which renders the majority of divisive doctrines unnecessary. See Brogi, *Teologia senza verità*, 256.

76 An excellent volume of essays has recently been published that clarifies the complex relationships between Arminianism and Socinianism in the early modern period. See Martin Mulsow and Jan Rohls (editors), *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2005). See 67–74 for the case of Le Clerc in particular. Also helpful is Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 115–135.

of the divinity of Jesus Christ, of original sin, and of God's omniscience. On a more fundamental level, one that explains the above denials, they are associated with the view that reason is the correct guide to the interpretation of Scripture; whatever is contrary to the evidence of reason must be rejected. The resultant Socinian theology, therefore, is one in which reason and theology are consistent, never at odds. On the political plane Socinians were proponents of a wide toleration for dissenting views. In 1658, after decades of growth in Poland, the Socinians were expelled from that land and dispersed throughout Europe. Many arrived in Holland where they were welcomed into the tolerant Arminian communities. The two sects—Socinianism and Arminianism—had much in common, most notably their mutual commitments to toleration and theological Rationalism.

'Theological Rationalism' is a potentially misleading term, and we must be careful to understand what it means in the case of Le Clerc, whose name has been attached to this term as closely as anyone else's in the seventeenth century. In particular, we must be careful not to equate Rationalism naively with Cartesianism. As we will see, Jaquelot's Rationalism was very Cartesian and metaphysical, largely inspired by Malebranche; whereas Le Clerc's theological Rationalism, though greatly influenced by the foundations of Descartes' epistemology, was first articulated in a work written in opposition to the influence of Cartesian metaphysics in religion, namely the 1685 *Entretiens sur diverses matières de théologie* [*Dialogues on diverse theological matters*], which Le Clerc co-authored with Charles Le Cène, but the second anti-metaphysical part of which is entirely from his pen. In this work, Le Clerc denounces the recent infiltration of Cartesian philosophy into theology, especially through the writings of Malebranche. Theology ought to be based on Scripture alone, not on the writings of modern philosophers. Moreover, theology ought to be thin, not fattened by the addition of metaphysical speculation. The bulk of Le Clerc's contribution to this work comprises an attack on Cartesian metaphysics. Le Clerc expresses his basic commitment to Descartes' method as expressed in the *Discourse*, as well as to Descartes' reliance on rational evidence as a guide. However, Le Clerc then attacks Descartes' metaphysics on the basis that it deals with matters which are far from evident, and which God never intended the human mind to know.

The basis of this critique is Le Clerc's view that God intended humans to inquire into only those things connected to their happiness, their fulfilment of moral obligations, and their eternal salvation. Le Clerc's theology is therefore thoroughly moral. Nothing else should be the concern of human beings. Le Clerc therefore possesses two separate criteria of theological truth: first, whether the doctrine coheres with rational evidence; second, whether the doc-

trine is necessary to believe in order to be happy, good, or saved. Le Clerc's list of essential theological doctrines is therefore sparse. It is worth listing these doctrines, which Le Clerc considers rational and necessary for salvation, since they correspond exactly with the doctrines that Le Clerc believes he must defend against Bayle's attacks, and so they help us to understand the motive for his entering into debate with Bayle: "I conceive distinctly the omnipotence of God, his goodness toward his creatures, his holiness, or in other words, his love of virtue and hatred of vice, and his mercy ... I perceive that I am free, and I am evidently persuaded of God's omniscience."⁷⁷ When one reduces to theology to such a meager foundation, one has good reason to defend that foundation.

One of the great ironies of Bayle's debates with Le Clerc and Jaquelot stems from Le Clerc's contribution to the *Dialogues on Diverse Theological Matters*. A few decades after this work was published, Bayle would credit the work, along with Arnauld's writings, as one of the motives that led him to abandon Malebranche's theodicy.⁷⁸ Indeed, Le Clerc's contributions to the *Dialogues on Diverse Theological Matters* include many arguments that anticipate some of the main lines of Bayle's own attacks against rationalist theodicies.⁷⁹ In a letter to Bayle, Le Clerc summarized his aim in offering those arguments, and anticipated by a decade Bayle's own skeptical attitude toward the problem of evil: "It seems that you believe that the aim of the author of the second part [of the *Dialogues on Diverse Theological Matters*] was to attack Father Malebranche directly; but the author had no other aim than to show that this author undertook to discuss a subject that it would be better to leave alone, since whatever opinion one chooses will be surrounded by insurmountable difficulties. All the systems concerning such abstract matters serve only to give rise to doubts, rather than to dissipate them."⁸⁰ The irony is that Bayle reviewed the *Dialogues* in his *News from the Republic of Letters* (*NRL*), describing Le Clerc and his co-author [without naming them] as heterodox,⁸¹ which clearly insulted Le Clerc.⁸² In a few years it would be Le Clerc accusing Bayle of

77 Jean Le Clerc, *Dialogues on Diverse Theological Matters*, 219–220.

78 See *RQP* II, clv (*OD* III, 825b, note t).

79 See, for example, *Dialogues on Diverse Theological Matters*, 276–282.

80 See Jean Le Clerc to Pierre Bayle, 11 May 1685, *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle*, volume 5, edited by Elisabeth Labrousse, Antony McKenna, Laurence Bergon et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2007), 353.

81 *NRL*, April 1685 (*OD* I, 277).

82 See Jean Le Clerc to Pierre Bayle, 11 May 1685, *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle*, volume 5, edited by Elisabeth Labrousse, Antony McKenna, Laurence Bergon et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2007), 352.

heterodoxy for an opinion concerning the problem of evil that Le Clerc himself may have persuaded Bayle to adopt!

This would not be the only time that Bayle would offend Le Clerc by means of his impression of one of Le Clerc's books. Le Clerc's first single-authored work, and the one that would render him famous throughout Europe, was his critique of Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du vieux Testament* (*History of the Old Testament*), which had created a scandal on account of Simon's arguments that Moses could not have written the whole of the Pentateuch, contrary to long-standing tradition. Le Clerc's *Sentiments de quelques théologiens de Holland sur l'Histoire ...* (*Opinions of Several Dutch Theologians concerning the History ...*) did not make its mark by defending orthodox beliefs about Scripture against Simon's attacks, but rather by taking Simon's radical views to even further extremes. For example, whereas Simon leaves some role to Moses in the composition of the Old Testament, Le Clerc denies any role for Moses whatsoever. Bayle felt it necessary in his review of Le Clerc's *Opinions* to attribute the most radical parts of the book dealing with the inspiration of the prophets to a "friend of the author" (in case anyone discovered that Le Clerc was the author), since Bayle considered these parts to be reflective of a strong Spinozistic influence (a well-founded suspicion, since Le Clerc had read Spinoza's *Tractatus* several years before writing his *Opinions*).

Privately Bayle felt it necessary to admonish Le Clerc in a frank letter to him: "Permit me to tell you that all those who read [the *Opinions*] found it far more dangerous than Father Simon's book. We expected Holland to produce a response that would reaffirm the foundations of the faith that this priest wished to obscure, but instead we found that you obscured those foundations much more than he did, and that your entire 'Treatise on the inspiration of the prophets and apostles' will only serve to cast a thousand doubts and a thousand seeds of atheism into your readers' minds."⁸³ This letter is fascinating, since it presents a role reversal viz-a-viz the later Bayle-Le Clerc polemic: in 1685 it is Bayle who is worried (sincerely, it would seem, for the context is a personal letter) about Le Clerc's works spreading atheism; just a few decades later it will be Le Clerc who takes Bayle to task for undermining the foundations of religion. It is interesting to note what each author defended: Bayle felt he had to defend the foundations of *faith*, namely the inspiration of Scripture; Le Clerc would later defend the foundations of *rational* theology, especially the rational support for belief in a morally good, just, and merciful God.

83 Pierre Bayle to Jean Le Clerc, 18 July 1685 in *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle*, volume 5, edited by Elisabeth Labrousse, Antony McKenna, Laurence Bergon et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2007), 431.

In 1686 Le Clerc became Bayle's competition in the world of learned journals with the founding of his *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* (*Universal and Historical Library*), which he oversaw for eight years. This journal was like Bayle's in its focus on providing timely reviews of works that were difficult to acquire outside of Holland, but it distinguished itself from Bayle's by the inclusion of reviews of English books and scientific works. This journal was succeeded by two other journals undertaken by Le Clerc: *Bibliothèque choisie* (*Choice Library*; 1703–1714), which Le Clerc would employ to publish most of his attacks against Bayle, and *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne* (*Ancient and Modern Library*; 1714–1726), which included reviews of whatever Le Clerc happened to be reading at the time. Whereas Bayle preceded Le Clerc in the journalistic field, Le Clerc was first to engage in writing Dictionary articles, having agreed to revise Moreri's *Grand Dictionnaire Historique* for the new editions of 1691, 94, 98, and 1702. Whether this competition with Bayle gave rise to their later disputes is doubtful; however, the journalistic and encyclopedic achievements of both parties rendered their disputes a matter of public interest.

One other work by Le Clerc which appeared prior to his dispute with Bayle casts some light on the intellectual motives behind that dispute. The 1696 *De l'incrédulité*⁸⁴ (*On Unbelief*) is a treatise devoted to the reasons that atheists give, and the motives they do not themselves recognize or admit, for rejecting religion, from passion and pride to scandals and unending divisions within every religion. Part II, chapters six and seven, of *On Unbelief* consider the ways in which unbelievers use philosophical difficulties raised against religion as their "excuse" for rejecting God. In chapter six the more particular motive for atheism considered is the inability of theologians to answer the atheists' objections. In chapter seven the concern is with difficulties that religious believers themselves recognize within their systems, and that are intrinsic to religion on account of the sublimity of its subject matter. The relevance of these chapters to Bayle's discussions of the problem of evil (which were published roughly at the same time as *On Unbelief*) is immediately apparent: Bayle concludes that unbelievers can raise insoluble objections against Christian systems of providence, and Le Clerc is worried that such an admission can and will be used by certain people as justification for atheism. It should not be surprising, therefore, that shortly after Le Clerc had read Bayle's *Dictionary* he wrote in opposition to the Manichean articles.

84 Jean Le Clerc, *De l'incrédulité, où l'on examine les motifs et les raisons générales qui portent les incrédules à rejeter la religion Chrétienne* [*On Unbelief*] (Amsterdam: Henri Wetstein, 1696).

Several of the dominant themes of the Bayle-Le Clerc controversy are also predictable in light of these two chapters of *On Unbelief*. Bayle will of course insist that his reflections on Manicheism do not lead to atheism, but rather to the abasement of reason before the superior light of faith. Le Clerc argues in *On Unbelief*, however, that such fideism is a dangerous feature of modernity that will only increase the number of atheists. Le Clerc anticipates Bayle's resolution of the Manichean objections as follows: "There are many today who claim that we should make no use of reason, or of discernment, in religious matters. They maintain that we must believe it to be revealed, without knowing why; that when it is a matter of discovering the meaning of some revelation, or the Books containing revelation, we must not reason in order to understand it, but we should even accept things that conflict most of all with reason, rather than abandoning the literal interpretation."⁸⁵ Why does such fideism lead to atheism? "The unbelievers will conclude that they are being deceived, and that we know very well that our dogmas are unjustifiable because we will not permit them to be examined."⁸⁶

Fideism is a dangerous foundation for religion, and must be replaced with several fundamental rationalist doctrines if atheism is to be prevented. First, it is acceptable to speak about doctrines that are "above reason," but never about doctrines that are "contrary to reason," for "it is impossible to extract a single proposition from the Gospels, or from the other writings of the Apostles, expressed in their own terms, which is not perfectly conformable to reason."⁸⁷ This conformity of faith and reason entails that despite the possible good intentions of certain theologians who speak in this way, "it is entirely false that God willed that there be mysteries in religion that exceed all understanding solely in order to humble the human mind."⁸⁸ The conformity of any mystery with reason can be fully explained, even if the mystery itself cannot be fully understood. There cannot be insoluble objections to Christian mysteries as Bayle will argue there are in the case of Manicheism; to argue otherwise, in Le Clerc's view, is to undermine the foundation of religion. This brings us finally to Bayle's debate with Le Clerc over the problem of evil and the conformity of faith and reason. In what follows I organize and analyze the debate's main themes and arguments that forced Bayle to clarify his position and his intentions.

85 Le Clerc, *On Unbelief*, 251.

86 Le Clerc, *On Unbelief*, 254.

87 Le Clerc, *On Unbelief*, 257.

88 Le Clerc, *On Unbelief*, 262.

An Overlooked Theodicy: Origen and the Possibility of Universal Salvation

In 1699, two years after the publication of the first edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*, Le Clerc's first response to Bayle's treatment of the problem of evil appeared in his anonymous *Parrhasiana*. Le Clerc opens the relevant section of that work by recounting the ways in which Bayle had armed the Manicheans with objections to the unity of God and to the theological systems of several Christian sects. He takes Bayle's conclusion to be that every Christian ought to remain silent concerning the nature of providence, believe all that Scripture teaches on the subject, and refrain from worrying about any apparent inconsistencies between the Biblical account of divine governance and the light of reason; these inconsistencies are supposed to be useful for humbling reason. Le Clerc does not share Bayle's opinions on these matters, summarizing his own view of faith and reason as follows: "Reason and Revelation are Heaven's two daughters who never quarrel with each other."⁸⁹

Two important clarifications about Le Clerc's intent precede his defence of divine providence. First, he makes absolutely clear that he does not attribute Manicheism or heterodoxy of any kind to Bayle; nor does he accuse Bayle of supporting atheism intentionally or inadvertently. Rather, "we must take the difficulties that Bayle proposes to be the sort of objections that one finds in theology and philosophy lecture halls, where the more a difficulty is pressed, the greater the honour one can achieve by responding to it."⁹⁰ To use a contemporary distinction, at this point in the debate Le Clerc understands the problem of evil in Bayle "aporetically, as generating a puzzle,"⁹¹ rather than *atheistically*, as challenging core religious beliefs (even though, as mentioned above, Le Clerc probably worried that Bayle was inadvertently giving support to atheists). The second clarification is an act of self-defence. Just as nobody should attribute Manicheism to Bayle, though he made use of that sect to drive home his point about faith and reason, so too nobody should attribute Origenism, or any particular Origenist beliefs, to Le Clerc if he makes use of that sect to respond to the Manichean objections. Obviously this second clarification is also a foreshadowing of the argumentative strategy the reader is about to encounter.

Before Le Clerc gets to any arguments, however, he deals first of all with the pessimistic and plaintive tone of Bayle's reflections on evil. Le Clerc reveals his

⁸⁹ Le Clerc, *Par*, 356.

⁹⁰ Le Clerc, *Par*, 302.

⁹¹ See Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (eds.), *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2.

pastoral side by giving therapy before theodicy. The dual basis of Le Clerc's therapy are the claims that human beings possess libertarian free will, and therefore have no right to complain if they fall into sin or suffer its consequences, and that God is forgiving, and therefore humans consequently have reason to hope for deliverance from suffering. First, the fact that we possess free will is clear in Le Clerc's view both "by one's own experience, or by the inner feeling of the power to do or refrain from doing good or bad actions,"⁹² and by the consideration that God's punishment for sin would not be just if humans lacked freedom. Freedom is an excellent gift since it "makes room for virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment."⁹³ Finally, the fact that we are free entails that humans alone are responsible for moral evil, and that we consequently lack the right to complain about physical suffering because "sinful men are not worthy of receiving supernatural intervention from God that would deliver them from this kind of evil."⁹⁴ In other words, assuming human responsibility for moral evil, any complaint about God's permission of (or active role in) physical evil is unwarranted. Le Clerc relies here on the traditional Augustinian view of suffering as just punishment for sin.

Le Clerc further claims that there can be no just complaint to God for opening the door to sin by the gift of freedom because God does not ask humans to be perfect, nor does He properly speaking punish sin, but He asks only for repentance, and punishes only its lack. Bayle's frequent complaints in "Paulicians" that free will was a bad gift assume that God demands impeccable behaviour from human beings. While God undoubtedly desires perfection for His creatures, Le Clerc thinks that the only unqualified divine command is that His creatures ask forgiveness whenever they fail to reach that perfection. The failure to repent is the only truly damnable act, because even the weakest-willed person is capable of sincere remorse. God may not have created all humans with wills powerful enough to achieve moral sainthood, as Bayle was fond of pointing out, but He did create all humans with enough strength of will to ask for forgiveness for each of their sins. Conscience is never fully extinguished and God looks favourably on every act of remorse. Bayle's frequent estimations of the number of the damned are surely exaggerated.

From these therapeutic reflections Le Clerc moves on to theodicy. But first he summarizes what he takes to be Bayle's two strongest problems of evil in the *Dictionary*:

92 Le Clerc, *Par*, 306.

93 Le Clerc, *Par*, 306.

94 Le Clerc, *Par*, 307.

- (A1) If God causes moral or physical evil, then He is not benevolent;
- (A2) If God permits evil although He can prevent it, then He is indifferent to human suffering and sin, and consequently He is not benevolent;
- (A3) Moral and physical evil exist;
- (A4) God either causes these evils or permits them although He can prevent them.
- (A5) Therefore, God is not benevolent.

- (B1) If God condemns the majority of humankind to suffer eternally in hell, He is not benevolent;
- (B2) According to Christians, God condemns most of humankind to suffer eternally in hell;
- (B3) Therefore, according to Christians, God is not benevolent.⁹⁵

Le Clerc gives three replies in all: one to argument A, limited to physical evil; another to argument A, limited to moral evil; and one to argument B. All three responses rest on the supposition of the same doctrine of the early Church father, Origen, the doctrine of Universal Salvation, according to which all humankind will ultimately be free from suffering (and possibly experience eternal beatitude). The possible truth of Universal Salvation (which Bayle neither considered nor denied nor refuted) demonstrates the consistency of positing a single benevolent God while acknowledging the existence of physical evil, moral evil, and a non-eternal hell (or purgatory).

Le Clerc's first response goes as follows. Since the duration of any instance of physical suffering, no matter how intense, is finite, but the freedom from suffering (and possibly eternal happiness) will be infinite for every human being, all suffering is infinitely outweighed by its lack in the eternal lives of all humans, leaving God's benevolence intact, contrary to the claims in A1 and A2 (limited to physical suffering). God is like a physician who inadvertently, but foreseeably, makes a child cry for a short while as he administers the needed treatment for some illness. The child's complaints, since they are a sign of his ignorance and limited perspective, are not evidence of malice on the part of the physician, and they may even cause the physician to laugh at the child's shortsightedness. God's benevolence is not contradicted by the plight of suffering humans, who need only to elevate their minds to see their pain from God's perspective as a finite preparatory prelude to eternal bliss.

⁹⁵ Neither of these arguments is laid out this explicitly by Le Clerc. The premises and conclusions can all be found, however, in *Par*, 304–305.

Another argument from analogy serves as Le Clerc's defence of God in light of moral evil. If a clockmaker made a pendulum that kept time over the course of a whole year, except for the loss of two seconds, we could not say that the craftsman lacked concern for his works. Similarly, "if God one day rectifies all the disorders caused by the misuse of free will, we would not be astonished that He did not put an end to them while we were still on the earth."⁹⁶ Again, God's benevolence is questionable only from the shadowy standpoint of human minds; once our minds are enlightened, the consistency of God's benevolence and the existence of sin will cease to strike us as doubtful. Asserting A₁ and A₂ is a symptom of human myopia.

Le Clerc's strategy, used twice now, of increasing the mind's distance from all the evil in the world's finite history until all that evil shrinks away entirely, is ineffective when it comes to the *eternal* punishments that Christians allege will be suffered by the damned in hell. Taking advantage of the fact that Bayle omitted mentioning its possibility, Le Clerc employs once again Origen's hypothesis of Universal Salvation—the claim that suffering is *not* eternal for *anybody*—to answer this most difficult objection to the benevolence of God: "I do not deny that Jesus Christ threatened the wicked with *eternal fire*, and I will not appeal to the ambiguity of these terms; I only ask: who told the Manicheans that the Supreme Legislator of the universe does not have the right to remove these punishments, by means of which He threatens the wicked, whenever He sees fit?"⁹⁷ Le Clerc continues: there is nothing contrary to the divine goodness, and on the contrary, there is much in conformity with divine mercy, in God's leading sinners to believe they will suffer eternally, but then freeing them from their pains after they have been purified by them.⁹⁸ If God in fact acts in this way, then even the suffering of the damned in hell, temporary as it is, will one day appear as nothing compared to the eternal joy that they will experience in heaven. God's benevolence, Le Clerc believes, has been fully vindicated against Bayle and the Manicheans.

Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana* was published in time for Bayle to include a rebuttal in the second edition of his *Dictionary*. The true origin of the Bayle-Le Clerc debate lies here, in Bayle's response to Le Clerc in "Origen," remark E, for whereas Le Clerc had engaged Bayle in the *Parrhasiana* in a blithe scholarly manner, Bayle responded in the *Dictionary* as though he had been fiercely attacked by a sworn enemy. Bayle's complete disregard for the doctrine of

⁹⁶ Le Clerc, *Par*, 311.

⁹⁷ Le Clerc, *Par*, 311.

⁹⁸ Le Clerc, *Par*, 312.

reciprocal force surely marked Le Clerc, though it did not move him immediately to respond to Bayle, as we will see.

Bayle focuses his rebuttal on three of Le Clerc's theses: (1) that the duration of the suffering and sin in the world is nothing compared to the duration of eternal paradise, such that evil does not compromise either God's benevolence or holiness; (2) that God created human beings free in order to make possible both virtue and vice, reward and punishment; (3) that God damns human beings only for failing to repent, not for sinning.

The opening argument in Bayle's reply introduces what will become the central philosophical topic throughout his debate with Le Clerc: the nature of goodness. The main fault of Le Clerc's response to the Manichean objections is that he did not adequately conceive what is meant by perfect goodness. The Manicheans demand that Christians explain the origin of evil while maintaining the purity of the goodness of their God; not even the slightest trace of evil can be present in the account of the Christian God, lest the Manicheans claim that this evil is evidence of the influence of a second malevolent principle. Bayle defines the 'ideal goodness' that Christians must uphold to be that which "disposes its subject to make gifts which by the shortest and most certain means possible will render the recipient of the gift happy. This ideal goodness essentially and necessarily excludes everything found in a malicious being."⁹⁹

Bayle's abstract concept of goodness provides him with an immediate response to the first and most important of Le Clerc's theses: "Now in consulting this idea of goodness, we do not find that God, a supremely perfect being, could have postponed making His creatures happy until several centuries of misery had passed."¹⁰⁰ In Bayle's view, such action is suitable only to a limited, imperfect goodness. Bayle's ideal goodness also supplies him with a response to the second of Le Clerc's theses that Bayle targets: "Vice and blame should not have any place in the works of a cause that is infinitely holy ... Since everything should be happy in the empire of an infinitely good and powerful sovereign Being, punishment should not have any place there either."¹⁰¹ In other words, God's alleged motive for giving human beings free will is not purely good—for why would God want to make room for vice, blame, and punishment?

Bayle was aware that Le Clerc would reply to this last question by saying that God wanted human beings to *merit* the happiness He had in store for them; evil

99 DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 542a–b.

100 DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 542b.

101 DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 543a.

had to be possible so that it could be wisely avoided, or if needed, courageously overcome. Bayle preempts this response by adding to his concept of divine goodness: all the gifts of a perfectly benevolent being are purely free and too wonderful ever to be earned by mere humans. A human being can be worthy of the gift of another human; but when the gift is eternal paradise, and when the benefactor is God, meriting the gift is out of the question. But even if humans could do something pleasing to God to win His favour, their actions could never be the motive for divine gift-giving, which is always free. There is no *quid pro quo* in the designs of a perfectly benevolent God.¹⁰²

Having dealt in a preliminary way with the first and second of Le Clerc's theses, Bayle proceeds to dismiss the third by focusing on the tension that exists between the omniscience of God and His benevolence. On Le Clerc's view, although He damns a majority of human beings, God is nevertheless benevolent because He has given humans two opportunities, not just one, to employ their freedom well, and so to merit eternal paradise: first, humans are free not to sin; second, if they do sin, they are free to repent at any moment before they die. But, Bayle responds, God knew from all eternity who would sin and who would fail to repent; why, then, did He make the gift of freedom to these people and promise them salvation on the condition of repentance? Le Clerc's view is that the promise to reward a very imperfect use of free will is what saves God's benevolence in light of the reality of hell, but Bayle argues in response that "[i]f one promises to pardon someone on the condition that they repent, and if one knows ahead of time with great certainty that this person will never repent, then properly speaking one promises nothing at all."¹⁰³ We cannot be perfect, Le Clerc admits, yet he claims without proof that we can all be perfectly repentant.

The rest of the rebuttal focuses again on the first and most important of Le Clerc's theses. Bayle's strategy is to emphasize additional tensions that exist between divine goodness and other divine attributes. For instance, divine mercy seems to conflict with God's goodness as Le Clerc understands it, since the former attribute, if perfect, should not permit God to subject humankind to any suffering whatsoever, but the latter attribute, as Le Clerc sees it, permits God to allow humans to endure the pains of hell for hundreds, thousands, or millions of years before He sees fit to free them. Bayle consequently corrects Le Clerc's notion of divine goodness in light of its need to conform to divine mercy: "You cannot therefore attain the supreme goodness of God, except by

¹⁰² See *DHC* III, "Origène," rem. E, 543a, toward the bottom.

¹⁰³ *DHC* III, "Origène," rem. E, 543b.

removing the punishments of hell down to the very last minute."¹⁰⁴ Mercy, as Bayle sees it, demands that God spare human beings all suffering; if goodness is to conform to mercy, therefore, not a moment of hell should be permitted, or needed in the first place.

God's omnipotence is then brought into conflict with divine goodness through a refutation of Le Clerc's argument from medical analogy. After conceding that it is common for physicians to make their patients suffer in the process of healing them, Bayle notes that "there is neither doctor nor apothecary who does not apologize for the bitterness of his remedies, and who does not assure us that if it were possible, he would replace these disagreeable treatments with medicine as sweet and pleasing as anything a dessert chef could prepare." Bayle refuses to see anyone limit God's power, and thereby limit the manifestation of divine goodness: "The idea of divine goodness excludes all the weakness that is found in the way that men deal with one another."¹⁰⁵

The principal failure of Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana*, Bayle believes, is this tendency to diminish God's perfection through puerile analogies with human experience. Bayle's refutation of Le Clerc's clockmaker analogy demonstrates how we are supposed to understand the divine attributes, if we are to claim victory over the Manicheans: "We praise the skill of a clockmaker when his pendulum loses less than two or three seconds per year. But the exactness of a craftsman who is supremely perfect excludes absolutely all exceptions: his holiness, his wisdom, etc., are absolutely simple, and without any mixture of contrary qualities."¹⁰⁶

Bayle's understanding of the divine attributes entails that the defeat of the Manicheans by reason requires not only defending *monotheism*, the oneness of God, but also divine *simplicity*—both the simplicity of each divine attribute, but also the simplicity of the divine nature in general—which is a more difficult kind of unity to uphold and explain in the face of evil. In other words, there is one divine nature—a simple perfection—and so there can be no conflict of any sort within God. The Christian must explain God's creation and providence as devoid of all hesitation, all compromise, all regret, all conditionality: these are foreign to a simply perfect being. In Bayle's view perfection is pouring forth unqualified goodness in one overwhelmingly powerful, beautifully harmonious act. Neither Le Clerc's regretful physician God, nor his fumbling clockmaker God, nor his divine judge who utters false threats of eternal punishment is perfect in this respect.

¹⁰⁴ DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 543b.

¹⁰⁵ Both quotations in this paragraph are from DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 544a.

¹⁰⁶ DHC III, "Origène," rem. E, 543b.

In requiring Le Clerc to refute Manicheism without positing any conflict within or between the divine attributes, i.e. without compromising divine simplicity, Bayle introduces the most difficult problem of evil in the history of philosophy—to reconcile the evil in the world with a perfectly good, completely simple first cause. Bayle does not deny that we have a rational conception of ideal goodness, he claims only that we cannot apply that conception to the works of God so as to fully satisfy the Manichean objections. Le Clerc remained silent on these issues for several years, without offering a word in response to “Origen,” remark E.

The Debate over Cudworth's Plastic Natures

A nearly four-year hiatus ensued in the Bayle-Le Clerc debate over Manicheism. Much is made of this fact by Bayle at the outset of the *Dialogues*: does not Le Clerc's silence prove that when he finally decided to defend his imagined Origenist it was not from any real concern for the issues at stake, but from animosity toward Bayle? True religious zeal would have pushed Le Clerc to defend his cause immediately. In any case, in the intervening years Le Clerc became intensely engaged in yet another dispute with Bayle touching the foundation of religion, this time surrounding the plastic natures of Ralph Cudworth. Whether or not the heat of this latter debate fully accounts for Le Clerc's decision in 1705 to take up his Origenist's cause once again, it is unquestionable that this heat was transferred to the second-stage of the dispute between Le Clerc and Bayle over Manicheism.

In the first and second volumes of his *Choice Library* (both published in 1703), Le Clerc gave a *précis* in French of Cudworth's 1678 *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, which had gained a considerable reputation in England, but which had not yet been translated into French. Since Bayle could not read English, but had heard of Cudworth's new system, he eagerly read Le Clerc's substantial reviews. The new dispute between Le Clerc and Bayle began when the latter published his own reflections on part of Cudworth's system—the doctrine of plastic natures—arguing that the supposition of these entities removed one of the strongest objections to atheists, thereby inadvertently aiding their cause. Since Le Clerc was an acquaintance of Lady Masham, Cudworth's daughter, he felt obliged to defend her late father's good name by distancing his works in every way from the support of atheism.

Bayle's understanding of plastic natures came entirely from reading Le Clerc, who summarized the view and the need for it as follows:

Since not everything is produced by the mechanical movements of matter alone, and since we cannot reasonably believe that God does everything

directly by His own activity, there must be some inferior nature beneath Him, which executes the orders of His Providence concerning the regular movements of material beings. It must always be remembered, however, that this inferior nature does not exclude His Providence which, presiding over that nature, often supplies what is lacking to it, and often drives it by Itself; for this *Plastic Nature* acts without choice and discernment. In this way the divine wisdom is not closed in on itself, but appears outside itself ...¹⁰⁷

Plastic natures forge a compromise between materialism and occasionalism, and they were an integral part of Cudworth's attempt to Christianize the corpuscularian philosophy. But in Bayle's opinion, plastic natures only weaken the case of Christians against atheists, since these natures render more plausible the idea of a godless world: "Nothing is more troubling for atheists than to find themselves forced to explain the formation of animals by a cause that has no idea of what it is doing, yet regularly executes the same plan despite its complete ignorance of the laws governing that plan." The idea of a plastic nature—an entity lacking mind, but which acts along with matter to create order and regularity—strikes Bayle as providing just what the atheist would most like to have: a proof of the possibility of mindless matter organizing itself into complex beings. Sure, Le Clerc had emphasized the dependence of plastic natures on divine concurrence and even occasional intervention; but Bayle's point is that "if God was able to give such a plastic virtue to matter, then this is a sign that it is not repugnant to the nature of things that there be such agents; plastic natures could therefore possibly exist by themselves, the atheist will conclude."¹⁰⁸ The argument that is undermined by the supposition of plastic natures is that it is *inconceivable* that matter alone could form complex organisms on a regular basis.

Since it was Le Clerc's review that provided Bayle with this objection to Cudworth, and since Lady Masham had personally protested to him about Bayle's remarks, Le Clerc could not let the issue go as he had done with Bayle's refutation of the *Parrhasiana*. The details of the ensuing debate over plastic natures do not concern us here, except to say that the fiery back-and-forth over several years between Bayle and Le Clerc in the *Choice Library* and *History of the Works of the Learned* surely played a role in Le Clerc's decision finally to launch a second attack on Bayle's Manicheans.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Le Clerc, *BC* II, 84.

¹⁰⁸ Both quotations in this paragraph are from Bayle, *CPD*, xxi (*OD* III, 217a).

¹⁰⁹ For more on the Bayle-Le Clerc debate over plastic natures, see Thomas M. Lennon,

The Great Chain of Being

In 1705, while still debating plastic natures with Bayle, Le Clerc inserted a digressional defence of his Origenist refutation of Bayle in a review of the second edition of *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*. The occasional cause for the defence was a remark by Tillotson concerning the divine threat of eternal punishment; but the more relevant cause, as we learn from Le Clerc, was that many people had read and were impressed by Bayle's response to him in "Origen," remark E. Le Clerc waited so long to write a rejoinder to Bayle, he tells us, because he could not believe that Bayle's response would convince anyone; he now realized that he was wrong about that. Le Clerc continues to treat the Manichean objections as if they were simply offered as an academic exercise, but Le Clerc also voices the concern that the logical consequence of Bayle's thought is the overturning of the consistency of Scripture, and therefore the truth of Christianity. Le Clerc has begun to set himself up as the public defender of religion against Bayle.

Le Clerc insists on the validity of his original defence, namely that the duration of evil is infinitely less than the duration of paradise, but he also realizes that this Origenist argument has been severely damaged, and so he builds another case against Bayle on a new philosophical foundation. Since Bayle had placed such great weight on the nature of ideal goodness in his response, Le Clerc abandons the Origenist line for most of his rejoinder and directly takes up the issue of how a perfectly benevolent being can best express its goodness in creation. The strategy that Le Clerc employs is the ancient Rationalist device that has come to be called the Great Chain of Being.¹¹⁰

Bayle's constant contention is that ideal goodness demands that God see to it that every human being is perfectly happy and free of all vice. Not a single trace of evil should be found in humans. Punishment and hell should be obviated altogether, not merely mitigated, by a perfect God. Bayle's thesis, in short, is that the purity and perfection of God's goodness should be manifest in every particular person. Le Clerc now contends, on the contrary, that God's goodness must be manifest in creation taken *as a whole*, not in every particular part. The universe, not individual human beings, bears the infallible mark of God's perfection: "I respond that God, having willed to produce an infinite number of creatures, more or less perfect than one another, so that the full extent of his

"Cudworth and Bayle: An Odd Couple," in Thomas M. Lennon and Robert Stainton (eds), *The Achilles of Rationalist Psychology* (Springer, 2010), 139–158.

¹¹⁰ The authoritative study of the history of this idea is Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1936). Lovejoy nowhere mentions Le Clerc, and makes only passing reference to Bayle.

power could shine forth in infinitely many ways, formed man, who, in his order is neither the most perfect nor the most imperfect.”¹¹¹ Neither the mind nor the body of imperfect human beings was made immune to suffering: “And so God did not create man so perfect in mind that he could not stray from his duty or from the rules that reason and Revelation prescribe to him so that he will remain agreeable to God and happy on the earth; and as for the human body, it was not made so strong that it would not be subject to numerous afflictions.”¹¹² God gave human beings enough mental and physical power, however, that they could attain happiness in this life and the next if they were prudent and wise.

As Le Clerc understands Bayle’s Manichean objections, God’s goodness must be fully exhausted in each and every creature, or else there will be traces of evil throughout the universe, which is incompatible with ideal goodness. But, Le Clerc argues, this argument entails that God, in order to manifest His goodness, had to create as many Gods as there are creatures, “which is contradictory.”¹¹³ The proper way to understand divine benevolence in creation involves accepting that “the goodness of God is in itself infinite, but that each creature is finite and incapable on account of that of exhausting this goodness. But the infinity of the divine goodness still appears by the infinite number of objects over which it extends in infinitely many ways more and less, and above all by the eternal goods it bestows on infinitely many intelligent creatures.”¹¹⁴ But the goodness of God does not appear only in the universe taken as a whole; even the lesser parts, like frail humans, are good effects:

[A]n infinitely good being, like God, is in no way obligated to communicate itself to all creatures equally; it can give to certain ones a gratuitous happiness, if you will, or in other words make them happy from the beginning of their existence, while it makes others purchase in a certain respect their happiness. The reasons for this are the following. First, it is clear that one who is not obligated to give always does a favour whenever he gives. Second, it follows that he can give more or less as he sees fit. So God, if He so willed, could have given to some of His angels happiness without pain and without delay, while also making a creature less perfect than such angels, a creature that arrives at happiness only after some suffering. Either God could have acted in this way, or we must say that God should

111 Le Clerc, *BC VII*, 333–334.

112 Le Clerc, *BC VII*, 334.

113 Le Clerc, *BC VII*, 336.

114 Le Clerc, *BC VII*, 336.

have made all intelligent creatures equal, which would have destroyed entirely the beauty of the universe, for there would not have been any free creatures, such as man ... I claim, therefore, that a free creature, one capable of sinning and of attaching itself to virtue, is a good effect in this universe ...¹¹⁵

The Great Chain of Being explains how we ought to think about the manifestation of divine goodness, and it also accounts for the ultimate cause of evil: “the imperfection of man was the cause of his being able to abuse his freedom and stray from his duty, because of which he then attracted every other evil in this life and the next to himself.”¹¹⁶ The imperfection of humans—a metaphysical evil—which is a necessary evil because humans are created beings and not gods, leads humans to abuse their freedom, which is ultimately the cause of all evil. The necessary imperfection of human beings entails the possibility both of sinning and of suffering physical evil; there could not be creatures of the human kind without the risk of evil. Whereas in the *Parrhasiana* freedom was portrayed in a positive light as a great gift from God allowing humans to attain eternal paradise, it has now turned into a necessary imperfection of the human link in the Great Chain of Being: “The freedom to do evil is a weakness in a changing creature like man, if he is compared to more elevated creatures.”¹¹⁷ God created the Great Chain of Being with imperfect humans as one of the links, so is God the ultimate cause of the moral evil to which humans give rise? Le Clerc insists that God is not the cause of moral evil, though He does permit it: “creatures have a mutable nature, a nature that in fact changes for the worse because God leaves the creature’s freedom intact ...” However, this permission is not itself a culpable evil because “God remedies [the creature’s abuse of freedom] afterwards and in a way that is admirable and worthy of eternal acts of praise.”¹¹⁸ In this last passage Le Clerc supports his Great Chain of Being theodicy with his prior Origenist theodicy.

In his reply to Le Clerc, Bayle focused on two main objections to the Great Chain of Being theodicy. The first objection is that Le Clerc has not explained the cause of *actual* sins, but only the cause of the *possibility* of sin.¹¹⁹ Bayle agrees that no creature has the right to complain that it was not created as perfect as some other creature. But he argues that this was never the nature

115 Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 125.

116 Le Clerc, *BC* VII, 336.

117 Le Clerc, *BC* VII, 337.

118 Le Clerc, *BC* VII, 340.

119 See especially Bayle, *RQP* II, clxxiii (*OD* III, 865b).

of the Manichean complaints, which concern not the regrettable capacity to sin arising from the frailty of human nature, but the actual fact of sin that has followed from that imperfection. The Manichean objections were not built on the foundation that humans *could* sin, but on that fact that some actually *did* and *do* sin. From a given act of sin it necessarily follows that some creature was able to sin; but from the ability to sin it does not necessarily follow that a creature must sin. A universe free of sin and suffering, but also containing creatures with free will, is a possibility, and this possibility might have been actualized by God if He had only supplied the sufficient grace that each sinful creature needed to avoid falling into vice.

The second objection naturally follows the first and tends to this conclusion: Le Clerc must admit that God positively willed actual human sins. The argument begins by observing that divine omniscience implies that God placed certain creatures in circumstances in which He foresaw infallibly that they would sin. Next, omniscience also implies that God possesses the counterfactual knowledge that these creatures would have persisted in virtue if they had been placed in other circumstances, or if they had been supplied with sufficient grace. Bayle then adds the following controversial assumption, which he would have to defend in future rounds of debate with both Le Clerc and Jaquelot: “we do not will an event any less when we render it infallible than when we render it necessary.”¹²⁰ It follows from these premises that because God foresees the fall of certain people infallibly, He therefore wills their fall as completely as He would have if He had necessitated it. Le Clerc’s assumption that human beings are endowed with free will, and are therefore always capable of repenting is neutralized: despite human free will, sin and lack of repentance are infallibly foreseen by God, and are therefore willed by Him as long as He permits them.

Bayle agrees with Le Clerc that God was not obligated by the rules of justice to supply creatures with sufficient grace to avoid sin, considering that He created them from nothing and assuming that He had already endowed them with sufficient power in the form of free will to accomplish a virtuous life. But Bayle asserts that this observation changes the state of the question, which does not concern divine justice, but divine goodness in all its purity. The common notions we have of perfect goodness are irreconcilable with the supposition of a benefactor who foresaw and permitted a great deal of evil without intervening in it, although He could have ended that evil succession much earlier, or obviated it altogether. Le Clerc, who insists on the compatibility of our common

¹²⁰ Bayle, *RQP* II, clxxiii (*OD* III, 867b).

ideas of goodness and the observed conduct of God must explain that compatibility in detail without changing the focus of the discussion from goodness to justice; otherwise the Manichean objections remain unanswered.

Le Clerc's response to the two objections to his Great Chain of Being theodicy is simply free will: the cause of actual sins is the misuse by human beings of free will, and the reason why God is not guilty of positively willing sin is that He merely permits sin, while humans alone will that sin. The metaphysics of this response is never fully explored; the Bayle-Jaquelot debate elaborates the free-will defence of God's goodness. Le Clerc instead continues to exploit the Origenist assumption that God's perfect goodness will be manifested to everyone at the end of time, even though different human beings will take different paths to arriving at their eventual happiness:

God willed to create two sorts of men: one sort that will pass through certain dangers before arriving at happiness, without suffering anything other than several inconveniences in the course of their lives, which are nothing in comparison with the happiness that awaits them after they have fulfilled their duty; and another sort that will succumb to these same dangers by their own fault, and will consequently meet with punishment proportionate to their sins, and placed in a state inferior to that of the previous, for a duration that nobody knows.¹²¹

Le Clerc insists that the above scheme is consistent with a perfectly good divine nature, since all will end well for suffering and sinful humans. Bayle is too focused on the here-and-now; he must elevate his mind and take the perspective of the whole of eternity.

By the time Bayle wrote the *Dialogues* he and Le Clerc had reached a stalemate in their debate over Origenism and the Great Chain of Being; very little is consequently said about these issues in the work translated below, although this background is assumed by Bayle and essential for understanding much of what he does say in the *Dialogues*. One final passage of Le Clerc's on these topics is worth quoting, however, since Bayle will use it as evidence that Le Clerc, at bottom, agreed with his position on the problem of evil. Conscious that he was not fully answering, but was often evading Bayle's objections to free will, Universal Salvation, and the Great Chain of Being, Le Clerc wrote the following in his *Defense*:

¹²¹ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 146.

If my responses do not fully satisfy someone, and if nothing better is found, then still it will not follow that one can accuse God of injustice or of lacking goodness. It would be necessary instead to say that we do not fully understand the words of Jesus Christ, assuming that the manner in which we understand them is not compatible with the goodness or justice of God. It should not seem strange that we do not understand many of the discourses in which things that exceed human perception are discussed. It would be far more reasonable to confess one's ignorance than to attack the goodness and the holiness of God.¹²²

Since Bayle did not see himself as “attack[ing] the goodness and the holiness of God,” he could not agree more with the last sentence quoted above. Part of Bayle's goal in the last rounds of debate with Le Clerc, therefore, was to show his adversary that they were largely in agreement with each other. Le Clerc's goal, however, became increasingly polemical: he aimed to demonstrate that Bayle's intentions were subversive of religion, and that his reflection on evil leads directly to atheism. Much of the *Dialogues*, Part One, is concerned with answering these charges, which were not baseless accusations by Le Clerc, but the conclusions of careful analyses of Bayle's texts dealing with evil.

Belief, Evidence, and Bayle's Hidden Intentions

Numerous times in the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* Bayle suggests that the debate needs to focus on questions concerning the role of evident (*évidentes*) notions¹²³ in forming our judgments about the conduct of God as it is presented to us in experience and in Scripture. Different conceptions of rational evidence and belief formation are the source of any difference of opinion that still divides Bayle and Le Clerc, and they indeed became the focus of their debate in its last two rounds. But first Le Clerc had another level of his

¹²² Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 148.

¹²³ Throughout this Introduction, and in my translation of the *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius* below, I translate the French words ‘*évidence*’ and ‘*évident*’ as ‘evidence’ and ‘evident’ respectively. When faced with these French terms, some translators opt for “self-evidence” and “self-evident,” which are fine in many cases, but misleading in the case of the Bayle-Le Clerc debate. ‘Self-evidence’ is primarily a logical term, referring to the fact that some proposition does not require proof. It is also a binary term: some proposition is either self-evident or it is not. However, much of the Bayle-Le Clerc debate is focused on epistemological *évidence*, which we can think of as the appearance of clarity and distinctness in some idea. The debate also turns on whether there are various degrees of *évidence*, which Bayle insists there are.

own to introduce, or rather to impose upon Bayle: the question of intentions. Why does Bayle constantly defend Manicheism against all comers? Whereas in the previous rounds of discussion Le Clerc insisted that he believed that Bayle's motives were good (viz. to encourage philosophers and theologians to respond more strongly to the problem of evil than they had yet done), in the first twelve pages of the *Defense of the Goodness and Holiness of God, against the Objections of Mr. Bayle* Le Clerc asserts that he has changed his opinion of Bayle. From now on Le Clerc will refuse to distinguish Bayle's views from those of his imagined Manicheans; the former, like the latter, aim to undermine Christianity.

What caused this change in Le Clerc's attitude toward Bayle? It was the fact that Bayle "in the last two volumes of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*, seriously upheld the Manichean sect against the divine goodness."¹²⁴ William King, Isaac Jaquelot, and Jean Le Clerc had all shown Bayle the way to resolve the problem of evil. But rather than "thanking those who had lifted his difficulties, as is the custom in theological and philosophical auditoriums," Bayle did just the opposite: "he attacked the Christian religion from under the mask of Manicheism."¹²⁵ While he recognizes that Bayle has always claimed to defend the orthodox Reformed doctrine on predestination against its critics, Le Clerc declares that he will no longer be deceived; from this point, Le Clerc will treat Bayle as an enemy of religion because he:

Invented difficulties against providence; expressed them as speciously as possible; repeated them on every occasion, both in his *Dictionary* and in a book [*Continuation of the Various Thoughts on the Comet*] whose design was to excuse atheists as much as possible; did not wish to accept any arguments against his objections, but quibbled about every detail; compared the conduct of God to that of the worst men, and did not wish to recognize any difference between them ...¹²⁶

Bayle cannot expect his readers to believe that his intentions are in any way compatible with the flourishing of the Christian religion: "What he says squares very well with a Manichean, or if you prefer, a Pyrrhonian, who works to render everything doubtful both in religion and in civil society; but what he says is in no way becoming of a Christian ..."¹²⁷ Le Clerc draws the logical conclusions

¹²⁴ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 104.

¹²⁵ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 107.

¹²⁶ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 112.

¹²⁷ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 111.

of Bayle's thought on evil: God is neither good nor holy; Scripture is full of contradictions and must be rejected as false; all religions are equally valid, or rather, equally invalid; all societies should be replaced with the Society of Atheists on behalf of which Bayle gives the apology in his *Various Thoughts on the Comet* and its sequels.

This new round of debate between Le Clerc and Bayle begins the exchange that will most interest those who are fascinated with the Bayle enigma. Le Clerc pushes Bayle to answer questions about his intentions. To ensure that Bayle will comply, Le Clerc asserts in the *Defense* that he will do the same; henceforth, rather than arguing solely through an imagined Origenist, Le Clerc will speak on the basis of his own beliefs. Bayle should therefore do the same: "if he wishes to attack the New Testament, which I feel obliged to defend, then he must declare what principles of theology and of philosophy he plans to follow; for it is an infinite task to respond to a man whose opinions are totally unknown."¹²⁸

Le Clerc is certain that regardless of what Bayle says about his motives, the psychological effect of Bayle's Manichean articles on his readers will be an increase in atheism (a prediction perhaps justified by subsequent early modern history). The reason for this is that Bayle recommends that his readers abandon evident notions of metaphysics and morality and rest their religious beliefs instead on blind faith. Le Clerc has passages like the following in mind: "It is necessary to choose between philosophy and the Gospel: if you do not want to believe anything but what is evident and conforms to common notions, take philosophy and abandon Christianity; if you want to believe the incomprehensible mysteries of religion, then take Christianity and abandon philosophy: for to possess evidence and incomprehensibility together is not possible ..."¹²⁹ This advice to abandon evident notions is essential to Bayle's doctrine on evil (particularly the move from P₂ to P₃). In P₂ Bayle claims that the Manichean objections are superior to any responses to them from the point of view of the evidence of the propositions advanced. However, Bayle claims in P₃ that we ought to abandon evidence as the basis of our religious beliefs. Bayle's advice to abandon rational evidence as a criterion of belief is, in Le Clerc's view, impossible, or at least very dangerous, to follow.

The case for the impossibility of following Bayle's advice follows from the psychological impossibility of renouncing evident notions, which are on Le Clerc's view (and Descartes') always clear and distinct, and which therefore

¹²⁸ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 141.

¹²⁹ Bayle, *DHC IV*, "Éclaircissement sur les Pyrrhoniens," 644.

compel assent.¹³⁰ Le Clerc asserts this impossibility several times in the *Defense*,¹³¹ always without argument: “These things are well-known, and do not need to be proven.”¹³² But even if it were possible to renounce common notions of reason, Le Clerc objects to this foundation of faith on account of its deleterious consequences. First, it would lead straight to the most extreme Pyrrhonism: “If the evident lights of reason could deceive, then we could never trust reason; for if having perceived something clearly, and unable to prevent myself from assenting, I was nevertheless deceived, then there would be nothing that I could know without being deceived.”¹³³ Le Clerc rests again on a Cartesian principle: whatever deceives even once must be abandoned as a criterion of truth. Le Clerc does not fail to observe that many people believe that Bayle’s ultimate design in discussing the problem of evil was to establish Pyrrhonism in his readers.

Le Clerc then argues that abandoning the criterion of evidence would lead to undermining Christianity, which is based on the message contained in Scripture, but which in turn can be discerned only by using reason, especially its evident common notions. “Revelation would become useless because it was not given to beasts, but to men, and it assumes common notions throughout.”¹³⁴ Bayle’s suggestion that we abandon reason and turn to the Gospel is impractical; Scripture, like all books, requires reason even for basic understanding and interpretation. Bayle’s renunciation of rational evidence leaves humans no more intelligent than beasts, and so incapable of participating in religion.

It is true that Scripture says that God is good and holy; but these, says our author [Bayle], are a goodness and holiness that we cannot defend without renouncing the common notions that we have of these virtues; which is to say that we have no idea, according to Bayle, of the meaning intended when Scripture says that God is good and holy ... I believe, he says, that God is perfect, and consequently that he is good and holy; but I have no idea of these perfections; they are names that mean the same thing to me as *hocus pocus*.¹³⁵

130 “Admittedly my nature is such that so long as I perceive something very clearly and distinctly I cannot but believe it to be true.” Descartes, *Meditations* V (AT VII, 69; CSM II, 48).

131 Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 152, 156, 158.

132 Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 152.

133 Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 162.

134 Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 163.

135 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 396.

But even if enough of reason were left after the abandonment of certain common notions that participation in religion were still possible, Le Clerc observes that all religions would likely appear equal.¹³⁶ Bayle therefore establishes—just as Jurieu accused him of doing in 1686 by means of his theory of toleration—total indifference in religious matters. The situation is the same with respect to morality: without firm common notions at its basis, morality would be undermined.¹³⁷ Le Clerc assumes that some reader has been convinced by Bayle's arguments, and has consequently abandoned common notions, and then has the person ask Bayle: what shall I believe now concerning right and wrong, and on what basis shall I believe *that* rather than something else? Bayle would have no answer for the man, and would lead him to moral relativism.

Finally, and predictably, comes the charge against Bayle of attempting to replace religion in society with atheism by means of his objections to Christian theodicy.¹³⁸ With reason undermined, religion rendered useless and a matter of indifference, morality stripped of firm principles, what remains? “Would it be this *Society of Atheists* that becomes every day more famous by Bayle's writings, and in which people observe all the rules of virtue and beneficence despite being persuaded that these are only words floating in air?”¹³⁹ The salutary antidote to Bayle's multiple poisons is, in Le Clerc's view, to believe that “right reason is a light from God that never deceives us as long as we follow it with precision.”¹⁴⁰ If we believe this, then we will never be led to suspect that reason and Scripture conflict, for both have their origin in the same divine nature. Some of what God reveals may be *above* reason, but nothing is *contrary* to reason, as Le Clerc repeats following a long tradition.

In much of the *Dialogues*, Part 1, Bayle responds to Le Clerc's objections and accusations just summarized, and so I leave the reader to peruse Bayle's defences below (see also the Afterword below this Introduction, in which I lay out Bayle's response to Le Clerc's position on evidence). These chapters of the *Dialogues* are some of the most important passages in the late Baylian corpus, since they mark an important shift in Bayle's thinking about moral rationalism. In his earlier works, like the *Philosophical Commentary*, Bayle relied on the evident truth of moral common notions to make his case for

136 Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 166.

137 Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 168.

138 The accusation against Bayle of writing on behalf of atheism is taken up more fully by Le Clerc later in *BC IX*, article x, 361–386. That article deals, however, with the dispute over plastic natures, and not with the problem of evil, so I will not discuss it here.

139 *BC IX*, 169.

140 *BC IX*, 152.

religious toleration; at the end of his career Bayle seems to undermine the rational foundation of his earlier thought by arguing that we both can and sometime should abandon evident notions.¹⁴¹

Three Final Arguments Proving Bayle's Atheistic Intent

In conformity with his usual style, but also in response to the demands of controversialist literature, Bayle fills much of his *Dialogues* with quotations from Le Clerc's *Remarks on the Response on Behalf of Bayle to the 3rd and 10th articles of the Choice Library*,¹⁴² the last response by Le Clerc that Bayle would ever read. It would be redundant, therefore, to offer a linear commentary on the *Remarks*, since Bayle will effectively do that himself in the translated *Dialogues* that follow. However, Bayle is sometimes guilty of portraying his adversary's arguments as pitifully weak and unfounded when in fact the arguments can at times be quite compelling. So in what follows I attempt to give a more sympathetic treatment of Le Clerc's best arguments for the claim that the logic of Bayle's reflection on evil leads to atheism. Along the way I note the passages in Bayle's *Dialogues* where the responses to these arguments can be found.

Le Clerc's final work before Bayle's *Dialogues* is his best. The arguments, or rather charges, that he lays out are the strongest arguments offered in Bayle's day for the claim that Bayle's philosophy leads to atheism. The genius of Le Clerc's strategy lies in his having found passages, mainly in the *Dictionary*, where Bayle himself argues that such-and-such hypothesis leads to atheism; then Le Clerc demonstrates that Bayle, in his reflection on the problem of evil, endorses that particular irreligious hypothesis, which allows Le Clerc to conclude that *according to Bayle himself* the logic of Bayle's reflection on evil tends to undermine theistic belief.

Teaching that God is the Author of Sin: The First Argument for Bayle's Atheism

The strongest such argument is based on a remark made by Bayle in the *Dictionary*, article "Paulicians," remark 1, which Le Clerc quotes at length for his reader:

After reporting various methods that have been employed to exculpate Providence, Bayle speaks in the following way ... 'Why so many supposi-

¹⁴¹ For an analysis of this *volte-face*, see Gianluca Mori, "Pierre Bayle on Scepticism and 'Common Notions,'" in Gianni Paganini (ed.), *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes to Descartes to Bayle* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 393–415.

¹⁴² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 364–426.

tions? What was the measure, what was the rule for all this reasoning? It was the desire to exculpate God; it was the clear understanding that THE WHOLE OF RELIGION DEPENDS ON IT, and that once one dares to teach that [God] is the author of sin, ONE WILL NECESSARILY LEAD MEN TO ATHEISM. So we see that all the Christian sects who are accused of this doctrine defend themselves against it as from a horrible blasphemy and an execrable impiety, and they complain of having been victims of terrible calumny'.¹⁴³

It is unquestionable on the basis of this passage that Bayle believes that *if you teach that God is the author of sin*, then you will necessarily lead people to atheism. The basis for this claim is Bayle's view that God's principal attribute is goodness; any being that lacks supreme goodness is not a God. Therefore, if one teaches that God is responsible for evil, then one teaches that God is evil; or in other words, that God is not God. This is contradictory, and will lead people to the denial of God's existence. Le Clerc's strategy, therefore, is to show that the logic of Bayle's reflection on evil leads to the conclusion that God is the author of sin. From there Le Clerc can offer the following argument: Bayle believes that teaching that God is the author of sin leads to atheism; Bayle teaches that God is the author of sin; therefore, Bayle believes that Bayle is leading his readers to atheism.

The first premise of the argument is well established by the quotation taken from "Paulicians," remark 1. And the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. So the question of Bayle's atheism has been narrowly focused on the second premise: does the logic of Bayle's reflection on evil entail that God is the author of sin? Le Clerc's evidence for this premise is twofold: first, Bayle's reflection on evil demonstrates that all existing Christian systems relating to providence lead to the conclusion that God is the author of sin (that is the point behind Bayle's saying that the Manichean objections are insoluble); and second, Bayle offers no better system. Le Clerc therefore summarizes Bayle's reflection on evil as follows: Bayle demonstrates that all existing rational reflection on providence entails that God is the author of sin; Bayle claims that there is no better philosophical system that would avoid this consequence; and hence Bayle believes that all rational teaching about providence ultimately amounts to teaching that God is the author of sin. Consequently, the upshot of Bayle's reflection on evil is that God is the author of sin, and *by his own admission*, this conclusion leads people to atheism.

¹⁴³ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 371–372. The emphases are Le Clerc's.

This is a compelling argument for Bayle's atheism, and gives rise to an entire chapter of the *Dialogues*—namely Part 1, chapter 2. The most important response Bayle offers is based on reflections he had already made in the second edition of the *Dictionary*, “Synergists,” remark B. Bayle devotes much of the article “Synergists” to praising the theologian, Philip Melanchthon, especially his conduct during his disputes with Calvin over the problem of evil. What is admirable about Melanchthon is that “he was equitable enough to distinguish these two things from one another: Calvin’s doctrine as he [Melanchthon] considered it; and Calvin’s doctrine as Calvin considered it.” From Melanchthon’s point of view, Calvin’s doctrine of predestination logically entailed the conclusion that God is the author of sin. But this is not a consequence that Calvin drew from his own doctrine, though he could appreciate Melanchthon’s reasons for thinking that his doctrine entailed such a horrible conclusion. Melanchthon’s tolerant attitude toward Calvin stemmed from his understanding that a person does not necessarily believe or teach all the things that his doctrines can be convincingly shown to entail. In other words, if I believe p, and you can demonstrate very plausibly that p entails q, it does not follow that I do, or even that I ought to, believe q. Consequently, the fact that Bayle shows that all systems of thought lead to the conclusion that God is the author of sin does not entail that anyone does, or should, believe that God *is* the author of sin. In *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 2, Bayle defends this Melanchthonian point, which he considers important for maintaining religious toleration.

Bayle’s response to this particular charge of atheism is problematic, however. After all, Le Clerc’s worry is that Bayle’s readers will be led to atheism, and those readers may not have the tolerant attitude of Melanchthon. If Bayle’s readers take his texts at face value and derive logical conclusions from them, will they not be led to reject God? Bayle is clearly conscious of this worry, which is why he reflects at length in *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 1, on his intentions *from a reader’s point of view*, demonstrating the many reasons that readers would have to impute motives to Bayle that are consonant with Christianity.

The Pyrrhonist’s Real Intentions: The Second Argument for Bayle’s Atheism

Le Clerc quotes a passage from the article “Rufin” in which Bayle asserts that the Pyrrhonian arguments against divine providence tended to undermine belief in God more generally. In what follows I quote Le Clerc’s quotation of the passage, in which he includes his own commentary, which I have placed in square brackets:

The Pyrrhonians, under the pretext of opposing only the dogmatists' arguments for the existence of God, undermined the doctrine as well. They declared [just as Bayle does] that they were in agreement with common opinion, without attaching themselves to any particular sect; that **THEY AGREED THAT THERE ARE GODS WHICH THEY HONOURED**; that they attributed providence to those gods; but that they could not endure that the dogmatists should have the **TEMERITY TO REASON ABOUT SUCH THINGS**; following which they proposed to them [just as Bayle does] various objections, which by way of overturning providence tended to undermine the very existence of God.¹⁴⁴

Le Clerc believes that in this passage Bayle “describes his own behaviour, without realizing it, since he has placed himself among the Pyrrhonians, whose arguments tend to destroy the existence of God.”¹⁴⁵ The force of the accusation derives from Le Clerc's assumption that Bayle's treatment of the problem of evil has the same goal as the arguments of Sextus Empiricus, which aimed to overturn the arguments in favour of benevolent divine providence. If this assumption is granted, then the inference from Bayle's Pyrrhonism to atheism is provided by Bayle himself in the passage just quoted. So again, this is a formidable charge of atheism against Bayle.

An entire chapter of the *Dialogues*—Part 1, chapter 6—is devoted to explicating Bayle's relation to Pyrrhonism, especially in the article “Pyrrho,” which Le Clerc frequently cites against Bayle. However, that chapter is not the most relevant if we are seeking Bayle's response to the accusation of supporting atheism. Bayle's solution is rather to be found scattered throughout *Dialogues*, Part 1, in the many passages where he lays out the difference between, on the one hand, arguing that some claim is met with insoluble objections, and on the other, arguing that that claim is false. Part 1, chapter 1 of the *Dialogues* is devoted to upholding this distinction against Le Clerc, who does not recognize it, and who constantly blurs the distinction in an attempt to disgrace Bayle.

Again, this distinction that Bayle offers is not concocted *ad hoc* just to escape Le Clerc's charge. It appears, in fact, several lines above the passage quoted above, where Bayle writes: “I must not finish this remark without observing the injustice of certain people who believe that once one rejects the reasons offered on behalf of some doctrine, one consequently rejects the doctrine itself.”¹⁴⁶

144 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 374. The emphases are Le Clerc's.

145 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 374.

146 *DHC III*, “Rufin,” rem. C, 101a.

The case of the Pyrrhonians is offered by Bayle as an exception; they used this distinction to cover their true intention, which was to do damage to religious belief. Why should we not believe that Bayle is doing the same thing—hiding behind a distinction that he does not truly acknowledge just so that he can undermine religion with impunity? The only possible answer that can be given, unless we are ready to call Bayle an atheist, is that Bayle *does* sincerely accept the distinction he draws, and in that respect differs from the Pyrrhonians (as he portrays them). This leads us to consider the third charge of atheism, in responding to which Bayle again reflects at length on the difference he recognizes between arguing that the Manichean objections are insoluble, and denying divine providence.

*The Retortion of Socinianism: The Third Argument for Bayle's
Atheism*

Le Clerc had been accused of Socinianism around the time of his dispute with Bayle, a fact that Bayle uses to his advantage in the last round of debate. Le Clerc spends much of *BC X* responding to the charge of Socinianism, and he makes the mistake of advising Bayle that he should have informed himself of the proceedings that had been brought against Le Clerc before weighing in on those charges. In the months prior to the composition of the *Dialogues*, therefore, Bayle secured all the relevant documents, and makes sure that his readers have easy access to their damning condemnations of Le Clerc's writings (see *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 4).

Of interest to us are the retortions of Socinianism against Bayle found in this last reply of Le Clerc. One of the prime characteristics of Socinianism was its rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity on the grounds that it conflicts mightily with the most evident notions of reason. Predictably, therefore, Le Clerc turns to the notorious "Pyrrho," remark B, where Bayle argued by means of his Pyrrhonian abbé that basic mathematical principles (for example, $a = d$ and $b = d$ and $c = d$ implies that $a = b = c$) conflict with the doctrine of the Trinity (because though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all identical to God, nevertheless the Father is not identical to the Son, and neither Father nor Son is identical to the Holy Spirit). Now, Bayle himself claimed, in opposition to Le Clerc, that Socinianism is worse than atheism. So it follows that in the article "Pyrrho," Bayle advances ideas that are, by his own admission, worse than atheistic. Bayle devotes chapter 10 of Part 1 of the *Dialogues* to investigating Le Clerc's own views on the Trinity that are laid out in *BC X*, as well as to revisiting whether Le Clerc's humbling of reason, a key part of *BC IX* as we saw, is just the same thing as what he calls Pyrrhonism in Bayle's case.

The more interesting charge of Socinianism against Bayle, however, is given by Le Clerc in this passage: “[Bayle] claims that it is necessary to humble reason beneath faith; but he will have to become Socinian despite himself, for we cannot fail to believe evident things.”¹⁴⁷ Le Clerc’s point is that, like the Socinians who make reason the judge over all matters proposed for belief, Bayle must likewise follow reason wherever it leads, whenever evident notions are concerned. Wherever there is evidence, belief is compelled. Therefore, when Bayle claims that the Manicheans bring evident objections against Christian theology, Bayle must believe that the targeted aspects of Christian theology are false because he cannot fail to follow the evidence which points to that conclusion. It follows that Bayle’s Manichean objections against providence, like the Pyrrhonian objections in his opinion, undermine providence and therefore also the existence of God.

Le Clerc denies once again, therefore, that Bayle can uphold the distinction between claiming that some proposition is met with evident insoluble objections, and claiming that the proposition is false. The foundation of Le Clerc’s view is that we simply *cannot* believe that which we recognize to be opposed by insoluble evident objections. What Bayle called Socinianism is in fact just a feature of human psychology in certain contexts: perceived evidence forces belief. In order to respond to Le Clerc’s doxastic determinism—what Themistius calls “the fundamental axiom of the whole trial” at the outset of chapter 1 of the *Dialogues*—Bayle must show that it is possible to reject an evident proposition. This is the subject of the most philosophically interesting pages of *Dialogues*, Part 1—the whole of chapter 5. In demonstrating the possibility of believing that which is opposed by evident objections Bayle distinguishes himself from the Socinians as Le Clerc portrays them, and from the Pyrrhonians as Bayle portrays them. He thereby responds to the last two charges of atheism.¹⁴⁸

Part 3: Bayle’s Debate with Jaquelot

The Bayle-Jaquelot debate before the *Dialogues*, unlike the Bayle-Le Clerc debate, comprised only a few well-organized books, as the Chronology above shows. So after a brief biography of Jaquelot, the remainder of this section

¹⁴⁷ Le Clerc, *BC* x, 388.

¹⁴⁸ For further analysis of the Bayle-Le Clerc over the psychology and ethics of evident belief rejection, see Michael W. Hickson, “Belief and Invincible Objections: Bayle, Le Clerc, Leibniz,” in *Leibniz et Bayle: confrontation et dialogue*, ed. Christian Leduc et al. (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2015), 69–86.

is organized by “round”: first Jaquelot’s *Conformity* is discussed, then Bayle’s *Response to a Provincial’s Questions*, and finally Jaquelot’s *Examination*. The individual works are further organized by theme to help track the dialectic.

*Isaac Jaquelot*¹⁴⁹

Isaac Jaquelot was born one month after Bayle in Vassy (near Champagne, France) on 16 November 1647, and he died less than two years after Bayle in Berlin on 20 October 1708. The two had far more in common than their age, however, and just as with Le Clerc, so too with Jaquelot, the study of his life makes one wonder how Jaquelot ever came to verbal blows with Bayle. Like Bayle, Jaquelot was the son of a Reformed Minister and later experienced all the insecurity that went along with being a Huguenot in Louis XIV’s France, to the point that Jaquelot, who became a Minister and worked alongside his father for many years as Pastor of Vassy, was forced to leave France permanently following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Fortunately for Jaquelot he had become a renowned preacher, praised for his learning and his ability to touch listeners’ hearts (despite his infamously feeble and squeaky voice), and he was ultimately welcomed as preacher at The Hague by the nobles in that city who paid him well, allowing him to focus on studying and writing. Jaquelot’s earliest works, like Bayle’s, targeted the Catholic persecution of Protestants in France and urged mutual toleration. Aligning himself with *les tolerans* in Holland Jaquelot, along with Bayle and Le Clerc, made himself an enemy of Jurieu and was ultimately pursued by the Theologian of Rotterdam at the Synod of Leiden in 1691 on suspicions of Socinianism. The background to this Synod, particularly to the allegations of Socinianism against Jaquelot, is worth reporting, since Bayle assumes and draws upon this background in his debate with Jaquelot, and because it clarifies Jaquelot’s understanding of the relationship between faith and reason which motivated his attacks against Bayle.

149 Besides the works already mentioned, I have relied mainly on the following for background on Jaquelot’s life and works and on his debate with Bayle: David Durand, *La Vie d’Isaac Jaquelot* [*Life of Isaac Jaquelot*] (London, 1785); Anonymous, “Vie de M. Jaquelot,” in Isaac Jaquelot, *Dissertations sur l’existence de Dieu* (Paris, 1744), tome 1, xli–xcii; Ruth Whelan, “Reason and Belief: The Bayle-Jacquelot Debate,” *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 48:1 (1993), 101–110; Jean-Luc Solère, “Creation continue, concours divin et théodicée dans le débat Bayle-Jacquelot-Leibniz,” in Leduc et al., *Leibniz et Bayle*, 395–424; Inès Kirschleger, “Les premières armes d’un apologiste: les sermons sur le Messie du pasteur Isaac Jaquelot (1692),” in Nicolas Brucker (ed.), *Apologétique 1650–1802: La Nature et la grâce* (Berne, etc: Peter Lang, 2010), 127–149.

Beginning in 1686 Jurieu became known for prophetic writings in which he predicted the fall of Roman Catholicism in France followed by the return and official establishment of the Reformed Church. The Glorious Revolution in 1688 bade well for Jurieu's predictions, which had begun to focus on 1689 as the miraculous year when France would become Protestant. Huguenot refugees in Holland and elsewhere were critical of Jurieu's predictions which smacked of superstition, and they warned him that he was inviting ridicule from Catholics and making the eventual return of the Reformed to France more difficult. The most famous attacks against Jurieu from this period are Bayle's controversial works, *Réponse d'un nouveau converti* [*Response of a New Convert*] (1689) and *Avis aux Réfugiés* [*Advice to the Refugees*] (1690). Along with his *coreligionnaires* Élie Saurin, Jacques Bernard, Gédéon Huet, and the Basnage brothers, Jaquelot spoke out publicly against Jurieu's prophecies. The mounting criticism led Jurieu to publish a series of letters, ultimately printed together as the *Tableau du Socinianisme* [*The Portrait of Socinianism*] (1690), in which he warned that a cabal of allegedly Reformed ministers, but who were actually all Socinians, was forming in Holland and was attempting to undermine Christianity from within. What united the various critics in Jurieu's mind and led him to charge them all with Socinianism? It was predominately their common commitment to toleration, which Jurieu was never able to distinguish in his own mind from pure indifference toward all religions, as well as their principle that all articles of faith must be in clear conformity with reason, and never be opposed to evident rational maxims.

An anonymous work that Jaquelot never admitted to writing, but which Jurieu, Bayle, and others knew was Jaquelot's, appeared shortly after Jurieu's first letter of the *Tableau*, and was entitled *Avis sur le Tableau du Socinianisme* [*Notice Concerning the Portrait of Socinianism*] (s.n.s.l., 1690). Neither of Jaquelot's earliest biographers, including David Durand, whose biography borders on hagiography, raises any serious doubts that Jaquelot was the author of the *Notice*. We can safely assume that Jaquelot did write it since much of what he says, especially concerning the fundamental issue of the conformity of faith and reason, coheres perfectly well with what he earlier and later wrote on the subject. In the *Notice* Jaquelot summarizes the core of his position as follows: "When the issue is how to understand a passage of Holy Scripture that admits of two different interpretations, one in conformity with right reason and one contrary to right reason, then we must decide in favour of the interpretation in conformity with reason, unless it is manifestly opposed to the words, the intention, or the reasoning of the author of Scripture."¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Jaquelot, *Notice*, 13.

Jaquelot claims that this principle is so obvious that he cannot imagine anybody denying it in general. Moving to more particular matters, Jaquelot argues that we can and ought to continue to believe doctrines that are above reason, as long as reason can grasp the doctrine in part. Jaquelot gives the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as an example of something that is above reason, yet is still partly rational because Scripture speaks very clearly about this doctrine and because the idea of the infinite power of God is capable of answering every rational objection to the doctrine. Faith is able to support reason's weakness and uphold the belief. But when reason cannot grasp even part of a doctrine, then to say that the doctrine is above reason and to say it is against reason amount to the same thing, and to urge belief by faith alone in the doctrine is futile because it is impossible to believe something that contradicts the light of reason: "Because man is essentially rational, he can see or believe what is against reason less than the eye can perceive shadows or the void."¹⁵¹ Whatever we believe must have some rational basis; faith and reason are consequently always in conformity with each other. Nobody can argue with these points, claims Jaquelot; the dispute with Socinians does not concern this fundamental position on the conformity of faith and reason, it concerns only its application to specific topics like the Trinity. Jaquelot was ultimately acquitted at the Synod of Leiden in part because Jurieu presented insufficient proof that Jaquelot was a Socinian or the author of the *Notice*, but also in part because Jaquelot was very well connected to influential nobles throughout Holland.

Jaquelot's *Notice* gives us a helpful perspective on his future debate with Bayle. Like Le Clerc, Jaquelot preferred a minimal theology, and since he reduced the necessary doctrines to a very small number, he was all the more motivated to defend those fundamentals. Belief in the existence of God, the goodness of God, and divine providence were among Jaquelot's core doctrines. It was thus imperative for Jaquelot to defend the rational basis for belief in these doctrines, since without a strong rational basis, these doctrines would slide from being merely above reason to being also against reason. Bayle's Manichean articles, in Jaquelot's view, attempted to convince the public of the conflict of reason with the most basic Christian tenets, like God's benevolence and the human origin of evil in the world.

Durand, Jaquelot's biographer, gives two further compelling reasons why Jaquelot wrote against Bayle. In 1702 Jaquelot accepted an offer from Frederick I of Prussia to become the King's court preacher in Berlin. Once in Berlin "Jaquelot found people of both sexes and of the highest quality who always

¹⁵¹ Jaquelot, *Notice*, 14.

had the unfortunate [Manichean] objections of Bayle on their tongues. Therefore, Jaquelot resolved to write on this great subject and to attack this proud Goliath who defied all the weapons of Israel.¹⁵² This motivation is consistent with the portrait of Jaquelot that emerges from all reports of his life, namely that he was a devout pastor first and foremost, and a philosopher-theologian second. The other motivation given by Durand is also compelling, in that it connects the two issues of theodicy and toleration, which were never far from one another in the period. Jaquelot was concerned upon reading the *Dictionary* that Bayle's focus seemed to land on the subjects most divisive among Protestants. In the Manichean articles, the principal issues were predestination and free-will, which had divided the Reformed into Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants earlier that century, and which had never ceased to cause turmoil. Jaquelot felt it was the duty of anyone interested in the eventual reunion of Christian churches to oppose Bayle by demonstrating a simple way to resolve the most difficult Manichean objections in a manner acceptable to all Protestants. This story is plausible. One defender of toleration (Jaquelot) was essentially warning another defender of toleration (Bayle) that the latter's writings risked reopening old wounds and leading to future intolerance. The story also helps explain what is otherwise rather mysterious, namely why Jaquelot waited so long to write against Bayle. He likely waited to see what the effect of Bayle's *Dictionary* would be on its readers, and as the first motivation given by Durand confirms, Jaquelot found that Protestants were in fact deeply troubled by Bayle's Manichean objections.

Jaquelot's Conformity of Faith and Reason (1705)

Despite its subtitle, "Defence of Religion against the Principal Difficulties Found in the *Historical and Critical Dictionary* of Mr. Bayle," less than half of Jaquelot's *Conformity of Faith and Reason* is a response to Bayle's Manichean objections concerning the origin of evil. Over half of Jaquelot's first book against Bayle lays out proofs of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the truth of Scripture, the existence of angels, the spiritual nature of the soul, and other basic tenets of Christian theology. When Jaquelot finally turns to the *Dictionary's* Manichean articles he insists that the existence of human freedom is capable of answering every one of Bayle's objections. Consequently, much of the book aims to prove the existence of freedom, answer objections to its possibility both from Bayle and others, and demonstrate how the origin of evil can be and should be attributed solely to human choice, and not at all to divine activ-

¹⁵² Durand, *Life of Isaac Jaquelot*, 381.

ity. In what follows I present Jaquelot's theory of human freedom, his theodicy based on it, and his criticism of Bayle's skepticism.

The Existence and Nature of Human Freedom

Jaquelot defines human freedom as follows: "we will define freedom as the power that a man has over his actions, such that he does what he wills because he wills to do it, and if he did not will to do it, he would not do it and would instead do the contrary."¹⁵³ With this definition in place, there is *nothing* clearer in Jaquelot's mind than the fact that human beings are free. Indeed, this fact is at least as certain as Descartes' famous *cogito*:

I claim now that in fact there is not a single reasonable man who is not convinced by the knowledge that he has of himself and by his own feelings that he is the master of his actions in just the way that I have described. For it is just as certain when I am alone in my room that I read or do not read, that I rise or sit, that I walk or stop, every time that I will to do so and because I will to do so, as it is certain that *I am, because I think*.¹⁵⁴

So it is primarily by means of our immediate awareness of ourselves that we can know that we are free. But there are other proofs of human freedom as well. If human beings were not free, and merely reacted to the sum of the impulses acting on them from within their minds and from outside their bodies, then erratic behaviour would be the norm—we would constantly see people walking and then halting only to start walking again; speaking, stopping mid-sentence, changing subjects, yelling, whispering; etc. But what we witness instead in people, on the whole, is steadfastness of intent through the constant barrage of impulses with which they are everywhere and always confronted: people walk until they reach their destination despite encountering temptations along the way; they finish a sentence before moving on to the next; and so on. This demonstrates that humans are not merely puppets controlled by the sum of the forces acting on them, but are masters of their own activity.

To clarify his account of freedom Jaquelot imagines reasons and motives in the human mind as weights placed on a balance. Those who deny that humans are free, or who reduce freedom to spontaneity, argue that human actions are determined by the distribution of these weights: I raise my left arm rather than my right arm because the reasons and motives for moving the left are greater

¹⁵³ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 143.

¹⁵⁴ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 143–144.

than those for moving the right. Against this deterministic view Jaquelot argues that we are all immediately aware of its falsehood: “however powerful the reason might be that persuades us, we feel within ourselves a superior force that renders us masters of our actions. Far from being dragged along by reasons that we cannot resist, on the contrary, it is necessary for us to give our consent and, so to speak, our permission to the reasons that pull us before they can send us toward any action or movement.”¹⁵⁵ Regardless of how the weights are placed, and however powerful the motivating reasons for or against an act, the balance tilts when and only when, and to the degree that, the will permits.

Free action is not independent of reasons, however. In fact, the will decides which motivating forces will be permitted to affect behaviour by examining those forces, which is a process presented by Jaquelot as a sort of normative reasoning: “we feel within ourselves and we are convinced that we have the power to stop the impression that the strongest reasons make on us, to the extent that, having carefully examined and weighed them, we give our consent to those which appear to us to be those which ought to determine us and make us act.”¹⁵⁶ Jaquelot is aware of the objection that an infinite regress is lurking close by: motivating reasons are given permission to influence action by appeal to further meta-reasons (i.e. reasons about the relative worthiness of certain reasons to motivate us), which in turn are presumably chosen by further appeal to reasons, and so on. However, Jaquelot ends this line of objection by stipulating that a human ought to be considered completely free as long the following conditions are met: (1) that the nature and weight of proposed motivating reasons have been examined; (2) that the motivating effect of these reasons has been successfully suspended during the period of reflection; (3) that it is possible to stop or start one’s activity whenever it is appropriate to give a demonstration of one’s freedom; and (4) that in general, motivating reasons lead us to act only once they are given permission to do so.

Human beings are free, therefore, in the sense that they have the power to reflect on their motives, suspend the effect of potential motives of action for a time, choose which motives are the best from the point of view of reason, and further choose the time at which the best motive(s) will compel their action. Freedom is therefore closely connected to reason: “It is consequently an incontestable proposition that a man, when he acts freely, always follows reason, that is, that he knows the motive that makes him act.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 145.

¹⁵⁶ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 146.

¹⁵⁷ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 148.

Jaquelot's goal in explicating his account of the will is to render the following two claims consistent and plausible: (1) the will is always moved to act by some reason(s); and (2) after all reasons and other motives have been examined, the will is always free to act or not to act on the basis of any one or combination of them. At first glance these claims seem contradictory. The first stipulates that the will is always compelled by some reason, while the second appears to make the will independent of all reasons, and in possession of a strict indifference. Jaquelot addresses the seeming incompatibility of the two claims in the following manner.

Free will, after its deliberation is complete, can be considered in two ways: just before it acts, and at the time of its action. Considered at the time of action, a free will is always found connected to some reason; free action is always performed with a known purpose. It is a false idea of freedom that makes the free will act independently of reasons; such a will would become more free to the extent that it was ignorant, and less free the more that reason directed it, which are both absurd consequences. But to say that a free will is always moved by some reason or another is not to say that there is some particular reason that necessitates the will to act. Considered just prior to action, a free will is one that has not yet consented to any of the competing reasons and motives of action; it is a will that may very well consent to none of these motives and remain in a state of suspense. Such suspense will be free if it is prolonged for the sake of demonstrating the will's freedom. (There is an unresolved problem here: isn't "demonstrating the will's freedom" just another competing motive that the will must consider? Jaquelot raises the worry, only to dismiss it.)

Jaquelot has not aimed to give a complete theory of the freedom of the will, nor has he claimed to be original in his reflections. The tone of his discussion reveals that he thinks the whole matter is so obvious that it hardly deserves the lengthy analysis that he deigns to give it. We have only to look into ourselves to know that we are free and to know what that means.

The Origin of Evil

There are two goals of Jaquelot's reflections on freedom, one negative and one positive. The negative goal is to answer Bayle's doubts about the existence of freedom that are presented in "Manicheans" and "Paulicians." It was partly by means of these doubts that Bayle attempted to refute free-will theodicies. With the freedom of will vindicated, an appeal can be made again to that strand of response to the problem of evil. The positive goal follows from this, namely to set up Jaquelot's own free-will theodicy.

First Jaquelot explains in the following manner how he understands the problem of evil: "All these difficulties turn on these two questions: one, why God

formed man capable of offending him and of sinning; the other, why he formed man with the fatal ability to render himself eternally unhappy as a result of his sins.”¹⁵⁸ The two questions seem to reduce to just one, both in their exposition here and in Jaquelot’s treatment of them. The problem of evil for Jaquelot is just this: why did God make human beings capable of sinning? The question is difficult because sin both offends God and leads to eternal damnation for human beings.

Jaquelot responds to the question by arguing that God made human beings free, obviously not in order that they might offend Him by sinning, but in order to give Himself the greatest possible glory: “God cannot act except for Himself and for His own glory.”¹⁵⁹ Offence and sin are the unintended by-products of free will, which is so valuable that its introduction was worth the risk of, and eventually the fact of, evil that succeeded it. If freedom was a minor perfection, then God might have refrained from giving it to creatures on account of its potential to cause evil, but freedom is in fact the greatest perfection in all of creation: “Now of all possible beings, we can assert that this being that God formed intelligent and the free master of its actions, having the ability to do what it pleases, is by far the most excellent and the most perfect of all creatures.”¹⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, the most perfect creature is also the creature from which God derives the greatest glory, which justifies His running the risk of creating free creatures. To illustrate God’s plan more clearly, Jaquelot makes use of an analogy between God and an artist:

Finally, to conceive more easily God’s intentions, it is necessary to know that God, desiring to make Himself known by His works, remained hidden behind His creation much as a painter, if it is permissible to make such a comparison, stands behind his canvas to hear the judgment that people make of it. In this way humans were created free for this reason, in order to judge God’s grandeur by the magnificence of His works.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 179.

¹⁵⁹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 161. The obvious parallel between Jaquelot and Malebranche on theodicy has been noted, but also overestimated. The emphasis on God’s glory and wisdom is the same, but much differs in the succeeding layers of thought. For Malebranche’s theodicy, see Denis Moreau, “Malebranche on Disorder and Physical Evil: Manichaeism or Philosophical Courage?” in Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer, *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 81–100.

¹⁶⁰ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 162.

¹⁶¹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 165.

The main reason, therefore, why God created human beings intelligent *and* free, was so that they could discover God in His works by forming a free and sincere judgment of the surpassing beauty of those works. It is in witnessing this praise by humans that God finds His greatest glory. There are other reasons for creating free creatures that Jaquelot mentions mainly in passing. God desires to be discovered in His works; intelligence is required to find God in His works, but intelligence requires free will, because intelligence requires choosing to act on the basis of one's knowledge rather than on the basis of some other motive; therefore God made free creatures.¹⁶² God loves holiness, but only free creatures can be holy, therefore God created free creatures.¹⁶³ Freedom is that which renders a creature most like its divine creator, even more so than intelligence (presumably because intelligence requires freedom on Jaquelot's view).¹⁶⁴ God wanted His creatures to praise him and to be praiseworthy in turn, but both directions of praise require freedom.¹⁶⁵ And so forth.

The choice to create free creatures was an obvious one, if it can even be called a choice. At times Jaquelot portrays the creation of free creatures as if it were *necessary*: "If a free and intelligent being is the most excellent work of an infinite power, as we have seen, then we can already conclude that nothing could or should prevent the creator from producing it, even if this free being would make ill use of its freedom."¹⁶⁶ Free creatures are so excellent that God *had to* make them, or else lose perfection in His creation, and consequently sacrifice glory for Himself.

So how do humans, such excellent and perfect parts of creation, actually sin? With the divine justification for risking evil behind him, Jaquelot now moves on to address the actual origin of evil, whether it is in God or wholly in human beings. Obviously the source of evil is not in God for Jaquelot, so it must reside exclusively within human beings: "Self-love is the source of evil in free and intelligent beings, for this knowledge and this love that we have of our own being leads us to grant that being as much weight and importance as possible."¹⁶⁷ Self-love was given to human beings, just as thirst and hunger were, for the sake of promoting well-being, to keep pains and pleasures

162 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 180.

163 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 181.

164 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 164.

165 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 164.

166 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 167.

167 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 183.

in their proper balance in the pursuit of the good life. But self-love has a natural tendency to overvalue pleasures, and if left unchecked, this leads the creature to prefer itself to God and others.

Both free will and self-love are God-given characteristics of human beings and require God's conservation to remain in existence while they are being used, so Jaquelot must explain why God is not responsible for the ill use made of these gifts. There are two objections that present themselves: first, why is God not the efficient cause of the sinful movements of the will?; and second, why is God not morally responsible for these sins? The first objection is given its strongest foundation in the doctrine that Bayle and many others upheld, namely that conservation is just continuous creation. At every instant of a creature's existence, God re-creates that creature with every one of its determinations. So properly speaking, God is the efficient cause of every action, including sinful acts. Jaquelot devotes several pages of the *Conformity* to this doctrine and to this objection.¹⁶⁸ His response is to assert, but hardly to elaborate or defend, the classic doctrine of concurrence, according to which creatures participate in some measure in their actions. Jaquelot distinguishes the first moment of creation, which is solely the work of God and totally an effect of His divine will, and subsequent moments of conservation when "the creature must necessarily contribute something."¹⁶⁹ God is free to create an eye, whose essence is sight, opposite the sun, whose essence is to emit light. This creation is an effect of God and God alone. But in the second instant, God's conservation is constrained by the natures of the created objects. If God is to conserve *an eye*, He must conserve a seeing thing; if God is to conserve *a sun*, he must conserve a shining thing; if God conserves a healthy eye opposite the sun, then the eye must see light in that instant.

Jaquelot's response to the moral objection is that God is not an accomplice to sin just as a winemaker is not an accomplice to the sins that proceed from the drunkenness brought about by his wine. But this response makes God's causal role in sin more distant than it should: winemakers do not have the ability to annihilate the wine as the drinker pours too much into his glass, but God does have the ability to destroy the sinner's freedom, or even the sinner himself, if the need arises. A second response therefore follows. God is not responsible for sin because He has provided everything that is necessary for free creatures to achieve moral goodness. He has arranged everybody's circumstances with a view to their well-being, and if creatures abuse their surroundings, that is their

¹⁶⁸ See Jaquelot, *CFR*, 254–265.

¹⁶⁹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 255.

fault. But there is the problem of divine foreknowledge—God knew that the circumstances of Eden, for example, although they could be used to benefit humankind, would not in fact do so. Jaquelot responds to this objection only by noting that the problem would be much worse if we assumed, which Jaquelot does not, that every sin corresponded to an inviolable and eternal decree of God. On Jaquelot's view, as we have seen many times, sins are effects of human wills, not of the divine will.¹⁷⁰ And yet again, we must remember how excellent and perfect a thing freedom is, and how impoverished the world would be without it.

In chapters IX and X of the *Conformity*, Jaquelot applies his reflections on free will to resolve the main difficulties that Bayle raises in “Manicheans” and “Paulicians”: “Despite all these efforts to critique the ways of God by speaking of the origin of evil as if it were abysmal to the human mind, free will clears away every shadow.”¹⁷¹ Since Bayle will attack mainly the foundations of these responses already given above rather than the arguments based upon them, I will not delve into the details of Jaquelot's objections to Bayle. What is worth noticing is that in these chapters more than the others Jaquelot's critique of Bayle sounds much like Le Clerc's, both in terms of Jaquelot's portrayal of Bayle as an enemy of religion, and in terms of the particular arguments that Jaquelot employs.

Jaquelot considers the existence of hell to be a formidable objection against the goodness of God, but he insists that we know too little about it to determine whether or how it conforms to the wisdom of God.¹⁷² (Unlike Le Clerc, however, Jaquelot treats the eternity of hell as if it were a fact clearly enunciated in Scripture.) Like Le Clerc, Jaquelot also rests heavily on the Great Chain of Being to respond to the bulk of Bayle's difficulties. Where Bayle mainly went astray was in treating human beings as if they were the only creatures God had made, and as if God were morally obligated to exhaust his goodness on them alone. But in fact, human beings occupy only one rung on the ladder of perfection, and only a view of God's outpouring of goodness on the whole ascent of creatures can give a proper perspective on the morality of His treatment of human beings: “all the difficulties ... resolve themselves once we consider this immense universe as a Whole, as a composite of infinitely many parts, in such relationship and connection with one another that this varied multiplicity of creatures contributes to the manifestation of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the

¹⁷⁰ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 191.

¹⁷¹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 250.

¹⁷² Jaquelot, *CFR*, 220.

creator.”¹⁷³ In following the Great Chain of Being defence as Le Clerc had done, Jaquelot similarly leaves himself open to Bayle’s principal rebuttal that we have already seen, namely that this “varied multiplicity” justifies only the creation of free creatures that *can* sin, not free creatures that actually *do* sin.

The Role of Reason in Religion

Although Jaquelot refrains at the outset of the *Conformity* from judging Bayle’s intentions or accusing him of any wrongdoing,¹⁷⁴ the tone becomes adversarial in the final chapters in which Jaquelot discusses Bayle’s article “Pyrrho,” the goal of which Jaquelot takes to be the undermining of religion. The chapter devoted to “Pyrrho” begins: “There is nothing more dangerous or more capable of destroying religion than to claim that it is always contrary and opposed to reason, and that to receive religion it is necessary to abandon reason as quickly as possible, and to renounce common sense in order to shelter oneself by faith.”¹⁷⁵ Jaquelot will go on to show that these dangerous things are precisely what Bayle repeatedly does in the *Dictionary*, and that consequently Bayle leads his readers straight to atheism: “To everywhere oppose faith and reason is a pernicious maxim that pushes men toward atheism, libertinism, and the complete renunciation of religion and holiness.”¹⁷⁶

Much of the chapter is devoted to surveying the usual traditional explanations for the Trinity and the Incarnation, the two mysteries that Bayle takes in “Pyrrho,” remark C, to be contrary to evident notions. Jaquelot attempts to convince the reader that there is no need to renounce common notions to explicate these mysteries, which are wholly in conformity with reason. What is interesting for our purposes are Jaquelot’s principles governing the necessity of reason in the practice of religion. Like Le Clerc, Jaquelot insists that reason is first of all necessary to prove certain preliminaries, like God’s existence and the immortality of the soul, but especially to verify the divinity of Scripture. The second use of reason is in reading Scripture, and getting the proper meaning out of it, another point that Le Clerc emphasized. Jaquelot’s third principle is the one that brings him into closest contact with the material of Bayle’s article “Pyrrho”:

¹⁷³ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 248.

¹⁷⁴ “I declare that I have no plans to attack the person or the heart of Mr. Bayle. I esteem his erudition, his mind, his penetration, and all his excellent talents that distinguish him in the Republic of Letters.” Jaquelot, *CFR*, preface.

¹⁷⁵ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 265.

¹⁷⁶ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 267.

The third principle is that it is necessary to admit a maxim that is generally approved. It is that in the very matters that are the unique domain and competency of reason, what is true and well-proven at one time remains always true, even if the doctrine subsequently leads to incomprehensible consequences. The infinite divisibility of extension, for example, is a truth as certain from the point of view of reason as the continuous division of fractions, which can be carried on infinitely, is in arithmetic. Yet it is not conceivable that the parts of a grain of sand can equal the number of the parts of the universe, which is nevertheless a necessary consequence of the divisibility of extension to infinity ... From which it is necessary to conclude that an object can be luminous and accessible to reason from one perspective, and obscure and incomprehensible from another; but this does not give us the right to reject the object. I will name the consent that we give to these consequences that are far from reason's reach *the faith of reason*, because reason acts in such cases by authority over the mind to make it accept consequences that it does not understand, by virtue of the principles whose truth it has previously proven and demonstrated.¹⁷⁷

This passage is one of the best examples of the way in which Jaquelot's Rationalism can both differ from and resemble Bayle's skepticism. Jaquelot's phrase, "the faith of reason," could just as easily have been coined by Bayle, who insists that his flight to faith is ordered by reason itself. But the phrase in Jaquelot is intended to resist Bayle's urge to renounce reason's maxims once they come into conflict with articles of the faith. Both Jaquelot and Bayle, however, agree that some propositions that are demonstrated by reason lead to apparently absurd consequences, and that this poses a problem in the domain of the ethics of belief. So once again, the Bayle-Jaquelot debate will parallel the Bayle-Le Clerc debate, as we will see in greater detail as we turn to the subsequent rounds of the debate.

Bayle's Response to a Provincial's Questions

The structure of Bayle's response to Jaquelot's *Conformity* parallels the structure of that work given above: Bayle organizes the chapters of his *Response to a Provincial's Questions* into objections to Jaquelot on free will, the origin of evil, and Pyrrhonism.

¹⁷⁷ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 275.

Freedom of the Will

Jaquelot devoted much of his *Conformity* to a discussion of free will in order to refute what he took to be Bayle's rejection of freedom, as well as to build the foundations of his theodicy. Bayle begins his response by denying that he ever rejected the idea of the freedom of the will; he merely declared the matter insoluble: "I can assure you, from one philosopher to another, that the question of the freedom of the will is far from decided."¹⁷⁸ Those who maintain that the will is free have the advantage of better explaining human morality, while those who object to, or outright reject the notion of free will, stand their ground on the side of metaphysics. The result is another stalemate in Bayle's view.

If the will is truly free, the proximate efficient cause of its effects, then Bayle believes the will must be endowed with a freedom of indifference: "Those who uphold the freedom of the will properly speaking, attribute to man a power to determine himself either to the left or to the right side even when the motives are perfectly equal on the sides of each of the opposing objects. They claim that without having any other reason than to make use of their freedom, our souls can say: I prefer this to that, even though I see nothing more worthy of my choice in this compared to that."¹⁷⁹ Bayle rightly maintains that Jaquelot's theory of freedom contains and depends on this freedom of indifference, and so he focuses his objections on that conception of freedom.

To defend his view that the debate over freedom is still undecided, Bayle demonstrates that all the phenomena explained by Jaquelot's theory of freedom can just as easily be explained by a form of determinism. The particular kind of determinism that Bayle defends over an entire lengthy chapter of his *Response to a Provincial's Questions* is psychological in nature and maintains that human beings "are the playthings of their passions—now of one, now of another. There are several passions that can coexist, but there are others that battle each other for territory, and it is always the strongest that prevails. A passion's empire is often short, such that it may in a single day be the victor as well as the vanquished. But sometimes a passion establishes itself so firmly that it becomes a habit, which nevertheless does not guarantee immunity from sudden revolutions that irrevocably steal its dominance."¹⁸⁰

Bayle attempts to suspend the readers' judgment about free will by considering Jaquelot's argument that only free will can explain the effectiveness of

¹⁷⁸ Bayle, *RQP* II, cxxxix (*OD* III, 782b).

¹⁷⁹ Bayle, *RQP* II, cxxxviii (*OD* III, 780a).

¹⁸⁰ Bayle, *RQP* II, cxxxix (*OD* III, 783b).

a king's decrees, or any positive law, in thwarting criminal behaviour. Jaquelot had argued that "the idea alone of the prohibition would not be sufficient to undermine a longstanding habit."¹⁸¹ The supposition of the freedom of the will is required to explain how, in an instant, a habitual gambler can stop gambling upon learning of its illegality. The "mental weight" of the law, assumes Jaquelot, cannot explain this about-face given the power that habits have over us. But Bayle responds that, on the contrary, the balance model of the will captures precisely what is happening to the gambler: "Jaquelot will understand this immediately, if he would just pay attention. It is not the idea [of the prohibition] alone that prevails over the habit in the first instant, but rather it is that idea united with a great fear or hope."¹⁸² The fear of the king's punishment is what is particularly effective in rendering his subjects obedient, not the idea of the law on its own. Ideas may not be stronger than habits, but the fear of gallows certainly is.

While Bayle denies that he ever rejected the idea of the freedom of indifference, he nevertheless admits that he offered several serious objections to it, which he revisits and strengthens in light of Jaquelot's attempted responses. The main objection to freedom found in the *Dictionary* (and repeated elsewhere) is this succinct one: "We have no distinct idea that allows us to understand how a being that does not exist by its own power could nevertheless act by its own power."¹⁸³ As we have seen, this argument is supported by recourse to the doctrine of conservation as continuous creation:¹⁸⁴ since each created being requires God's constant creative power to remain in existence, then at every moment it is properly speaking God's creative power that acts, never the creature's own power.

In addition to Jaquelot's response to this objection considered above, he offered an analogy to establish this possibility of creaturely action in an indirect way: "I ask whether we do not have a distinct idea of our existence whenever we say, *I think, therefore I am*; yet we do not exist by our own power. It is therefore no more difficult to conclude, *I know and I sense clearly and distinctly that I do whatever I will in my sphere of activity, therefore I am free*; even though I am dependent on my creator to act, as well as to exist."¹⁸⁵ The force of the analogy derives from that of the cogito: we can hardly doubt that we know that we exist. Yet we cannot easily account for the power by means of which we exist—it is

181 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 157.

182 Bayle, *RPQ* II, cxxxix (*OD* III, 783b).

183 *DHC* III, "Manichéens," rem. D, 306a; see also *RQP* II, cxl (*OD* III, 785a).

184 Bayle, *RQP* II, cxli (*OD* III, 787–791).

185 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 234.

not clearly and distinctly given to us in the way that the fact of our existence is given (according to Jaquelot in any case; Descartes would have disagreed). So Jaquelot's point is that we can know clearly and distinctly that we are free, though we lack such certain knowledge of the metaphysics of freedom.

Bayle appropriates the analogy to make his initial objection clearer. We may indeed be certain that we exist. The fact of existence is well established, even though, as Jaquelot argues, the cause of that existence at any given moment is not immediately given. We must deduce that cause through a process of reflection. So too in the case of our actions. Bayle then argues that only the fact *that we act* is immediately given, i.e. clearly and distinctly perceived. But the *cause of that action*—whether we ourselves or some other cause—is not immediately given, which entails that the alleged *freedom* of our action, which is a causal account of that action, is never immediately intuited, but must be deduced also through careful metaphysical reflection. Jaquelot therefore confused two distinct things—our actions and our alleged freedom—and wrongfully assumed that we know the fact of both just as clearly as we know that we exist.¹⁸⁶

But the dispute over the nature and possibility of free will is not central to the debate in Bayle's view. Therefore, despite Jaquelot's prolix cogitations on the subject, Bayle leaves the subject aside relatively early in his response. He will treat the matter even more cursorily when he writes the *Dialogues*.¹⁸⁷ Bayle's stronghold is the moral objection, the argument that God is morally responsible for evil, even if He is not physically responsible for it (i.e. the efficient cause of the will's movement toward sin). Bayle is willing early on to permit Jaquelot to employ any theory of the freedom of the will he pleases; none of these, in Bayle's view, will permit Jaquelot to exculpate God from the moral objection.

The Origin of Evil and Jaquelot's Free Will Theodicy

In the *Dictionary* Bayle left relatively unclear the question of what, exactly, would satisfy him in a response to the problem of evil. Since, in Bayle's opinion, Jaquelot and Le Clerc had both strayed very far from the heart of the matter, Bayle lays out more explicitly than he or anyone had ever done before, and perhaps even more clearly than has ever been done since, what is required of a successful Christian theodicy. The first thing to note is what is *not* required of a theodicy; in other words, what is *not* being disputed at all. For Bayle, it is

¹⁸⁶ See Bayle, *RQP* II, cxl (*OD* III, 785b).

¹⁸⁷ See below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 1.

not a question of whether this world—past, present, and future—conforms in every respect to the infinite perfection of its maker. The clearest idea of reason, Bayle often repeats, tells us that everything that God does is done perfectly well. So this universe of ours, regardless of appearances to the contrary, must in fact be good. No Christian theodicy is required to demonstrate *that* the presence of evil is compatible with God's perfection.

The challenge for Christian philosophers and theologians is to demonstrate *how* evil is compatible with God's perfection, and this requires not only convincing human reason that there is such a compatibility, but even enlightening reason in these matters by revealing at least some of the details of that compatibility. So that there could be no further question about what is required of theodacists like Jaquelot when faced with the problem of evil, Bayle goes on to enumerate in painstaking detail the precise theological doctrines and philosophical maxims that must be brought into conformity with one another. Since these principles reveal Bayle's theological commitments and his opinion of what ought to be taken for granted in philosophy, as well as because the reconciliation of these principles is the criterion for victory in the dispute between Bayle and Jaquelot, a complete summary of the principles follows:¹⁸⁸

Seven Theological Doctrines

- T1. God, the eternal and necessary being that is infinitely good, holy, wise, and powerful, possesses eternally both a glory and beatitude that cannot ever increase or diminish.
- T2. God determined Himself freely to produce creatures, and He chose from an infinite number of possible beings those creatures to which it pleased Him to give existence and with which it pleased Him to populate the universe, and He left all other beings in nothingness.
- T3. Among the creatures God willed to create were man and woman, to whom God gave, among other things, the gift of free will, by means of which they were able either to obey or to disobey God's commands. But God threatened the first humans with death if they should ever disobey His order not to eat a certain fruit.
- T4. Yet they ate that fruit and were consequently condemned along with all their posterity to the miseries of this life, to temporal death, to eternal damnation, and to an inclination to sin to which they abandon themselves almost endlessly and ceaselessly.

¹⁸⁸ See Bayle, *RQP* II, cxliv (*OD* III, 796b–798b).

- T5. Because of His infinite mercy it pleased God nevertheless to deliver a very small number of humans from this condemnation by providing them with assistance in this life when confronted with the corruption of sin and with misery, an assistance that can ultimately lead them to the attainment of the eternal happiness of paradise.
- T6. God has foreseen eternally all that will ever happen, He rules over all things, He puts each thing in its place, He leads and governs continuously according to his good pleasure, such that nothing happens without His permission or against His will, and He is able at all times and as often as it pleases Him to prevent anything from happening that displeases Him, including human sin, and to place in human minds any thought that He finds acceptable.
- T7. God offers graces to human beings who He knows will not accept them, and who will render themselves more culpable than they would have been if they had never been offered these graces. He declares to these human beings that He wants them to accept these graces, and He does not give to these humans the graces that He knows they would accept.

Nineteen Philosophical Maxims

- P1. Since the infinitely perfect being finds in Himself a glory and beatitude that cannot either increase or diminish, His goodness alone determined Him to create this universe; the ambition to be praised and self-interested motives of conserving or augmenting His glory or beatitude played no part.
- P2. Each of the attributes of the infinitely perfect being is infinite, but an attribute would not be infinite if we could imagine an increase in it. This is the case, in particular, with the goodness of the infinitely perfect being, as well as with His love of virtue and hatred of vice: these are infinite, but would not be infinite if we could conceive an increase in them.
- P3. Since, by P1, infinite goodness led the perfect being to create this world, it follows that all the wisdom, skill, power, and beauty of the universe exist for the sake of the happiness of intelligent creatures. The creator expressed His perfection in creation so that intelligent beings could find their happiness in the knowledge, admiration, and love of the perfect being.
- P4. Gifts given by the creator to His creatures capable of happiness aim only at their happiness, so He never permits those gifts to render

them unhappy. If some misuse of the gift by the creature were capable of harming the creature, then the creator would intervene to ensure that the gift was always used well. Otherwise the gift would not truly be a gift, or the creator would not be infinitely good.

- P5. A maleficent being is very capable of heaping gifts on his enemies when he knows these gifts will destroy them. It is therefore not consistent with the idea of the infinitely good being to give His creatures a free will that He knows very certainly will be misused by them and render them unhappy. Therefore, if God gives human beings free will, then He adds to that gift the necessary skill required always to use it well, and He never permits them to neglect that skill. If there were no sure means of guaranteeing the good use of free will, He would refrain from giving that gift rather than permitting it to cause the misery of His creatures. This is all the more true given that free will is a pure grace given by the creator freely without creatures ever having asked for it, and because the creator would be more responsible for the creatures' misery in this case than if He had given free will only because creatures had asked for it.
- P6. The following means of taking a man's life are equally effective: (a) give him a noose when you know with certainty that he will use it to hang himself; (b) stab him with a knife; (c) have another person stab him with a knife. By employing (a) one does not demonstrate less desire for the man to die than one would demonstrate by employing (b) or (c); in fact, (a) seems most malicious, since one leaves the man with all the trouble and all the blame associated with his death.
- P7. A true benefactor gives promptly and does not wait to give until after those he loves have suffered on account of the privation of his gift that he could easily have given earlier. If the advantages that could be derived from an evil that is suffered could be derived just as easily by the route of pure goodness without suffering, then the latter approach to obtaining those advantages is always taken.
- P8. The greatest glory that one who is the sovereign over others can acquire is to maintain virtue, order, peace, and contentment among them. Glory derived from misery is false glory.
- P9. The greatest love of virtue that a sovereign can demonstrate is to guarantee that virtue is always practiced, without any mixture of vice. If the sovereign can easily procure this good (of always practicing virtue) for his subjects, but instead chooses to allow evil to

rear its head and then to punish subjects for committing evil after having tolerated it for a long time, then the sovereign's love of virtue is not infinite.

- P10. The greatest hatred of vice that a sovereign can demonstrate is not to allow it to reign for a long time and then to punish it, but rather to crush it before its birth; that is, to prevent it from ever coming into existence in the first place.
- P11. A sovereign who is interested in the virtue and well-being of his subjects takes every care to guarantee that his subjects do not disobey his laws; and if it is necessary to punish them for disobedience, he guarantees that the punishment removes every inclination to disobey in the future and reestablishes in their souls a firm and constant disposition to do the good.
- P12. To permit the evil that one can prevent is tantamount to not caring whether the evil is committed, or even to hoping that the evil will be committed.
- P13. It is a great flaw in those who govern not to care whether or not disorder is present in their States. The flaw is even greater if they desire disorder in their States. If, by hidden and indirect, but infallible means, the sovereign excited sedition in his State in order to bring it to the brink of destruction, just so that the sovereign could win the glory of demonstrating that he had the courage and prudence necessary to save a great realm about to perish, then he would be condemnable. But if the sovereign excited this sedition because there was no other way to prevent the total ruin of his subjects, then it would be necessary to complain of the miserable necessity to which the sovereign was subject, and to praise him for the use he made of it.
- P14. The permission of a particular evil is excusable only when one cannot avoid the evil without introducing an even greater evil. But the permission of a particular evil is never excusable in the case of one who has an effective remedy for this evil as well as for every other evil that might arise from the suppression of this evil.
- P15. The infinitely powerful being, the creator of matter and minds, does whatever He wills with that matter and those minds. There is no movement, arrangement or shape that He cannot give to matter, and there is no thought that He cannot communicate to minds. Therefore, if He permitted some physical evil or moral evil, it was not because without that evil some greater physical or greater moral evil would be entirely inevitable. None of the arguments about the

mixture of good and evil based on the limitations of benefactors apply to Him.

- P16. One is as much the cause of an event when one brings it about by moral means as when one brings it about by physical means. A Minister of State who, without leaving his office, undermined the plots of some cabal by merely manipulating the passions of the cabal's leaders would be as much the author of the ruin of that cabal as he would be if he used his own two fists to destroy it.
- P17. It is all the same thing to employ a necessary cause and to employ a free cause when the action of the cause is determined. Suppose that a certain cannon powder has the property of either igniting or not igniting when fire touches it (so it is "free"), but that I know with certainty that the powder will ignite if fire touches it tomorrow at eight o'clock (so it is determined to ignite at that time). Then, if I put fire to the powder at eight o'clock, I would be as much the cause of the "free" powder's ignition as I would be if I knew that the powder had the property of always, necessarily igniting when fire was put to it. That is because, from my point of view, the powder would no longer be a "free" cause if I put fire to it at the very moment that I knew with certainty that it would be determined by its own "choice." It is impossible for a being to be free or indifferent with respect to that to which it is already determined or with respect to the time at which it is determined. Everything that exists exists necessarily while it exists.
- P18. When a large population is found guilty of rebellion, it is no sign of mercy to pardon a tiny fraction of the people while putting to death all the rest, including babies at their mothers' breasts.
- P19. Suppose there is a supply of medicines capable of curing some disease, and among these several that would be taken by a patient with pleasure. Now suppose that some doctor chooses instead a medicine that he knows infallibly will be refused by that patient. Then the doctor can exhort the patient to take the medicine all he wants, but we will still have good reason to suspect that he does not want to heal the patient. If he wanted to heal the patient, then he would have chosen one of the good medicines that is easy to swallow. Moreover, if the doctor knew that this refusal of medicine by the patient would lead to the patient's death, then we could not prevent ourselves from thinking that the doctor desired the patient's death.

After enumerating the doctrines and maxims that Jaquelot had to bring into conformity, Bayle goes on to demonstrate the failure of Jaquelot's free-will theodicy to reconcile these principles. Bayle's first critique demonstrates that Jaquelot failed to show how T₁, T₃, T₄, and P₅ are consistent. How are the facts that God is infinitely holy and all-knowing, that He gave humans free will, and that humans misused it to their demise, consistent with the maxim that an infinitely holy being does not give gifts that He foresees will destroy the recipient, but always ensures that His gifts will be used well? A response might be that God could not ensure that free will would be used well; it is the very nature of free will to be unmanageable. But Bayle anticipates this reply and employs an *ad hominem* to prove that Jaquelot agrees with Bayle that God was able to give the gift of free will and also to ensure its constant good use. The proof of this agreement is that Jaquelot wrote in the *Conformity* that "[t]he state of the blessed [in heaven] is a state of reward in which the knowledge of the blessed is so elevated, so pure, and so vivid that it directs the self-love and the love of bodily goods, which in this life are the sources of sin, in such a way that the freedom of the blessed is always led toward goodness, and never to evil."¹⁸⁹ Bayle observes two things about this passage. First, Jaquelot assumes that the blessed in heaven retain their freedom of the will. Second, the elevation of the minds of the blessed has the effect of always leading their wills toward what is good, and preventing them from ever sinning. Bayle concludes that Jaquelot must admit that a universe containing free creatures that never sin was possible, since it is in fact actual: the eternal paradise of the saved, however small, is such a universe. Bayle's first objection to Jaquelot therefore follows: "Let us grant Jaquelot for the moment that the lack of any free creatures would be an imperfection in the universe greater than the imperfection caused by the presence of sin. Nevertheless, Jaquelot must admit that the presence of free creatures that never sin would render the universe more perfect than would the presence of free creatures that do sin. Now, it was easy to join together constantly and invariably free will and the practice of virtue; Jaquelot acknowledges such a conjunction in the case of paradise."¹⁹⁰ Assuming T₁ and T₃, maxim P₅ entails that paradise should be the only state ever experienced by free creatures; doctrine T₄, however, entails that this is not the case. Jaquelot does not explain how T₄ and P₅ are consistent.

Bayle anticipates Jaquelot's response, and in so doing gives us a glimpse of how Bayle might respond to a recently resuscitated theodicy. Jaquelot would

¹⁸⁹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 230.

¹⁹⁰ Bayle, *RQP* II, cxlv (*OD* III, 800a).

respond that God willed that free creatures experience progress in the course of their existence; or, to employ terminology from recent literature, God wanted creatures to experience “soul-making.”¹⁹¹ Free creatures were not created perfect like the blessed in heaven, but were created fallible; they are born in a *state of trial*, and through their good actions they are capable of achieving the *state of reward*.¹⁹² The possibility and realization of this progress, and therefore the existence of these two distinct states, is a good feature of the universe. Bayle responds by acknowledging that progress in souls can indeed be a good thing, as long as the souls begin innocent and happy, and progress from there to ever greater happiness, all the while preserving their innocence. Soul-making does not necessitate original sin or original misery. God’s goodness and love of virtue would not be infinite if He willed a form of soul-making that progressed from sin and misery toward eternal happiness; for an even greater goodness and even greater holiness would be manifested in a continuous path from goodness and happiness toward greater goodness and happiness. So by P2 and P9, soul-making must exclude sin and misery. Another problem with Jaquelot’s two states is that they cannot be distinguished as long as we assume that God is all-knowing. It is no “trial” if the judge knows the verdict even before the trial begins. Like Bayle, Jaquelot acknowledges that God’s foreknowledge extends even to future contingents: according to Jaquelot, the cause of future contingents “is no less determined with respect to God’s foreknowledge,” even though these contingents are “indeterminate in themselves.”¹⁹³ Bayle again cites P17 in this context to undermine Jaquelot’s two-state distinction.

Jaquelot responded to an objection like the one just outlined as follows.¹⁹⁴ A creature that always chooses freely and deliberately to lead a virtuous life is greater than a creature that is necessitated always to lead a virtuous life. Therefore, God created free creatures in order that the universe would contain some of these greater creatures, rather than containing only virtuous automata. Bayle’s objection to this response is that it is no response at all to the problem of evil, which is the problem of why God permitted sin, not why God permitted free creatures to exist. This response by Jaquelot only exacerbates the problem, especially in light of the above paragraphs, since it reinforces Bayle’s claim that God should have given creatures free will and then guided them all infallibly

191 See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 253–262. Hick attributes his soul-making theodicy to St. Irenaeus.

192 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 230.

193 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 79.

194 See Jaquelot, *CFR*, 232.

in a continuous virtuous use of that free will. Since Jaquelot has admitted the possibility of this state of affairs, it does nothing to emphasize further the excellence of the virtuous use of free will.

Bayle employs an element of the Molinist account of divine foreknowledge in order to construct another objection to Jaquelot, who relied on that model of foreknowledge. First, Bayle observes that he and Jaquelot are in agreement that God's decrees were formed after He had foreseen the misuse that Adam and Eve would make of their free will in the Garden of Eden. The question is whether the fact that God decreed that the Fall take place entails that God positively willed that the Fall take place. Bayle argues that in this and in every case, what God decrees God also positively wills. This is because God surveys, on the Molinist account, an infinite number of possible circumstances in which He can place each human being, and He foresees the ways in which they will employ their free will in those circumstances, before He decrees that such-and-such will be the actual circumstances in which they will be placed. God in fact placed Adam and Eve in circumstances in which He knew infallibly that they would sin. But, Bayle asserts, among the infinitely many other possible circumstances that God surveyed prior to forming His decree, there must have been at least one set in which Adam and Eve would not have sinned. So God positively willed to place Adam and Eve in circumstances (the Garden with the serpent) in which they would sin; He was not forced to do so by any necessity. Consequently, even if God is not responsible for sin in a physical sense (i.e. in the sense of efficiently moving the wills of Adam and Eve to sin), He is undoubtedly responsible in a moral sense for their sin by P6, since God gave Adam and Eve the "noose" of free-will knowing infallibly that they would use it to hang themselves along with their posterity. Jaquelot also violates P9 if he acknowledges that there were circumstances that God could have chosen, but did not, in which Adam and Eve would not have sinned.

Bayle cites a number of passages wherein Jaquelot seems to admit that God positively willed that humans sin, and that sin was even necessary to augment the glory of God. These passages extol the uses that God makes of human sins to bring about good effects; the wisdom of grace; the marvel of divine redemption; the need for vice in order to know virtue; and so on. Bayle suggests that Jaquelot was led to this way of thinking by his exclusive focus on divine wisdom, power, and glory, and by his neglect of the demands of divine goodness. Bayle cites a number of passages again to show that when Jaquelot mentions divine attributes, he often omits goodness, yet always mentions wisdom. But in order to uphold T1, Jaquelot must demonstrate the conformity of all the divine attributes with the permission of sin. It may be the case the divine wisdom is manifested by permitting sin and then deriving good effects from it; but infinite

goodness is in no way manifested by such an arrangement (by P9, P10, and P11). When Jaquelot does mention divine goodness, he asserts that we would need to understand the infinite God and have a view of the entire universe before we could complain that this universe is not perfectly good. But, Bayle observes, this is just the sort of move that rigidly orthodox Calvinists make whenever they cannot answer an objection to their view. So, once again, Jaquelot has offered nothing better than the view (that of the orthodox Predestinarians) which everyone, including Calvin, agrees is met with insoluble rational objections, and which ultimately rests on faith.

Bayle anticipates a response that Jaquelot and others will give to these objections. It is not the case that because God created this universe, therefore He willed (in the sense of desired or lauded) all the events in this universe. We must distinguish two different wills in God: an “absolute and independent will, by which God wills that all things happened exactly as they happen, and a relative will, which concerns merit and blame, and by which God wills that all humans obey His laws.”¹⁹⁵ Therefore, everything that happens is in conformity with God’s absolute (or what is also called God’s ‘consequent’ or ‘permissive’ or ‘governing’ or ‘revealed’) will; but not everything that happens is in conformity with God’s relative (or ‘antecedent’ or ‘legislative’ or ‘hidden’) will. With this distinction one can uphold simultaneously that nothing can occur unless God wills it (which one wants to uphold since God is the unique and all-perfect creator), and also that God does not will everything that occurs (which one wants to uphold because God is good and some things that occur are bad).

Bayle rejects the two-will distinction. Either God wills something or He doesn’t; there cannot be any conflict or contradiction in the divine nature, which is simple. To say that God willed that Adam and Eve sin with His permissive will, but also willed that Adam and Eve obey Him with His legislative will is to reduce the legislative will of God to a velleity in this case. But “it would be useless to inform you that a supremely perfect nature is not capable of having velleities.”¹⁹⁶ A velleity is a sign of some weakness or constraint, but God is not subject to either. What the two-wills distinction amounts to, in Bayle’s mind, are the claims that (1) God willed that Adam and Eve sin, and (2) God willed that Adam and Eve believe that He willed that they obey Him. When understood in this way, there is no conflict in the divine will. But there is also no solution to the problem of evil, which is further intensified, once again, since (2) portrays God as deceptive.

¹⁹⁵ Bayle, *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 821b–822a).

¹⁹⁶ Bayle, *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 822a).

The two-wills distinction relies on the claim that to permit something is not always the same as to will that thing positively. Bayle rejects the claim that God permits some things that happen without also willing them positively. If God permits certain things without willing them positively, then one must sacrifice God's omniscience and His providence. God knows only what He decrees, and He decrees only what He wills. So God knows only what He wills. If permitting a thing is distinct from willing that thing, then what God permits He does not will, and what He does not will He also does not know. But what God does not know, He cannot direct, and therefore both omniscience and providence are destroyed. If, however, there were some way to explain how God can know and direct something that He merely permits but does not will, then there is another problem. On this view, God foresees what He permits, anticipates the consequences of His permission, and then directs those consequences toward some good end. Omniscience and providence are saved. But in this case, the permission-will distinction breaks down, since what God permits He also directs, but what He directs He must will as the means to the end that He decrees. Bayle quotes a passage where Jaquelot speaks of the divine permission as something hardly distinguishable from what God wills: "since God directs everything by His wisdom, when we say that He permits something, this does not merely mean that He does not will to prevent it, because He also directs all the things He permits toward the execution of His plans ... [s]uch that the permission of God brings about that things happen when it pleases Him and however it pleases Him."¹⁹⁷

Finally, Bayle criticizes Jaquelot's reflection on physical evil by demonstrating that in every instance Jaquelot resolves the problem of suffering by sacrificing or limiting some attribute of the supremely perfect being. When Jaquelot treats the suffering of moral saints, for example, he extols the good effects that can come from such suffering. Bayle responds that only a limited being, not a supremely perfect being, would have recourse to unjust suffering in order to bring about some good effect. This is again Bayle's response to Jaquelot's explanation of animal suffering, which is that such suffering generally serves the purpose of the animal's survival. But a supremely perfect God could have found a way to employ pleasure, not pain, to make the animal aware of dangers to its life. Jaquelot argues that if we posit, as Le Clerc had done, that there is no eternal suffering awaiting the wicked, then the whole problem of evil vanishes. Bayle repeats that a supremely perfect God would not permit a moment's suffering, which can be significant to the one who suffers. Every theodicy of

¹⁹⁷ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 313–314.

physical evil limits, constrains, or sacrifices attributes of the divine nature. But all such limitations, constraints, and sacrifices are victories for the Manichean hypothesis.

The Relationship between Faith and Reason

The final issue that divides Bayle and Jaquelot is the conformity of faith and reason. Bayle will insist throughout his debate with Jaquelot that the two are substantially in agreement, since they both acknowledge that all the mysteries of the Christian faith accord perfectly with *reason in general*. The disagreement lies solely in the details of explaining that accord. To make this clearer, Bayle distinguishes what we might call “orders of theodicy.” “First-order theodicy” is the level on which Bayle disagrees with Le Clerc and Jaquelot. This order involves explaining in detail how the seven theological doctrines and nineteen philosophical maxims above are consistent. A successful first-order theodicy will employ other, equally evident principles to demonstrate the conformity of these doctrines and maxims. First-order theodicy involves demonstrating the conformity of the articles of faith with *finite human reason*. Bayle does not believe that this can be done. The reason this cannot be done is one of the following (it is not entirely clear which Bayle advocates): (1) because God has acted contrary to one of the nineteen philosophical maxims for a reason that only His wisdom is capable of appreciating; or (2) because God’s actions are indeed in conformity with all the doctrines and maxims, but we do not have enough information, or a wide enough view of the universe, to perceive the whole range and nature of God’s actions. Both (1) and (2) are examples of what we might call “second-order theodicy.” Second-order theodicy explains why first-order theodicy must fail, but it also justifies the ways of God in light of the facts of evil. Whether (1) or (2) is the case, there is a sense in which faith and reason are in perfect conformity. But “reason” in this case does not refer to finite, human reason, but to general, divine reason. If (1) is the case, then there is some divine reason, inaccessible to human minds, which explains why certain philosophical maxims were violated. If the human mind were enlightened, by the beatific vision perhaps, then human reason would be satisfied with this rational exception to evident maxims. If (2) is the case, then faith and reason are compatible in a simpler way, without requiring any violations of any maxims, but the limitations of the human mind prevent us from seeing this. So both Jaquelot and Bayle are committed to the conformity of faith and reason in general, but Jaquelot is additionally committed to the human capacity to prove that conformity in considerable detail.

Bayle critiques Jaquelot’s use of the famous “above reason” versus “against reason” distinction. The mysteries are above reason, Jaquelot maintains, but

not against reason. But the distinction, Bayle argues, rests on an equivocation of the word “reason”; we slip from talking about human reason to talking about divine reason. The mysteries are indeed above human reason, but they are also against human reason, Bayle claims, since human reason does not perceive a successful first-order theodicy. However, if we speak throughout about divine reason, then the mysteries are neither above nor against divine reason. Bayle employs an analogy (which Leibniz admires in the *Theodicy*) to explain the case of human reason. When we perceive a square tower in the distance as round, the square shape of the tower is not only above our vision, but also against our vision, since our vision perceives a contrary shape in the tower. Similarly, when our reason grapples with the problem of evil, various articles of faith are not only above reason, but also against it, since those articles appear to contradict evident philosophical maxims.

Finally, Bayle surprisingly accepts Jaquelot’s accusation that he “establishes Christianity in his heart in the ruins of his reason.” Bayle argues that, in fact, “there is no faith that is better established in reason than faith that is established in the ruins of reason.”¹⁹⁸ Bayle explains that true faith is belief in the word of God, not belief in the words or reasoning of men. It is therefore more reasonable to establish faith in the word of God, which Bayle urges his readers to do, rather than in human reason, which both Le Clerc and Jaquelot urge their readers to do. Bayle claims that his recourse to faith is what is encouraged by the words of Jesus to St. Thomas the Apostle: “Happy are those who believe without having seen.”¹⁹⁹ Bayle will repeat in the *Dialogues* that his limited rejection of reason in matters of faith is in fact the most rational action for a true religious believer to take, since reason is rejected in favour of a more reliable guide, Scripture. It is reason itself that urges us to abandon evident notions of reason in favour of the words of the Bible, which are clear when it comes to the unity and goodness of God.

Jaquelot’s Examen

Since Bayle summarizes and quotes extensively in his *Dialogues* much of what Jaquelot argues in his last work, the *Examen*, it will be unnecessary here to give a substantial analysis of that work; Bayle will do so in great depth, and he presents Jaquelot’s work, for the most part, very faithfully. There is one possible exception to Bayle’s fidelity, right at the beginning of the second part of the *Dialogues*, where Themistius claims that the first 304 pages of Jaquelot’s 472-

¹⁹⁸ Bayle, *RQP* II, clxi (*OD* III, 863b).

¹⁹⁹ John 20:29.

page *Examen* can be ignored because they are irrelevant to the dispute. The justification for the claim is that these pages concern the freedom of the will, and that Bayle had made the dispute independent of that issue through his reflections in the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*; Jaquelot was henceforth free to assume any theory of the freedom of the will he liked, and Bayle's arguments would retain all their force. Concerning whether Bayle's position on the problem of evil is equally justifiable no matter what theory of freedom one espouses, I will let the reader judge for him- or herself by reading what Bayle has to say about this in the rest of the *Dialogues*. But a brief word is in order here about the content of the first 304 pages of the *Examen*, because in fact only 100 of these concern free will. Why did Bayle omit all mention of the first 200 pages of the work?

This last question is an important one, since the first 200 pages of Jaquelot's book aims to demonstrate that Bayle's intent, for over twenty years, had been to undermine religion and to put atheism in the best light possible. In particular, Bayle's aim in his discussions of the problem of evil is to "deny human freedom, as the pagans did, in order to convince reason that God is the author of sin and the cause of evil."²⁰⁰ So these pages are relevant for approaching the Bayle enigma. However, a close reading of these pages shows that Jaquelot's strategy is to repeat, and sometimes to augment with additional citations from Bayle's works, older criticisms brought against those works, mainly by Jurieu, to which Bayle had already replied in his *Clarifications* appended to the second edition of the *Dictionary*. The first fifty pages of the *Examen*, for example, aim to prove that Bayle's Manichean articles have the same aim as Bayle's much earlier *Various Thoughts on the Comet*, namely to demonstrate the rational victory of atheists over Christians. There is no new evidence brought forward by Jaquelot, and there are no new accusations that Bayle had not already tried to answer in his *Addition to the Various Thoughts on the Comet* and in his first *Clarification*. The next fifty pages of the *Examen* argue that Bayle aims throughout the *Dictionary* to demonstrate that reason and faith contradict one another, and that consequently, the proper response of reason is to reject Christianity. Bayle's *Clarifications* concerning the Manicheans and the Pyrrhonians treat this objection at length. Jaquelot then turns to Bayle's vulgarity in the *Dictionary*, arguing that it is scandalous to readers and encourages libertinism in them. Bayle dealt with this problem in the *Clarification* concerning obscenities. Jaquelot devotes the last fifty pages of Part One of the *Examen* to summarizing his own view of the relationship between faith and reason, to supporting that

²⁰⁰ Jaquelot, *ETB*, Preface.

view with numerous citations from celebrated theologians, and to outlining the differences between his view and Bayle's. In my view, Bayle was justified in ignoring these first 200 pages of the *Examen*, which were repetitive in a variety of ways, and in any case, did not have anything at all to do with the arguments advanced by Bayle in the *Reponse to a Provincial's Questions*. Their value is rhetorical; they place doubts in the readers' minds about the sincerity of Bayle's professions of faith and about his intentions in elaborating the Manichean objections.

Bayle was also justified in ignoring the next 100 pages of the *Examen* which aim to demonstrate the following: that Bayle's purpose whenever he discussed freedom was to destroy his readers' belief in the freedom of indifference; that Bayle thereby aimed to undermine all religious devotion, which assumes that humans are free to love or to reject God; that Jaquelot's arguments on behalf of the freedom of indifference rose to the level of demonstrations; and that none of Bayle's objections to Jaquelot's account of freedom have any merit whatsoever. Bayle will explain in chapters 4 and 5 of Part 2 of the *Dialogues* below why none of these points is worth discussing in further detail. He will claim, rightly, that he had ended the discussion concerning the freedom of indifference by permitting Jaquelot to assume it, even to the point of allowing him to discuss the origin of evil from a Pelagian perspective, if he wished. Bayle's doctrine on the problem of evil is meant to hold whether or not human beings possess the freedom of indifference. Moreover, among Bayle's list of theological doctrines, T₃ assumes that humans were given free will. Jaquelot's aim in the *Conformity* and in the *Examen* was to prove that the existence of human freedom is a philosophical maxim, not merely an article of faith; but none of this is relevant any longer to the discussion of the origin of evil, in which Bayle not only permits, but even demands that his readers believe, at least for argument's sake, in human freedom. Jaquelot believes that carefully articulating the basis of this belief will solve the problem of evil; Bayle denies that. The *Dialogues* below are the test to determine who was right.

So we are left with 168 of the 472 pages of Jaquelot's *Examen* that are devoted to answering Bayle's strongest objections concerning the origin of evil, which I take to be the following: (1) that the consistency of the theological doctrines and philosophical maxims Bayle enumerated cannot be demonstrated to the satisfaction of human reason; (2) that Jaquelot's theodicy subordinates and even sacrifices divine goodness to the other divine attributes; (3) that a perfectly good God would create a universe, not like this one, but with free creatures that never sin; (4) that Jaquelot's account of why God permitted sin makes sin into a necessary feature of this universe; (5) that God does not have two wills, but only one, and consequently He wills directly and positively whatever He per-

mits; (6) that, in general, divine permission cannot be explained in such a way that God is exculpated from any role in human sin. In what follows I assemble Jaquelot's responses to each of these points.

(1) Jaquelot informs his reader without delay that he has no intention of playing Bayle's game according to Bayle's rules. The philosophical maxims that Bayle enumerated are like "lead swords" that he insists his opponents employ to defeat him. These maxims were not offered in good faith, but only in order to tilt the balance in Bayle's favour. Consequently, Jaquelot has next-to-nothing to say about those maxims, in themselves or as a set, in the remainder of the *Examen*.²⁰¹ To demonstrate the consistency of those doctrines and maxims would require answering every possible objection to divine providence, which Jaquelot considers impossible. Instead, Jaquelot aims merely to clarify the ways of divine providence by shedding some light on them, but not by making them completely evident to human reason.²⁰² Five principles will form the foundation of Jaquelot's response to Bayle: first, "the pre-eminence of God is infinitely beyond all creatures, such that it would be mad for humans to claim to enter into all the ways of God and all His plans when He created the universe"; second, "one must not judge the plans of God or the manifestation of His attributes in the creation of this universe solely by means of the way things are on this Earth, which is less than a point in comparison to the whole universe"; third, "God placed humans on this Earth in order that they might apply themselves to the search for God in His works"; fourth, "God has done everything for His glory" (Jaquelot later defines God's glory as the manifestation of his power and wisdom); and fifth, "God directs his creatures by immutable laws that He established and from which he never derogates without a miracle."²⁰³ So in response to the first main objection by Bayle outlined just above, Jaquelot concedes that he cannot render all of Bayle's principles consistent, but instead provides other principles to guide his effort at theodicy.

201 In 1708 Philippe Naudé published his *La souveraine perfection de Dieu dans ses divins attributs* in response to Bayle's Manichean objections. Naudé considered Jaquelot's *Examen* a failure at least in part because he ignored Bayle's challenge to demonstrate the consistency of the theological doctrines and philosophical maxims, a task that Naudé takes up himself at great length (see chapter 2, pages 68–118).

202 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 309–310.

203 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 312, 313, 315, 317, and again 317 respectively.

(2) One might have expected Jaquelot to take particular issue with Bayle's accusation that he sacrifices divine goodness when he upholds God's other attributes. After all, a theodicy is an attempt to justify the attribute of divine goodness in the face of evil. However, Jaquelot instead admits that he has intentionally subordinated goodness beneath two divine attributes that he considers more important to uphold: power and wisdom, which together make up God's glory, which is the only reason that could have motivated God to create (according to Jaquelot's fourth principle). According to Jaquelot, Bayle is wrong to argue that God's purpose in creating must have been to render intelligent creatures happy. As far as we know, humans are the only intelligent creatures and they occupy a tiny part of the universe. Moreover, the universe existed long before humans and it is full of insensible creatures that God designed and carefully placed: "if the goodness of God was the first motive that made Him act, then what good is this nearly infinite space full of insensible objects incapable of being the recipients of God's goodness ...?"²⁰⁴ Jaquelot's answer is that the myriad stars in the sky are not evidence of divine goodness, but of divine power and wisdom, which are consequently the first motives of creation. Divine goodness was manifested when humans arrived on the scene with all the intelligence and freedom required to search for God in His works.

(3) The crux of the debate between Bayle and Jaquelot, according to the latter, is the question whether God could have and should have created a universe better than this one. Bayle argues that human reason leads us to respond 'yes', and even provides us with the particulars of how God might have done so: He simply had to prevent humans from sinning, and thereby avoid all crime and suffering in the world. Jaquelot responds primarily by appealing to his first and second principles above. To find fault with this universe is to think one knows more than one does, and it is to judge the whole universe by what takes place in this small corner of it. But Jaquelot is aware that this response comes very close to repeating Bayle's own fideistic denouement, so he goes on to give more philosophical clarification. What matters is not that God created beings that could sin, but rather that God created all beings with everything they needed to avoid sin. If free creatures sinned, then this was certainly not part of God's plan for the universe, but a result of the misuse of freedom. To prevent this misuse along the lines Bayle suggests would require God constantly to derogate from his general laws, both with respect to the physical circumstances in which humans find themselves, and with respect to God's conservation of

²⁰⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 363.

and concurrence in human free will. God would have to perform infinitely many miracles in order to prevent humans from sinning, but this is beneath God's wisdom, though it is within His power. Therefore, God permits sin.

(4) The notion of permission occupies Jaquelot through most of the *Examen*. A preliminary objection to his account is that it is misplaced; God cannot be said to permit what is in fact necessary, and Bayle has argued at length that sin was necessary in the universe if Jaquelot's account of divine creation and foreknowledge are correct. Bayle argued that if God's motive for creating the universe was the manifestation of His glory, and if God knew infallibly before creating that this universe would contain sin, then it follows that sin was necessary in order to manifest God's glory, otherwise God would have chosen some other means of manifesting His glory. Jaquelot answers by assuming, along with Bayle, that an infinitely wise God would have many ways of creating the universe in order to glorify Himself. It follows that God does not love any of these means *necessarily*, since He could have chosen, in accordance with His freedom of indifference, any of them. Jaquelot disagrees with Leibniz, therefore, about the uniqueness of the best universe. As it happens, in the world that God chose to create, "[s]in became by accident one of the means [of manifesting God's glory], but God did not choose sin by an efficacious decree, He merely permitted it ... after which, God made of use of it in order to manifest His mercy and then His justice upon impenitent sinners."²⁰⁵

But no lengthy reasons are needed in order to convince us that sin was not necessary; the evidence of our freedom of indifference, which Jaquelot continues to insist is as clear and distinct as possible, convinces us that sin is contingent, since it is an effect of the misuse of our wills, which we experience immediately as contingent. Against Bayle's insistence that the circumstances in which Adam and Eve were placed led infallibly to their sinning, Jaquelot clarifies that circumstances never determine sin, even if God knew infallibly that within those circumstances humans would sin. Infallibility does not entail determination, as Jaquelot will argue in upholding the two divine wills (discussed immediately below).

(5) Jaquelot defends his two-wills account of divine volition, and thereby attempts to save the permission (and infallibility) versus determination distinction that depends on it. Bayle's objections depend on a simplistic dichotomy: all that happens must be either in accordance with God's will or against God's

²⁰⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 365.

will. Then Bayle argues, again simplistically, that nothing can happen against God's will, from which Bayle concludes that God wills equally efficaciously all that happens. Jaquelot gives a more nuanced account of this "accordance with" versus "against" distinction. To begin, Jaquelot distinguishes the physical will, which issues efficacious decrees that tend necessarily to glorify God, from the moral will of God, which issues violable decrees which, when obeyed, lead intelligent creatures toward happiness. Nothing happens contrary to God's physical will, which decreed that this physical universe would be created in accordance with general laws and that humans would be placed therein with the faculty of free will. Things do happen contrary to God's moral will, however, including all sins. But the misuse of free will is in no way the effect of an efficacious decree of God's will. Rather, the misuse of free will was foreseen by God, who then made a permissive decree to allow that misuse to take place. Why the decrees of permission? Because God did not wish to "extinguish or impede" the power He gave to humans to do good or evil. Consequently, it follows on Jaquelot's account that God is capable of having velleities. Every moral decree that is violated by human beings is a divine velleity, but not a sign of weakness in God, only weakness in human beings.

(6) Jaquelot distinguishes two questions that arise when discussing the divine permission of sin: first, the general question, why does God permit sin at all?; second, does the fact that God permits sin entail that God is physically or morally the cause of sin? Both of these questions have been answered in the above paragraphs, but Jaquelot assembles the reasons into a single theodicy. God created the universe to manifest His glory, which is nothing other than His power and wisdom. Even before humans appeared, God's glory was clearly expressed, though not yet appreciated. Humans were created in order to search for God in His works and to admire His glory. This search required intelligence and freedom. Freedom entails the possibility of sinning, a possibility that God could not impede without derogating from His general laws, which His wisdom prevents Him from doing. Our own immediate experience of freedom shows us clearly and distinctly that sin is never necessary. God foresaw that humans would in fact sin, so He made permissive decrees allowing those sins to take place, as well as physical decrees that would lead after these sins to the manifestation of God's justice and mercy. Therefore, God permits sins for reasons that humans can easily comprehend and appreciate, and He is in no way the physical or moral cause of those sins, as everyone who reflects on their own sins can evidently see. These are the main lines that Jaquelot drew in his last reply to Bayle, and which Bayle set out to answer in his *Dialogues*.

Afterword

The second reason that I offered in the Preface for translating and introducing Bayle's *Dialogues* three centuries after its initial publication was that this work, perhaps above all others, promises to shed light on the Bayle enigma. In what follows I provide some justification for this claim by offering a detailed example of how the *Dialogues* elucidates one controversial and important aspect of Bayle's thought. As we saw in outline in the Introduction above, Le Clerc's objections forced Bayle to expand his doctrine on the problem of evil. If one understands the Bayle enigma, as I do, to refer to confusion over the meaning, structure, and cogency of Bayle's philosophical arguments, then this expansion of the doctrine on evil that is presented (albeit unsystematically) in the *Dialogues* represents an important contribution to resolving one aspect of the Bayle enigma. Recall the doctrine on evil as it was presented in the *Dictionary*, and as Bayle summarized it in the early rounds of his debate with Le Clerc:

- [P1] The natural light and revelation teach us clearly that there is only one principle of all things, and that this principle is infinitely perfect.
- [P2] The way of reconciling the moral and physical evil of humanity with all the attributes of this single, infinitely perfect principle of all things surpasses our philosophical lights, such that the Manichean objections leave us with difficulties that human reason cannot resolve.
- [P3] Nevertheless, it is necessary to believe firmly what the natural light and revelation teach us about the unity and infinite perfection of God, just as we believe in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, etc., by faith and by submission to divine authority.¹

Le Clerc focused, as we saw, mainly on the transition from P2 to P3, arguing that the alleged insolubility of the Manichean objections—the thesis of P2—undermines the possibility of continued belief in the goodness, or even in the existence of God, which is the recommendation of P3. By the completion of *Dialogues*, Part 1, Bayle believes he has fully resolved this apparent conflict. Early in the *Dialogues* Bayle notes that Le Clerc finds fault with his doctrine largely because of an assumption that he holds but never explicitly addresses. Bayle

¹ Bayle, *RBL* iii (OD III, 992b–993a).

calls this assumption “the fundamental axiom of the whole trial.”² The axiom is that “whoever acknowledges that a doctrine is exposed to insoluble objections acknowledges, as a necessary consequence, the falsity of that doctrine.”³ If this axiom is granted, then Le Clerc is right that P₂ undermines P₃; but Bayle’s main goal in *Dialogues*, Part 1, is to demonstrate the falsity of the supposed axiom and to clarify how it is possible to acknowledge both that a proposition is met with invincible objections and that this proposition is nevertheless one that we ought to believe.

There are further related assumptions of Le Clerc’s that Bayle identifies and must refute in order to uphold his doctrine. Bayle was unequivocal in holding that the Manichean objections were evident [*évidentes*]—that is, based on evident notions of reason—and he clarified P₃ by saying that we must therefore reject as false the evident ideas at the basis of the Manichean objections. Le Clerc assumed, as we have already seen, that it is impossible to reject evident notions as false, and it is moreover dangerous from the points of view of reason and religion to suggest that we do this impossible thing. Much of *Dialogues*, Part 1, is therefore devoted to defending the possibility and the rationality of rejecting evident notions. Along the way, Bayle must revisit the notion of evidence, which was the key epistemological concept of his era, as well as the touchstone of his philosophy from the time of his earliest philosophical work, the *Philosophy Course*, which he taught in Sedan and Rotterdam.⁴ These developments in the first part of the *Dialogues* are among the most important and interesting evolutions of Bayle’s thinking and deserve the attention of any historian of philosophy interested in skepticism, the ethics of belief, rationality, or epistemology generally as these were discussed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

After taking into account *Dialogues*, Part 1, we find that Bayle’s doctrine on the problem of evil has expanded to include at least seven additional premises that aim to bridge the gap that Le Clerc identified between P₂ and P₃ (to emphasize that these are bridge premises, I will label them P_{2.1} to P_{2.7}). I have carefully traced the development of Bayle’s expanded doctrine elsewhere,⁵ so here I merely present the revised doctrine and follow it with a brief commentary in which I show how this new doctrine clarifies an important aspect of Bayle’s philosophical reflection, and therefore contributes to resolving the

² *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 1, 131.

³ *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 1, 130.

⁴ See Bayle, *Systema totius philosophiae*, in *OD IV*, 199–520.

⁵ In Michael W. Hickson, “Belief and Invincible Objections: Bayle, Le Clerc, Leibniz.”

Bayle enigma. I also offer some remarks on the problems that the revised doctrine continues to face, as well as on the directions that future research can take to resolve those problems. The seven premises that Bayle defends in the *Dialogues* in order to fill in his doctrine on evil are the following:

- [P2.1] It is possible to continue to believe a proposition after one has acknowledged that the proposition is opposed by invincible objections.⁶
- [P2.2] It is sometimes rational to continue to believe a proposition after one has acknowledged that the proposition is opposed by invincible objections.⁷
- [P2.3] It is possible to reject as false an evident proposition.⁸
- [P2.4] There are degrees of evidence.⁹
- [P2.5] Other things being equal, when confronted with two opposing propositions, the mind will naturally assent to the proposition that possesses the greater degree of evidence.¹⁰
- [P2.6] It is rational to reject as false an evident proposition in order to espouse, or to continue to hold as true a more evident opposing proposition.¹¹
- [P2.7] There is no proposition more evident than this one: “God is a supremely perfect nature and everything done by such a nature is done well.”¹²

p2 of Bayle’s doctrine on evil asserts that there are invincible objections to the unity and perfection of God. The notion of “invincible objection” was explored by Bayle in his *Clarification on the Manicheans*. In that place, Bayle explained that to successfully refute an objection to a proposition, it is necessary to uphold that proposition by arguments that are at least as evident as the premises that form the basis of the objection.¹³ To say, therefore, that some objection is invincible is to say that it is impossible to uphold the proposition under attack by means of additional premises that are as evident as the

6 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 2, 147–148; chapter 5, 159.

7 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 160.

8 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 161.

9 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 162.

10 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 162.

11 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 162–163.

12 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 7, 173.

13 For the clearest statement, see *DHC* IV, “Clarification on the Manicheans,” 630–631.

objection itself. Nevertheless, Bayle defends *P2.1* and *P2.2* in the *Dialogues*—the claims that it is both possible and rational to continue to believe the attacked proposition itself, without positing further support for it, despite evident objections to that proposition. This is accomplished by rejecting as false the evident premises that support the objection. It is both possible and rational to do so when one's reason is to maintain belief in a proposition that is both inconsistent with these premises and more evident than the premises (see *P2.3–6*). In Bayle's view, the very proposition under attack by the Manichean objections—that God is one, perfect, and that everything that He does is good—is more evident than any of the premises underlying the Manichean objections (*P2.7*). So one continues to believe the proposition under attack because it is more evident than the objections to it, not because one has found an adequate answer to the objections or because one has discovered a new evident proof of the proposition under attack. (This is reminiscent of G.E. Moore's argument against skepticism—the so-called “Moorean shift”—according to which one rejects the skeptics' arguments against the external world, despite not being able to answer them, because one's belief in the external world seems far more plausible and rational than any of the premises employed in the skeptics' attacks.)

The addition of these seven premises to Bayle's doctrine on evil clarifies the abrupt transition from *P2* to *P3* that shocked readers of the *Dictionary* and led Le Clerc and Jaquelot to oppose Bayle. The silencing of reason in “Manicheans” and “Paulicians” seems to be either a form of fideism or, if Le Clerc and Jaquelot were right, a form of subversion. However, the revised doctrine on evil demonstrates that “fideism” is not an accurate description of Bayle's final position because, as Bayle often repeats in the *Dialogues* against Jaquelot,¹⁴ Bayle's abandonment of reason is commanded by reason itself. Bayle's recommendation to continue to believe in the unity and perfection of God is based on the claim that to do so is the most rational course of action, for it amounts to preferring a more evident proposition to a set of less evident propositions. The abandonment of particular common notions that is required by Bayle's doctrine is not to be confused with the abandonment of reason in general; in fact, this abandonment is always undertaken at the behest of reason, which requires that we believe whatever appears most evident to us. Finally, Bayle's revised doctrine on evil is based on epistemological premises which are entirely plausible and rational, and therefore quite distant from the realm of faith.

¹⁴ See especially *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 8.

Nor do I think that Bayle's revised doctrine can be considered subversive. To be sure, *P2.7* is problematic; one wonders whether Bayle truly believed that the most evident proposition that the mind could entertain is that God is perfect and that everything God does is good. As I mention above in the Introduction, in my discussion of Bayle's "Defence of *P1*," Bayle certainly had reasons, as well as a long history of Medieval thought before him, backing his claim in *P2.7*. But grant for a moment that *P2.7* was insincere—does it follow that the revised doctrine is subversive? If Bayle was acting subversively, he was not aiming to subvert *his own* views, but rather those of his readers. Now, I think it is more than plausible that in the minds of most of Bayle's readers the most evident proposition was precisely the one Bayle identifies in *P2.7*. It follows that Bayle's revised doctrine on evil would not upset in the least the religious views of most of his readers, assuming they accepted the rest of the revised doctrine on evil.

However, Le Clerc thought that the rest of the revised doctrine was subversive as well, especially Bayle's claims that evidence admits of varying degrees and that it is possible and even rationally required of us to reject some evident propositions as false. All of this leads to skepticism and atheism, in Le Clerc's view. Might this have been Bayle's aim—to infect his readers' minds with opinions about evidence that would eventually develop into the diseases of skepticism and atheism? Perhaps, though I strongly doubt it. More importantly, I do not think we are in a position today to understand Bayle's account of evidence, since there has been far too little scholarly attention paid to that criterion of truth, which was the dominant criterion of the seventeenth century. Until we understand the evolution of the criterion of *evidentia* / *évidence* / *evidence* from the Medieval period to the eighteenth century, particularly the complicated relationship between that criterion and theology, it will be impossible to contextualize Bayle's own use of that criterion which shifted over the course of his career from the *Philosophy Course*, in which the criterion is defended in very Cartesian fashion, to the *Dialogues*, in which Bayle offers what may or may not be important innovations in the account of that concept. I suggest that these "may not be" innovations because recent literature on Medieval skepticism has demonstrated that the introduction of degrees of *evidentia* dates back to John Buridan and Albert of Saxony, who employed degrees of *evidentia* in order to *refute* skepticism, not to encourage it!¹⁵ Bayle's *Dictionary* has an article devoted

15 See Henrik Lagerlund, "Skeptical Issues in Commentaries on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*: John Buridan and Albert of Saxony," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism: The Missing Medieval Background*, edited by Henrik Lagerlund, 193–214, Leiden, Brill, 2010. Elizabeth

to Buridan, so he was certainly aware of the philosopher and of discussions of his works. Might Bayle's degrees of *évidence*, like Buridan's degrees of *evidentia*, be an anti-skeptical move rather than a Pyrrhonian skeptical move? I cannot answer the question here; my aim in raising the issue is only to demonstrate the sort of research directions suggested by Bayle's *Dialogues*, and the possible discoveries to which these directions might lead.

The *Dialogues* resolves at least one particular element of the Bayle enigma, namely the question of how Bayle thought that P2 was consistent with, let alone supportive of, P3. Le Clerc and Jaquelot, and many commentators since, have puzzled over that question. The *Dialogues* answers the question through its defence of P2.1 to P2.7. Not everyone will find the answer satisfying, but it is an answer nonetheless, and constitutes progress in understanding the evolution of Bayle's thought. However, the *Dialogues* also raises new questions, new elements of the enigma. For example, how could Bayle continue to insist to the end of his career that evidence was the criterion of truth, as he had always done in his early works, while destroying in the *Dialogues* the sufficiency of the appearance of evidence for declaring any proposition true? But this new question, rather than causing us to despair of ever understanding the Philosopher of Rotterdam, should remind us that there is still fundamental work to do to appreciate fully one of early modernity's most fascinating authors.

Karger, "A Buridanian Response to a Fourteenth Century Skeptical Argument and its Rebuttal by a New Argument in the Early Sixteenth Century," in Lagerlund, Henrik (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Skepticism: The Missing Medieval Background*, 215–232, Leiden, Brill, 2010.

Notes on the Text

To understand the editorial decisions that I have made in preparing the translation below, some background is needed concerning the original composition and subsequent printing of the *Dialogues*. The part of the *Dialogues* devoted to Le Clerc was completed and already in print by October, 1706.¹ Bayle received a copy of Jaquelot's *Examen* around the same time (the beginning of October, 1706²), which means that Bayle composed his response, 500 pages of dense philosophy, in under three months. This part of the *Dialogues* is incomplete, which is clear from the very abrupt ending of the work. However, it is also clear that that part is very nearly finished, perhaps a few pages short, since it contains treatments of all three of the main subjects which had organized Bayle's debate with Jaquelot—free will, the origin of evil, and Pyrrhonism—and the last pages that we have are devoted to mere house cleaning. Printing of both parts of Bayle's *Dialogues* was finished in early February, 1707, just over one month after Bayle's death.³

The *Dialogues* appeared again in print nearly a quarter century later in volume four of the first edition of Bayle's *Oeuvres diverses* (La Haye, 1731),⁴ and then again in the second edition of the *Oeuvres diverses* (Trévoux, 1737).⁵ The 1737 edition is a “slavish re-setting, mostly page for page”⁶ of the 1731 edition, as W.H. Barber notes; so I will compare only the 1707 and 1731 editions, which are the only two distinct editions of the *Dialogues* ever printed in French. The texts of the bodies (i.e. the actual dialogues) of the 1707 and 1731 editions are

¹ See the letter of Bayle to La Croze, 25 October 1706 (*OD* IV, 882).

² *Ibid.*

³ See the letter of Jacques Basnage to Jean Le Clerc, 20 January 1707, in Myriam Silvera (ed.), *Jacques Basnage: Corrispondenza da Rotterdam, 1685–1709* (Amsterdam/Maarssen: APA-Holland University Press, 2000), 250. See also Labrousse, “Introduction” (*OD* IV, vii).

⁴ This edition of the *OD* has recently been reprinted along with addition volumes of works by Bayle and his contemporaries: Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses*, edited with an Introduction by Elisabeth Labrousse (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964–1990).

⁵ For both the first and second editions, the reference is the same: *OD* IV, 1–106.

⁶ “[T]he Trévoux edition [of the *Oeuvres diverses*] amounts to no more than a slavish re-setting, mostly page for page, of its Dutch model [i.e. the first edition]” (W.H. Barber, “The Publication of Pierre Bayle's *Oeuvres diverses*, 1725–1737,” in Giles Barber and C.P. Courtney, *Enlightenment Essays in Memory of Robert Shackleton*, 9–26 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1988), 18). Barber's assessment is mostly correct in the case of the *Dialogues* as they appear in the two editions. However, several typographical errors in the 1731 edition are corrected in the 1737 edition. See the footnote below, for example.

the same, except that several typographical errors in the 1707 text are corrected in 1731, and new typographical errors are committed in 1731 which were absent in 1707.⁷ The only notable differences between the 1707 and 1731 editions lie in the footnotes.⁸

All of the footnotes of the 1707 edition are contained in the 1731 edition. However, there are two ways in which the footnotes of the 1731 *Oeuvres diverses* edition differ from those of the original 1707 edition. First, some of the footnotes of the 1707 edition were slightly revised by the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses*. These revisions concern Bayle's references to his own works. Of course, when Bayle wrote the *Dialogues* he referred to the most recent editions of his other books. But the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* chose to make all references to Bayle's books internal to the *Oeuvres diverses*, except of course in the case of references to the *Dictionary* which was not included in the *Oeuvres diverses*. When Bayle wrote the *Dialogues* he cited the second edition of the *Dictionary* by page number. The editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* mostly replaced page references with references to article and remark. Second, the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* added several footnotes of their own to Bayle's *Dialogues*. Some of these new notes contribute biographical details (e.g. the year of Bayle's death, why he denied the authorship of the *Philosophical Commentary* though he was certainly its author, etc.); other new notes give references to works which Bayle mentioned but failed to cite; other notes clarify Bayle's meaning. The editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* gave no indication of which notes were Bayle's and which were their own, although in many cases it is obvious when the editors have added a note.

While completing the translation below I had both the 1707 and 1731 editions of the *Dialogues* open in front of me. As mentioned above, the bodies of these editions are nearly identical. Therefore, the main text of my translation is that of both editions. However, I have made a few minor editorial changes to the layout of that text. It was Bayle's practice to indicate quotations by means of italics, which he also used at times for emphasis. I have replaced italics in the former case with double quotation marks, leaving most

⁷ Of the latter sort, two glaring typographical errors, unique to *OD IV* (1731), are committed in the first few pages. First, the year of Bayle's death is given as 1726 (*OD IV*, 2, note a), and second, there is a "ne" missing before the "peuvent" three lines from the bottom of the first column of text at *OD IV*, 3. These errors are both corrected in the second (1737) edition of the *OD*.

⁸ One minor difference between the two editions is that in the 1707 edition each part of the *Dialogues* is prefaced by its own Table of Contents, while in the 1731 edition the Table of Contents for the work as a whole is given at the front of *OD IV*. I have followed *OD IV* in placing the Table of Contents for the entire work at the front of this book.

of the remaining italics to indicate Bayle's desire for emphasis. Bayle often has some imaginary character (besides Maximus and Themistius, if these are purely imaginary characters⁹) speak to Le Clerc or Jaquelot (e.g. a Zoroastrian, a Pyrrhonian, an atheist, a Lutheran, a pagan philosopher, etc.). Again, he employed italics to indicate that some imaginary character was speaking. I have replaced these italics with single quotation marks (i.e. " ") to distinguish these passages from real quotations. Single quotation marks are also used below to indicate that Bayle is mentioning, rather than using a word, which Bayle again indicated by means of italics. In my opinion Bayle used paragraphs too sparingly in his *Dialogues*; Maximus and Themistius often go on for pages and pages without a break, though there is clearly much internal structure to what they are saying. I have therefore imposed additional paragraph structure on the text where it seemed natural and helpful to do so. Finally, I have translated into English the Latin aphorisms with which Bayle peppered his text, as well as the several lengthier Latin passages in the footnotes. I have left these aphorisms and passages in italics to indicate that they were Latin text.

I have included in the translation all of the footnotes of the 1731 *Oeuvres diverses* edition of the *Dialogues*. Unmarked footnotes are common to the 1707 and 1731 editions (hence they are Bayle's footnotes); footnotes marked by '[OD]' are unique to the 1731 edition (likely, then, they belong to the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses*); footnotes marked by '[MH]' are my own clarifications where I thought these would be helpful. I have revised the footnotes of the 1731 edition to match current citation practices that are standard in the Bayle literature. So instead of citing only the page number of the *Oeuvres diverses* where some passage can be found, I have also cited the title of the original work, the chapter number of that work, and then I have given the reference to the *Oeuvres diverses* by volume and page number, along with column letter ('a' for left, 'b' for right). I have similarly revised references to the *Dictionary* according to standard practice. It is now most common to refer to the 1740 "fifth" edition of the *Dictionary* (Amsterdam, Leyde, La Haye, Utrecht) by volume, article, remark, page, and column; so this is what I have done below. For the *Dictionary*, all page numbers in the footnotes refer to the 1740 "fifth" edition.

⁹ I am not convinced that Maximus and Themistius are entirely imaginary. I have chosen to translate 'Maxime' and 'Thémiste' in these ways because I believe that Bayle had the ancient philosophers Maximus of Tyre and Themistius in mind. For more on this point, as well as its possible significance for understanding the *Dialogues*, see Michael W. Hickson, "The Message of Bayle's Last Title: Providence and Toleration in the *Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71:4 (2010), 547–567.

However, I have not modified Bayle's text in the *Dialogues* where he sometimes refers to page numbers in the *Dictionary*; these are references to the second edition, the last one that he saw printed.

As mentioned above, the part of the *Dialogues* devoted to Le Clerc was written first and also printed first. The editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* therefore had good reasons to place that part first and to name it "*PREMIERE PARTIE*" ("first part"). However, Bayle himself did not name either part of his *Dialogues* "first" or "second". Neither part begins with anything that feels like a general Introduction to the whole work, nor does either part leave us with anything resembling an ultimate conclusion. In fact, besides using the same title and characters for each part, Bayle did little-to-nothing to give unity to the work as a whole; the two parts are really two separate books on the same general topic. Only a single passing remark in the part devoted to Jaquelot gives us an indication of how Bayle would have ordered the texts if he had lived to oversee the conclusion of its printing:

Maximus: Please stop urging me to discuss a certain number of passages from the first 303 pages of Jaquelot's book. I've taken my position: I no longer want to think about that book; I'm becoming tired of these disputes; yet I must reserve some energy for our meetings concerning the last reply of Le Clerc to Bayle.¹⁰

This passage indicates that Bayle intended the part devoted to Le Clerc to follow the one devoted to Jaquelot. So in Bayle's mind "Part One" was the part devoted to Jaquelot, and "Part Two" was the part devoted to Le Clerc, which is the opposite of the order given to the texts by the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses*.

(That the editors of the *Oeuvres diverses* got the order "wrong" is also supported, however weakly, by consulting bound copies of the 1707 edition of the *Dialogues*. In all three of the copies of the *Dialogues* that I have been able to consult in which the two parts of the work are bound together, the part devoted to Jaquelot appears first. I have also seen copies of the *Dialogues* with the two parts bound separately. In one of these copies, the *Foreword* appears in the volume devoted to Jaquelot; however, in the other copy, the *Foreword* appears in the volume devoted to Le Clerc. We should not make too much of this information, however, since in the 18th century books were not commonly bound before they were sold; it was up to the purchaser to have the book bound as he wished.)

¹⁰ See below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 36, 400.

The order of the parts is ultimately a matter of little importance, however, as I think anyone who reads both Dialogues will agree. The parts are by and large independent of one another. So I have followed the *Oeuvres diverses* in placing the part devoted to Le Clerc first (and in naming it “Part One”) because it is now standard in the literature to refer to that part as “Part One” and to the part devoted to Jaquelot as “Part Two.” Changing the order in this translation would only frustrate and confuse those readers who chose to consult the Bayle scholarship surrounding the *Dialogues*. Of course, if readers would like to read the book in the way that I believe Bayle intended it to be read, then they are certainly free to do so by beginning with the part devoted to Jaquelot.

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For a complete bibliography of Bayle's works and of all the secondary literature of the twentieth century, see Gianluca Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 347–396. In the Bibliography below, I include only the works that I consulted while translating and introducing Bayle's *Dialogues*.

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PIERRE BAYLE

Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius

∴

Foreword¹

The author was putting the final touches to this work when death stole him away. He had known for some time where his illness was headed, but because he was indifferent to life and death, he neglected the remedies that might have soothed or even healed him. Untiring in his work, he would not interrupt it to calm the fever that consumed him. He applied himself during part of the night to the composition of these dialogues, and he was preparing again to take up his pen when death overcame him unexpectedly.²

We will not give his eulogy here. Those who do not know him by the large number of works he published are total strangers to the Republic of Letters. Besides, the lives of philosophers are rarely filled with notable events; their disputes are the battles and brilliant actions that comprise the histories of these heroes. Reading, meditation and solitude were Mr. Bayle's only pleasures. Those who believe they discover the character of authors from their works will be mistaken in his case. He dealt cheerfully with every matter he handled, despite living in isolation. His *Critique of the History of Calvinism*³ and *News from the Republic of Letters*⁴ were written with a politeness and charm rarely found among scholars, and certain passages of his *Dictionary* will cause some to suspect he loved women, though he always kept considerable distance from them.

These dialogues are the last work to which he applied himself. Nothing essential is missing from them. What concerns Mr. Le Clerc was printed during the author's life, as well as the better part of his dispute with Mr. Jaquelot. He claimed to have responded to all the latter's objections, and limited himself to several reflections on certain passages he had reserved for the end. The subject matter cannot be more important or more difficult, and if it has not been sufficiently clarified by the writings that have appeared recently from masterly hands, then we should not hope to find it treated more clearly in the future. Indeed, it involves probing providence to uncover its motives and purpose behind the Fall of man. It involves reconciling what appears contradictory.

¹ [OD] This foreword is in the style of Basnage de Beauval.

² Bayle died on 28 December 1706, at 9 o'clock in the morning, at the age of 59 years and several months.

³ [MH] Pierre Bayle, *Critique générale de l'Histoire du calvinisme de M. Maimbourg* (Amsterdam, 1682), in *OD* II, 1–160.

⁴ [MH] Pierre Bayle, *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* (Amsterdam, 1684–1687), in *OD* I, 1–760.

People have been working on this for a long time. The pagan philosophers, who were able to give free rein to human liberty, exhausted their subtlety on this question. Christianity confines its theologians to narrower limits, since it gives them clearer ideas of the foreknowledge and goodness of God, and elaborates the operations of grace needed for conversion, which were unknown to the pagans. It is not surprising that we dispute this matter and that we do not agree on the paths to take to reach its conclusion. Given the difficulty surrounding this subject, one would hope we could content ourselves with the pleasure of having found the truth once we believed we possessed it, without treating our adversaries with contempt. Even in polemical works we should preserve this moderation, which is one of the most admirable qualities of a writer. But we do not always do this. Instead, we find ourselves offended by personal accusations; self-love rises up against these outrages; we feel obliged by honour to return the abuse; and finally, we ourselves cast piercing gibes at our enemies. It seems to be a strategy permitted to those who are at war. The author availed himself of this freedom, and despite his love of tolerance and moderation, he may have gone too far; but he believed the strong accusations brought against him justified his show of indignation, and that indifference in a matter so delicate would have been reprehensible.

PART 1

*A Response to What Le Clerc Wrote against
Bayle in the Tenth Volume of the Choice Library*

∴

Introduction

Maximus: You will not blame me today¹ if I put on an exaggerated show of modesty, for after reading Bayle's latest response to Le Clerc, I predicted that the latter could answer with only the feeblest rejoinder, and found upon examining with great attention the eighth article of the tenth volume of Le Clerc's *Choice Library* that the matter stood just as I had expected.

Themistius: You did not need to be a soothsayer nor be especially insightful to make such a prediction; for given the terms to which Bayle reduced the dispute, it was easy to foresee that his adversary would only sink deeper if he tried to extricate himself. We have also been able to tell for some time that these two gentlemen would finally come to verbal blows.

Maximus: It was not Bayle's fault that this affair was not always treated with great moderation and honesty. I admit that he did not follow the sure path for preventing the irritation of his adversary, which would have been to shrug off his attack; but we cannot, without committing an injustice ourselves, find fault with him for ignoring that approach.

Themistius: Let me see if I follow you. The apparent origin of this lengthy war of words is that Le Clerc, in the first volume of his *Parrhasiana*, attacked Bayle's thesis concerning the Manichean objections. He did not criticize it by showing that the systems which, according to Bayle, cannot resolve the difficulties surrounding the first sin and its consequences are in fact capable of resolving them, but by supposing that Origenism, of which Bayle had said nothing, completely removes all these difficulties. So he brought an Origenist onto the scene, armed him head to toe with every care imaginable, and expected from him nothing short of miracles,² which did not prevent us from seeing him struck down and stripped of all his arms a short while later in the second edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*. If Bayle had contented himself with an uncertain advantage, if he had left the Origenist with some mark of victory, Le Clerc would not have grown angry: is that the idea?

Maximus: You have understood me very well. But I should not leave out that Le Clerc's sensitivity to the perceived insult of such a strong refutation did

¹ See below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, 219.

² See Le Clerc, *BC VII*, 350; *BC IX*, 107.

not enrage him; he calmed himself and kept quiet several years. Then, having found a pretext for making a new case against Bayle on the occasion of a remark concerning Cudworth's plastic natures that Bayle had slipped into one of his books, he employed numerous subtleties, kept his composure, and even while the defeat of his Origenist was fresh in his mind, tempted the fate of a second battle. You know with how much success he was met, because you have read the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*³ wherein the poor Origenist was again stripped of all his weapons. Nevertheless, Le Clerc dared to say,⁴ in a lie which every reader can easily recognize, that his imaginary Origenist reduced Bayle to silence. I will say nothing of the advantage gained over Le Clerc in the same volume concerning plastic natures. Up to that point, the whole affair had been managed with ample restraint, especially by Bayle, who avoided insisting upon what was likely to turn the dispute sour, and who thought of nothing but overwhelming his adversary with civility and overcoming him by reason.⁵ But since the publication of this third volume, the face of things has changed: anger has been introduced in a terrible way.

Themistius: The turning-point you identify is correct. Since he realized by reading what concerned him in the third part of the *Response to the Provincial*⁶ that he could no longer continue in his usual way except to his great shame, and since he considered that remaining silent would be even more shameful,⁷ Le Clerc had recourse to a Pharisaical ruse. He cloaked himself in the convenient pretext of serving the interests of the glory of God in order to set himself up as the public prosecutor of irreligion. Thus the scene changed; the most hateful libels appeared. After these new steps by his adversary, Bayle ceased to treat him considerately and began to press him more strongly; so there appeared one last reply from Le Clerc, even more passionate than the preceding one.

Maximus: Everyone had a good laugh, perhaps in France more than anywhere else, seeing Le Clerc in this new role that fits him so poorly and that is so disproportionate to the character that has always distinguished him. Alas, necessity has no law. He no longer knew to which saint he should dedicate

3 [OD] See *RQP* II, clxxii (*OD* III, 863 ff.).

4 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 380.

5 What Mr. Le Clerc says in *BC* X, 376, namely that Mr. Bayle mingled "a large number of reasons pulled *ex invidia* or to render hateful" had been refuted in *RBL*, section V (*OD* III, 999).

6 [OD] See *OD* III, 863 ff.

7 "It was indeed shameful to compete, but it seemed more shameful to concede" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 5, v. 315).

himself, nor from what wood he should cut his arrow. So he had to toss the sacred anchor;⁸ that is, he made religion and the good Lord his two causes. This is a great way to turn insults poured onto paper from personal hatred and vengeance into acts of devotion!

Themistius: There are many authors who in their works of controversy are more pleased with their pen when they believe they have delivered a fine cutting gibe and when they have let fly a satirical dart than when they believe they have followed through with their reasoning. Many inferior, ill-intentioned readers of this sort of writing search for only the insulting passages, which alone move them. But because we belong to a higher class of readers, and we have resolved today to examine the last piece that each of these two antagonists has written, we must place aside the insults they have exchanged, and consider only what is related to the very foundation of the matter. Let us, therefore, pause only over the following question: *Has Le Clerc proven soundly that Bayle is guilty of the crime of which he accuses him?*

Maximus: I am delighted by what you have just suggested, for I would regret every moment I gave to the consideration of reproaches, complaints, and the hundred other irrelevancies that quarrelling authors spread throughout their writings. All of that is unworthy of our attention. Let us examine only in what manner Le Clerc proves his accusation, namely that Bayle does not believe in the goodness and holiness of God.

⁸ See Erasmus, *Chil*, 1, cent. 1, n. 24, the proverb *sacram ancoram solve*.

CHAPTER 1

An Examination of Le Clerc's Case against Bayle

Themistius: In his last work I did not find that Le Clerc did anything other than reiterate the alleged validity of the only proof that he had yet offered and the ridiculousness of which Bayle had already demonstrated.¹ The proof is this: that Bayle continues to uphold that we cannot respond to the Manichean objections that purport that the conduct ascribed to God by Christian systems does not agree with the ideas we have of goodness and holiness.

Maximus: If Le Clerc offers that as a proof, then he must establish as an incontestable proposition that whoever acknowledges that a doctrine is exposed to insoluble objections acknowledges, as a necessary consequence, the falsity of that doctrine. But can there be anything further from the truth than that proposition?

Themistius: Le Clerc would expand the boundaries of the Republic of Letters if he could enrich it with this new axiom which has never been a citizen here, and which, on the contrary, has always been refuted by experience. Consider the following example.

There are three opinions concerning the continuum. The one affirms as a mathematically demonstrated fact that it is infinitely divisible. Another affirms, as a fact proven by mathematical demonstrations, that it is composed of indivisible parts with no extension. And finally the last claims, as a fact that we cannot deny without admitting a doctrine whose impossibility has already been demonstrated, that the continuum is composed of indivisible parts that have extension. These claims are all opposed to one another, yet the proponents of the different claims are in agreement that the doctrine they embrace is exposed to insoluble objections. Consider another example.

Those who most decisively take the affirmative or negative stance on the real or possible eternity of the world,² or on the infinity of number, or on the plenum or the void, etc., feel strongly that they succumb to the weight of their adversaries' objections. And I am sure that of the many philosophers who are persuaded of the existence of motion and time there is not a single one who would hesitate to admit that his reason and his mind become confused and

¹ See *RBL*, section VI, toward the beginning (*OD III, 1000a*).

² See Pererius, *De communibus rerum naturalium principis*, book 15.

lose themselves in the inexplicable difficulties that are raised concerning these matters. These are evident facts known around the world, and so Le Clerc too must have known them.

Maximus: He must have known as well of the similar cases furnished by Christianity, for he saw testimonies of these in Bayle's writings, namely the innumerable citations from the most illustrious theologians who assert that the Trinity, the Incarnation, absolute Predestination, etc., are mysteries that demand the submission of the understanding, despite all the difficulties with which reason opposes them. There is consequently nothing more false or more contrary to experience than that maxim which is supposed to serve as the foundation of the alleged proof of Le Clerc's accusation against Bayle.

Themistius: It is inexcusable for the accuser to neglect discussing the fundamental axiom of the whole trial. He passed over it in silence and did not say clearly enough what he thought of the examples that prove that, without either lying or contradicting ourselves, we can assert that we believe things that we cannot bring into agreement with all the ideas of the natural light. He contented himself with saying here and there that we must have consideration for the good intentions of theologians who express themselves in that way, and he made several excuses for them that we will have to discuss.

Maximus: There are many other oversights in his writing just as affected and deceitful as that one. I have never seen anything less orderly than his manner of proceeding. His writings should have had the form of a factum. First he should have identified the charge, and then he should have made his case from arguments clearly distinguished from one another and numbered properly. Instead of this method, he employs a cheap declamatory rhetoric and disperses his arguments without any order, muddling them now in one way, now in another. We can nevertheless discern through this confusion that he grounds himself on particular circumstances, and not on a general maxim, when he claims that his adversary must deny the goodness and holiness of God because he denies that we can respond to the Manichean objections.

Themistius: Let us do him a favour that he did not do himself: let us give some order to his arguments, re-assemble them, and line them up for battle.

(1) The first that presented itself to my eyes in reading Le Clerc's last piece can be reduced to this: "Bayle said that the arguments of the Manicheans"³ against

³ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 366.

the goodness of God are demonstrative,⁴ even mathematical demonstrations, based on the clearest notions. “He must not, therefore, demand the same consideration for himself that we have for theologians who say that they believe revealed truths even when they appear to be surrounded by difficulties that their reason cannot resolve. We have grounds for saying that he does not believe”⁵ the truth of Revelation, which is not based on proofs clearer than demonstrations.

Maximus: Allow me to refute that. I cannot recall that Bayle ever said that the Manichean objections are “mathematical demonstrations.” Le Clerc would have done well to cite the page where that expression is found; the accuser must never be permitted to change terms, let alone to exaggerate them.

But in any case, I can guarantee that Bayle never claimed to go beyond the limits within which some people say that it is impossible for them to satisfy their reason concerning the evident difficulties that reason raises against the mysteries of the Gospel, of which they are wholly persuaded. A Lutheran with good faith and some acumen would acknowledge ingenuously that the dogmas of the Trinity and Real Presence are opposed by evident notions; that all the responses that have been invented are incapable of satisfying our reason; and that consequently, it is our duty to oblige reason to sacrifice to divine authority the simple notions it opposes to the doctrines of the Trinity and Consubstantiation.

That is also the whole extent of the intention behind Bayle’s judgment of the objections that compare the common notions of goodness and holiness with the systems explaining predestination. He has therefore all the right of a Lutheran to treat the quibbling of his accuser as ridiculous. Now, who would doubt that a Lutheran would look with the greatest contempt on those who drew from his claims this inference: *So you do not believe in the truth of Revelation?*

Themistius: I agree with you, for I know that every orthodox believer would treat a Socinian with disdain if the latter addressed him in the following way: ‘You cannot believe at the same time that Scripture is divine, and that it contains the dogma of the Trinity. For God, who has revealed to us by natural light that that which begets is substantially distinct from that which is begotten, cannot reveal to us by the Gospel that the person of the eternal Father and the person of his Son the Word are consubstantial. There is no single mathematical

⁴ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 397 and 421.

⁵ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 366.

demonstration stronger or more evident than the proof by which one could end the controversy between two critics, one who claimed that some particular King of Macedonia is the same as some other, and a second who claimed the contrary. If we prove that some King of Macedonia is the father of the other, we will have proven that they are two totally distinct men, and we can defy every mathematician to furnish a demonstration more convincing than that one. You cannot, therefore, *believe the truth of Revelation, which is not founded upon proofs clearer than demonstrations.*⁶

Maximus: You are right to say that all the orthodox would deride such a Socinian discourse. Le Clerc, who declares that he believes in the mystery of the Trinity, knows well what would be required in order to respond to them, and would find it unfitting if I bothered to inform him. I will therefore say only that the whole first proof is an evasion as detestable as what he adds, namely that Bayle's claims render "Christians incapable either of proving that there is a good God, or of proving the truth of Revelation to atheists or Manicheans."⁶

Themistius: We are forgetting the best part. All the most odious and horrid consequences that one would like to draw from Bayle's opinion fall directly on the opinion of Le Clerc, who admits that Bayle is well-grounded in all the systems of Christianity except the one that denies the existence of hell. What an absurdity! What blindness! He presents himself as the zealous defender of the Christian religion, but in the end he pleads only for a dogma detested by every Christian, if you discount a very small number of men who live *incognito* in Christianity. He undoubtedly felt this lash,⁷ though he concealed it with remarkable hypocrisy.

Maximus: I will proceed to his second argument. We have already remarked⁸ that because the inference he draws as an objection to Bayle is insulting to nearly all Christians, for they would be impious imposters if this inference were valid, he avoided expressing himself with precision and prepared for himself several means of escape. He protected himself with a disjunctive by saying that those who claim to believe things that are contested by evident reasons are *either* liars *or* ignoramuses who reason without principles and fall into contradiction. But he adds that the latter are excusable since they have no

⁶ Le Clerc, *BC* x, 367.

⁷ Bayle delivers this blow to Le Clerc more than once. See *RBL*, secs. IV and VI, and the conclusion (*OD* III, 993a–b, 1001a–b, and 1009a–b).

⁸ See above, 132–133.

ill intention. We will see his other excuses. If he wishes to acquit himself of calumny, he is reduced to showing that Bayle's intentions are bad; and indeed, his observations head in that direction. What an extreme for a public informer! There is no need for me to mention that an infinite number of examples manifestly show the falsity of his disjuncts.

(II) Here is a comparison aimed at showing that Bayle has ill intent for religion: "If someone collected every hateful thing that could be said against the conduct of his Sovereign and then defied all the other subjects to respond to these things, while nevertheless claiming that he was persuaded that his Sovereign's conduct was beyond reproach and that he was his Sovereign's most humble subject, I would very much like to know," says Le Clerc, "whether that Sovereign and his subjects would be content with this discourse, or whether they would take it for pure comedy played out by this man in order to get himself out of trouble. The Prince would believe, with reason, that this man planned to turn his subjects against him, and the subjects would not have any better opinion of his fidelity, despite his cries of calumny. Could the Sovereign and his subjects believe the man spoke sincerely and with only good intentions if he said the following: that while the conduct of his Sovereign appears to his feeble lights to be execrable and outright tyrannical, and while it is impossible for the subjects to show the contrary, and that the Sovereign even grows angry when his subjects undertake such justification of his actions, nevertheless he submits his lights to the declaration of the Prince, for he claims to govern with as much goodness as one could ever imagine? Again, would one be content with his many protestations that he published so much of the evil of the Sovereign only in order to humble some of the more presumptuous subjects, who thought themselves capable of providing good reasons for the Sovereign's conduct and who felt obligated to provide these reasons for the honour of their Prince, by making them see that it was impossible to defend the Sovereign by means of reason? These bad excuses, instead of appeasing the Sovereign and his subjects, would only further offend them, because they would quickly realize he took them for imbeciles, and that to calumny he added mockery and contempt."⁹ If I have read you the entire passage without omitting a word, it is so that you will better appreciate the accuser's trickery.

Themistius: I have never seen a piece of sophistry as fraudulent as that one. Le Clerc wants us to believe that he gives a naïve portrait of Bayle's conduct, but it is a portrait that is horribly disfigured. Let us consider things from Bayle's perspective, by depicting for ourselves an Emperor who surpasses

⁹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 367–368.

our most able politicians to the same degree that these latter surpass school teachers. The sublimity of his genius causes him to form plans that are vaster and more significant than those of his predecessors, and it presents him with new means of arriving at his goals. He follows no example and lays paths for government unimagined until now. Foreigners blame him for wandering from ways that have always passed for prudent. Some of his subjects murmur in opposition to his novelty and dread its consequences. Authors rise up who undertake to refute the foreigners' criticisms and the subjects' complaints by attempting to show that it is false that the conduct of the Emperor is unguided by ordinary political maxims. To this end they draw parallels, they twist, they stretch, and they distort every commonplace. Another author comes along who does not deny the evidence, but who shows that we must place ourselves entirely in the hands of the wisdom of his Imperial Majesty; that this wisdom has its reasons for not conforming itself to common rules; that while his Majesty's conduct is different from that of his most prudent ancestors, it is no less prudent for that; and that because his wisdom is of a degree incomparably more eminent than that of other men, his maxims should have a new character, proportionate to the exceeding superiority of the genius he possesses.

What would the Emperor say when he heard of the method of the first apologists? He would excuse their unenlightened zeal, but he would nevertheless mock their ignorance; and he would approve above all the last apologist. That is how Le Clerc is to be confounded and how his false depiction is to be corrected.

Maximus: What do you think of what he adds when he says that Bayle has made "horrible accusations against divine providence?"¹⁰

Themistius: I would be tempted to say that there is only one madman on the loose who could speak in that way; for in that case the most orthodox theologians, especially among the Reformed, would be horrible blasphemers, since they recognize that in the providence of God, as far as sin is concerned, there are gulfs impenetrable by reason, where reason would inevitably lose itself were it not to submit its feeble lights to the authority of Revelation. If the Reformed Churches of France had believed that we could reconcile the providence of God with respect to evil with our ordinary methods of judging goodness, holiness, and justice, would they have said, "we humbly

¹⁰ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 369.

adore the secrets hidden to us without inquiring beyond our capacity?"¹¹ One never speaks in that way while trying mightily to resolve the difficulties of a philosopher. It is of little importance at this point for me to observe that Diroys¹² and Nicole¹³ would have uttered abominable blasphemies, and that a book by Jurieu¹⁴ would be full of them, if we followed Le Clerc's tablature.

Maximus: What redress he owes to an infinite number of solemn Doctors! He will perhaps say that they should take refuge in the second disjunct, by claiming that they are not blasphemers, but good men who know not what they are saying. What a nice consolation! What fine redress!

Themistius: I will show you one of the most specious arguments that he offers in order to legitimize his suspicions concerning Bayle's intentions. It consists of four charges:

(III) That "1. Bayle invented objections against Divine Providence and proposed these in his *Dictionary* under the name of the Manicheans; 2. He established these objections very artfully; in his own name he claimed that it is impossible to respond to them by reason; and he thoroughly criticized everybody who tried to give any response; 3. He said that no theological system could resolve these difficulties; 4. He would have us believe nevertheless that God is good and holy because Scripture says so, even though, according to Christian theologians, Scripture teaches things incompatible with the goodness and holiness of God, as the invincible objections of the Manicheans demonstrate."¹⁵ Tell me, what is your opinion of this passage?

Maximus: The first charge is entirely false, for Bayle did not invent the objections he laid out in his *Dictionary*; he did nothing but extend those found in a work by Jurieu, and in works of several other controversialists.

As for the second charge I will tell you that these objections, in so far as they concern absolute predestination, are established much more artfully in the books of Jesuits, Lutherans, and Remonstrants than in the *Dictionary*. I notice something similar concerning the objections that threaten the systems of these three sects. The Thomists, the Jansenists, and the Calvinists struck

¹¹ *Confession de foi*, art. 8.

¹² See *RQP* II, clxv (*OD* III, 845b–846a).

¹³ See *RQP* II, clxxvii (*OD* III, 873b–876b).

¹⁴ See *RQP* II, cxxxv (*OD* III, 774a–776b).

¹⁵ Le Clerc, *BC* X, 370.

them down with much more force than did Bayle. There is nothing more unjust than to criticize those who, having examined carefully these great disputes, recognize ingenuously that none of the parties can resolve the difficulties objected to them. The Reformed confess that it is necessary to stop at the edge of this gulf, and they do not boast at all of satisfying reason; but they show clearly that the objections of their adversaries prove too much, they retort every one of them, and they defy their antagonists to fend off the retortion.¹⁶

What I have to say concerning the third charge will crush Le Clerc, for he acknowledges that in order to meet the difficulties of the Manicheans it is necessary to employ not the systems taught among the Christians, but either the system of Origen,¹⁷ which he does not recognize as true, or some conjectures which he does not offer as certain.¹⁸ Therefore, he himself believes that which he makes a crime in Bayle's case—have you ever seen anything so grotesque?

I find in the fourth charge a sin of omission and a sin of commission. The former consists in Le Clerc's omitting what Bayle said, namely that reason, which informs us that the perfection of God is infinite, necessarily convinces us that everything God does is done well. The other sin is that Le Clerc asserts that according to Bayle the word of God "teaches things incompatible with the goodness and holiness of God, as the invincible objections of the Manicheans demonstrate." This is to be completely ignorant of where the question stands; for it is indeed true that the invincible objections of the Manicheans seek to prove that Scripture attributes to God conduct incompatible with the common notions of goodness and holiness, but the orthodox hold that this conduct is good, holy, and just, although we do not know its relation to our ordinary manners of judging these virtues.

You see then how vain is the calumny contained in these words of Le Clerc: "Neither reason nor Scripture exculpates God from evil, according to [Bayle]."¹⁹ Is it not to exculpate God from evil to make Him known to us as a supremely perfect Nature? Now it is in this way that reason and Scripture represent Him. Bayle has made himself clear enough on this matter.²⁰

16 See *RQP* II, cxxxv and cxlvii (*OD* III, 774a–776b; 803a–804a).

17 See *RBL*, section IV (*OD* III, 994).

18 See *RBL*, secs. V, VI (*OD* III, 999, 1001).

19 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 371.

20 See *DHC* III, "Manichéens," rem. D; *DHC* III, "Pauliciens," rem. E; and *RQP* II, cxxxiii (*OD* III, 770).

Themistius: I will add a few remarks to those you have made concerning the accuser's four charges.

It is a rule of natural equity that if the motives of an action may have been innocent, then while we are speculating about those motives, we must never decide that they were criminal. Le Clerc violated this rule; for it is possible, and even likely, that Bayle laid out the objections of the Manicheans with some pomp from motives that were innocent. It can be supposed that because the character of his work entailed giving the history of heresies, he believed it was his duty to make known the strengths and the weaknesses of the Manicheans' opinions. Representing the naïve state of a sect's opinions as well as the arguments that support or oppose them is not the least important part of the history of that sect. It rarely happens that those who treat this part of the history of heresy bring to it any good faith; but the more this is rare, the more it is possible that Bayle desired to merit the praise of being a sincere historian through an ample and naïve description of what the Manicheans could object to the orthodox. Is there anything more innocent than such a motive? Moreover, the sect of these men was so horrible and so ridiculous that it is a most remarkable singularity that they were able to deliver objections that troubled the orthodox. This singularity is well suited to humble our minds, and to bring us to useful reflections on the bizarrely tenebrous constitution of human knowledge. Why not believe that this good intention was found in Bayle when he made the display that Le Clerc claims arises from an ill motive?

In addition, since our age is so fertile in inventions, Bayle could have hoped that his work would challenge several of these great geniuses who establish new systems, and lead them to invent a resolution unknown until now. Aside from that, he could have believed that his manner of proceeding would serve him to better judge his readers, and to decide whether they are fair or iniquitous, and whether the controversialists in particular are guilty of the all the bad faith of which they have been suspect for some time. We never learn such a thing with as much certitude as when we are personally interested in an affair; for reflections made about the injustices done to our neighbour are ordinarily quite superficial.

If Le Clerc had meditated without preoccupation, he would have found it highly probable that his adversary had such motives as are all very innocent; and even if he had found the motive he presently imputes more probable, he would not have fixed his attention on it, or at least he would have abstained from making his judgment public and from letting it serve as the proof of a completely atrocious accusation. Only blind passion can lead to the behaviour he manifests.

Maximus: Allow me to add to what you have said. The injustice of Le Clerc would be considerable if Bayle had said nothing of his intentions; for in that case even those who attempted to surmise them would have been obliged to give preference to favourable conjectures, or to hold themselves in suspense and leave the affair to the judgment of God. However, because Bayle indicated with great care the goal at which he was aiming, and because this goal was very commendable and worthy of an orthodox thinker, you see how the injustice of Le Clerc attains the highest level.

He knew that Bayle had warned his readers that the use they were to make of this lengthy ensemble of disputes was to remain attached to the spirit of Christianity, which would have us submit to revealed truths, whether we can defend them against the vain and innumerable arguments of the philosophers, or whether we cannot. He knew that Bayle had confirmed this intention through two long essays at the end of the second edition of his *Dictionary*. Could he, without remarkable bad faith, dispense himself from joining this fact to the four others, he who could not ignore a remark that had been made against Jaquelot?²¹ He could have claimed in the style of the good Polish Brethren that this design “to humble reason, supposing such a thing necessary, is a cure worse than the disease,”²² but it was necessary by all the rules of good faith that this fifth fact appear after the others, even with a note indicating that Protestants regard the humbling of reason a very important part of orthodoxy, and that taking common notions for rules is something that is in their opinion altogether pernicious to the Christian faith.

Themistius: If we were not strictly committed to good faith in this examination, we would take for Le Clerc’s fourth proof these words on page 374: “It is in this way that Mr. Bayle described his conduct, without realizing it, and that he situated himself among the Pyrrhonians, whose arguments aim at destroying the existence of God.”²³ Le Clerc speaks in this way after having cited a passage where Bayle represented the spirit of the Pyrrhonians. However, because Le Clerc rests this remark on a condition that he does not affirm,²⁴ he would have reason to complain if we supposed that he offers this as proof of his accusation; he could, I say, complain that we are impertinently ridiculing him; for we would

21 See *RQP* II, cxxix, cxxxii (*OD* III, 762a–763b; 769).

22 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 405.

23 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 374.

24 He says that “[i]f we suppose that Mr. Bayle says everything that comes to his mind ... it would be necessary to place him among the Pyrrhonians that he himself describes.” Le Clerc, *BC* X, 373.

be attributing to him the following reasoning: 'Bayle described his conduct in this passage without thinking about it, so I therefore have the right to accuse him of taking for his goal the ruin of religion.' We would shout reproof at him if he employed such an argument, for in order to refute it invincibly, and in order to reduce him to silence, it would suffice to deny that Bayle revealed himself in this passage without realizing it.

Maximus: I agree with what you have just said, but I am sure that you will take the following to be one of Le Clerc's proofs.

(IV) "There is a considerable difference between a self-indulgent style, such as Mr. Bayle's, and the style of theologians persuaded of their doctrine."²⁵ Le Clerc was not able to undermine Bayle's defence that was based on the facts that the orthodox acknowledge the impossibility of answering the objections concerning sin, and that they acknowledge that these objections can be retorted against less rigid systems; so he searched for as many excuses as he could, and found only false ones. You see how he emphasizes the gravity of the theologian's style, and then asserts that Bayle's style is "self-indulgent." He would be the most pitiful of critics if these were the only indications he ever gave of his taste.

There are in Bayle's *Dictionary* several articles that invite jest and a cheerfulness of style; the author took the freedom the subject matter permitted, but in grave matters his style is as serious as it should be. I take as my witnesses everyone familiar with that work, and I dare affirm that this fourth alleged proof is founded solely on a manifest lie.

Themistius: Prove to me, if you will, your judgment concerning Le Clerc's excuses on behalf of the theologians who serve as Bayle's rampart. There are three such excuses.

(1) First, he says, "none" of the Reformed theologians "invented" the opinions they had about providence. These opinions "were the doctrine of the Schools before the Reformation."

(2) Second, "none of them collected objections against Providence, or made such objections as strong as possible, or insulted every Christian theologian the way Mr. Bayle did. They all tried to defend providence to the best of their ability and they never had recourse to the depths of God's conduct except when they found themselves at a loss to explain certain received dogmas that they were not at liberty to reject."

²⁵ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 378.

(3) Third, “none of them believed they were in opposition to reason even when they said they were above it. They are therefore excused and we should not attribute to them any ill intent.”²⁶

Maximus: The invincible refutation of this passage is not difficult. As for the first excuse, it suffices to notice that Calvin’s system concerning predestination and free will is at issue. Now, Calvin’s thoughts on the matter were far from the doctrine of the Schools; on the contrary, the Scholastics became either Pelagians or Semi-Pelagians,²⁷ and if, on the one hand, Calvin declared that the dogmas of the Roman Church on this point needed extreme reformation, his adversaries responded on the other that he was introducing a horrible new doctrine that made God the author of sin. These facts are so well-known that it is astonishing that Le Clerc would have us believe that he was unaware of them.

I add that since he thinks along with the Arminians that Calvin’s system is impious and full of blasphemy, he is wrong to say that the Reformed, having established this system in the Schools, are excusable for having adopted it. He would not be able to justify them by this reasoning with respect to this article without condemning them for not having retained the doctrines of transubstantiation, the worship of saints, purgatory, etc.; and finally without condemning in general the work of the Reformation and the conduct of the Arminians, for it is public knowledge that they found the system that was confirmed by the Synod of Dordrecht in the Reformed Schools. See whether this man is not happy to make apologies that are a sort of satire not only of the Reformation, but also of the Arminian party which he embraced.

Concerning the second excuse, I ask him whether he has forgotten that Jurieu, having said that the objections against the system of Dordrecht are insoluble, proposed many difficulties to the adherents of other systems and defied them to respond.²⁸ I ask him, moreover, whether he has forgotten that those who have recourse “to the depths of God’s conduct” have in view a doctrine they profess, not because they find it established and would lose their positions if they openly condemned it, but because they judge that it is true. This is the opinion one must have of the Reformed, for otherwise it would be necessary to take them for imposters who sacrifice the light of

²⁶ All quotations taken from Le Clerc, *BC X*, 377–378.

²⁷ See what was cited from Jurieu in *RQP II*, clxxxiii (*OD III*, 859).

²⁸ In his *Jugement sur les méthodes rigides et relâchées d’expliquer la providence et la grâce* (Rotterdam: Abraham Acher, 1686).

their conscience to some temporal interest. We have here a ridiculous apologist: he insinuates that those he wishes to excuse were traitors to their own lights.

Concerning the third excuse I ask him whether he has forgotten that Theodore Beza acknowledged that “there is no element of Christian doctrine more contrary to the senses and to human reason” than absolute predestination.²⁹ Has he forgotten what Piscator admits,³⁰ and what Bayle demonstrates concerning the distinction between *above reason* and *against reason*?³¹

Another difficulty. With cold and fraudulent hyperbole he claims that it is an insult to every theologian to say that their systems concerning the fall of man and its consequences are exposed to insurmountable objections. He appears very sensitive to this alleged affront, for he returns to it more than once. It would seem that this is one of the principal reasons why he declared war on Bayle, and nevertheless there is no appearance that any regret has seized him for having exposed the theologians to the contempt and hatred of the public in so many ways. But let us pass over that and show him only that his great zeal for the theologians does not agree with his conduct; he abandons them all to the insult that he claims has been made against them; he recognizes that Bayle spoke justly concerning all the theologians, aside from those who conjecture that the sufferings of the damned will be lessened over time. Now, these conjecturers make up no part of Christianity, so they should count for nothing.

Themistius: Let us attribute to him as his fifth proof what he said toward the end of his article.

(v) “Neither the Reformed, nor the other theologians, say that they believe things opposed by demonstrations, as Mr. Bayle does. They do not recognize in the least the hateful consequences that he drew from their doctrine in favour of the Manicheans, such as that God acts contrary to all of the ideas that we have of justice and goodness. They deny such consequences formally, and as long as they deny them, we cannot consider these consequences to be their doctrine, though we can say incontestably that they are the doctrine of Mr. Bayle, if he speaks sincerely.”³²

29 See *RQP* II, clxiv (*OD* III, 842, 843).

30 Ibid.

31 See the end of the *Dictionary* at the beginning of the second *Clarification*, and *RQP* II, cxxx, cxxxi, and clix (*OD* III, 764; 766; 806–807).

32 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 420–421.

Maximus: This is perhaps the most pitiful of all the alleged proofs of the accuser. Did he not say “that one will find without doubt in the systems” several dogmas that are AGAINST REASON or incompatible with a DEMONSTRATED PROPOSITION?³³ Therefore, he must claim that if the theologians do not confess that they believe things opposed by demonstrations, they are either deceitful or foolish. One could not be unaware, without being stupid or foolish, that a dogma incompatible with a demonstrated proposition really has this incompatibility.

But leaving that aside, all those who examine dispassionately the articles that have been cited from the *Dictionary* will clearly see that Bayle goes no further than Jurieu. Now, Jurieu merely developed what the Predestinarians had always taught concerning the force of the difficulties and their retortion against the other systems. In a word, Le Clerc could not prove that Bayle acknowledged any consequences rejected by the Reformed.³⁴ It is a pity when an accuser is reduced to saying that the person whom he accuses is guilty if he speaks sincerely. He should never accuse without factual evidence; and if, once the accusation is denied, he can go no further, nor say anything more than that the defendant is insincere, he deserves to be mocked by the whole world.

33 Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 159.

34 See *RBL*, section VIII (*OD III*, 1008), where there is a challenge to Le Clerc that was never considered; he continued to accuse without proofs.

CHAPTER 2

Four Serious Problems with Le Clerc's Objection That was Based on Several Inferences He Drew from Bayle's Opinion

Themistius: Here is a completely defective argument that Le Clerc gives. He cites a passage where Bayle remarks that “once we dare to teach that God is the author of sin, we will necessarily lead men to atheism.”¹ He adds that Bayle “openly maintains that no theological system can exonerate God from the charge of being an evildoer who takes no notice either of holiness or vice ... The only remedy he finds is to confess unreservedly that we can understand very little of this matter, which is to grant victory to the atheists, for if that were the case, then we could not prove to them that according to our theology God is good and holy ... If we suppose [Bayle] is coherent in his reasoning and thinking, then we must say that he [leads us necessarily to atheism] according to his own judgment, since we all teach in our systems that God is an evildoer and the author of evil; for he offers us no better system.”

Maximus: You are exactly right to say that this objection is completely defective. I counted four major blunders while you were relating it.

First, Le Clerc continues to build upon a false maxim, or as they say in the Schools, his *proton-pseudos*, which is the source of his aberrations. He assumes that the moment we cannot respond to various objections, we lack every means of maintaining the doctrine under attack; from which he concludes that if Christians cannot resolve the difficulties surrounding the origin of evil, they are incapable of exculpating God. Is he ignorant of the conduct of the Calvinists? There is perhaps nothing of which he is more persuaded than this Arminian thesis—that according to the System of Dordrecht, God is the author of sin. He undoubtedly believes that the Arminian objections are demonstrative on the subject and that the responses of the Reformed are but ridiculous and pitiful gibberish. Nevertheless, we know that they do not lack resources for exculpating God; for, conceiving Him to be supremely perfect in the way reason and Scripture represent Him, they conclude demonstratively that no sort of imperfection can be found in Him, let alone a fault as enormous as that of

¹ For this and the next quotation: Le Clerc, *BC X*, 372–373.

being the author of sin. They add that by the secrets of His infinite wisdom, which are impenetrable to the human mind, God has an influence on the sins of humankind in such a way that nothing is taken away either from His holiness or His other attributes, and they oblige their reason to submit humbly to this great mystery with all the insoluble difficulties that are easy to bring against it.

Le Clerc's second blunder is that, while he knew very well that Bayle made use of the same denouement as the Reformed, he nevertheless charged him with odious consequences that in fact fall on the whole body of the Reformed Churches. This stands in contrast to the care found in other parts of his writing, care which perhaps derives only from his attempt to win over the idle journalists, whom we are told Le Clerc catechizes in the bookstores by discouraging them from reading Bayle's *Dictionary* if they wish to conserve the purity of their faith. Once won over, people of this sort can disperse the sweet scent of Le Clerc's orthodoxy from home to home, and thereby gain partisans for him. But he would be the first to mock them *in petto*: these good people, he would tell himself, are foolish enough to think that I attack Bayle from a sense of religious zeal, that I am going to become a good Calvinist, that I am sincerely striving for Jurieu's friendship, and that I have forgotten, like a good Christian, the harsh blows that I have recently received, and that I have only feebly avenged.²

His third blunder consists in his failure to distinguish the two meanings of "to teach that God is the author of sin." The phrase means either that we teach something which, according to our adversaries, makes God the author of sin, or that we confess that we ourselves make God the author of sin. No Christian sect teaches that God is the author of sin in the second sense; but if we believed the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Arminians, etc., then we would think that it was Calvinist doctrine that God is the author of sin. The Calvinists defend themselves from that charge as from the darkest calumny, and declare at every opportunity that God influences human sin in an ineffable manner that in no way compromises His perfect, sovereign goodness. If they cannot resolve every difficulty, they blame the limitations of their knowledge, and they retort against their adversaries all the same difficulties.

Among Christians, there is no single system that in the judgment of all the others exculpates God when His providence is judged by our ordinary methods. But on the other hand, it is admitted by every sect that no other sect establishes that God is the author of sin in the second sense. It is clear that in the passage of Bayle in question these words, "to teach that God is the author of sin," ought to be understood in the second sense. It is therefore not

² Le Clerc, *BC VI*, 428.

true that in his own judgment all of our systems lead us necessarily to atheism, for immediately afterward he remarks that “all the Christian sects that are accused of [teaching that God is the author of sin] defend themselves as from a horrible blasphemy and an atrocious impiety, and they complain of having been slandered diabolically.” Le Clerc was aware of this remark; he reported it in his own words.

His fourth blunder is that he struck himself with the same blow he dealt his adversary. Here is the proof: he claims that the only system that can exculpate God is the one that affirms that the punishments of hell are not eternal,³ and that perhaps the state of the damned will eventually become bearable. Now, there is no such system among the Christians. He admits, therefore, that all their systems have the same defect that Bayle found in them. He lays the same charge against them as Bayle, he attributes to them the same consequences, yet he makes it an enormous crime in Bayle’s case to have said that all these systems succumb to various objections. Would a man agitated by the Furies reason any worse?

Themistius: You have forgotten something that deserves some attention. Le Clerc relies greatly on the claim that Bayle “gives us no better system.” This example would have some force if Bayle had claimed that it was a sign of falsehood in a theological system if it cannot respond to certain objections; but far from having claimed such a thing, he formally declared and amply proved that this incapacity to respond does not prevent a system from being true. He had no need to give a better system, for he believed it was necessary to uphold the decisions of Dordrecht, since of all the hypotheses, there is none that is as much in conformity with Scripture as that one, and because the most relaxed methods do not remove the difficulties that accompany it. In that, he followed Jurieu’s principle.

If Le Clerc boasts that he has given a better system, he will only disgrace himself. Will he allege that he employed Origen’s hypothesis? Then first of all, he never employed it as if it were true, and in the end, he considered it rash. It is clear that with such weapons we cannot resist the Manicheans.⁴ Second, if he had considered Origen’s hypothesis true, then he never would have ceased succumbing to objections, and in fact, he did succumb to those of Bayle: he could not furnish a second reply. Third, if Origenism could resist the Manicheans, then still no advantage would accrue to Christianity, since the dogma of Ori-

³ *RBL*, section VI, (*OD* III, 1001).

⁴ *RBL*, section V, (*OD* III, 989–999); *RBL*, section III, (*OD* III, 993); *RBL*, section VI, (*OD* III, 1001).

gen has long been condemned by nearly all Christians as pernicious. Can the fact that a few unknown people slip away from the conqueror as he puts the rest to the sword prevent the victory from being complete? All these difficulties have even greater force against the conjectural system Le Clerc proposed after parting ways with Origenism. This system will never catch on, since both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities will always unite in order to suppress a dogma whose consequences have been considered baneful to good morals.

If I wanted to embarrass Le Clerc with a new example, I would ask him to respond to this question: 'What would you say of the Calvinist system if we omitted from it the dogma of the eternity of the punishments of hell, and if we grafted onto it your conjectures? Would you cease to say that it is contrary to the ideas of God's perfection, that it makes God the author of sin, and that as a consequence it is impious and abominable?' I am certain that if Le Clerc spoke his mind, he would reply that he would continue to make this judgment of the Calvinist system. Now, I would respond to him, we can prove demonstratively that neither Arminianism nor Molinism can exculpate God if we judge His conduct according to our common notions, and for this reason, if we only consider the head of your conjectural system, whatever the tail may be, we can prove to you invincibly that your system is not at all in conformity with the natural ideas we have of holiness and goodness.

Maximus: You were right to say that I had forgotten something considerable. I have just noticed another omission, which I will now correct. Le Clerc is being petty by holding that those who teach that God is the author or the promoter or the accomplice of sin in the first sense described above, all lead to atheism. His reason is that, because they all claim that they reject as an abomination the consequence that their passionate adversaries infer from their doctrine, every man of judgment will abandon them, since such men will see that the consequence they condemn flows necessarily from their system, which from that time on can no longer be true. Therefore, Le Clerc would say, if all the Christian systems had the flaw Bayle imputes to them, they would all be abandoned, after which nobody could settle anywhere but in atheism or Manicheism.

He should not avail himself of this argument, however, for first of all, it would be as contrary to his own position as it is to that of his antagonist, whose judgment on all our systems of theology he approves. Second, we see by experience the futility of the objection. There is not a single Christian who does not know evidently that to permit the evil that one has the right and the ability to prevent, and that one can prevent without any ill consequence, is a bad action. There is no single Christian whose system concerning the fall of

the first man does not attribute to God conduct that seems contrary to this evident notion, and nevertheless, we see that every Christian finds a remedy to this conflict. They avoid this conflict through their recourse to an even more evident notion, that everything that God does is done well, and that the human mind is too limited to understand all the mysteries of the divine.

CHAPTER 3

Whether Le Clerc's Zeal was Delayed

Themistius: Let's discuss the response Le Clerc gave to the reproach that his zeal was late in coming. He justifies himself by alleging that he was the first to respond to Bayle's objections, and he cites volume one of the *Parrhasiana*.¹ Pitiful justification! The zeal in question was that which drove Le Clerc to spare Bayle's person no longer, but to denounce him publicly as one who is guilty of the tragic aim to ruin religion. Now, far from finding in the first volume of the *Parrhasiana* any vestige of this zeal, we in fact find, on the contrary, a declaration completely in Bayle's favour.

"I do not suspect him at all," says Le Clerc, "of supporting [the Manichean objections]. I am persuaded that he took the philosophical liberty of giving the pros and cons on numerous occasions without disguising anything only in order to exercise the minds of those who understand the matters he discusses, and not in order to defend those whose arguments he explains. We should take the challenges he proposes as the sort that it is permissible to raise in a lecture hall ... This is A RIGHT that he can demand of his readers, and that we should not refuse him. FOR MY PART, I VERY WILLINGLY GRANT HIM THAT RIGHT."²

Le Clerc was of the same mind until he witnessed the total defeat of his Origenist in the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*. As for the reasons he gives for why he did not erupt earlier,³ only he and God may know if they are true, which is why I will not examine them.

Maximus: If he boasted that his zeal against false doctrine was not slow because he was the first to respond to Bayle's objections, then we would soon confound him, for he took an interest only in the defence of a sect that has been buried for several centuries, and whose opinions he did not approve. To what shall we compare such zeal? Does it not resemble the charity of a lady who does not give a thing to the poor, but who has someone bring bread and wine to a sepulcher on her behalf in order to look after the needs of a few of the dead? Le Clerc persevered constantly right up to the present in this ridiculous zeal.

¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 378–379.

² Le Clerc, *Par*, 302.

³ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, at the beginning of article 3.

But even if we complied with Le Clerc, and unjustly considered his alleged zeal in the *Parrhasiana* authentic, we would still not allow him to deny that this zeal appeared late. Thirteen years had already passed since Jurieu published a book that argued that no system could remove the challenges to divine providence arising from evil.⁴ If Le Clerc had had the zeal of which he boasts, he would have taken prompt action against this book by Jurieu, for he hated the author and was hated in return by him, and he did not have the same reasons to rest quiet that Jaquelot had.⁵ Admit to me that a zeal which is fortified by an aversion for someone, yet holds itself in silence, must be very meager, and then admire Le Clerc's inequity: his zeal was a bulldog when it came to justifying Grotius and Episcopius against Jurieu's calumnies, and a poodle when it came to defending Christianity from the attacks of the same author.⁶

4 *NRL*, August 1686, article 4.

5 *RQP* II, cxxxvi (*OD* III, 776).

6 That is to say, the attacks that Le Clerc should have believed that Jurieu made against religion.

CHAPTER 4

Le Clerc's Response to the Accusation of Socinianism

Themistius: Let's discuss the accuser's reply to the charge that he was infected with the Socinian heresy. He begins by saying that the point of the reproach was "to render him suspect in order to prevent his arguments from making an impression on people's minds, but that it was a mean trick and would not fool anybody."¹ He says next that if a Turk [*Turc*], a Buddhist monk [*Talapoin*] or priest [*Bonze*], or a Mandarin [*Mandarin*] "rightfully found fault with the doctrine or the behaviour of Bayle, then Bayle would not be less culpable because of the character of the accuser." A Socinian, he continues, would set him right very easily "if he felt like it. In no way did I employ Socinian principles to destroy [Bayle's] objections, [and consequently], on this occasion the charge of Socinianism is ridiculous."

Maximus: The first time I read this passage in the *Choice Library* I told myself that its author was either acting in bad faith, or naturally had a weak mind, or was not a good logician, or that on this particular occasion a thick cloud of passion had come between his mental vision and the words he wrote. The *Response to Le Clerc* does not contain a single word that might have given Le Clerc the slightest pretext for saying what he did. Every reader will be convinced of that.

Themistius: We should add that whoever believes Bayle was capable of imagining that an argument is weakened simply by the fact that it is offered by heretics surely does not know Bayle. Nobody is more persuaded than he is that the quality of an objection is independent of the quality of the person who proposes it; he has explained himself on that very topic more than once.² In any case, you are correct to say that Bayle's accusations of Socinianism against Le Clerc had an entirely different goal than what the accuser indicates.

Maximus: Le Clerc eventually agreed that "his French version of the New Testament was banned in the States of the King of Prussia,"³ but he eludes the force

¹ For this and the subsequent passage: Le Clerc, *BC X*, 379–380.

² See *RQP II*, clii (*OD III*, 816).

³ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 381.

of this piece of evidence by other facts he reports without proof. Each person can take from this whatever he wants; this is a matter unworthy of our idlest attention.

Themistius: I completely agree with you; nevertheless, I beg your patience while I show you this excerpt of a letter written in Berlin, 8 October 1706, by someone informed of this matter:

Mr. Le Clerc says that the condemnation of his New Testament had no repercussions in the King of Prussia's States, and that the wise Ministers were not at all for this condemnation. All of that is false. Not one copy of his New Testament has sold since that time, except in secret. The French bookseller sent the rest of his copies to Leipzig, and the German booksellers had no copies. As for these wise Ministers who were not for the condemnation, Mr. Le Clerc's spies served him poorly. There were no defenders in the French Consistory. One single Minister wanted to offer some opposition, based on nothing more than the claim that the Consistory had no right to ask the Court for a ban on evil books. That did not halt anything and so the King's decree was read in the Churches and posted by the booksellers. You can verify all that I have said, for nothing is more certain.⁴

Maximus: Le Clerc correctly remarked that Bayle was not informed of the proceedings of the Walloon Churches. This ignorance is to Bayle's credit, since it shows that he does not act on the basis of passion, and that he preserves a perfectly philosophical indifference. Anybody other than Bayle would have looked into those proceedings out of curiosity and then reported them, because they dishonour Le Clerc's work. However, Le Clerc's adversary in this case ignored this information and expressed himself in a general way that, rather than being too strong, is in fact too weak. You will agree with me if I show you the Synod's resolutions. Here is what we learn from article 38 of the Acts of the Walloon Synod held at Heusden in August of 1703:

One of our brother deputies in the Synod read in the Assembly several excerpts that he took from the New Testament recently translated and published into French by Mr. Jean Le Clerc, and printed with notes at Jean Louis de Lorme in Amsterdam, and it appeared from these excerpts that the author had the audacity to bring his pernicious thoughts into broad

4 Excerpt of a manuscript letter.

daylight. The Society has praised on the one hand the zeal and vigilance of the said deputy for his concern for truth and orthodoxy in our Churches, and has declared on the other that it detests the horrible and manifestly heretical explanations given in several of these excerpts. Hoping to prevent to the greatest possible degree the repercussions and harmful effects that the publication of the said book could produce in people's souls, it has judged appropriate to commission the Churches of Amsterdam and of Naarden to work in concert on the matter already in process, and to publish in short term, in French and in Flemish, various passages of this alleged New Testament so that the public may be informed of the mortal poison that the author of the said book dared to spread throughout it under the pretext of explaining passages that concern the most important mysteries of our very holy religion, and so that good souls may be made aware and not be infected by opinions as pernicious as those of the Socinians and similar heretics. And before the printing of the said excerpts, Messrs. N.T.C.F., the deputies from the Hague, are asked to inform the *Grand Pensionnaire*, that he might be so good as to employ his zeal and his authority for the purpose of preventing the distribution of such a mean work, and for the sake of maintaining the dogmas of sound doctrine. The present resolution will be communicated to our very dear brothers of the Flemish Churches.

Article 43 of the May 1704 Walloon Synod held in Amsterdam contains the following:

The Commissioners named in the 22nd article for the examination of the New Testament of Mr. Le Clerc reported that after attending to this matter over several sessions they found in general that it is a book that is very dangerous and full of poison, and wherein the author never commented upon the plurality of the divine persons, or their distinction, or the eternal generation of the Son, in the texts where these great truths are taught. Moreover, in those texts where he believed he could not avoid making some remark, he does so in a sense contrary to the Christian faith and in conformity with the principles of the Sabellians, as appears from his remarks on the Gospel of St. John, chapter 1, verses 1, 2, 3–14, and on various other passages. They also discovered that the author planted Socinian propositions in several places in this work, as much concerning the divine person of Jesus Christ as concerning his satisfaction.⁵ The Society, after

⁵ We find here, in the original, various proofs; for here the meaning given by Le Clerc to various passages is found.

having examined, carefully and in the fear of God, this affair that had its beginning in the previous Synod, and after having deplored the misfortune of our people to whom was given, in our language, a book they could read believing they were reading the Word of God, declared that it was in the interest of the faithful to refrain from reading a book that relates so poorly to the majesty of the title it bears. This is why the Society, exhorting all people within its communion to protect themselves from such a dangerous book, has resolved, in conformity with the Synod's declaration, to bring to our Lords, the States, our just complaint, that it might please them, that by their Christian prudence and by their authority, the progress of such a book may be halted in every province. The deputies of the Church of the Hague and of Delft will go on behalf of this Synod to our Lords.

The Walloon Synod held at Naarden in September of 1705 produced this article, the 29th:

Our very dear brothers, the deputies of the Churches of the Hague and of Delft, reported that they had the honour of meeting with the *Conseiller Pensionnaire* more than once, and that they had been received by him not only with signs of veneration for the Society, but also with signs of affection and zeal for the interests of the Truth. They reported that he committed himself to preventing the progress of any new editions that might be proposed of Le Clerc's edition of the New Testament, the sale of whose first edition was impossible to impede, because it had had ample time to spread everywhere since it was first made. Several members of the Society reported what they knew about the consequences of these actions, and the Society, having decided to deliberate on this matter, thanked the deputies for their trouble, and sent them to see the *Conseiller Pensionnaire* to offer him fitting thanks on behalf of the Synod, and to beg him to continue to lend his hand, as he had already done, to secure the Truth against the attacks of its adversaries. And to put an end to this affair, the Society confirms and wholly renews article 43 of the Amsterdam Synod, containing the censure and condemnation of the said edition and the notes the author joined to it, and the Company exhorts all the Consistories to make this censure known to all the members of their Churches, so that everyone may be on guard against the poison that is spread throughout this work.

Tell me if Le Clerc has good reason to say “that there is no need to inform Bayle of the proceedings of the Walloon Synod.”⁶ He should fervently hope that Bayle will continue in his ignorance of them, and that the public never learns of them either.

Themistius: We could say many things if we wished about Le Clerc’s claim that he responded to the objections of one of the Ministers of the Assembly “in a manner admitting of no response.” I do not know the reasons that obliged this Minister to refrain from replying to Le Clerc and from defending his original position, but I do know that the response that Le Clerc claims to have made to him has in no way prevented the Reformed from judging his version of the New Testament and his notes just as the Synods have judged them. Moreover, a book has recently appeared that succeeds in revealing both the heresies and the deceitfulness of this new translation. You will easily understand that I am speaking of the book that Gabillon has just published under the title, *A Defence Based on Holy Scripture of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and of Interior Grace, against the Impious and Extravagant Paradoxes of Le Clerc and his Followers, with a Refutation of his Notes on the New Testament.*⁷

Maximus: I have not yet had time to read this work, but I have heard much good about it. Gabillon deserves high praise for having worked on such a subject. God gave him the grace to recognize the errors of the Communion of Rome, and to draw him into the Reformed Church. He has shone among preachers in Paris, and his eloquence at the Hague was the cruel occasion of the jealousy of one Minister, who has since established himself in Germany.

Themistius: Let’s discuss the quarrel Le Clerc had with the Jesuits of Trévoux. If Bayle had placed emphasis on two or three words of the Jesuits to the effect that Le Clerc’s book generally smelled of Socinianism, he would have been wrong to do so; however, he did not rest on such a vague expression, but established his position on detailed arguments furnished by one of the journalists of Trévoux, which gave him the upper hand in the dispute. Le Clerc said that he replied five times, and that if he did not respond to his accuser’s last book, it was because it was a ridiculous work that was hated in Paris, that “could not sell in Paris,”⁸

⁶ Le Clerc, *BC* x, 381.

⁷ [MH] Frédéric Auguste de Gabillon, *La defense de la divinité de Jesus-Christ, et de la Grace interieure par l’écriture sainte contre les paradoxes impies et extravagans de M. Le Clerc et de ses adherans, avec la refutation de ses notes sur le Nouveau Testament* (La Haye, 1706).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

and that contained nothing new to refute, for which reason it deserved no new refutation. Neither you nor I have read that work, and so we cannot judge this affair, but we would be rather naïve if we trusted Le Clerc's judgment. It is the usual style of writers who have been cornered and who have nothing left to add but impertinent remarks to say that they will not deign to respond to some worthless piece of writing. They are never so boastful as when they rest silent, incapable of continuing a dispute.

Even if the Jesuit's last book could not sell in Paris, I would not believe on that basis that it was not a good book of its kind, for to be such a book, it would have to be just as the journalists of Trévoux advertised it:⁹ it pursues Le Clerc in every direction, it unmasks him everywhere, and in the end it reveals his similarity to the Polish Brethren. To accomplish all of that after Le Clerc's fifth reply would require comparing many passages, confirming a hundred things already discussed, and giving so many critical details that, given the taste currently reigning in Paris, the reader would soon be exhausted. This would be the case above all because the topic is one that is completely uninteresting to the public, namely whether Le Clerc is a Socinian.¹⁰ You know that the replies of which Le Clerc boasts are rather short pieces, filled with material quite beside the point, such as recriminations and insults. What apologetic material there is in those works is vague and ambiguous. What harm could it have done him to furnish a sixth reply? All the initial evidence is against Le Clerc.

Maximus: We should leave aside everything Le Clerc says against Abbé Faydit, who can respond very well for himself, and we should move directly to the passage where, in order to convince the public "that Mr. Bayle makes the accusation of Socinianism only from despair," he asserts that if Bayle reasoned logically, "he would have to be Socinian."¹¹ Here is what is said to prove that.

First, he claims that Bayle is of like mind with the Pyrrhonian abbé whom he brings into debate with a good Catholic abbé in his *Dictionary*; for, he adds, Bayle confesses that the Pyrrhonian's arguments are good, and he concludes as a consequence that it is necessary to submit to the Faith.

Second, Le Clerc relates what the Pyrrhonian objects to the mysteries of the Trinity and the hypostatic union, namely that they are opposed by evident notions.

9 See *RBL*, section II (*OD* III, 990–991).

10 "The people scarcely care about that" (Terence, *Andria*, Act 1, scene 2).

11 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 387.

Third, he concludes that because Bayle approves of the Pyrrhonian objections, “he must be a Socinian despite himself, for we cannot fail to believe things that are evident.”

Themistius: You have just given an exact analysis of pages 387 and 388 of the tenth volume of the *Choice Library*. If Le Clerc gave similar analyses of the arguments of his adversaries, then we would not have so many proofs of his feeble and superficial mind, or of his bad faith. It will be easy to defend Bayle on the last point you mentioned, namely whether we can fail to believe what is evident.

Maximus: Very easy indeed. But first, let me observe in general that there could be nothing more unjust than to say that Bayle believes everything he put into the mouth of the Pyrrhonian abbé. If that were the case, then we would have to impute to all the authors of dialogues and plays all the maxims they put into the mouths of the people who speak in conformity with the character given them. Now, nothing could be more ridiculous than that.¹²

Returning to Le Clerc, by some trick or illusion that he makes reign over this dispute from beginning to end, he supposes that the proposition, ‘this doctrine is exposed to evident objections to which there can be no response,’ is equivalent to this one, ‘this doctrine should be rejected as false.’ This hypothesis of Le Clerc, however opposed it may be not only by the practice of theologians,¹³ but also by that of philosophers, is in any case the great principle in virtue of which the Socinians reject the Trinity, the Incarnation, satisfaction, original sin, the eternity of hell, the foreknowledge of contingent events, etc.

If it were true that Bayle adopted this maxim of his adversary, then it would be necessary for him, in order to reason coherently, to imitate the Socinians in their rejection of all the Gospel mysteries; but it would not be necessary for him to embrace the system of the Socinians, for he would show them that their doctrines—that the divine nature occupies only a certain amount of space, that God knows the free thoughts of men only to the degree that they exist, that God left to chance the reign of virtue or of vice—are dogmas exposed to evident objections to which nothing worthwhile can be responded. Le Clerc’s maxim does not drive us to Deism or to Atheism, which are both systems defeated by obviously insoluble objections, but to the most overt Pyrrhonism, or to *Acataleptism*.¹⁴

¹² *DHC* II, “Erasmé,” rem. Q, 387.

¹³ See the beginning of chapter 1 above, and the beginning of chapter 5 below.

¹⁴ That is, the incomprehensibility of all things.

Themistius: From what you have just reported, we can conclude that if Le Clerc reasoned properly, he would have to be an overt Pyrrhonian or an Acataleptic. But tell me, how would you undermine the accusation of inconsistency made by Le Clerc?

CHAPTER 5

Whether It is Possible to Reject an Evident Proposition

Maximus: Le Clerc bases that accusation on the assumption that Bayle argued in the following way: ‘since evident and insoluble difficulties are raised against our mysteries, we must humble our reason and submit it to the Faith.’ This conclusion appears absurd to Le Clerc, who admits the validity only of the following consequence of Bayle’s reasoning: ‘therefore our mysteries are false.’ However, because Bayle concluded nothing of that sort, Le Clerc holds him guilty of inconsistency. He ought, therefore, to hold every Christian guilty who believes in these mysteries; his accusation aims in particular at all adherents of the Synod of Dordrecht. Isn’t that enough to permit Bayle to disregard the accusation?

However, in order to reveal all the machinations of the accuser, I must reflect on his claim that “we can never renounce [mathematically certain axioms], unless we become completely crazy; for it is not within the capacity of a man, who is in his right mind, to believe that evident propositions that he understands are false¹ ... [W]e cannot fail to believe evident things.”² To whom is he speaking here? Is it to schoolboys or to the learned? Or is he unaware of what is common knowledge throughout the learned world?

Some Christian philosophers claim that the existence of an infinite number is impossible, while others claim it is possible. They overwhelm each other with obviously insoluble objections, and nevertheless they all persist in their way of thinking. Therefore, they must all be capable of dispensing themselves from believing in evident things.³ Would Le Clerc say that they’ve all become completely crazy? In that case Gassendi, Maignan, Cordemoy, and several other great atomistic philosophers must have been completely crazy, for they had no concern for the geometrical demonstrations or the metaphysical ideas that brought the Peripatetics naturally to maintain the divisibility of lines to infinity.

¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 387.

² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 388.

³ For example, those who claim that an infinite number can exist reject the very evident proposition that ‘there are more groups of ten than groups of one hundred in every number greater than one hundred.’

It is evident that (1) what touches a thing, and what does not touch a thing, are two really distinct beings; (2) in a round atom that touches a plane, there is something that touches the plane and something that does not touch it. Despite these two evident propositions, Gassendi holds that a round atom is not composed of parts, but is a perfectly simple body. Will we say after considering this example that we cannot fail to believe evident propositions, and that we will never believe that evident propositions are false without first losing our mind?

Le Clerc believes without any doubt that common notions are evident, while Jurieu is so far from persuaded that they ought to be followed in religious matters that he says positively that “to establish common notions as principles of the faith is equivalent to delivering Religion, hands and feet bound, over to heretics and the impious.”⁴ He adds that the Rationalist principle according to which we must never believe anything without evidence “leads to Socinianism, to Pyrrhonism, and to Deism.”⁵ Le Clerc has been made aware that the scholarly Fr. Pétau abandoned on several occasions the commonest notions of philosophy while treating the Trinity.⁶

Themistius: You will not squeeze the accuser so tight that he cannot free himself by some sophistical maneuver. He will claim that those who reject evident propositions are so seduced by their prejudices that they are no longer aware that they are evident.

Maximus: That is easy to refute. I won't deny that a number of people who are persuaded of our mysteries cover their eyes to reason's opposition, but we cannot doubt that innumerable theologians do feel the full force of the philosophical doctrines that challenge the mysteries of the faith. If Fr. Pétau had believed that the common notions he abandoned were in no way evident, he would not have abandoned them, since an objection that he believed to be founded only upon an uncertain and obscure principle would not have perplexed him.

One would have to be crazy to believe that all the theologians of the Augsburg Confession are unaware how evident it is, according to the light of reason, that the penetration of the dimensions of a body, and being in two places at once, are both impossible. If they did not know that, then they never would

⁴ See *RQP* II, cxxxiii (*OD* III, 797).

⁵ *RQP* II, cxxx (*OD* III, 765).

⁶ *RBL*, section IV (*OD* III, 995).

have claimed that there are some conclusions that are true in philosophy and false in theology, which can mean for them only that there are some conclusions that must be taken as obviously true if only theology had not opposed them.⁷

We could cite a thousand passages that clearly prove that the Roman Catholics are not ignorant of the evidence of the philosophical principles opposed to transubstantiation. If they were unaware of this evidence, then they would not uphold the excellence of faith in proportion to the sacrifice made by reason to the authority of God. All their flaunting of the merits of faith would be vain and puerile if they were persuaded that faith always conformed to evident notions.

Finally, all the ingenuity with which the Reformed theologians acknowledge that the mysteries of predestination and the sin of Adam suffer from inexplicable difficulties, and that these are chasms where reason loses itself unless it humbly submits to the authority of God, manifestly proves that they feel all the evidence of the Arminian objections. The Rationalists themselves make us understand clearly when they speak of the Trinity that they fully recognize its opposition to philosophical principles.⁸ I can assure you that what obliges the Rationalists not to recognize the tribunal of Philosophy is that they vividly feel the evidence of these difficulties.

Mr. Claude felt this very strongly when he said that “the divine essence and its attributes, the persons and their relations, the decrees of election and reprobation, the hypostatic union of the Word and the flesh, the satisfaction of divine justice by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the manner of God’s participation in our acts of volition, are things beyond our sight, and are in themselves incomprehensible. Our senses cannot get involved here, and our reason confesses that it only errs.”⁹ Could you ask for anything more than such an admission that reason itself recognizes its incapacity to judge our mysteries and that it errs in so doing?

Le Clerc does not dare say the torments of hell will last forever, and he haughtily rejects the dogma of original sin.¹⁰ This is because he has understood the full force of reason’s objections to these two Christian opinions. But does he think he is the only one with enough intellect to have discovered this force? It would be a gross error if he did: Mr. Nicole discovered it just as well as he,

7 *DHC* II, “Hoffman (Daniel),” rem. c, 782–783; *DHC* III, “Luther,” rem. KK, 234–235.

8 See *RQP* II, cxxxii (*OD* III, 766).

9 Jean Claude, *Réponse à la perpétuité de la foi*, 63.

10 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 391.

which is why he wrote “that the two dogmas of original sin and the eternity of hell are the triumph of the authority of God over human reason.”¹¹ He saw that the doctrine of original sin “produces impenetrable difficulties for the reason of every person.”¹² “That a sin which is the act of the will can pass from one soul to another; that the body which is nothing but matter can corrupt the soul which is spiritual; that God could justly form a soul in a body which corrupts it the moment it receives it; that God could justly impute an inevitable and involuntary sin: all these difficulties leap out at our eyes and collide with our minds.”¹³

Themistius: What misled Le Clerc is that he did not consider that not all propositions that appear evident to us appear equally evident to us. An atomist finds evidence in the reasons that prove infinite divisibility as well as in the reasons that oppose it; but he finds far more in the latter than in the former, which is why he rejects the evidence of the first and adheres only to the evidence of the second. When the reasons *for* seem to us equal to the reasons *against*, we feel that our understanding is undetermined. But if the reasons *for* appear to us to have more force than the reasons *against*, we feel our understanding declare itself for the former; it is pulled to that side by the superiority of the weight, as if it were a balance.¹⁴

It is not even necessary for this balance to carry a reason on one side that is more evident than the one on the other. On some occasions the superior weight will contain nothing evident,¹⁵ while the inferior weight will contain some evidence. Can we ignore either the effectiveness of arguments based on feeling, or the force of pleasure on people’s minds? We sometimes sense the uncertainty of an argument, and yet, as long as it is agreeable to us, we acquiesce to it rather than to an argument that is less doubtful but that bothers us.

Every sect is full of people who are so firmly fixed to some doctrine by custom and prejudice that they would not abandon that doctrine even if they were made to understand clearly that this doctrine was opposed by irrefutable objections. We may well say that their faith is ill founded, but not that they

11 Pierre Nicole, *Perpétuité de la foi*, 140.

12 *RQP II*, clxxvii (*OD III*, 874).

13 Nicole, *Perpétuité de la foi*, 140.

14 *RQP II*, cxxxix (*OD III*, 783b).

15 That is, either evident in itself, or something that has become evident through an exact examination of the reasons *for* and *against*.

have lost their minds and have gone completely crazy. Could anyone refute Le Clerc by arguments more convincing than ours? Do we not derive these arguments from our experience, against which it is absurd to allege speculative arguments? He seems not to have examined this matter at all.

CHAPTER 6

What Le Clerc Said Concerning the Trinity and the Pyrrhonian Abbé

Maximus: He reported in a few words the most common responses people offer the Socinians concerning the Trinity, and he even offered a response to the difficulties the Pyrrhonian abbé had proposed against the mystery of the Incarnation. May God grant that he spoke according to his conscience, and that he will be able to convert the Socinians by this short apology on behalf of these two mysteries. We might find it strange that he stopped half-way; that is, having begun to respond to the difficulties of the Pyrrhonian concerning the dogma of the Incarnation, that he neglected to resolve the most important point.

Themistius: Let's not forget that he accused Bayle of "not having studied in the least" the subject of the Trinity.¹ His proof is that the Pyrrhonian abbé does not refute these two orthodox responses: (1) "that what makes the divine persons one single thing is not what makes them distinct"; (2) "that the word 'person' does not signify on this occasion the same thing as when it refers to creatures, but signifies instead a true distinction ... of which Revelation has given us no idea." Le Clerc supposes that the Pyrrhonian abbé overlooked these two responses "that the least able schoolboy can make" only because he was not aware of them. It would be more correct to suppose the Pyrrhonian had implied these responses when he said: "draw as many distinctions as you please, but you will never show that this maxim—things that are not different from a third are not different from one another—is not refuted by the mystery of the Trinity." Le Clerc knows better than most the disdainful judgment the Socinians make of these two responses. He will understand whenever he likes, therefore, that in order to preserve an air of credibility, the Pyrrhonian abbé had to judge these responses unworthy of his wrath.

Maximus: Here is a stronger accusation. Le Clerc says that because Bayle, in his *Dictionary* and in chapter 128 of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*, joined the dogmas of the Trinity and Incarnation "with that of Transubstantiation, as being equally opposed to reason," he therefore deserves to be credited with

¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 389.

believing neither in the Trinity nor in the Incarnation.² I am sure Le Clerc had enough intelligence to know that such a sweeping reproach was unworthy of his pen; but having heard that certain people were murmuring about this association of true mysteries with false, he believed that it suited him better to stir up this charge rather than to miss his opportunity. It is even more inexcusable since he knew that Jaquelot had fallen into this trap.³

It is surprising that neither one of them understood the goal of the Pyrrhonian abbé. They suppose he aims to prove that the mysteries of Christianity are false, but it is clear that his dispute tends only toward claiming that the truth of these mysteries proves that there are some axioms that are at once both false and evident, from which he concludes that the Dogmatists, who hold that evidence is the criterion of truth, are mistaken. One must remember that his dispute is with a good Roman Catholic abbé, and that he argues *ad hominem* against him while assuming these mysteries. If, therefore, he had prided himself on the advantages he hoped to derive from his antagonist's belief in the Fall of Adam, Original Sin, the Trinity, and the Incarnation, while he remained profoundly silent about Transubstantiation, which furnishes the greatest weapons, there is not a single person who would not have cried out that this character was made to act foolishly and stupidly. For this reason it was necessary for Bayle either to trample all the rules of plausibility and good sense, or to make his Pyrrhonian abbé make the association in question. Le Clerc would have been the first to mock this character, which would have been ridiculous if he had said nothing of Transubstantiation in his situation. As for chapter 128 of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*, we find there a historical fact known to the whole world. Even the most savage Inquisition does not prohibit relating simple facts that nobody can deny. Le Clerc is to be pitied if his error is worse than to have imitated certain small minds.

² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 391–392.

³ See *RQP II*, clx at the end.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion of Le Clerc's Remarks on the Three Propositions to Which Bayle Reduced His Own Position

Themistius: Without losing any more time on incidental matters, let's move forward to the principal point of what follows in Le Clerc's discourse. Bayle reduced his position to the following three propositions:

- [P1] The natural light and revelation teach us clearly that there is only one principle of all things, and that this principle is infinitely perfect.
- [P2] The way of reconciling the moral and physical evil of humanity with all the attributes of this single, infinitely perfect principle of all things surpasses our philosophical lights, such that the Manichean objections leave us with difficulties that human reason cannot resolve.
- [P3] Nevertheless, it is necessary to believe firmly what the natural light and revelation teach us about the unity and infinite perfection of God, just as we believe in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, etc., by faith and by submission to divine authority.¹

Bayle added the following to the above three propositions: (1) He gives this summary of his doctrine of his own free will, and that "this is far from an imitation of Le Clerc, who refused the quick and easy way proposed to him to justify himself, namely to declare his position on the coeternity and consubstantiality of the three really distinct, divine persons." (2) "He is very sure that nobody will ever prove that these three propositions are not what he constantly taught in his works; or that if he established them in several places, he established the three contrary propositions in another."² (3) Le Clerc desperately needs "to pay attention to this summary; for one cannot tell if he has understood anything about his adversary's opinions, for he relates those opinions everywhere under a guise other than the true one."³

¹ See *RBL*, section III (*OD* III, 992–993).

² *RBL*, section III (*OD* III, 993).

³ *Ibid.*

Maximus: I was shocked that Le Clerc made no remark on the opposition that had been shown between his conduct and that of Bayle; namely, that while Bayle gave a summary of his doctrine of his own free will, Le Clerc refused the short and easy way to justify himself that was proposed to him. I was even more shocked to find these words in a passing remark: "I have no other confession of faith than the New Testament," (the most pernicious heretic would say much the same thing), "as I said to Mr. Bayle when I enjoined him to indicate his own, which he never did, despite the fact that he was enjoined to do so more than once."⁴

I have no memory of this reiterated demand, and yet I read attentively all the pieces these gentlemen published against one another as they appeared. Le Clerc must be faulted for not having indicated the pages where he made these demands, for nobody will have the patience to re-read so many pieces in order to find them. I remember only the passage where the accuser expressed himself in the following way: "if Mr. Bayle wants to attack the New Testament, which I am obliged to defend, then he must declare the principles of theology and philosophy he will follow, for it would be an infinite task to respond to a man whose opinions are completely unknown."⁵ These are absurd words, fitting only for a penitent who, in order to witness to his shame, accuses himself of great stupidity.

A reader who does not discover that Bayle is well grounded in the principles of the non-Rationalist, Reformed theologians; in the principles, I say, of those who oppose as strongly as possible the dangerous maxim of the Socinians, 'that we must not believe anything that does not appear to us in conformity with every philosophical doctrine'; such a reader can only be of a mind so thick and so weighed down that the clearest things are for him enigmatic. And here is Le Clerc, who considers himself a great scholar, but who declares nonetheless that he does not know which theological principles Bayle wishes to follow. He even declares this after his recent reading of Bayle's reply to Jaquelot.

Themistius: I was shocked by the same things as you, but what appeared to me even more scandalous was that Le Clerc made no effort to prove that the three propositions were not Bayle's long-standing doctrine, and yet he expresses himself in the following way, on page 394: "I impute nothing to Mr. Bayle except what he has said, and I attribute nothing to him but what he professes in his

⁴ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 408.

⁵ Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 141.

works, as we have already seen; and here he denies things he has said only to deceive those who will not take the trouble to read his thick books.”

A few pages later he remarks that from the principles of the third proposition, Bayle concluded in his *Dictionary* that “it is necessary to become a Pyrrhonian.” “We can learn from this,” he adds, “whether it is true that Mr. Bayle everywhere taught these three propositions in such a way that other Christians could hold them, or whether it is rather the case that he speaks as he does in order to mock us.”⁶

Maximus: All of that is so full of lies that a reader would be remiss if he were not offended by the disdain shown him by the audacity it took to publish those words. So I admit that what scandalized you the most was also what made me the most indignant. Let’s delve even deeper into the audacity of this imposter. What he attributes to Bayle is the desire to attack the Providence of God, to make a joke of Religion, to make an apology on behalf of atheists, and to spout whatever might destroy Religion.⁷ Now, he assures us that he attributes nothing to Bayle but what Bayle professes in his works. It is necessarily the case, therefore, either that Bayle confessed in his works that he aimed to attack the providence of God, etc., or that the accuser is guilty of a remarkable calumny. It is very certain that Bayle never avowed such things; it is therefore very certain that Le Clerc is the most impudent liar on Earth.

Here’s another one of his lies: he boasts that he has proven that we can find in Bayle’s works the confession of everything he attributes to him.⁸ Nothing could be more false. We have discussed all the remarks Le Clerc made up to page 394, and we have found nothing there that was even the shadow of a weak piece of evidence. But what follows is even more surprising. Le Clerc wants the consequences derived by the Pyrrhonian abbé in the *Dictionary* to be Bayle’s own opinions, but we see just the opposite, for the conclusion that Bayle derives after the abbé has spoken is this: “that it is necessary, before all else, to make the Pyrrhonians feel the infirmity of reason, so that this feeling might cause them to have recourse to a better guide, namely faith.”⁹

He makes use of an entire page to confirm this conclusion, and he cites among other authorities the liturgy of baptism that Calvin composed for the use of Protestant churches of the Geneva Confession. It would not be an easy

⁶ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 401.

⁷ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 392.

⁸ “As we have already seen,” he says.

⁹ *DHC III*, “Pyrrhon,” rem. B, 733b.

thing for us to decide whether the accuser's bad faith is here more admirable than his lack of judgment. He cites page 2431 of the *Dictionary* to prove that Bayle did not always teach the three propositions in a sense that other Christians could accept.¹⁰ Now, on this page 2431, it is the Pyrrhonian abbé who speaks, and we find on the following page that Bayle corrects the abbé according to the principles that Calvin himself would have employed in such a case. Is this not to deceive intentionally? Should we not worry about whether all the readers who consult page 2431 will also consult page 2432?

Themistius: If someone convinced me that I was guilty of faults similar to those of Le Clerc that you have just revealed, I would renounce the world and hide myself in some hermitage. The mere sight of one of my readers would make me tremble. *May the heavens preserve me from such infamy.*

Maximus: Le Clerc does not share your scrupulosity. But let us finally see his critique of the three propositions. It is a heap of the principal difficulties the Socinians and Remonstrants invented against the system of the Calvinists. What an itch to repeat the same things! Didn't Bayle declare clearly enough that he would take no notice of those objections that fall equally forcefully on the doctrine of the Reformed and on him, and that in such cases, he referred his readers to the responses that had been made a thousand times by the orthodox to the enemies of the mysteries and of absolute predestination? It is surely more reasonable that Bayle supposed the Reformed theologians had already responded for him, than that he dared to believe he had to respond on their behalf.

Le Clerc heard something false, namely that Bayle was preparing a much larger work for him.¹¹ He conjectures falsely that a response will be made to what he has said about reason; but Bayle takes no pleasure in following well-trodden paths. The orthodox have published so many nice treatments of the use of reason in theological matters that it should be considered an exhausted topic from now on.

If Le Clerc had not been so impassioned, he would have left Bayle's three theses alone, after having seen that it was impossible for him to prove that they were not the old and constant doctrine of this author, or that they had been destroyed in other passages of his works. But a false sense of honour and the desire to put to profit certain commonplaces overcame Le Clerc's sense of

¹⁰ See *DHC* III, "Pyrrhon," rem. B, 732–733.

¹¹ Le Clerc, *BC* X, 426.

justice, and even of prudence, for it was not at all appropriate for him to deliver blows to Bayle that would equally strike the system of Dordrecht. I will let you refute his remarks concerning the first proposition.

Themistius: In Le Clerc's judgment, of all men, Bayle is the only one who believes that that proposition is false for he claims "*that natural reason invincibly proves that God's conduct is not that of an all-perfect Being, since it is not that of a good and holy Being; and that it is necessary to deny the authority of common notions and our idea of goodness when it comes to judging whether the Manichean objections are sound or not.*"¹² There you have two pieces of evidence, one just as bad as the other. The first contains a crass error that Le Clerc does not cease to repeat. When he first made use of that error, we could imagine that it was nothing but an oversight, but from the time he was advised about it,¹³ it has been necessary to call it an act of bad faith. Le Clerc has been informed that to claim, as he does, that those who believe that we cannot respond to the Manichean objections, according to which our systems attribute to God conduct that conflicts with our common notions of goodness and holiness, must also believe that God is neither good nor holy, is to offer an opinion so ill-founded that several examples known to the whole world can refute it. Despite this lesson, Le Clerc persists in saying that because Bayle acknowledged the irrefutable nature of the Manichean objections, he must not truly believe that God is good and holy, or, as a consequence, that He is all-perfect.

How admirable is Le Clerc's shrewdness when it comes to making up arguments! His first argument shows us that he has happily forgotten the fracas of the Arminian controversies. He no longer remembers that the Remonstrants held that Calvin's and Gomarus' system made God the author of sin, a cruel and deceitful tyrant whose conduct toward men was as two drops of water to that of Tiberius toward the daughter of Sejanus.¹⁴ He no longer remembers that the Counter-Remonstrants never concealed the inexplicable difficulties with their system, and that they had constant recourse to the exclamation of St. Paul: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"¹⁵ He no longer remembers that they confess that our reason loses itself if it tries to

¹² Le Clerc, *BC* X, 394.

¹³ See *RBL*, section IV toward the beginning; section V at the beginning; section VI at the beginning; section VIII at the end.

¹⁴ See the *Apologeticus* of Bertius against Piscator, page 17, where there is a two-columned parallel between the conduct of God and that of Tiberius.

¹⁵ *RQP* II, clxiv (*OD* III, 841).

probe these deep chasms. But, while they made such a confession on the one hand, on the other they claimed their doctrine was being slandered. They held that they followed with a firm step wherever the natural idea of God and Scripture led them, namely to the beliefs that God cannot do anything that does not agree with His sovereign perfection, that He is infinitely good, holy and just, etc. Today, as well as in that time, Reformed theologians confess, some in a less precise manner, others, like Jurieu, in a perfectly clear way, that reason presents them with intractable difficulties; yet all the while they say that we must not abandon on account of that the interpretation they give to Scripture, and that by the idea of an all-perfect Being, we should persuade ourselves beyond doubt that all of His conduct is good, holy, just, etc. Bayle's opinions are so much in conformity with those, that if Le Clerc were right to accuse him of denying the first of the three propositions, then he would be right to impute the same impiety to the whole body of Reformed churches. For this reason, Bayle can look down on this vain trial where he is no more implicated than all the Counter-Remonstrant theologians.

Le Clerc's second proof is pitiful. If it is necessary, he says, to deny the authority of common notions, then it follows that we have no idea of the goodness and holiness of God.¹⁶ If I conceded that, then would he conclude that I do not believe that God is a good and holy Being? But if he drew that conclusion, then what would be become of innumerable theologians who assert that the eternity of God is in no way successive, but rather consists in an indivisible point that nonetheless coexists, without any confusion, with the diverse parts of time? Do they have any idea of such an eternity? Do we have any idea of the divine understanding? Do we not believe nonetheless that God understands? Do we have any idea of a power that by a simple act of the will gives existence to that which a moment before had none? Do we not still believe in creation?

But to press the accuser further I will argue *ad hominem*. He approves of the method of explaining the Trinity by the word 'person' of which he realizes we have no idea. He finds this method so excellent that he treats as ignorant all those people who do not know that this word 'person', stripped of all ideas, lifts all the difficulties concerning that mystery.¹⁷ So he finds those people reasonable who believe in the Trinity without having any idea of it. Then how could he condemn those who would tell him that they have no idea of the goodness of God, though they believe nonetheless that God is good?

¹⁶ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 395.

¹⁷ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 389 and 408.

I have no trouble admitting to him, not that I have no idea of the goodness of God, but that the idea that I have of it is imperfect and confused because I cannot see how the goodness of God is compatible with things that appear to me manifestly incompatible with goodness in general; which does not prevent me from believing that God is good, for when it comes to God's conduct, the fact entails the right. That God permitted moral evil, which had to be followed by physical evil, is a fact. It is therefore necessary that such permission be in conformity with the goodness of God, even if it appears impossible to me that it should ever conform to the goodness that common notions have made known to me.

"According to Mr. Bayle," continues Le Clerc, "it is necessary either to admit that goodness and holiness as we conceive them are not perfections, and that as a consequence the all-perfect Being does not possess them, or that it is not true that God is all-perfect."¹⁸ A small difficulty, and one that is beneath the dignity of a man who has studied theology! All orthodox theologians teach us that to know whether some conduct is an imperfection or a perfection with respect to God, we must consult Revelation and experience, but not the speculative ideas we have in our minds, which will surely deceive us. If you consult these latter ideas, they will tell you that it is a lack of goodness and holiness, and consequently an imperfection, to permit those whom one might have made truly happy and virtuous to fall into misery and sin; and that it is a very great perfection to employ all one's power and all one's vigilance to bring it about that nobody ever departs from his duty or ever feels pain. Those are the responses you will receive from the oracle of common notions. Now, consult Scripture and experience, and these will tell you that God permitted moral evil, and that He leaves all people subject to sin and misery, from which you will conclude that common notions have deceived you miserably by revealing to you as an absolute perfection or an absolute imperfection something which is neither in the case of God.

Nicole put it well when he said that "there is nothing that conforms less to ordinary human light, by which men make judgments about justice and mercy, than the decree pronounced by St. Paul against those who commit the crimes he lists."¹⁹ Nicole was nonetheless fully persuaded that there is nothing more just than that decree. He also said that, "it is by the truth of dogma that we must judge what is cruel; it is not by our vain ideas of alleged cruelty that we should judge the truth of dogma. Nothing God does can be cruel, for He is sovereign

¹⁸ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 395.

¹⁹ *RQP II*, clxxvii (*OD III*, 874).

justice. This ought to place limits, therefore, on all our inquiries, and we should not claim to judge whether God has or has not done something based on the feeble ideas we have of justice and cruelty."²⁰

Maximus: We could never admire Le Clerc's blindness too much: he thinks he is attacking Bayle alone, while in fact he is attacking the whole of Christianity.

Themistius: By that very blindness he imagines that his adversary contradicts himself in joining Revelation to the natural light in the first proposition, for he adds, "Mr. Bayle holds that Revelation teaches us things concerning the goodness and holiness of God that are incompatible with our natural light."²¹ Le Clerc speaks as if he were persuaded that the natural light always agrees with itself, and that its bond is so tight that we could never adopt one part of it while rejecting the other. We see then how poorly informed he is on this subject, and how little he has meditated on it; for far from coming to the aid of one another, our natural lights very often conflict.

Would you like insoluble arguments for infinite divisibility? Natural light will provide you with them. Would you like several arguments against infinite divisibility? Natural light will give you those as well. And if you wish to remain neutral on the question, it will not fail to equip you with everything you will need for that position. I could put forward other examples. Therefore, there is nothing incorrect about Bayle's first proposition, where he joins together natural light and Revelation, even though he does reject several maxims of the natural light by means of Revelation. Reason teaches me that God is a supremely perfect nature, and that everything done by such a nature is done well. Nothing could be more evident than that axiom. The same reason teaches me that a good and holy Being, insofar as He can help it, does not permit what He loves to fall into misery and vice. I then consult Revelation, and there I find that God permitted Adam and Eve, whom He loved and whom He provided with many good things, to lose their innocence, and thereby to expose their entire posterity to innumerable evils and to a horrifying moral corruption. Therefore I reject the second principle above that reason, or the natural light, had taught me, and I reject it as deceptive and false because it contradicts a truth of fact; and I affirm in virtue of the first axiom above, and also in virtue of the testimony of Scripture, that God is good and holy.

²⁰ *RQP* II, clxxvii (*OD* III, 874). See what was cited by Mr. Saurin in *RQP* II, cxliv (*OD* III, 797).

²¹ Le Clerc, *BC* X, 396.

It will be objected that I have “no idea in what sense Scripture says that God is good and holy,”²² and I will respond that I have an idea sufficient enough to maintain religion in men’s hearts, for this idea contains part of the features that compose our common notions of goodness and holiness. I know God by this idea as a Being who provides many good things, who answers our prayers, etc., and who by His promises, by His threats, by His rewards, and by His punishments, demonstrates that He loves virtue and hates vice. I confess that my idea is imperfect because I do not find in it other features of our common notions, nor how the goodness and holiness of God are compatible with things that according to the natural light are incompatible with these two qualities. But even if my idea were more confused, Le Clerc could not condemn my faith, he who approves of our belief in the Trinity despite the fact that Scripture has given us no idea of the notion of *person* involved in this great mystery.²³ I don’t think he would dare boast of having an idea of what differentiates the hypostatic union and the other sorts of union, yet he professes to believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, and he exerted himself in defending it against the Pyrrhonian abbé.

Maximus: After that, should we not ignore the base accusation of *hocus pocus* that he borrowed from the Socinians? For that is how they caused trouble for all the mysteries of the Gospel. They claimed that to believe in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and so on, is to revel in a word that means nothing. Beware that everything he says against Bayle’s three theses, and what he repeats in other passages, is not a defence of Socinian principles against our most august mysteries, which he nonetheless pretends to adopt.

Themistius: I have already examined them well, but I would like to hear you refute Le Clerc’s remarks concerning Bayle’s second proposition.

Maximus: That will be very easy after the refutation you just gave of his criticism of the first. You undermined in advance the contradiction he thinks he found between the first and second propositions. He says that “they amount to this: Reason teaches me that God is good and holy, and the same reason teaches me that He is neither one nor the other, for I must reject these notions of goodness and holiness in order to resist the Manicheans. To believe these two things, one must be like the person who said, ‘I believe because it is impossible.’”²⁴

22 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 396.

23 See above, 171.

24 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 397.

This alleged Doctor is so well-versed in the knowledge of facts that he imagines that as soon as philosophers or theologians have accepted a maxim that reason has presented to them, they accept all the other maxims that reason presents to them in order not to fall into contradiction. But it is far from true that they make use of reason in that way, for once they have chosen from reason's maxims those that appear preferable to them, they have no further consideration for the maxims that agree poorly with those, and they are obligated to conduct themselves in this way, for otherwise they would affirm two contradictory things.

Gassendi chose the evident arguments that reason presented to him for the thesis that the continuum is not infinitely divisible, and he rejected all the evident arguments that the same reason presented to him for infinite divisibility. If he had deferred to the latter species of arguments as if they were proofs of a true doctrine, then he would have taught at one and the same time that matter is divisible and not divisible to infinity. Consequently, he kept himself from deferring to those arguments, and considered them solely as difficulties proposed against a true doctrine, which could not be refuted on account of the smallness of our minds. There are many such examples in the Republic of Letters.

You already see that Bayle is justified, then, for I am sure that while I was speaking to you about Gassendi, you were applying what I was saying to the first and second propositions. It is utterly false that one overturns the other. If Le Clerc had any grounds for finding here what we call a contradiction, then he would have to establish as a certain and universal maxim that it is to contradict oneself manifestly to acknowledge that an opinion that one takes to be true is defeated by objections to which one has no response. Bayle establishes in his first proposition that by the natural light everything that God does is done well, and in the second, that our mind is too limited to bring our common notions of goodness and holiness into agreement with God's conduct. This is in no way to remove with one hand what we have given with the other; it is simply to realize that these common notions cannot serve as a rule for the conduct of God, and that they cannot be true insofar as they are put to use against this absolutely certain axiom, 'that everything God does is done well.'

Continuing his critique of Bayle's second proposition, Le Clerc observes that it is not a question here "of the divine nature considered in itself, which will always be an endless abyss for all creatures, but of the abstract ideas of virtue, or of goodness and holiness, which are most clear, and about which we can reason with perfect certitude."²⁵ However, should he not take into account that

²⁵ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 397 and 398.

the goodness and holiness of God are not qualities of the divine nature, but the divine nature itself? Everything in God is God: His goodness is not at all distinct from His justice, and His mercy is really the same being as His wrath. In this way, the ideas we form of God's virtues do not resemble the original, for we represent these virtues to ourselves as if they were distinct from one another, and distinct from the divine nature. We make use of these attributes in this way to accommodate the weakness of our minds, but in the end, there is really as much of an abyss for every creature in each of God's attributes as there is in the divine nature considered in itself, since this nature is in reality the same as each of these attributes.

The certitude with which we can reason about these abstract ideas of goodness and holiness is not as great as Le Clerc claims. He says that it is not possible for us to judge that an action that is contrary to these ideas is good and holy.²⁶ Therefore, I believe that if I asked him in general what he thought of some conduct that I described to him, he would tell me without hesitation that it was opposed to the common notions we have of goodness and the love of virtue, and consequently that it was bad. But, I would reply, it is nonetheless an example of conduct entirely similar to that which God exercised toward Adam. So I prefer to say with the Reformed theologians that we must not judge God by the dim lights of our reason, rather than to say along with Le Clerc "that we should take for holy and good actions only those that are in conformity with the ideas [that we have of virtue]."²⁷

Themistius: I am fully persuaded that this discourse would confound Le Clerc, and that he would never free himself from this difficult quandary. But that is a move I will leave for him. Continue.

Maximus: The inconveniences heaped together by Le Clerc in imitation of the Unitarians and Remonstrants in order to render the system of Dordrecht hateful would be problematic if Christians were, generally speaking, endless disputers; or if they gave themselves a law to believe nothing that was not entirely evident and to reject everything not apparently in conformity with their natural notions; or if we promised to demonstrate for them how the entire teaching of the Gospel conformed to these natural notions.²⁸ It is certain that

²⁶ Le Clerc, *BC* x, 398.

²⁷ Le Clerc, *BC* x, 398.

²⁸ Far from promising them any such thing, we take a quite different tone with them. See Nicole in the *Perpetuité de la foi*, 92ff.

in these three cases they would soon be on the high road to Pyrrhonism, never to return again. Our most orthodox theologians are in agreement on that point, and make of it an objection to overcome the Rationalists.

But thank God Christians are instructed in a better school. They are taught that their system is surrounded with difficulties that are there to serve to exercise their faith, and that, instead of a combative spirit, they should arm themselves with a humble and docile one. Moreover, they have an unshakeable foundation in a single philosophical and theological maxim, and in the certitude of revealed facts; they know, namely, that since God is Sovereign Perfection, everything He does is done well, and that His conduct toward man was exactly as Scripture reports it. Once they know by Revelation that God has done something, they are firmly persuaded that it is just; and one hundred philosophical maxims combined to prove that it is unjust would not shake them.

Instead of reasoning as Le Clerc would have Christians reason—‘a certain act of God does not conform with our natural ideas of goodness and holiness; therefore, God is neither good nor holy’—they reason in this way: ‘a certain act of God does not conform with our common notions of goodness and holiness; therefore, these notions are false and illusory when they are made to serve as a rule for judging God’s conduct.’ They do not place on the balance whether they should remain attached to these common notions or to the philosophical and theological maxim I have just indicated; they decide firmly, in full right, that all evidence contrary to this maxim is an illusion.²⁹ In this way, they remain in the state of the true faithful, and they have all the motives to practice the duties of that state. It is in this way that the inconveniences collected by the accuser disappear like phantoms. He should read a little of what Jaquelot wrote.³⁰

What Le Clerc observes about Scripture is true when he says that it means the same things by ‘goodness’, ‘holiness’, and ‘justice’ “as what men mean by these things” whenever it speaks of such notions.³¹ But we must notice, first of all, that the expressions used by Scripture are often meant to accommodate the vulgar, and would not survive a rigorous metaphysical examination. Second, that these passages from Scripture give us ideas that contain some of the

29 This serves as a response to these words of Le Clerc: “Mr. Bayle does not know what he should believe” (*BC X*, 402).

30 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 11, where it is shown that Jaquelot abandons common notions that, according to Le Clerc, cannot be rejected without undermining religion. You see how the enemies of Bayle agree with one another.

31 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 400.

features of our common notions of these virtues, as you have remarked very well.³² Third, that we can imagine a Prince who exemplifies the whole common notion of goodness, yet clearly would not fulfill that idea if he behaved toward his subjects the way God acts toward men; if being able to give them good things without any admixture of evil, he mixed much evil in the goods he distributed to them; if being able to correct their faults, he did not correct them; if he allowed his provinces to go to war with each other; if he punished the faults of which he had been, in a certain sense, the promoter, and so forth. Le Clerc, who could not endure hearing about La Calprenède and Mademoiselle de Scudéry,³³ would not be so delicate about Pliny the Younger. Allow me to invent the following scenario.

A Roman went to see Pliny the Younger and said to him: 'I know you are working on a panegyric for Trajan, and that you intend to praise the goodness of this emperor in several passages. Here is a detail that will much embellish your work. This prince applied himself with such promptness to repairing the damages in one of his provinces that had been ravaged for three years that at the end of three months not a single mark of desolation remained. But in order not to hide any truth, I must tell you that he could have prevented all these damages, and that it would only have cost him a letter. He did not want to write the letter, neither before the troubles arose, nor while they were taking place, despite knowing that the reception of his letter would have calmed the civil war in a short time. He even employed several secret schemes to embolden the leaders to start the rebellion and then continue it. Finally, after three years of appalling miseries, he took pity on his province, restored calm, and spent everything necessary to restore it promptly.'

Pliny responded, 'I will not likely use that entire narrative. I will remove the part concerning the three years, since they are hardly appropriate for proving that Trajan is a good prince, and I will speak only about the three months.'

'I must inform you,' continued the Roman, 'of two details that you might use in praising the justice of this emperor. First, he is conducting an inquiry into the corruption of some of his servants, and plans to exact punishment for their wrongdoing; second, he brings it about himself that they are worthy of punishment, either because he does not divert them from wrongdoing despite the great ease with which he could do that, or because he allots them tasks that he knows they will very badly perform, and does not give them the tasks he knows they would fulfill quite well.'

³² See above, 174.

³³ See Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 127.

Pliny replied, 'I will be sure not to use your second detail, which manifestly proves that the emperor sacrifices virtue for a vain show of justice, and that he does not in the least resemble that ancient Greek of whom it is written: 'He does not wish to appear just, but to be just.''³⁴

Themistius: Surely all panegyrists, when they praise the goodness of a monarch, suppose that he prevented as much as he was able, and stopped as soon as he was able, every inconvenience his subjects faced. One would never dare to say in a funeral oration that by a principle of his goodness the monarch brought victory to one of his provinces over all the others, for is it goodness to bring great pleasure to the conquerors, while bringing even greater misery to the conquered? One would never dare to assert that by a principle of his justice he had all those punished whom he himself had helped to fall into error.

Maximus: We see now how we must judge a passage toward the end of Le Clerc's work that can be taken as a recapitulation of the things he has repeated so many times. He says that "Mr. Bayle teaches that the Manicheans demonstrate by reason that God is not good, and he gives us no reason to believe the contrary, except to say that Scripture teaches the contrary, which is to say nothing according to his principles: first, because he says that we have no notion of the goodness of God; second, because if Scripture teaches things contrary to evident truths, as he says it does in his article "Pyrrho," then we have no reason to believe it; and third, because we cannot refuse our consent to evident things, such as, in his view, the objections he invented³⁵ in favour of the Manicheans."³⁶

Themistius: It would be difficult to fit into a passage of this length as much falsity as I find here. First, it is false that Bayle does not base himself in reason when he believes in the goodness of God.³⁷ Second, it is false that he says we have absolutely no idea of the goodness of God.³⁸ Third, it is false that he says Scripture teaches things contrary to evident truths. His opinion is that an evident notion should make less of an impression on our mind than a revealed doctrine that is contrary to that notion; and that for this reason we should abandon that evident notion as false insofar as it is contradicted by Scripture.

34 *DHC* I, "Amphiarus," rem. H, 195b.

35 On this falsity, see above, 136.

36 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 420.

37 See above, 174.

38 *Ibid.*

Fourth, it is false that we cannot refuse assent to evident things. The practice of theologians and philosophers proves the contrary as we have already said more than once. I will add nevertheless that it is evident that what is spread across a space has extension, but nearly all our theologians have abandoned this evidence, for they say that the substance of God, without having any extension, spreads itself throughout the space of the universe and penetrates all matter. And notice that they have not abandoned this evidence in order to embrace a more evident doctrine; for nothing is more incomprehensible than what they believe about the immensity of God.³⁹

Maximus: The passage from Isaiah that Le Clerc cited—“Judge between me and my vineyard”⁴⁰—is the basis of one of the most frequent objections made against Calvinists. It could be retorted even against the Pelagians, and so it could not pass for good.

After having defended the first and second propositions of Bayle against all of Le Clerc’s wrangling, we can conclude that they accord perfectly with the third, and we can ignore Le Clerc, who boasts of having proved the contrary. When he adds “that if reason and Revelation really contradict each other, then it is no longer possible to trust reason, and all the lights we have will be forever extinguished,”⁴¹ he gives us a miserable Unitarian commonplace that the orthodox have cleared up and refuted a hundred thousand times.

The opposition between Revelation and several maxims of reason is no more worrisome than the opposition found between the maxims of reason. We would badly delude ourselves if we believed that our reason was always in agreement with itself. The innumerable disputes resonating throughout the Schools on nearly every subject manifestly prove the contrary. Reason is a fair where the most diametrically opposed sects go to stock up on weapons.⁴² After that, they battle one another to the bitter end under the banner of reason, and each rejects some evident axioms. Does it follow that “it is no longer possible to trust reason, and [that] all the lights we have will be forever extinguished”?

Moreover, Bayle’s three propositions are so visibly orthodox according to the principles of the Reformers that I am not astonished that Le Clerc refused the offer made to him to have this dispute judged by the Faculties of Theology in the United Provinces. He foresaw that his condemnation would inevitably ensue. The expedient Le Clerc proposes to Bayle of having his *Dictionary* and several

39 RQP III, xv (OD III, 942–943).

40 Le Clerc, BC X, 400.

41 Le Clerc, BC X, 401.

42 RQP II, cxxxiii (OD III, 770); cxxxvii (OD III, 778).

other works approved by the Academies is the loophole of a snared Sophist and marks the end of his role.⁴³ It is not the custom in this country to have such books approved by theologians, and in any case, such an approbation would be superfluous. It is sufficient that Bayle attested publicly that he desired them to judge his doctrine, and that he reduced it to a manifestly orthodox *précis*.

43 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 423.

CHAPTER 8

Retortion of Le Clerc's Accusations

Themistius: Here is the devastating blow that I have been saving for Le Clerc. I will prove to him that the stones he threw at Bayle, and simultaneously at the system of Dordrecht (the impact of which has been avoided), can be deflected toward him.

All is lost for his position if the divine conduct is not conformable to the common notions we have of goodness and holiness. By the word 'holiness' we must understand here the love of moral goodness and hatred of moral evil. If, therefore, I prove to him that on his system the conduct of God is not conformable to these common notions, he will find that by all his objections and by all his inferences he only stabbed himself and will not heal from this self-inflicted wound.

His system is without doubt that of the Arminians, except that he has removed their decision concerning the eternity of the infernal torture, for he has decided nothing on the subject, but has reduced his position to conjecture, about which we will have something to say later.

There are three things to consider in the Arminian system. First, that before God determined himself to create man He knew what would be the consequences of the misuse of human freedom, if in fact men used their freedom wrongly. Second, that God knew that if He placed Adam and Eve in certain circumstances, they would make good use of their free will, but if He placed them in another set of circumstances, they would abuse their freedom. Third, that God decreed that He would put them in the circumstances where He had foreseen that they would misuse their freedom, despite the horrible punishment with which He planned to threaten them.

There is not a single person who cannot easily see in this conduct, first, that God willed that Adam and Eve sin; second, that He willed that they and all their descendants be exposed to all the consequences He had foreseen as attached to the first misuse of freedom. Now, these consequences are an extreme corruption of morals and an appalling multitude of miseries.

If Le Clerc could demonstrate to us a perfect conformity between these two acts of God's will and the common notions of holiness and goodness, then he would be able to prove that the conduct of a London merchant (who will be described immediately below) would possess nothing that was not conformable to the ideas we have of paternal goodness and the love of virtue.

This merchant has ten sons, and he knows by revelation that if he sends them to Cambridge, they will make considerable progress there in the sciences and in virtue, such that their merit will earn them honourable positions that they will occupy the rest of their days. But if he sends them to Oxford, they will debauch themselves, become delinquent, and pass from mischief to mischief, until justice reintroduces order by condemning them to diverse punishments. He knows, too, that he will obtain pardon for one of them. Though he does not doubt the truth of this revelation, he sends his sons to Oxford, not Cambridge. Is it not manifest by common notions that he wills that they be mean and hapless; and that as a consequence, he acts in opposition to goodness and the love of virtue?

The disparities Le Clerc might invent concerning this analogy would be as worthless as those that he and Jaquelot alleged concerning the comparison of a mother, which were utterly refuted by Bayle.

In this way, all these storms the accuser excites—that it follows that God is neither good nor holy; that we have no idea of the goodness and holiness of God; that this “leads directly to irreligion and atheism”;¹ that we cannot prove to atheists that there is a God;² that this is to furnish the pagans with a sure means of defending themselves for all the crimes their poets attributed to their gods; and so on—fall on himself and overwhelm him, leaving him with no means of escape. There you have the good service he offered to religion: he made it depend on something that turns out to be false on his own principles.

Maximus: I will not miss this opportunity to retort the objection that he based on the following words: “Judge between me and my vineyard.” He says that “Bayle would respond to God in accordance with his principles, saying that He in fact omitted only what was necessary for his vineyard to bear fruit.”³ But this response squares marvelously with Le Clerc’s system. On his system, the greatest sinners could say that God did for them only what He knew would be useless to them; that He even did precisely what He knew would be harmful to them; that He placed them in situations in which fortune was against them,⁴ and He suppressed the situations that would have been favourable to them;

¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 399.

² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 411.

³ *Ibid*, 400.

⁴ I speak in this way because according to the hypothesis of the freedom of indifference, there is no other reason that determines the will besides its good pleasure; now, it is a matter of luck that its good pleasure was this rather than that in each circumstance.

that is, that He decreed to place them, not in circumstances where He knew they would use their freedom well, but in circumstances where He knew they would use it very poorly. Let Le Clerc respond to that, if he can.

Themistius: Le Clerc objects that it is a horrible consequence⁵ of his adversary's principles that a certain action could be an injustice among men, but an act of justice for God. But this is a difficulty that faces not only all the Christian systems, but even the systems of the ancient philosophers who recognized providence. People have always been scandalized by witnessing that the unjust prosper, and the just are oppressed, under the watch of an all-perfect God.

But as I see it, we should be even more surprised that no man has ever fully avoided sin and misery under a God who has only to say the word, and immediately all men would be holy and happy. Nevertheless, this conduct of providence has no flaw. However, a Prince who had sure means of rendering all his subjects virtuous and content, and who did not employ these means, but used instead a hundred other ways the uselessness of which were well known to him, would conduct himself very poorly. Therefore, it is certain that the same thing that is evil among men is not evil for God.

Maximus: Our man is in a bind and I cannot condemn enough the omissions in his manner of proceeding. Why did he not draw a parallel in two columns between the way God treated our first fathers and the way he claims that a good, upright man would treat his children according to our natural ideas of goodness and the love of virtue? In this way he could have clearly demonstrated that the two are very similar. I would appreciate it if he gave us such a parallel one day.

⁵ "Once we begin to reason about God's conduct on the basis of the appeal to consequences, where will we stop? By this method we will easily fall from precipice to precipice all the way to the chasm of impiety or atheism" (*Histoire du cas de conscience*, volume 2, 491).

CHAPTER 9

That Le Clerc Delivers Religion, as Well as Himself, Hands and Feet Bound, over to the Atheists

Themistius: Let me see if I can surpass you by dealing him an even harsher blow. I will represent two or three atheists who, having agreed to a meeting with Le Clerc, begin with this hypothetical syllogism:

If the God of the Christians is false, then there is no God.

Now, the God of the Christians is false if His conduct is not conformable to the common notions of goodness, holiness, and justice.

Therefore, if the conduct of the God of the Christians is not conformable to these notions, then there is no God.

Bayle would stop them right away by denying the minor, but what would become of Le Clerc, who is obliged to grant them this whole syllogism? He would have to abandon at once into the atheists' hands the Greek Christians, the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the Arminians, and he would have to admit that these systems legitimately lead to the conclusion that there is no God, since they attribute conduct to God that offends our common notions of goodness, holiness, and justice. He would even have to abandon the Socinians, for he would undoubtedly consider the annihilation of the wicked a great lack of goodness, and the conservation of their existence a remarkable good. I suspect that that is why he never placed the Socinian hypothesis among the ways of responding to the objection based on eternal damnation.

It is already an approach that is horrible and injurious to Religion to grant the atheists all the most appalling conclusions they wish to draw against every Christian society. But the damage will be even greater when they refute the response Le Clerc would offer them, namely that for his part, he has nothing to fear in their syllogism, given that he does not recognize that the damned will always be very unhappy and wicked, since he conjectures that their torments will cease and give way to remorse and sorrow, which will not prevent their condition from being tolerable.

These atheists will reply that he continues to ascribe conduct to God that is greatly opposed to common notions. They will answer him: 'You believe that (1) God made Adam and Eve capable of doing both good and evil; (2) He knew they would use their freedom well if He placed them in certain circumstances,

but that they would use it poorly if he placed them in other situations; (3) He placed them in the circumstances in which He had foreseen that they would sin; (4) He threatened them in a manner He knew would not suffice to aid them in times of temptation, but that would render their sin even more grievous and punishable; (5) He permitted their fall, despite having a sure means of preventing it without placing any limits on their free will, and despite having foreseen that the fall would be unavoidably followed by all the disorder that presently reigns over the human species.'

'These disorders are incredible.¹ No man has ever been exempt from sin or misery. Good men have always been very small in number, and even counting all the good they have done, they have still committed more bad than good. The corruption of the others is enormous. The miseries of honest men and dishonest men alike are innumerable; they are all subject to a thousand discomforts, pains, and sorrows. Plague and famine afflict them occasionally, and war nearly always; they are the playthings of infinitely many extravagant and monstrous errors, and the prey of innumerable base and bizarre passions.'

'The human soul could be made into something excellent. You, Le Clerc, would not deny this, for you believe in the doctrine of Paradise. You believe, moreover, that it is always within God's power to heal the ills of our souls, and to protect us from every physical evil. You do not doubt that God has a sure means of making our souls judge rightly of things at all times, of seeing to it that they never stray from the path of virtue, and that they be always content. You have no doubt that He has such means that would leave us with the full use of our freedom; and yet error, crime, and misery, which have endured from Adam's time down to our own, will endure forever until the end of the world, while God makes use of no other remedies for this disorder than those whose uselessness to most men He knows full well.² This is your doctrine: you cannot deny it.'

'So much for what concerns the present life. After death, the unrepentant, whose number is like that of the sand in the sea,³ will perhaps be condemned to considerable torture,⁴ you say, and then to the remorse of conscience, worry, and regret, which will last forever perhaps, but will be a tolerable condition. You are not going far. People condemned to the galleys or to the mines, as well as

¹ Because Le Clerc often complained that the misery of men has been exaggerated, we will speak of it here very simply, but we will refer the reader to Mr. Amyraut, who painted an ample and lively picture of it in his *Traité des Religions*, 177 ff.

² Remedies such as exhortations, promises, threats, temporal punishments, etc.

³ See *RBL*, section VI, (*OD* III, 1002).

⁴ *Ibid.*

the slaves of Algeria, find their condition bearable once they fear falling into an even more abusive state, such that it is not necessary for the production of this effect to add some mildness to the punishments that overwhelm a miserable man: it suffices to make him fear an even greater evil. If the inspiration of this fear proves something, it is that the severity of the one who renders a condition bearable by this method has not reached the highest degree of barbarity.'

After having faithfully laid out Le Clerc's system, these atheists will desire that he show them in this conduct of God the traits that comprise ideas of goodness and the love of virtue in accordance with our common notions. They will maintain against him that by our ordinary ways of judging things, this conduct can befit only a nature that has one hundred times more hatred for the human race and for virtue than he has love, and that for this reason an enemy of the human race and of moral goodness would have something to rejoice about in the skill with which he satisfied his hatred. Would you treat your wife and children this way, they would ask Le Clerc? And if you treated in this way someone whom you considered the most detestable person, would you not consider yourself a great master of the art of hating?

Maximus: That is what is called a bell-ringer. I admit you surpassed me, but I'm not jealous. I would like to see Le Clerc's face in those circumstances. Perhaps he would yell and get quite angry; but perhaps the force of the blow would take the words right out of his mouth. If he responded that men are obligated by a superior law to aid one another as much as possible, but that the Divinity may dispose of His favours as it pleases Him, and that He was not obligated to give men more good than He did, then he would muddle himself more and more and even end up in contradiction. For he holds that if the conduct of God were not conformable to the ideas we have of goodness and holiness, then God would not be good and holy. Therefore, he must believe that God was obligated to bring His conduct into conformity with our common notions.

Besides, in matters of goodness and friendship, it is certain that external principles are not necessary. Goodness and friendship are in themselves complete principles that are reduced to action without us having to wonder whether there are any laws commanding us to do good. This is a remark that has already been objected to Le Clerc, to which he has yet to respond.⁵ If we treated him according to *lex talionis*, then we would denounce him as an inciter of atheism, since he persists in supporting a thesis from which atheists could derive many advantages. However, let's be more equitable than he; let's be equitable

⁵ *RQP* II, clxxiv (*OD* III, 870).

enough to judge that he did not see the pernicious consequences of his dogma. The blind impetuosity of his personal animosity toward Bayle that he followed headlong prevented him from reflecting properly on this matter. In any case, we have here an example that admirably proves what we cited from Jurieu.⁶

Themistius: I imagine Le Clerc would lay before these atheists all the innumerable pleasures that our souls can enjoy, and the dazzling prosperity with which God favours many people, and sometimes even whole nations, such as the Roman Empire, to which He granted victory over neighbours and many distant peoples. A declaimer would find ample material in this. However, Le Clerc would have to remember that he would be considered a Remonstrant theologian, and would be obliged therefore to defend himself against *ad hominem* arguments objected against him.

He would be shown first of all that to use the large part of pleasures innocently it is necessary to struggle continuously with nature, for without that, we would violate the Gospel commands; that in this very inconvenient combat, nature almost always claims victory, which is an inexhaustible source of crimes and of the remorse of conscience; that there are unjust pleasures that arise mechanically or to which we abandon ourselves despite reason, as in the case of the general custom of rejoicing over the misfortune of others; that all these things have been known eternally by God, and arranged according to His foreknowledge.

It would be shown him in the second place that according to him each thing happens just as God foresaw it and in the arrangement in which God placed it. Now, since the majority of people who attain a considerable fortune abuse their prosperity and finish their days miserably, it must be said that God foresaw their catastrophe as a consequence of their rise, and therefore, that He did not heap goods upon them by a principle of goodness, but in order to set them on a path that would lead them to the precipice. Common notions teach us that an enemy who hated and hurt with intelligence would employ similar methods to rid himself of his enemies. A clever courtier would hasten to get his rivals promoted to the most illustrious posts if he was sure they would be ruined by them. We will never understand how it is possible to maintain good intentions toward a person whom we shower with riches and dignities that we know he will abuse to the point of perishing miserably by them.

Theology does not permit us to believe that God loves the wicked who prosper with His aid; it teaches us rather that if such people are not punished

⁶ See above, chapter 5, 160.

in this life, they will be in the next. It is therefore a mark of God's hatred that they have acquired earthly goods that they must abuse. There is something very remarkable in Psalm 92, namely that "*the thoughts [of God] are marvelously deep, [that] the senseless person cannot know this, [and that] the fool cannot comprehend that the wicked flourish like grass, and that all the sinners thrive, IN ORDER to be eternally destroyed.*"⁷ We must understand by the senseless person and the fool all those who do not humbly submit to the light of faith; for those who would consult only their common notions, which are the topic of the quarrel with Le Clerc, could never understand, however great their mind, this passage of the psalmist: "*in order to be eternally destroyed.*"

The difficulties surrounding this subject were the cause, if I am not mistaken, of the contradiction into which the pagans fell. They considered goodness to be one of the principal attributes of the divine nature. This is how they judged when they contemplated the idea of a supremely perfect Being; but when they considered what happens to men, they represented the Divinity to themselves under the vague name of Fortune, as an evildoer, enemy of virtue, envious of human grandeur, etc.

Maximus: As for the conquests of the Romans, it would be shown him in the third place that Amyraut judged appropriately: "ordinarily, they were judgments deployed against other nations rather than evidence of the favour of God for the Roman Empire, which He wished expressly to render terrible and powerful, just as if He had given teeth of iron to a strong, devouring beast in order to break everything it met in its path, so that while feasting on other peoples, Rome would exercise the vengeance of God upon them, without realizing it."⁸

The Romans ruined Carthage, not because God loved them, but because His hatred for Carthage was riper, so to speak, than his hatred for Rome. This latter hatred reached the point of maturity not long thereafter; Rome became desolate, and was sacked several times. One must remember, moreover, that Rome's victories augmented the vices of its inhabitants, and did nothing to protect them from ordinary evils such as sickness and domestic worries. Le Clerc cannot be ignorant of the common discourse of the theologians that says that conquering nations are the instruments of divine punishment, the scourge of God, sticks he throws into the fire after using them. Let us conclude that this discussion would end to the confusion of Le Clerc.

⁷ [MH] "... POUR être exterminés éternellement."

⁸ Amyraut, *Traité des Religions*, 118.

It would not be good for us if Le Clerc knew about this fiction we just produced, for he would accuse us publicly of believing, and of supporting with every imaginable art, that the Christian God has always been the enemy of the human race and of virtue. Jaquelot would support the accusation: they are both accustomed to taking for Bayle's opinion whatever he objects on the part of those he introduces into the dispute. There would be readers who would fall into the trap, who would not know that we are merely making *ad hominem* arguments, and that we detest the consequences that the atheists could derive from Le Clerc's principle, but which they could not derive from our own.

CHAPTER 10

Whether Le Clerc Had Recourse to the Same Refuge as Bayle; An Addition to What He Said Concerning the Trinity

Themistius: What do you make of his response to the charge that in sacrificing the feeble lights of reason at the foot of the throne of God's majesty he retreated to the same refuge as Bayle?¹

Maximus: I would say he responds like a great liar, for he claims it is a question "not of the conduct of God, but of the meaning of the words of Jesus Christ."² What? Do not the words of Jesus Christ concerning the state of the damned make up precisely and formally a part of God's conduct? Le Clerc most certainly imagines that all his readers are an insignificant and ignorant bunch that believes everything he says. If he were persuaded that several readers would actually consult the writings of both parties, then his boldness in disguising the truth would be lessened.

There is another lie that can be seen on the same page,³ and that he repeats at every opportunity, but we have already refuted it. Moreover, it would be useless to examine the accusation on the page that follows, namely that it is to mock God and man, and to be a fanatic, to say that we submit reason to the Faith. Bayle is not the only target of this attack; so too is everyone most worthy of veneration among the greatest lights of the primitive Church and of the Church of every century up to and including our own. It is unbearably audacious for such a small man to treat nearly the whole body of Christianity in this way.

Themistius: It seems to me that you have been too easy on his response to the objection that he retreated to the same refuge as Bayle. You have not reflected at all on his observation that "reason dictates to us that it is better to say that we do not understand the meaning of the words of Jesus Christ than

¹ See *RBL*, section IV, (*OD* III, 994–995).

² Le Clerc, *BC* X, 403.

³ He says that Bayle claims that the eternity of punishments "is absolutely contrary to the justice and to the goodness of God" (Le Clerc, *BC* X, 403). This is pure calumny, since Bayle says only that we cannot demonstrate to the Manicheans that it is conformable to common notions.

to attribute to them a meaning contrary to reason, which is never opposed to Revelation.”⁴ This is what prevents him from interpreting literally those passages of the Gospel that represent the torments of the damned as eternal. He fears attributing to the words of the Son of God a meaning that is contrary to reason and consequently false, and so at worst he would rather say he does not understand them.

But why was he not as circumspect when it came to the passages concerning original sin, which in appearance have much less clarity than those concerning the eternity of hell? He flatly denies original sin, and suspends his judgment on the eternity of hell. Where could this disparity come from? Could it come from the fact that the rejection of the eternity of hell would not be tolerated in the United Provinces in the way we tolerate the rejection of original sin? He knows it better than I, but he does not consider it sufficient to endanger his reputation to play the Pyrrhonian on this other article.

I ask him again: why is he not as circumspect when faced with the passages of Scripture concerning the Trinity, the hypostatic union, the redemption of humankind by the death of Jesus Christ? He affirms these three mysteries, yet he knows the Polish Brethren oppose them with common notions. He should say, if he wishes to reason consistently, that from a fear of attributing to Scripture a meaning opposed to reason, he prefers to admit that he does not understand the passages by which the orthodox give proof of these three articles of their confession of faith.

Maximus: You have just placed him in the crossfire of the orthodox and the Socinians. This was a good remark; I was wrong to have omitted it.

Themistius: He was challenged “to dare to say that he did not abandon [common notions] when he recognized in God three really distinct, coessential,⁵ and consubstantial persons.”⁶ He responded coldly “that there is no reason in that case to abandon common notions,”⁷ whether we understand along with the Fathers that the three divine persons are “three equal substances of the same essence in species, or whether we take the word ‘person’ as we take it today in the whole of Christianity, and with reason.”

4 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 403.

5 He believed that Bayle meant “coeternal”, but this is to be ignorant of the fact that theologians ordinarily join together these two synonyms, *coessential* and *consubstantial*.

6 *RBL*, section IV (*OD III*, 995).

7 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 407.

These last words show us that he condemns the Tritheism that he attributes to the ancient Fathers, and that is likely to excite several objections from the Socinians. They also have the goal of reducing the orthodox to the necessity of renouncing the numerical unity of nature, and at the same time of recognizing a ternary number in essence and in personality. If they were to reach that goal, they would greatly triumph over the Trinitarians. So there you have Le Clerc in the most rigorous orthodoxy of the Roman Catholics and the Protestants on the mystery of the Trinity.

If we asked him by what secret he reconciles this mystery with common notions despite his recognition that we cannot attach any idea to the word ‘person,’⁸ he would respond that “that which makes the divine persons one single thing is not that which makes them distinct.” That is his whole secret, but, as he admits himself, the least schoolboy knows this resolution. It must be supposed, *a fortiori*, that the great Doctors know it too, and nevertheless Father Pétau renounced common notions while explaining this mystery. Is it possible that a dogma we bring into agreement with common notions so easily would appear to the theologians as the greatest example of the sacrifice of the lights of reason to the authority of God?

If there is some aspect of our faith, says Nicole, “that overwhelms and revolts reason, it is without doubt the belief in this mystery. If there are difficulties *that leap out at our eyes* ... they are those furnished by this mystery, that three really distinct persons have the same single and unique essence, and that this essence, though it is the same thing in each person as the relations that distinguish them, can be communicated without the relations that distinguish the persons being communicated. If human reason listened to itself, it would find in itself only a general uprising against these inconceivable truths. If it claims to use its lights to penetrate these mysteries, it will furnish itself only with arms to combat them. To believe, it is necessary for reason to blind itself, and to silence all its arguments and opinions, in order to humble and annihilate itself under the weight of divine authority.”⁹

Maximus: A man who speaks in this way is very far from believing that the mystery of the Trinity is reconciled with common notions by the expedient indicated by Le Clerc; for it is in this alleged expedient that the principal difficulty is found, as is shown by this passage from the same Nicole: “it follows from the Trinity that, though the divinity of the Father is not distinct in Him

⁸ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 389.

⁹ Pierre Nicole, *Perpetuité de la Foi de l’Eglise Catholique* (Paris, 1666), 118–119.

from the paternity which makes Him the Father, and though it is the same thing as the paternity, the divinity nevertheless is communicated to the Son without the paternity, and becomes the same thing as the relation which makes Him the Son, without multiplying and without losing its unity.”

Is it not a common notion that because twelve inches and one foot are the same thing, it is impossible to give a foot without giving twelve inches? By what stroke of brilliance, by what happy invention, did Le Clerc find that this notion agrees perfectly with a dogma according to which, though the paternity is the same thing as the divinity of the Father, nevertheless it was not communicated when this divinity was communicated to the eternal Son? If he indeed discovered this agreement, then he must abandon the language of all the theologians who believe in the Trinity. He can no longer say with them that it is an incomprehensible mystery, etc., for once we have perceived the perfect agreement between common notions and a doctrine, nothing is easier than to understand that doctrine. I am very tempted to believe that Le Clerc is here putting on the character of one of the greatest deceivers we have ever seen. We should remark a little how he speaks of the Trinity when he engages in disputes over it in conversation.¹⁰ His style in such cases is that of a man who treats it as chimerical.

10 See the Foreword, which follows the Preface, of the book by Mr. de Gabillon, whose title was given above in *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 4, 155.

CHAPTER 11

Plastic Natures

Themistius: Are you of the opinion that we should discuss the passage concerning plastic natures?

Maximus: No, that would be a waste of our time. Let's be content with noticing a great lie told by Le Clerc: "it was impossible for Mr. Bayle to show that this opinion gives an occasion to atheists to retort one of our greatest arguments against them. That was his principal design, and also his greatest failure."¹ It is clear once we inspect the documents of this trial that Le Clerc never left the question in the state that Bayle claimed would give rise to retortion. For once Le Clerc felt the difficulty, he said that God put into practice and led these plastic natures, which changed the state of the question, and handed the triumph over to Bayle. I am sure that Le Clerc is not happy to read what Jaquelot observes about plastic natures in his last piece against Bayle.²

¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 408–409.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 134.

CHAPTER 12

Several Remarks on Origenism

Themistius: Let us pause a while over the question of Origenism. Every sensible person would appreciate why Bayle did not refute the opinions of Origen concerning the future state of the damned.¹ Nevertheless, Le Clerc seems to have taken offence to this since he says, “I challenged him to do this several times.”² He adds that “the majority of the Manichean arguments” related by Bayle “assume” the eternity of hell, and consequently “they are ridiculous because they beg the question.” How pitiful is that! Christians both Eastern and Western, the Romans, Calvinists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians of Great Britain, Arminians, etc., all assert that the punishments of hell will be eternal. Therefore, when a Manichean objects that their systems attribute conduct to God that conflicts with common notions, and when he proves this particularly by the doctrine concerning the state of the damned, does he base his objections on opinions doubted by his adversaries? Does he not base himself on what they formally teach? Is this begging the question? Is it not a ridiculous blunder to claim that he does so? Notice that Bayle, in his dispute with Le Clerc’s Origenist, never bases anything on the hypothesis of the eternity of hell.

Maximus: Le Clerc strikes me as so weak in matters of argumentation that I am completely astonished. If he had held himself to the simple title of Grammarian I would not have been as surprised by his bad logic as I was after learning that for a long time now, aside from teaching the Hebrew language, he has taught philosophy in the Arminian college, and has even published his philosophy course several times.

Themistius: Perhaps he would reason better if his passion were less fiery. What is he thinking when he continually supposes that once we hold that the eternity of hell “is completely incompatible with the idea we have of justice,” we cannot reply to an Origenist who would conclude “invincibly, that the punishments are therefore not eternal because God is just”?³ He should examine a little the pages from Nicole’s work,⁴ then he would see that nearly all Christians are strongly

¹ See *RBL*, section VIII (*OD* III, 1006).

² Le Clerc, *BC* X, 412.

³ Le Clerc, *BC* X, 412–413.

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 7, 172.

persuaded that the eternal punishments of the wicked are just, even if they appear unjust according to our ordinary human ways of judging justice and mercy. That is how we would reply to the Origenist; and if he were obstinate in claiming that our ideas are the rule of God's virtues, we would soon reduce him to absurdity.

Maximus: If Le Clerc did himself justice, he would praise Origenism less. He would not say that if Origenism "were true, it would save religion from the attacks of Bayle."⁵ He would remember that by granting the Origenists everything Le Clerc gave them, Bayle did not fail to show that their system conflicted with common notions. Up to now, Le Clerc has not been able to parry these great blows.

Themistius: He denies that he renders the goodness and holiness of God problematic.⁶ But does he not declare that he knows not whether the punishments of the damned will be eternal, and does he not advance conjectures opposed to the common opinion of theologians concerning the eternity of these punishments?⁷ That is a fact he cannot deny. We know, moreover, that he establishes as an incontestable doctrine that if the conduct of God were not in conformity with the common notions we have of goodness, holiness, and justice, then God would be neither good, nor holy, nor just. Furthermore, we know that he agrees that the ordinary systems concerning the state of the damned attribute conduct to God that is in no way conformable to our common notions. He undertook to defend only Origenism against the objections of the Manicheans, and he abandoned the rest of Christianity. We must consider it certain that if he believed that the ordinary doctrine of hell agreed with common notions, then he would not have rejected it; for why would he separate himself from the whole body of Christianity? Why, when explaining the passages from Scripture concerning the state of the damned, would he abandon the literal sense that appears at once very clear, if he was not strongly persuaded that the eternal punishments are not in conformity with common notions, and consequently, remove from God all goodness, holiness, and justice? Therefore, I argue as follows:

According to Le Clerc, God would be unjust if His conduct did not conform to the notions we have of justice.

⁵ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 413.

⁶ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 414.

⁷ See *RBL*, section VI (*OD III*, 1001).

Now, according to Le Clerc, to inflict eternal punishment on the damned is conduct that does not conform to the notions we have of justice.

Therefore, according to Le Clerc, God would be unjust if He inflicted eternal punishment on the damned.

If, after that, this author declares that he does not wish to decide this matter, that he will content himself with conjecturing this or that, then I claim that he reduces to a *problem that will be solved only in the next life*, the goodness, holiness, and justice of God; and that if he knows in the next life that the punishments of the damned will be eternal, then he will be obligated to decide that God is neither good, nor holy, nor just; such that, while he is ignorant of the fate of the damned, he is obligated to say, in order to reason consistently, that he does not know whether God is just, holy, good, etc.

Maximus: The predicament in which he found himself here led him to some pitiful inconsistencies. Reason would have it that, after having established the major and minor of the syllogism, he should have decided firmly that the punishments of the damned will not be eternal; but because politics demanded that he not be decisive on such an article, he entrenched himself behind *maybes*, where he is incapable of warding off the attack.⁸

Themistius: He will undoubtedly say that in whatever way he is enlightened on this matter in the next life, he will always resolve the problem in favour of God's justice. That is, if God revealed to the blessed that the punishments of the condemned were eternal, then Le Clerc would acknowledge that those punishments were just.

Maximus: In that case, he would have to acknowledge that he was mistaken when he believed that the divine conduct cannot be just if it is not in conformity with common notions. He will see the injustice of his quibbling with Bayle; he will approve his adversary's principle that once we know that God has done something, we ought to be assured that it has been done well, whether we can make it agree with our ideas or not.

Le Clerc cannot be unaware that this is Bayle's principle, yet he makes this objection to him: "Mr. Bayle holds, while making conjectures opposed to his own arguments, for he knows nothing of this matter, that God will

⁸ *RBL*, section V (*OD* III, 999).

punish the wicked with punishments he calls unjust and completely unworthy of an all-perfect Being.”⁹ Where did he find Bayle saying that? We challenge him to produce the least proof of it. Where did he get the idea that Bayle speaks of the eternity of punishments only by conjecture and without knowing anything about it? Doesn’t Bayle follow the lead of nearly all Christians who ground themselves on a clear and precise revelation concerning the eternity of hell? Was Le Clerc careful not to offend mortally nearly the whole Christian body? Does he believe the Reformed Ministers will appreciate that he accuses them of preaching the eternity of hell without knowing whether it is true, and without resting on anything other than conjectures? Would he like it if we accused him of having nothing but conjectures concerning the eternity of the happiness of the predestined? Did the New Testament express itself any clearer concerning their eternal happiness than it did concerning the eternal misery of the condemned?

Themistius: You have piled up a number of remarks showing that the accuser is lost. I do not want to omit the passage where he claims that Bayle relies on nothing but a double conjecture: (1) “That there is nothing menacing in the punishments of the next life of which Scripture speaks, and that moral and physical evil will remain eternally in an excessive degree, such that an infinite number of creatures will be infinitely wicked and infinitely unhappy for all eternity, even though this directly opposes the unlimited goodness, the eternal mercy, and the most exact justice of the divinity;” (2) “that one cannot understand the eternal punishments otherwise than how he understands them, though he gives no argument for his understanding.”¹⁰

After having read these words I racked my memory as best I could, but I found I had no recollection of Bayle calling into question the dogma of the eternity of hell. Le Clerc is again at fault for not indicating the pages where he read what he imputes to his antagonist, for he should not imagine that we will take pains to search them out. Or perhaps he uses these passages only because he knows nobody will take this trouble, and that way, nobody will know whether he imputes falsehoods. In any case, I am sure, as far as I can remember, that Bayle never called into dispute whether the dogma of the eternity of hell was true or false. He never took it for true while refuting Le Clerc’s Origenist either, and it would be most useless to prove to other Christians the truth of this dogma, since they do not doubt it at all.

⁹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 414–415.

¹⁰ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 418–419.

I do not believe he ever made use of the two conjectures the accuser attributes to him, and I can guarantee that it is false that he said that the eternity of hell, as we ordinarily explain it, “is directly opposed to the unlimited goodness, the eternal mercy, and the most exact justice of the divinity.” It is loathsome calumny to attribute this to Bayle. He claimed nothing else besides this: that we cannot show, in order to respond to the Manichean objections, that this eternity of infernal torments agrees with common notions. But did he not say thousands of times that when God speaks, it is for reason to remain quiet, and to conclude that because God has done something, it has been done well, even though our natural ideas comprehend nothing of it?

Maximus: I will demonstrate using two examples the falsity of these words of Le Clerc: “if someone among the Reformed dared to propose artfully and forcefully the Socinian objections against the Trinity and the Incarnation; if he challenged every theologian to respond by means of reason; and if he grew furious with all those who, scandalized by his conduct, attempted to do so; then he might pass for a Socinian, or for someone who had lost his mind. However much he said that it was to humble reason, they would not believe he was orthodox in the Reformed party, unless they believed he had a disturbed brain.”¹¹

Let us suppose that a Roman Catholic who desired to force the Protestants to recognize the necessity of an infallible judge composed a book to show them that, by way of dispute, they could not overcome the Socinian heresy. To this end, suppose further that he laid out with every imaginable art the Socinian arguments, and compared them to the Protestant responses. Would this Roman Catholic pass in his communion for a member of the Polish Brethren or for somebody crazy because he acknowledged that the Protestants responded poorly to the Socinians? Would he not pass, on the contrary, for a man who held the principle of authority very close to his heart?

Here is my second example. Let us suppose that a Minister wished to assist Jurieu in showing Saurin that the Christian faith does not necessarily demand that we know with evidence that a certain dogma has been revealed to us, and to this end he wrote a book showing that as far as the mysteries denied by the Socinians are concerned, there is no passage in Scripture that is not obscured by their subtleties. Suppose that a Minister with a view to showing the consequences of the Rationalist hypotheses had done everything contained in the passage by Le Clerc: would he have been regarded as a false brother, as a

¹¹ Le Clerc, *BC X*, 422.

disguised Socinian, or as crazy? Not in the least. He would have passed on the contrary for a follower of the most rigid orthodoxy, and he would have been praised for the wise and ingenious method he had devised to confound the Rationalists.

Themistius: This further demonstrates that Le Clerc is endowed with only dim lights, and that he is a writer who meditates very little on the subjects he treats. If he had the patience to examine them well, he would have defended himself better than he did against one of the nine fallacies of which he was accused in the *Response to Le Clerc*. He does not deny that he mistook the meaning of the words in a passage he cited, but he claims nonetheless that Bayle believes what he imputes to him, namely, “that no system removes [the difficulties], and consequently, that all Christians must find them good and solid, and can propose them as well as he.”¹² The antecedent is true. According to Bayle, “no system can remove the difficulties”; but the inference Le Clerc draws, “that therefore all Christians must find them good and solid,” is worthless, if by “good and solid” is meant that the dogma against which they are proposed must be false.

Therefore, to remove all equivocation, to act in good faith, and to show that he was not ignorant of facts that it would have been shameful not to know,¹³ Le Clerc had to say that according to his adversary the objections are insoluble, and nonetheless destined to conflict with a true doctrine. The insolubility of the objections is in no way an indication of their truth, for the clever Peripatetics are persuaded both that the objections against infinite divisibility are irrefutable, and that nonetheless it is true that lines are infinitely divisible.

Moreover, what is Le Clerc thinking when he finds fault with his adversary for claiming that no system can remove the difficulties? Is this not the opinion of Le Clerc himself? Did he find in any Christian school a system he wished to adopt to oppose Bayle? Did he not seek out a system that had been buried for centuries, and after that, did he not employ his own conjectures that will not please any party? What appears most grotesque to me is that after arguing that according to Bayle all Christians could propose the difficulties in question as well as he, he asks whether Bayle “alone has the privilege to propose these objections.” Does this question not insinuate that Bayle would find fault with others who proposed them? How can this be made to agree with what was just

¹² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 423.

¹³ See *RQP II*, cliv (*OD III*, 871).

said? And is it possible not to know that Bayle draws an advantage from the fact that they are proposed either directly or by retortion in every Christian system?¹⁴

Maximus: Nothing was easier than to understand Bayle's thought in the passage where he asserted "that the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Arminians, the Greek Church, and the Schismatics can propose just as well as the followers of Manes the objection in question concerning the salvation of the condemned and demons."¹⁵ It was easy to see that it means that one could object to Origen that he eludes the force of the Manicheans only by a falsehood. Le Clerc took it in a completely different way. He claimed Bayle's thought was that the doctrine of Origen did not remove the difficulties any better than the other systems.¹⁶

Themistius: If we judged his mind on this basis, we would not think very highly of it.

14 *RBL*, section VI (*OD* III, 1000); *RBL*, section VII (*OD* III, 1003); *RBL*, section VIII (*OD* III, 1008).

15 *RQP* II, clxxv (*OD* III, 824).

16 Le Clerc, *BC* X, 424.

CHAPTER 13

What is the Nature of Tolerance According to Le Clerc?

Maximus: We have disregarded everything that does not relate to the principal issue, but we have let nothing pass that contains some argument or some difficulty. It is therefore time to close this chapter.

Themistius: I cannot say I share your opinion, for we have paid no attention at all to a very considerable passage that teaches us the nature of Le Clerc's tolerance. His books preach this doctrine at every opportunity, and it is also one of the four essential articles of the Arminian sect.¹ From reading these works, one would easily believe that he gives wide scope to the spirit of tolerance, but we will see that he in fact limits it to an extreme degree.

He declares he did nothing contrary to his principles of tolerance in dealing with Bayle, because it is part of the duty of theologians to cry out against all those who attack God's providence, and who utter things that destroy all religion.² "It is against the rules of all religions," he continues, "to raise difficulties against providence, especially in terms offensive to the Divinity. It is even against civil society, one of whose great foundations is the belief that there is a holy and beneficent God."

Now who are these people, I wonder, who according to him attack providence, and utter things destructive of all religion, etc.? They are the ones who admit that we cannot reconcile the divine conduct regarding sin with our common notions, and that no system can resolve these objections. He claims that it is to oppose the goodness, holiness, and justice of God; that it is to deny that God is good, holy, and just; and that consequently it is to ruin religion. You see, therefore, that he excludes from the benefit of tolerance all the followers of the system of Dordrecht, and all those called Augustinians, for they recognize ingenuously that predestination is a mystery so abstruse that we must not submit it to our ordinary ways of judging things, but that we must humble our reason before the authority of Scripture, and impose silence on the objections we cannot clear away.

¹ See Le Clerc, *BC IX*, 140.

² Le Clerc, *BC X*, 392–393.

Notice, in addition, that Le Clerc claims that every system that admits the eternity of hell attributes conduct to God that is opposed to our common notions of goodness, holiness and justice. Now, he asserts that to attribute such conduct to God is to make Him a God who is neither good, nor holy, nor just, and consequently, to undermine all the foundations of religion, and to oppose divine providence. Therefore, he would find no Christian society worthy of his tolerance. He would think himself obliged to deliver over to the secular arm, if such depended on him, all those who did not wish to sign the formal document that he would draw up that would explicitly condemn the eternity of hell. There would be very few honest people in the Christian world willing to sign this document, for the dogma of the eternity of hell is one of those we teach earliest to children, and which is inculcated most often in sermons. And we do not teach it as something only moderately important, but as a fundamental article, both for the Church and for civil society. The majority of signatures Le Clerc would obtain would lack sincerity, or would be furnished by that kind of debauched and villainous individual who suffers anxiety from a fear of hell.

Those who seek only to delude themselves in the practice of vice would adapt marvelously to Le Clerc's system, which would allow them to conjecture. You know that in matters of conjecture each person follows his own taste, and that there is no longer any fixed point once one abandons the ordinary rule of theologians, which is that the fault increases in proportion to the dignity of the person offended, from which they conclude that sin merits infinite punishment, since it offends an infinite Being, but that these punishments, unable to be infinite in degree, must be infinite in duration. Le Clerc, who abandons this rule, makes whatever conjectures concerning the state of the damned that he finds appropriate. He cannot prevent others from making their own conjectures, and indeed, he even encourages them to do so.³ Each person, therefore, will make conjectures as favourable as possible to his own interests,⁴ and will be able to believe that three days of suffering suffices as well as one hundred years to appease the Divinity; for if the punishments announced in Scripture are only threats, then it is just as likely that the execution will be short as that it will endure for a long time. That is how Le Clerc could hope to enlarge his sect. But in the end, it manifestly appears that his tolerance excludes nearly the whole body of Christianity, and that he would not even spare the Arminians if they did not break one of the articles of their confession of faith.⁵

³ Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 144.

⁴ See *RBL*, section V (*OD* III, 999).

⁵ *RBL*, section VIII (*OD* III, 1008).

Maximus: I understand the full force of the objection you have just put to him, for I see that the Reformed could not hope to shelter themselves from his persecuting spirit by telling him they reject the consequences he infers from their doctrine, and by protesting that they are very persuaded of the goodness, holiness, and justice of God. That, I say, would not render them tolerable in his eyes, since he declared that Bayle was unworthy of tolerance. Now, nobody has ever declared more often or more authentically than Bayle that even though we cannot resolve the Manichean objections, we must be firmly persuaded that all of God's conduct is just and supremely perfect, for which he gave philosophical and theological reasons.⁶

⁶ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 7, 173–174.

CHAPTER 14

General Reflections on the Proceedings of Le Clerc against Bayle

Themistius: I don't know whether in examining this dispute you have drawn as many moral lessons as I have. While reflecting on these issues I found that the spirit of Heraclitus, much more than that of Democritus, was inspired in me; for I sadly deplored the lot of human imperfection. It is a lamentable fact that people who have worked arduously to become learned and then succeeded have worked so little on purifying their heart, or that they have worked attentively on that too, but their trouble was for naught.

I do not want to doubt that they are capable of giving proof of equity and probity in indifferent matters; that is, where their passions take no interest. But have they taken a dislike to some author, with an author about whom they have no reason to complain, and with whom they should be quite pleased? Have they come to hate him without being able to give any reason? Can they say only, "we do not love him?"¹ Then there is no crime they are unwilling to commit to harm him. They look for opportunities to quarrel with him, knowing well that in the course of the dispute they will have occasion to employ the cunning of an old Tartuffe; I mean, to cloak themselves in the convenient pretext of religion.

Maximus: I did not consider these moral reflections at all, but I did attend to something else. I sought with all possible care some trace of an honest man in the two last pieces of Le Clerc written against Bayle, and I could find nothing. I saw everywhere signs of bad faith and a dark and cowardly—and I might add, *bloodthirsty* and *murderous*—spite. For who will tell me that Le Clerc did not hope that by repeating thousands of times the accusation of impiety, and by expressing it with every different phrase furnished by the French language to a man who knows well the precepts of his *copia verborum*,² he would inspire in those who are quick-tempered the spirit of the ancient Jewish Zealots, such that Bayle would be immolated by the zeal of these furious men, or by the brutality of a mob they had excited? Can we not confirm this suspicion by considering

¹ "I do not love you, Sabidius, nor can I say why; I can say only this, that I do not love you" (Martial, Book 1, *Epigram* 33).

² A treatise given to schoolchildren to teach them to express the same thing in several different ways.

these words of Le Clerc: “if there is any danger for Mr. Bayle in acting this way, it is not my fault, but his”?³ These words can be found near the beginning of his accusation; it was in order to take precautions early.

Themistius: I did not look for the same thing as you; I was certain that I would not find it in the accuser’s two last texts. I searched only for whether he showed himself to be skillful, and I found that he did not; for he takes things in the wrong way which are the easiest to understand; he confounds things visibly distinct; he needlessly repeats himself, and does so on several occasions without taking notice of responses already made to him; he has fallen into several blunders that had been indicated to him by his adversary, and he could find no excuse; he responds with nothing to the most important and pressing difficulties proposed to him; he offers no objection whose answer a skilled man could not have discovered; he offers no deduction of his methods; his alleged proofs are dispersed with no order; he draws no link between his subjects, but blurs and intertwines them with extreme confusion—“*sand without cement*”; he grounds himself on maxims he takes to be incontestable, while a practice known to the whole world refutes them; he did not foresee, as a skilled man would have, that all the difficulties with which he charged other systems could be retorted against his own system;⁴ finally, he shows in many passages that he does not understand this subject matter.

But even if he had avoided these flaws, he still would have given us reason to say he did not show any skill in this affair; for it is certain that a man of judgment never would have undertaken it, for the temerity he would have seen in it would have invariably turned him away. What is more foolhardy than to see an Arminian treat the following dogma as impious: ‘no system can relieve the difficulties of the origin and the consequences of sin, but it is necessary for reason to submit itself as well as these difficulties to the authority of Scripture’? Is this not the Reformed doctrine?

When the old Arminian quarrels are lulled, and must be for State reasons, what recklessness is it to awaken them with so much noise? Wouldn’t a man of judgment have foreseen that there would be either Flemish or Walloon Ministers unable to allow that an Arminian should involve the system of Dordrecht in his private disputes, and that he should charge that system with odious consequences and all the difficulties that the Polish Brethren pile up to prove that all is lost if philosophy is not the rule of the meaning of Scripture? Would a judi-

³ Le Clerc, *BC* 1X, 105.

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 8, 182–184.

cious man engage himself in an argument that would inevitably renew the din of a scandalous and dangerous dispute? Would he not examine above all things whether he could support his accusation before the ecclesiastical judges, or even before the civil judges, the born protectors of the honour and reputation of the people? For this cause is of such a nature that the accused may address himself when he wishes to the civil judges.

What would Le Clerc do before such a tribunal? Would it not be proven to him that he bases his accusation on a dogma that is that of the Reformed churches? He would respond that he excuses the Reformed on account of their good intentions, but that Bayle's intentions are bad. He would be asked for proofs of Bayle's intentions, he would not be able to give any, and so he would have to expect to be condemned to a sort of amends, to recognize before a full audience the recklessness of his accusations, and to confess this in a written statement. The ecclesiastic judges in this affair would of necessity be Reformed theologians. Would they bear to see their doctrine defamed in the person of Bayle? Would they not refer to God the judgment of intentions hidden in the depth of his heart? And would they not terribly censure the accuser for resting his case, not on the words, but on the alleged thoughts of the accused?

Maximus: You prove by that last piece of evidence that Le Clerc consulted neither reason nor good sense, but that he delivered himself blindly over to his passions when he set himself up as the public accuser of Bayle. I will confirm that by a new observation. What would he respond to the Reformed judges when they asked him whether Bayle left Christianity without a cure?

'He offers a cure,' he would respond, 'that is worse than the disease: that one must humble one's reason.'

'But,' the judges would reply, 'that is the cure that our Churches have always provided. And you, what cure do you offer, for you are as obliged as Bayle to cure the disease, since you acknowledge along with him that none of the systems taught in Christianity removes the difficulties or attributes conduct to God that is conformable to our common notions?'

'I cure all,' he would respond, 'for I do not affirm that the punishment of the damned will be eternal; I base this position on conjectures.'

'That,' the judges would reply, 'is what we call a cure worse than the disease. You would have it cost us the dogma of the eternity of hell, but it is a dogma too important and too essential to religion for us to abandon. Not only would we have to abandon that dogma, we would not even put ourselves in a position to respond to the enemy's objection. Go repent of your calumny, withdraw with your alleged cure. The one Bayle borrowed from our Churches will suffice for us.'

Themistius: We will never finish if we discuss every detail of the accuser's rashness. Let us stop, therefore, at this general remark. Where is the *cui bono* of the storm he has excited? It would be to abandon oneself over to illusion to suppose he hoped the Arminians would receive an increase in pension, under the pretext that it would be glorious for them that their philosopher had so much zeal for the interests of God that he carried his vigilance all the way to the Reformed community, even though it does not lack attentive people for suppressing dangerous opinions. The Arminians have too much good sense to revel in chimeras, and I can assure you this undertaking of Le Clerc displeases several of them. Perhaps it is not even approved by any of them. Besides which, if he got involved in this out of a hope for monetary profit, he could not have avoided the potential accusation of having poorly observed the duties of an honest man of good sense. But I can persuade myself without difficulty that this motive had no part in his enterprise.

So did he hope to render some service to our true Christians? It does not appear he hoped for that, since the only means that ought to have appeared proper to him to make himself useful to the orthodox is precisely what he omitted. What use is it to Christians to warn them that those who admit that we cannot resolve the Manichean objections utter an impiety, especially if one agrees that it is right to admit such a thing with respect to all the systems taught publicly in Christianity. The important thing is to prove that they are wrong in this claim, and that these systems very ably refute the Manichean objections, and to demonstrate manifestly that the conduct they attribute to God is in conformity with common notions. That is what Le Clerc should have done.

And since he embraced the Arminian party, and they entrusted the instruction of their youth to him, he should have shown everyone above all that the conduct that *their* system attributes to God conforms perfectly to common notions, as much for his own justification as to show his gratitude. Having begun there, he should have shown, both from generosity and from equity, that the system of Dordrecht says nothing about God that does not conform to the natural ideas of goodness, holiness, and justice, and then prove the same thing for the systems of the Thomists, Jansenists, Molinists, Lutherans, etc. This was the only way to suppress the worries he imagined Bayle's *Dictionary* might excite in the faithful, and the advantages he supposed the libertines could derive from it. He did not bother to render this good service to religion; he was unwilling to devote even one word to it.

On the contrary, he gave new weight to these worries of true Christians, and to the advantages that free-thinkers might derive, by admitting that everything Bayle said is true for those Christians who affirm the eternal punishment of the damned; that is, for all visible Christians, since we know neither the name

nor the location of the Christians who share the accuser's opinion on hell. We do not know, therefore, who could profit from Le Clerc's conduct. The term 'extravagant' would surely be too weak to describe this conduct if, despite his omission of the only important thing he should have done, he had imagined that he would render a good service to Christianity.

Maximus: No, no, he was in no way capable of such extravagance. He knew very well that he would do more harm than good to religion, but to him it was no loss, provided he could satisfy his hatred. That should suffice to prove that he did not act as a man of judgment.

Themistius: Is there anything more contrary to judicious conduct than both to cry out as much as he did that all is lost in matters of religion if one does not say that God conforms Himself to our common notions, and then to offer no response to the arguments by which Jurieu and Bayle proved that none of the systems of the Christian schools can exculpate providence when it is judged by our natural lights? Doesn't a little good sense teach us that when a person neglects to prove that God acts according to our common notions, it is useless then to assume this fact in opposition to people who deny it? Le Clerc neglected the first of these two things, and he assumed the second. What exercise of judgment!

Maximus: Wouldn't a man of judgment have foreseen that by his presumption he would make himself the most hateful of men if he embarked on this enterprise? Le Clerc tried to inspire his readers to draw a comparison between Goliath and Bayle, who "challenges," he says, "the pitched battles of the theologians to defend providence against his objections."⁵ But it is Le Clerc who acts like Goliath: he defies and insults the Christian Church of every century; he believes it is incapable of resisting the objections of the enemies of the goodness, holiness, and justice of God. He boasts that he is the only one who can resist them. It is necessary, therefore, for the whole body of Christianity to come to the School of Le Clerc in order to learn the true way of upholding the glory of God. Le Clerc will be the Universal Doctor of Christianity. He will deliver it from the impious error that holds it captive under the victorious arguments of the Manicheans.

And how will he do this? By teaching that instead of affirming that the damned will suffer for eternity, we must make conjectures about their condi-

⁵ Le Clerc, *BC* 1X, 141.

tion that are not too rigid. Therefore, unless the whole body of Christianity profits from Le Clerc's lessons, and unless it abjures at the feet of this new master its dogma of the eternity of hell, one will always be able to justly accuse it of conflicting with providence, and with the goodness, holiness, and justice of God, etc. Was it difficult to foresee that an affront as bloody as this would make the whole body of Christianity indignant, and would bring hatred upon the audacity of one who had the presumption to say that only he could exculpate God?⁶

Themistius: The portrait you have just given of Le Clerc's conduct is very faithful. It is a true Goliath who challenges all the pitched battles of Christianity. While Bayle warded off the enemy with the shield of faith, a sure means that he derived from the Christian systems by drawing on a principle that has always been taken to be essential to the Christian religion,⁷ Le Clerc found nothing in the systems that could protect us from the Manicheans' attack. He came up with all his own conjectures; he made it understood that if his conjectures were not adopted, then Christianity would rot forever in an incapacity to show that God is good, holy and just; that is, to show that there is a God, and to stand up to atheists. Wouldn't good sense, if he had deigned to consult it, have taught him that all the Christian communions would have reason to rise up against a man who took it upon himself to cure them by a teaching as shocking as that which leads to the denial of the eternity of hell?

Maximus: He made many enemies for himself all over Europe, especially among the theologians, either because of his dangerous doctrines, or because of his habit of decrying against the members of their order, or because of the arrogance with which he treated several famous Ministers.⁸ I do not know whether he will find somebody among so many irritated people who will want to take advantage of such a favourable occasion as this one; but I do not doubt that he would not have had this just fear if he had consulted prudence. He would have foreseen in consulting it that he could not treat this matter without providing an opportunity for his enemies to embarrass and vex him. The difficulties we

6 Concerning a much lesser subject, this lesson was offered to Le Clerc in a letter on behalf of Mr. Vander Wayen, printed in 1699, on pages 114–115: "There is found therein an unbearable vanity and boldness, to say nothing worse. He forgets himself greatly in this passage. He should have had a little more consideration and restraint for the dominant society in these Provinces ... Does only Parrhasius have zeal for the truth? Must one believe that the truth would perish without him? ... The reader will feel quite indignant about these arrogant opinions."

7 That is, the principle of the submission of reason to the authority of God.

8 Mr. Vander Wayen, for example, Mr. Allix, Mr. Benoit in the first volume of the *Parrhasiana*.

have found in his doctrines are only a small part of the arguments that would be assembled without trouble by the authors who would undertake to press him, and who would write *ex professo* against him.

Consider the extremes he could be reduced to if he were pressed to declare what he meant by 'common notions of goodness, holiness, and justice.' If he described them as being in conformity with what is in the understanding of every person, he would never make them agree with the conduct of God. If he described them as being in conformity with the divine conduct, he would be made to see that he offers as common notions things that are diametrically opposed to common notions.

Consider the grip on him provided by his conjectural doctrine on hell. If someone pressed him to explain himself on the tolerable state in which he conjectures the damned will remain eternally, and to say whether this state will be tolerable in the same way that the state of the peasants in Poland and that of galley slaves are tolerable, he will not know which way to turn. If he responds that he understands it in that way, then he will not remove the difficulty that the Manicheans base on the eternity of hell, for there will be only a difference of more and less between his doctrine and the common doctrine. If he responds that by *tolerable* he means a condition intermingled with a certain quantity of pleasure, then he will lift all fear of hell, which would expose him to a thousand theological storms.⁹

The same troubles would surround him if one were to press him on his conjectures concerning the moral state of the damned. Will they sin in this tolerable state, or will they be exempt from sin? In the first case, moral evil as well as physical evil will be eternal, and so the Manichean objection will triumph over Bayle's accuser. In the second case, nothing would be more absurd, nor less conformable to our ideas, than to make the condition of those who are exempt from sin merely tolerable.

Themistius: Le Clerc has already been made to feel a part of these great difficulties that he carefully eluded by his profound silence.¹⁰ But it would be another thing entirely if several theologians, irritated by him, or animated simply by the love of orthodoxy, pounced on him. Should he not have foreseen that he would expose himself recklessly to thorny disputes by his denouncement of Bayle? If he did not foresee that, then it is a sign that he did not act as a sensible man; but instead of consulting good sense, he consulted only his passion.

⁹ Compare above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 13, 204.

¹⁰ See *RBL*, section VI (*OD* III, 1002).

Maximus: Allow me to dwell on something particular. Even with the little reflection he gave to his undertaking, he must have sensed that he would soon be made to meet Jurieu in the middle of this road. Now, there are very few things he should have avoided more carefully than this encounter. Jurieu is a theologian for whom he has had a furious aversion for some time, and who hates him mortally. Le Clerc's star was on the rise for several years in a row, but finally fell. He pursued Jurieu so strongly on the subjects of Grotius and Episcopius that he inspired terror in him. Jurieu drank of these two chalices with all imaginable patience, however bitter he found them, but his courage was reinvigorated in his old age when he saw that one of his books was torn apart in the *Choice Library*.¹¹ He engaged Le Clerc sharply and reduced him to weakness, which we can see on nearly every line of his short reply,¹² which finishes with a sort of threat that has been vain up to now. Nothing less agreeable could have happened to Le Clerc in this situation than to meet Jurieu in agreement with Bayle, and he must have been certain he would have this meeting soon.¹³

This confines him to an infinitely uncomfortable straight: it imposes on him the hard necessity either of doing violence to the inclinations of his heart in order to follow the political course, or to have contempt for the counsels of prudence in order to follow the inclinations of his heart. If he speaks offensively of the person and the doctrine of Jurieu, he will tickle himself where nature may give him great pleasure, but he will lose the principal fruits which he hoped for in the accusation of Bayle, for rather than acquiring the favour of Jurieu's friends, he will irritate them. If he makes an apology for the doctrine of Jurieu under the pretext that this author accepts the system of Dordrecht in good faith, that he rejects the consequences that the Arminians derive from absolute predestination, and that he has not taken the poison of claiming that no system can exculpate the divinity, then he will embarrass himself in several ways.

First, he will offer as a principle that it is unnecessary to condemn or refute errors and impiety except when those who teach them have imbibed their poison. Now, this is a ridiculous and frightful principle. Second, he will shred and smear the memory of the first Arminians, for it is certain that Gomarus, Bogerman, Lubbert, and the other Predestinarians whom they attacked with a din that caused many storms and much popular emotion, were of good faith, and rejected the despicable consequences with which their doctrine was

¹¹ Le Clerc, *BC* V, article 6.

¹² See Le Clerc, *BC* VI, article 9.

¹³ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 3, 150.

charged. Third, he will be obliged to prove that Bayle is an author who does not act in good faith, who assents to various inferences, and who has taken the poison of Jurieu's doctrine. But is it not madness to hope to prove such things?

Themistius: There is every appearance that Le Clerc will take the side of hiding his inveterate hatred and, at the price of making nature suffer, will pretend to esteem Jurieu and to excuse him for a doctrine that is in full conformity with that of Bayle. This dissimulation is the political course of action. Perhaps one day he will even be Jurieu's panegyrist through a fickleness positioned in the opposite direction to that with which he reproached Bayle, and from which the latter justified himself over nine years ago.¹⁴ If Le Clerc knew it, then why renew these dated and ruinous accusations? If he did not know it, then this is not an ignorance that exonerates him. But to return to my subject, I repeat to you that there is every appearance that he will court Jurieu, and that the latter will make similar advances toward him. We are wrong if we imagine that theological hatred is the sort where all the characteristics of hatred are best united and concentrated; it is as supple as that of the finest courtesans, and cedes admirably to reasons of interest.

Maximus: Let's not trouble ourselves if the relationship between these two Ministers passes from black to white, but let's rest assured that Le Clerc followed bad advice when he set himself up as Bayle's accuser. This is a quarrel that will give him no honour. I have been told there are Rationalists, men suspected of Arminianism and even Socinianism, who are grateful to Le Clerc for what he has done. I do not doubt that several people, disposed against Bayle because he never took pains to write according to their taste, have declared themselves for Le Clerc with a popular, spirited force that is easily won when we dress ourselves up with zeal for the truth.

But what is such applause in comparison with a ruling of condemnation pronounced by sensible and judicious people who know how to distinguish a false glimmer from true light?¹⁵ If Le Clerc should lose only the reputation that he had acquired of having been cured of several false prejudices that distanced him from the path of equity and of right reason, I would not consider this loss as nothing. He did not acquire that reputation at a small cost, but by a bold commitment, renewed in all his confrontations for several years, to censure

14 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 383.

15 "Distinguish carefully what sounds solid from what is merely the painted plaster of the tongue" (Persius, *Satire 5*, verse 24).

the conduct of theologians from a dominant sect. Who will not say from now on that he developed the same flaws in his heart, of which he was such a severe judge, and that as soon as the opportunity presented itself these flaws were brought into the light of day in all their fullness, a clear sign they had existed there for a long time? If Bayle had deigned to respond to him, he could have justified his silence by the principles of his book in which he examines whether it is always necessary to respond to the calumnies of theologians.¹⁶ What he said in order to show that he did not act against his principles is so short, so vague, so weak, that he would be very wrong to hope he will erase the impression made by the reading of his works.¹⁷

Maximus: Sectarian prejudice produces, among other character flaws, a violent inclination to favour everything likely to make other sects hateful. A man with this flaw could not endure being shown what is praiseworthy in other sects, nor would he bear listening to the refutation of the falsehoods that besmirch them. One might have believed in reading Le Clerc's books that he was free of this flaw, but his most recent conduct teaches us the contrary. He could not bear that Bayle should report faithfully the objections an upholder of the two principles could propose to Christians. He could not bear that this same author should claim, according to the thought of a very large number of famous writers, that atheism is not the worst of the states into which the soul of man can fall, and that a society deprived of religion could nevertheless be maintained. He claims it is to work "to diminish the hatred we rightfully have for atheists."¹⁸ This is a remark he copied from Jurieu without any consideration for the arguments that had served to refute it.¹⁹

This teaches us at the same time that he is fully persuaded that one must never admit anything that could diminish the hatred people have for religions they believe to be false. For if the interest of the true religion demands that the hatred aimed at atheism should never be diminished, then it demands incomparably more that the hatred aimed at infidels, heretics, and idolatrous Christians be maintained in all its force. There is greater danger that someone orthodox will become Muslim, Socinian, or Catholic, than that he will become atheist. It is therefore more important for the Protestant communions to foment all the true or false facts that might sustain an aversion to Socinianism or Catholicism, than to foment by every just or unjust means an aversion to

16 Le Clerc, *Ars critica*, volume 3, toward the end.

17 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 392.

18 Le Clerc, *BC X*, 323.

19 See *Addition to the Various Thoughts on the Comet*, the responses to the 13th and 20th objections.

atheism. Le Clerc is consequently obliged to approve all the pious frauds that indiscrete zealots use to augment as much as possible the hatred for Popery, and he must find condemnable Mr. Reland, who collected the falsehoods Christians have spread concerning Muslims;²⁰ for if his book were read by Christians in Turkey, it would diminish the hateful and ridiculous idea they have of the religion of Mohammed. Now, it is good that they preserve this idea, for they are exposed to temptations that could lead them to become Muslim.

Themistius: If Le Clerc does not watch himself, he will soon resemble the bigots of the Roman communion who suspect a secret penchant for Calvinism in all the Catholics who admit that Calvin was not covered in *fleur-de-lys*; or he will resemble those Protestant bigots who regard as false brothers all those who call into doubt the necromancy of several Popes and the story of the “Popess” Joan. Do they not both share the same principle with Le Clerc? Don’t the bigots from the Roman church say that the story of Calvin’s *fleur-de-lys* sustains the hatred for Calvinism, and that it is necessary to keep from diminishing this hatred? Don’t the Protestant bigots say that nothing is better for inspiring horror for the Roman church than to say that the Popes gave themselves over to the devil, gave birth in the streets, etc., and that it is necessary to keep from diminishing this aversion?

END of PART ONE

²⁰ See *NRL*, September 1705, 317 ff.

PART TWO

A Response to Jaquelot's
Examination of Bayle's Theology

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Introduction

Maximus: You see: I remembered the time we agreed upon to meet and discuss Jaquelot's last book. I read it with great attention and with great surprise too, for I did not find in it the responses that I had expected.

Themistius: Don't be so modest: you and I both have enough experience to know a devastating blow when we see one. Personally, after reading the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*,¹ I would have bet ten-to-one that Jaquelot's reply would leave Bayle's objections intact. The public voice was the first to make this forecast.

Maximus: I know, but that very fact made me expect many extraordinary things from the response. I have known Jaquelot well: humility is not one of his strong points. He is sensitive to human glory, from which I concluded that the judgment of the public which attributed victory to his antagonist, as much for the past as for the future, would hurt his honour so much that he would exert his mind to the point of enthusiasm. You are not unaware of the effects of poetic frenzy. It furnishes ideas and expressions that render a man as much superior to himself as he is superior to vulgar men in his natural state. You know that prose has its inspiration, its vigour, its enthusiasm.

Themistius: In this particular subject, I give no more credence to the enthusiasm inspired by the sight of an overturned trophy and the violent passion to restore it, than to mystical ecstasies. In these matters, all that a mystic could learn "in the excess of his love" was that at the height of his prayer, in which he "made appeals to the eternal Father to destroy and annihilate sin by the merits of His Son, ... he heard the voice of God who told him"² that it was a decree made at the tribunal of divine wisdom that men should be always free to serve or to offend Him, and that because of that decree, He could neither force nor violate their freedom.

Maximus: So you are saying that, regardless of the heights attained by Jaquelot's enthusiasm, still he would have returned only with the solution of free will that he had offered before.

¹ [OD] It begins at *OD* III, 754. See especially *OD* III, 760 ff.

² *Vie de la bonne Armelle* (1704 edition), 249.

Themistius: That is my thought. But whatever the case may be, let us begin to examine his reply. It contains 472 pages of which we can ignore the first 304, which are superfluous for our purposes. The dispute had been reduced to these three points: 1. the freedom of indifference; 2. the origin of evil; 3. the objections that Pyrrhonism can raise against several revealed dogmas.³

The first point no longer deserves our attention; Jaquelot should have abandoned it entirely in his reply, since Bayle had given him *carte blanche* by permitting him to be entirely Pelagian if he wished, since Bayle had defeated him over the origin of evil without supposing the principle of the freedom of indifference.⁴ Jaquelot continually tried to reassert the importance of the question of whether man possesses this freedom. The itch to dogmatize as an Arminian brought him to it; he showed the same impatience that new Proselytes show when they publish incessantly the motives of their conversion.

³ See *RQP* II, cxxviii (*OD* III, 761).

⁴ *RQP* II, cxlii (*OD* III, 794).

CHAPTER 1

Whether Jaquelot is an Arminian Neophyte

Maximus: Let me stop you there. It seems to me that you take Jaquelot for an Arminian neophyte. Do not put too much trust in what he said, “that in meditating on this material more deeply once he desired to respond to Mr. Bayle,” he found the system of the Remonstrants preferable to the system of Dordrecht.¹ Innumerable people believe he left France a good Arminian, and that he signed the Synod of Dordrecht in Holland only because without doing so he would have been excluded from all the excellent treatment afforded to Refugee Ministers.

He is one of the principal Ministers Jurieu had in mind when he made this comparison: “When fire catches in the forest ... it is not only the doe and the fallow deer, the dove and the turtledove who leave; the wolves and the lions, the vultures and the owls flee as well ... [W]hen the fire of persecution engulfed the Protestant churches in France ... the souls touched truly by God and His truth took leave; but with them fled also impure animals, men corrupted in heart and mind, enemies of God and His truth.”²

Jurieu then describes the cabal that formed in France among the Reformed and “that plotted against Christianity in general.”³ “These men,” he adds, “have nearly all been discovered since the persecution dispersed them to places where they have been able to express themselves freely ... and yet, because they wanted some part of the charity made to Protestant refugees, they hid part of their opinions.”⁴ It is beyond doubt that Jaquelot was principally in Jurieu’s mind here.

Themistius: You have brought me back to the point and reminded me that Jaquelot believed he was targeted by this invective of Jurieu, for he worked seriously to exonerate himself by publishing the *Warning concerning the Portrait of Socinianism*.⁵ He declared that he was in no way Socinian, and that “for the part he might have ... in these regrettable suspicions, and to avenge himself for all this gall, he prayed to God” to bless his accuser.⁶

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 66.

² Jurieu, *Tableau du Socinianisme [Tableau]*, 4–5.

³ Jurieu, *Tableau*, 5.

⁴ Jurieu, *Tableau*, 8.

⁵ [MH] Isaac Jaquelot, *Avis sur le Tableau du Socinianisme* (Amsterdam, 1690).

⁶ Jaquelot, *Avis*, part 1, 5.

“It is necessary to drop the insults,” he continues, “to erase the ideas of the bear and the owl that the flame chases from lair and hole. The first precept of the Gospel commands it, and even goes so far as to say that if some scoffer called Jurieu the hare of this forest who fled at the first sound of a leaf without waiting for the storm and the fury of the conflagration, this Holy Gospel even demands, I say, that we should uphold the reputation of Mr. Jurieu.”⁷

He did not place his name at the head of this work, but the public, and above all Jurieu, soon knew that he was its true author, and this was one of the articles on which the Commissioners of the Walloon Synod, urged by Jurieu, wished to interrogate him. A feigned illness⁸ spared him the trouble of this examination, but he was never able to erase the impressions that this little book and the consequences that his adversary drew from it left in people’s minds.⁹ If several people refrained from believing that he was Socinian, they nevertheless did not refrain from believing that he was an Arminian who tolerated Socinianism, which according to the *Portrait* of Jurieu “is a kind of deism”¹⁰ in some respects and which is worse than Mohammedanism¹¹ in others.

However, I do not retract what I said about this author, that he desired to dogmatize like an Arminian with all the impatience of a new proselyte, since it is only recently that he has been able to do so in the open. I also believe that there was another motive that determined him to elaborate on free will: he was searching for a pretext to accuse his adversary of destroying freedom. In any case, if he had followed the public’s taste, he would have focused only on the difficulties of the second article, namely the origin of evil. The curiosity of the readers of this dispute is piqued on this point alone, and there is no controversy more disagreeable than the one over free will. Let’s abandon it and begin our examination on page 304 of Jaquelot’s reply. It is there that he finally examines the second issue in this debate.

Maximus: I beg you not to press ahead too quickly, but to agree to allow us, before getting to that matter, to make several preliminary remarks that will display the weakness of Jaquelot’s conduct.

Themistius: If you wish.

7 Jaquelot, *Avis*, 6.

8 That is, it was judged to be so later on.

9 Jurieu, *Tableau*, 97 ff.

10 Jurieu, *Tableau*, 20; see also *RBL*, section II, 991.

11 Jurieu, *Tableau*, 78 ff.

CHAPTER 2

First of Jaquelot's Faults: He Attacked Bayle's Doctrine without Admitting That He Knew That It was the Same as That of the Reformed, and He Pretended to Believe That It was Very Different

Maximus: It is very clear to everyone who reads with even the slightest attention the articles of Bayle's *Dictionary* touching the difficulties surrounding the origin of evil that he did nothing more than paraphrase what Jurieu had published in his *Judgment on the Methods* of 1686. Now, Jurieu, in acknowledging on the one hand that the System of Dordrecht cannot answer the objections, and in proving on the other that no other system can resolve them, merely developed the usual opinion of the Predestinarians; for they have always acknowledged that the fall of the first man and its consequences are impenetrable mysteries, and that our reason is too weak to discover the agreement of Adam's freedom with God's decrees. They have added that this does not prevent us from having to believe that the perfections of God remain wholly intact, and they have retorted the objections of their adversaries, and held that the simple permission of sin forms an insoluble argument when we wish to judge the conduct of God by the natural light. They took advantage of this occasion to uphold the excellence of faith and of the character of the Gospel, and to show that our reason must submit itself to the authority of Scripture when it comes to the doctrine of absolute predestination, just as when it concerns the mystery of the Trinity, etc.

Bayle did nothing but follow this route; he treated this matter in the style and according to the spirit of the Reformed theologians. That is incontestable when one considers the reflections that he inserted following the objections he reported, but especially when one considers the two long *Clarifications* he placed at the end of his *Dictionary*. Nevertheless, it pleased Jaquelot to consider Bayle's doctrine a novelty unprecedented in the whole Christian church, and to attack it under that heading, on the pretext of defending religion.

Themistius: I know some who have wished to excuse Jaquelot in a way that strikes me as being entirely impertinent. They have said that because he devoted several years to reading the most learned humanists of the seventeenth century while he worked on his book on the existence of God, he had forgotten what the Predestinarians say, and perhaps did not know what Jurieu had

advanced in his *Judgment on the Methods*; for his dedication to his work on the existence of God was such that it afforded him no time to read new books,¹ not even when he received them as gifts from their authors. This excuse appears to me false, and also injurious to Jaquelot. It is more probable that some particular annoyance was the cause of his quarrelling with Bayle while concealing what he knew of the conformity of the *Dictionary's* doctrine with that of the Predestinarians.

Maximus: A large number of people in Holland know that he was outraged to see that Bayle had cited the *Dissertation on the Existence of God*² without giving it any further praise than calling it a “fine book” [*beau livre*].³ Jaquelot openly protested and made his complaints heard in several places. It is true that he did not dare to say that his protests were based on the fact that the compliment “fine” was employed rather than the superlative “very fine” [*très beau*] or some other sublime epithet. He claimed that the term “fine” had been employed ironically.⁴ Having learned of this, Bayle had a common friend explain to Jaquelot that he had intended the natural meaning of this word, and that it is clear that he used it concerning a book about which nobody would ever have suspected him of trying to speak ironically.

Several people foresaw at that time that Jaquelot would write against Bayle with the animosity of a great enemy, that he would nonetheless obfuscate matters in his first attack because he knew that the reply to it would open a wide field to him. In any case, you are right to say that he took as an insult the excuse that you reported, for he was cut to the quick by Bayle's reproach that he had behaved like an author who had no knowledge of the Reformed doctrine.⁵

Themistius: Yet this reproach was the least offensive way of handling the situation, for if one supposed as a certain fact that the Reformed doctrine was before Jaquelot's mind, then one would represent him as guilty of having attacked the memory of Luther and Calvin and of several other heroes of the Protestant churches. Indeed, Jaquelot would have accused them of having advanced max-

1 We know with certainty that he said or wrote this to Mr. Drelincourt, Professor of Medicine at Leiden.

2 [MH] Isaac Jaquelot, *Dissertations sur l'existence de Dieu, où l'on démontre cette vérité par l'histoire universelle, par la réfutation d'Epicure et de Spinosa ...* (The Hague, 1697).

3 *DHC* III, “Pergame,” rem. C, 657a.

4 An obvious ruse, since there is nothing more common than to say in all seriousness: “that is a fine book,” “I bought a fine book,” “someone lent me a fine book,” etc.

5 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 440.

ims pernicious and harmful to the Christian religion. Now, either they would have known these maxims had those qualities or not. In the first case they would have been impious, and in the second they would have been ignoramuses incapable of reforming religion, for they would not have been able to distinguish what ruins it from what is useful to it. Rest assured that Jaquelot would offer Jurieu a very bad compliment if he wrote to him, 'I excuse you for the doctrine that I condemn in Bayle's case, for you did not know of its venom; you uttered it justly and in the simplicity of an Israelite without fraud.'

By the way, I believe that he was most sensitive to, and most offended by the necessity with which his adversary forced him to speak of Jurieu; for he was forced to speak either discourteously or courteously.⁶ The former course would have conformed to the inclination of his heart but would not have been political; and so it was necessary to sacrifice this inclination to politics by taking the latter course. It is not wise to embitter those who are already unhappy with one's doctrine.⁷

But let's leave aside all these minor incidents, and let's say that the dissimulation which he kept up in his first book could not be sustained in the second. There are so many formal declarations in the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*,⁸ so many passages from Jurieu's *Judgment on the Methods* and from books he published against Saurin, so many other citations of orthodox and venerable authors—and besides all that, Bayle so clearly indicated in his last reply to Le Clerc⁹ that his doctrine, once reduced to three propositions, was the same as that of the Reformed, and that to support the impact of the Manicheans he employed the same arms as the Reformed¹⁰—that it was entirely necessary for Jaquelot's second book to explain the opinion of its author on this conformity of doctrine of which his adversary boasted. He consequently explained himself; but instead of taking advantage of the occasion to perform a glorious action before God and honest men (i.e. to admit in good faith that he finally saw that Bayle's principles were those of the System of Dordrecht) he upheld the contrary position, resting his case on three remarkable falsehoods.

6 See above, *Dialogues*, part 1, chapter 14, 213.

7 In his Preface to *ETB*, on page 18, Jaquelot observes that some say there are theologians who cry out against him.

8 [OD] *RQP* II (*OD* III, 760–863).

9 See *RBL*, section III, at the beginning (*OD* III, 992b–993a).

10 *RBL*, section V, at the beginning (*OD* III, 997a–b).

Maximus: There you have the usual effects of false human honour: one would rather get out of some difficulty by a reckless act than by a sincere one. Jaquelot exemplifies this when he claims, on the one hand, that 1. Bayle “denies human freedom in whatever manner it is conceived”; 2. “Bayle claims that God is the author of sin”; 3. “Bayle believes that the evils and miseries of this life, and above all eternal suffering, are incompatible with a perfectly good Being”;¹¹ while claiming on the other hand that the supporters of the Synod of Dordrecht deny that man is deprived of the essence of freedom, that he is merely a purely passive subject of God’s actions, and that God is the author of sin.¹²

We will soon examine in some detail the first of these differences on which the second depends, and we will show that neither is Bayle’s doctrine.

As for the third, it suffices to say that Jaquelot grossly confused two very different propositions: the first proposition is that the evils of this life, but above all those of eternal suffering, would be incompatible with an infinitely good Being if we judged His conduct by our common notions of goodness; the second proposition is that, absolutely speaking, they are in no way compatible with an infinitely good Being. Bayle constantly maintained the contrary of this second proposition; he maintained the first only insofar as he always acknowledged that our natural ideas of goodness cannot serve as the rule for divine conduct. We will see in due time and in the right place that this is also the doctrine of Jaquelot.

¹¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 417.

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 433.

CHAPTER 3

Second of Jaquelot's Faults: He Believes That the Same Doctrine is Innocent or Blameworthy Depending on the Intentions of Those Who Teach It

Themistius: But what is he thinking about in speaking to us incessantly of Bayle's intentions? Reasons, objections, and opinions are not good because they are proposed by very solidly orthodox people, or bad because they are proposed by wicked enemies of orthodoxy. They are good or bad according to an inherent and intrinsic quality¹ that depends neither upon the intentions, nor the virtues, nor the vices of those who advance them. Moreover, the public does not need to know Bayle's secret intentions—*the people scarcely care about that*²—the public is interested only in the actions and the words of people, since it is by these that one can harm or do good to society; somebody's thoughts alone do neither good nor evil to anyone. Civil and ecclesiastical judges refer them to the tribunal of God and content themselves with knowing what one has done. If what an author teaches is true, it is necessary to approve of it even if his intentions are not good; and if he teaches falsehoods, it is necessary to refute them even if his motives are very good.

What is it to me to know whether Jaquelot published the *Conformity* from nothing but zeal for the truth, or whether he had in mind, first, to avenge himself for not having been cited with a magnificent compliment; second, to profit from the dedicatory letter; third, to attract the reputation of a good servant of God, and in so doing, to earn an increase in wages and a good portion of the pious donations of devout women. It would not be just if I amused myself with such suspicions; my duty is to profit, if I can, from reading a work without informing myself of the intentions of its author. It is not to me that he must answer for those intentions. Bandits would find their way into the Republic of Letters³ if it were permitted to dispute with authors by accusing them of having bad intentions.

¹ See *RQP* II, clii (*OD* III, 816).

² Terence, *Andria*, act 1, scene 2.

³ See *RBL*, section I, at the beginning (*OD* III, 989–990).

Maximus: Jaquelot has other principles. He knows that Jurieu taught that no system can resolve the objections touching the fall of Adam and its consequences. He is not ignorant of these words of the same author: “To what degree must one become blind to say that before the tribunal of reason we will win our case on the subjects of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the satisfaction, the sin of the first man, and the resurrection of bodies? Those who say that cannot believe it: we will never be persuaded that they speak in good faith; for all the false lights of reason revolt against these mysteries. And these false lights are such that it is impossible to distinguish them from the true, except by the lights of faith.”⁴ Nor is he ignorant of a hundred other passages of equal force that can be read in Jurieu’s works, and consequently, he knows that Bayle did not speak more advantageously of the Manichean or Socinian objections than did this Minister. A very inconvenient challenge could be offered to him on this point.⁵ Yet he declares that he has nothing to say against Jurieu’s doctrines because he believes him to “hold his system in good faith, without directly attacking the foundations of religion”;⁶ but he wishes to refute Bayle alone, because he believes he is hardly persuaded of the system of Dordrecht and harbours ill intentions toward the principles of religion.

Themistius: There you have a well-kept secret: even the Irish scholars [*Hibernois*], so fertile in distinctions, have never known how to separate two such things. They believe with the rest of humankind that if Titius and Mevius teach the same doctrine, then one could not refute that of Titius without refuting that of Mevius. Jaquelot should not worry about anybody becoming envious of or plagiarizing his new invention. Nobody will be jealous or try to snatch it away from him. But he will undoubtedly be asked whether he understands his distinction, and by what effort of genius he was able to elevate himself to the comprehension of how to separate things so tightly joined.

Maximus: We must not forget the abruptness of his progress when it comes to divining the intentions of his adversary. He declared in his first book that he had “no intention of attacking the person OR THE HEART of Mr. Bayle”;⁷ “... I repeat it once more,” he added, “it is not my design to penetrate HIS INTENTIONS:

⁴ Jurieu, *Religion du Latitudinaire*, 383.

⁵ For where would he be if someone challenged him to prove that Jurieu was orthodox and Bayle heterodox by placing in two parallel columns their respective passages concerning the same questions?

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 66–67.

⁷ Jaquelot, *CFR*, Preface, fol. *** 2 verso.

I leave that to the judgment of God and to his own conscience. He declares that these are difficulties that he proposes merely so that we will respond to them";⁸ "... I do not want to penetrate THE SECRET AIMS of this author ... let us beware of rash judgments."⁹ But in his second book he never ceases to affirm that Bayle has very bad intentions. Where did these new lights come from in such a short time? Is it from reading the response that was made to him? It would be an evident absurdity to claim such a thing. Let's speak frankly: this change of behaviour comes from nothing other than his passion irritated by the ill success of his attack.

Themistius: Note that his conscience has not always been dormant; for having foreseen in his more lucid intervals that the heat of the debate and the need for excuses would compel him to repeat his rash judgments thousands of times, he gave a formal disavowal and a sort of retraction. "I wish only," he said in his reply, "that it be remembered that I claim to speak neither of the person of Mr. Bayle, NOR OF HIS HEART";¹⁰ "... The title of this chapter," he said several pages later, "sufficiently shows that I want to speak NEITHER OF THE INTENTIONS NOR OF THE HEART of Mr. Bayle."¹¹ These few words are a very effective means of shattering Jaquelot's work, and they will prevent me from casting down on him the thunder with which Arnauld crushed a certain Minister who had had the boldness to rumour that the men of Port-Royal did not believe the doctrine of transubstantiation about which they had published so many volumes.¹² Accusers of intentions ought to learn from the severe judgments that Arnauld pronounces against them.

8 Jaquelot, *CFR*, fol. *** 3.

9 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 222.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 60.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 78.

12 See the *Apologie pour les Catholiques* II, chapters 5, 6. Mr. Claude would find himself very embarrassed by the way in which they press him, because he insinuated that their writings and their thoughts did not agree. See the same *Apologie* chapter 6, and the *Perpétuité défendue* II, chapter 9.

CHAPTER 4

Third of Jaquelot's Faults: He Claims That Bayle Removes Every Sort of Freedom from Man

Maximus: We saw that the first difference concocted by Jaquelot between the dogma of the Predestinarians and that of Bayle is that the former leave some freedom to man while Bayle leaves no freedom of any kind.¹ Jaquelot speaks so firmly and so often of this article that we could not prevent ourselves from believing that he wants to persuade his readers above all of this point. He doesn't wait for them to arrive at the body of his text; he assures them three or four times in the Preface that Bayle endeavours to ruin freedom. It is difficult to understand by what turn of mind Jaquelot fell into this illusion, assuming it is only an illusion.

Themistius: I understand nothing of this, for I remember what was said in response to these words: "Mr. Bayle [realized] that the sins and miseries on which the difficulty rests are consequences of free will. THIS IS WHY HE DEVOTES ALL HIS EFFORT TO DESTROYING IT."² It was answered that Jaquelot had found in Bayle's *Dictionary* only four objections concerning free will, and that: the first is not at all an objection; the second could pass for a considerable difficulty, but not for a formal attack; the third is troubling, but it was not proposed except in passing and in a few words, while the objections that are directed against those who fortify themselves by the hypothesis of free will are much developed; the fourth is in a passage of the *Dictionary* where there was no intention whatsoever of contesting the existence of human free will.

How could anyone say that an author who had planted here and there four remarks as the occasions presented themselves "devoted all his effort to destroying free will"? How could this be said once it was clear that this author had principally and amply insisted on showing that the freedom of indifference did nothing to remove the difficulties? That he should speak in this way of an alleged effort by Bayle to ruin free will is without doubt a marvel of the first of Jaquelot's works; but the marvel is much greater in Jaquelot's reply composed since the time that he saw that Bayle agreed to dispute with him

¹ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, at the end of chapter 2, 226.

² See *RPQ* II, cxlii at the beginning (*OD* III, 791b).

as with a Pelagian,³ and that in fact Bayle had always managed the dispute by presupposing the freedom of indifference and by claiming that this sort of freedom in no way weakened the Manichean objections. Once again, there is nothing more incomprehensible than the pretence of Jaquelot, who knew all these facts yet continually affirmed that Bayle rejected and annihilated every sort of freedom.

Maximus: Who will be persuaded that Bayle worked toward something as useless as that? If it had been impossible for him to arrive at his goal while acknowledging free will, then one might believe that he would devote all his effort to destroying it. But since he conformed himself to the claim of Jurieu and every Reformed theologian and upheld that the hypothesis of the freedom of indifference leaves the difficulties surrounding the origin and consequences of sin with all their force, it is evident that it was a matter of indifference to Bayle whether this hypothesis was true or false, and therefore, since he had no interest in combating it, he did not endeavour to destroy it. Even if I granted that he, along with nearly all the Reformed theologians, had combated free will with all his force, would it follow that he attempted to destroy every sort of freedom?

Themistius: Not at all: this consequence would be chimerical. The Counter-Remonstrants reject the freedom of indifference and yet they do not fail to uphold that man acts freely; for they teach that freedom consists in the fact that man acts voluntarily and with deliberation. They claim that necessity and freedom are in no way incompatible, and that grace, efficacious in itself, by which man is made to will the good necessarily, does not prevent man from willing it freely. It was debated some time ago whether the human will cooperates with grace in the first act of conversion.⁴ Those who denied it did not claim that man, with respect to this first act, was stripped of every sort of freedom, for he felt himself turned toward God without constraint, he willed to love God, and he loved Him while knowing what he was doing. It is easy to understand that freedom on this definition is inalienable from the human soul.

Who was Jaquelot hoping to persuade that Bayle was crazy enough to try to remove this sort of freedom from man; that is to say, to prove that we will nothing with deliberation, and without feeling a constraint that drags us along despite ourselves to will this or that? I defy Jaquelot to show that his adversary has removed from man the sort of freedom that is ordinarily defined by the

³ See *RQP* II, cxlii at the end (*OD* III, 794b).

⁴ See *DHC* IV, "Synergistes," 216 ff.

Reformed schools. The astrological *fatum* would not rob us of this freedom: Bayle showed this very clearly and Jaquelot could not have missed it.⁵ I am baffled by Jaquelot's marvels.

Maximus: Nevertheless, let us believe from charity that Jaquelot bases his case on something that could dazzle a controversialist who is already overheated by this dispute, and let's try to find out what his foundation might be.

⁵ In *RQP* III, clxx (*OD* III, 86o).

CHAPTER 5

Whether There is Something That Could Have Mised Jaquelot. Two Characteristics of Bayle's *Dictionary*

Maximus: Those who have studied Bayle's *Dictionary* closely will have easily remarked two of its characteristics. The first is that every time the subject permits, this work constantly establishes the following claims: that our reason is more capable of refuting and destroying than of proving and building; that there is nearly no philosophical or theological matter concerning which reason cannot form very great difficulties, such that if we wanted to follow it with a spirit of dispute as far as it could go, we would often find ourselves up against weighty stumbling-blocks; that there are doctrines that are very certainly true that reason combats by insoluble objections; that it is therefore necessary to scoff at these objections while recognizing the narrow limits of the human mind, and to oblige reason itself to put down its weapons and to submit itself in obedience to the faith, which reason can and must do in virtue of several of its most incontestable maxims; and that consequently, in renouncing several of its other maxims, it does not cease to act according to what it is, namely reason. So much for the first characteristic of Bayle's *Dictionary*.

The second is that the author takes the liberty of giving a good number of examples of the difficulties that reason finds in the most sublime matters. He does this most often as a simple reporter or as a sincere historian of the disputes that the philosophical mind has excited or can excite, such that unless he positively and expressly declares his position, one should not impute to him such and such an opinion on the pretext that he represented its good sides. If one grounded oneself on such a pretext, one would imitate those who, having left the audience a short time before the Advocate General had finished his plea, affirm that he concluded in favour of some party because he had given that party's arguments with all the art and strength imaginable. The contrary occurrence is not rare: sometimes it happens that an Advocate General declares himself against the party whose arguments had a dazzling character, the finest detail, and the clearest deduction in his plea. The explanation for this is that there are causes in which a solid but sober reason should carry the day over the flash of several less solid means. It is therefore in no way by the manner in which an Advocate General lays out the arguments of two parties, but by the conclusions that he draws, that we know what he thinks.

We must think the same way about Bayle. He pushes an objection forcefully; he even makes it shine, if you will; but this is no sign that he condemns the dogma he attacks. We cannot say that he condemns it until he declares that he condemns it, and we must always remember the principle he put forward, that there are doctrines that are certainly true that are also surrounded by inexplicable difficulties and exposed to insoluble objections. However sombre, however disgraced in appearance is the condition of some incomprehensible opinion, and however much it is beaten down by arguments that cannot be refuted, Bayle made it sufficiently understood that this is no proof that the opinion is false. We therefore owe him the justice of not attributing to him an opinion that he does not formally adopt, even if he shows its strengths.

Themistius: Allow me to apply what you have just said to our subject.

There are only a few issues as entangled as that of the free will of man: affirm or deny its existence and you will fall equally into a labyrinth from which you will not know how to escape.¹ The only convincing proof of human freedom that can be given is that men are wicked and unhappy. This is a phenomenon that cannot be explained more conveniently than by the supposition that they are unhappy because they sin. But in order for this supposition to gain all its force it must be confirmed by Scripture, where we learn that God punishes sin, from which it necessarily follows that man sins with enough freedom to be punished justly. Bayle acknowledged this consequence since, in order to teach his readers how they should guard themselves against the importunate objections of the Manicheans, he always brought them back to the incontestable maxim that everything that God does is done well; and therefore, once we know from Scripture that God has done something, it is necessary for us to be well assured that that thing contains no fault. Now, it would be a fault to punish a creature for an action performed without any sort of freedom; it is therefore necessary that the sinners whom God punishes possess enough freedom to be justly punishable, even if, beyond that, we cannot conceive how to bring human freedom into agreement with the decrees of God or with the condition of a created being. If a reader who has only fluttered about in Bayle's *Dictionary* does not know that what I have just remarked can be found there, I would not condemn him. But if Jaquelot were in a similar state of ignorance—he who has rummaged through every nook and cranny of this *Dictionary* in order to find grounds for accusation,

¹ See the passages in the *Dictionary* indicated by the index under the word *arbitre* (*le franc*) (free-will).

and who must have attentively examined the articles concerning Manicheism since he has attacked them—then I could not excuse him.

After having established very solidly this foundation² which makes us believe, but not understand, that man sins with a freedom that justly subjects him to punishment, it is surely permissible to examine the other proofs that one brings forward from free will and the objections that refute them, and to give one's opinion on all of that. This is what Bayle did. He would have overturned all the rules of history and plausibility if in giving the details of the attacks of the Manicheans against all the Christian systems he had withheld the difficulties that can be opposed to the first response of Christians. They are first of all asked: 'If there is but one single, infinitely good principle of all things, then whence evil?' They respond: 'From the bad use that man makes of his freedom—God in no way produces evil, He only permits it.'

It is natural to reply that a simple permission would in no way give God a certain foreknowledge of the abuse of freedom; that there must, therefore, be a necessary connection between this abuse and the cause of this abuse; and consequently that man did not have an equal power to employ well or to employ badly his free will, which destroys the hypothesis of the freedom of indifference. It is again natural to establish an argument on the basis of the Christian doctrine that the conservation of creatures is a continuous creation, from which it follows that creatures are not the efficient causes of their acts of volition. There you have the two difficulties that Bayle supposed that the partisans of the doctrine of two principles would oppose to the first response of the Orthodox.³

Jaquelot refuted these two objections to the best of his ability, despite having proposed the second to Jurieu as an argument for which he wished somebody would give him a response,⁴ an evident sign that he found it insoluble. Bayle vigorously defended all the force of these two objections and confirmed the second by the new philosophy, which teaches us that the modes of a substance are in no way distinct from that substance. He also rejected the reasons that Jaquelot had put forward to prove free will, and he proposed difficulties to him that were so troubling that there was no way to get out of them in his latest reply. This is what I would prove to you at a glance if we wanted to amuse ourselves by an examination of that part of Jaquelot's last work. So there you have the foundation of his conduct. He saw that Bayle's objections proved that man was

² It must be noted that Jaquelot, in his *AVIS*, based himself on a similar foundation on the subject of the foreknowledge of contingent events. See *RQP* II, cxxxiii (*OD* III, 770).

³ See *RQP* II, cxi, toward the end, and cxlii at the beginning.

⁴ See *RQP* II, cxli (*OD* III, 787).

not the efficient cause of his modes, and he believed he should infer that his adversary removed from man every sort of freedom, and made God the unique cause of moral evil.

Maximus: If Jaquelot were small-minded, then I would be less astonished by the confusion he introduced into this subject; but knowing that he possesses great penetration I cannot understand why he did not reduce the matter to its natural state, which he would have done had he said: 'Establishing himself upon Scripture and a philosophical axiom,⁵ Bayle acknowledges some freedom in man, he in no way makes God the author of sin, but he outright rejects all the proofs that I put forward for free will, and maintains that the objections that he proposes against free will are insoluble.'

Themistius: It is easy for you to put these things so well, but you have not considered that if Jaquelot had spoken in such a way he could not have found any differences between the fathers of the Synod of Dordrecht and Bayle, and yet he badly needed to find such differences at whatever price. His genius served him poorly; it invented for him three illusory differences, and he took for the pretext of the first two that which a clear and right-minded person would never have cast in that light. The Counter-Remonstrant theologians who are the most zealous for orthodoxy would do nothing unsuitable to their cause if they proved to Jaquelot that he was wrong to claim that their doctrine on human freedom nourished the discord between reason and religion, but that the free will of the Arminians pacified all the troubles; if they proved to him, in other words, that the freedom that they admit is the only one that ought to be admitted, and that the freedom of indifference could not be reconciled with reason, let alone bring reason and religion into agreement.

To prove such a thing to him, it would be entirely legitimate if they: undermined all the arguments he brought forth in favour of his opinion on freedom; formed the most devastating objections against him that their knowledge and genius could muster; mercilessly struck him down by asserting the argument based on the supposition that the conservation of creatures is a continuous creation; overturned all his defences; left him no means of escape; forced him to deny⁶ the proposition that he had acknowledged as true and that is evidently demonstrated in every course of Scholastic philosophy, namely 'that the conservation of creatures is a continuous creation'; exposed him to the shame of

⁵ See above, 234.

⁶ See Jaquelot, *ETB*, 277.

changing his opinion on that topic without being able to give anything more than a pitiful argument for it; forced him to admit in creatures the faculty of creating and annihilating an infinite number of beings of which they have no idea; reduced him to total silence on the problem that ‘the true efficient cause of an effect must know the effect and also know in what manner it must be produced, but our soul does not know how to form its volitions’; finally, pressed him such that he was obliged to take recourse in lies⁷ and in contradictory examples.⁸

How absurd would it be if based on this conduct they were accused of making man a purely passive subject and of attributing to God the production of moral evil? It is nonetheless the absurdity into which Jaquelot falls, such that it is necessary to have a remarkable sense of charity not to attack his bad conscience; for he knew of Bayle’s formal declaration: “I do not claim to decide absolutely that the soul cannot be the efficient cause of its volitions; I consider that to be the case only relatively to the principles of the objection.”⁹

Maximus: Let us end this particular discussion by remarking that if Bayle had made it a central issue to press Jaquelot firmly on the question of free will, nobody could find fault with him for it. We leave in peace, or at least we treat softly, those who admit the incomprehensibility of what they believe and the insolubility of the objections made against their beliefs;¹⁰ but those who boast as Jaquelot does of “putting an end to all the difficulties” by means of free will,¹¹ and who stand up as the mediators of an eternal alliance between theology and philosophy, should sit firmly in their saddles and ask for no mercy. Woe to those who defend themselves weakly; they do more wrong than right to the good cause. Amyraut would not deny this.¹²

7 He says on page 257 that Bayle “claims that the soul cannot make use” of its body, “that it does not know the entire composition and all the motives.” We challenge him to prove that Bayle ever said such a thing.

8 Take the one about the ignorant people who make a hundred little figures dance and turn without knowing anything but how to turn a crank (Jaquelot, *ETB*, 258). But our soul does not even know that much regarding the movement of our organs; it knows neither whether there is a crank, nor where it could be found, nor how to turn it.

9 See the last note of *RQP* II, cxl.

10 See *RQP* II, cxxxvii (*OD* III, 779).

11 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 250.

12 “He who professes that he wishes to render a thing absolutely acceptable to reason, and maintains that reason was given to us to believe straightforwardly; if such a person does not succeed, then he entirely ruins the credit that the authority of Revelation would otherwise have granted him to win men’s minds” (Amyraut, *De l’élévation de la foi*, 61).

CHAPTER 6

Fourth of Jaquelot's Faults: He Attacks Bayle on the Agreement of Faith and Reason, yet in the End He Says the Same Thing as Bayle

Themistius: But to tell the truth, Jaquelot has been worthy of some consideration since we learned the boundaries to which he confines his claims. This is what he explains in his second work, in which he topples the lofty idea that was given of his project through reading the title of his first book, *The Conformity of Faith and Reason, or The Defence of Religion against the Principal Difficulties Spread Throughout the Dictionary ... of Mr. Bayle*. This title produces the hope of a reconciliation happily accomplished according to the plan found in the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*, and which amounts to this: "it is necessary to show not only that there are philosophical maxims that are favourable to our faith, but also that the particular maxims that are objected to us as being out of conformity with our catechism are effectively conformable to it by a manner that we distinctly conceive ..." ¹

"This agreement demands not only that your thesis be in conformity with several philosophical maxims, but also that it not be victoriously attacked by several other maxims of reason. Now, your thesis will be victoriously attacked if you cannot defend it except by means of unintelligible distinctions, or by excusing yourself on the basis of the impenetrable depths of the subject." ²

It was easy for Jaquelot to see before reading this plan that this is the idea of peace that is sought whenever we hope for the conformity of faith and reason. But he was far from working on such an idea; he informs us in his last book that "when [he speaks] of the conformity of faith and reason, [he means] that one should not renounce reason in order to admit religion. For while there are [he adds] mysteries in religion that reason cannot understand, it does not follow that these mysteries are contrary to reason; just as it does not follow that the divisibility of bodies to infinity or movement are contrary to reason, despite reason's inability to respond to the difficulties which attack these propositions." ³

¹ *RQP* II, cxxxiii (*OD* III, 770–771).

² *Ibid.*

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 287.

Maximus: If he claims nothing more, then the dispute he raised with Bayle was pointless, since Bayle never said that it was necessary to renounce reason in order to admit religion, and on the contrary, he said thousands of times that we cannot act more in conformity with reason than by preferring the authority of Scripture to the philosophical maxims that oppose our mysteries. Jaquelot has only to reread pages 770, 832, and 836 of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.

Themistius: If Bayle had known that his adversary was claiming only what we have just read, then he would not have admitted that religion is obliged to retreat from reason “when certain mysteries are at stake, and in particular that of predestination.”⁴ He would have maintained instead that religion never finds itself obliged to draw back from reason, for if religion sometimes retreats behind the entrenchment of faith, it does so under the orders, under the leadership, under the auspices of reason; it is reason itself that commands it and that serves as guide. Nothing would be more false, therefore, than to suppose that in these encounters reason is renounced, and so there is no longer any cause of scandal for Jaquelot in Bayle’s books; for since Jaquelot claims that retreating from reason is the same as renouncing reason, we can declare to him on behalf of Bayle that religion never retreats from reason.

Maximus: It is a pity to see great disputes based on nothing more than a misunderstanding. Remove all equivocation, urge people to explain themselves with precision, and then you will find that the Reformed Rationalists and Anti-Rationalists say the same thing at bottom, and that Jaquelot and Bayle are in perfect agreement. The latter had criticized the former for the illusion of arguing “against the non-Rationalists as if they had said that reason in general, or the universality of reason, was opposed to faith in the Gospel mysteries”; while in fact “they understand by reason only several of the axioms in accordance with which we have become accustomed to judging natural things and thereby discerning truth from falsehood,” and “they do not deny that there are other very certain and evident axioms that justify our assent to the mysteries.”⁵

Jaquelot learned neither from the reproach nor from this clarification. He does not distinguish in his last book between retreating from reason and renouncing reason, and nevertheless they are two very different things. Retreating from reason is not to want to permit this or that philosophical maxim to

⁴ *RQP* II, cxxxiv (*OD* III, 771).

⁵ *RPQ* II, cxxxiv (*OD* III, 771).

serve as judge over some religious matter.⁶ It is to recognize that a dispute in which this maxim served as a rule would be a disadvantageous battle, since no evident response could be opposed to evident objections. It is to avoid wisely such combat, or to sound the retreat early in order to gain a better position, all under the direction of reason, which itself commands us by several of its most evident axioms to employ it in this way. This is done every day in philosophical controversies: one abandons several axioms of reason and then places oneself under the protection of others. We discuss this elsewhere.⁷

But to renounce reason is to abandon universally all of its maxims. Now, this is what those who retreat from reason in the sense that I have just described do not do. If things were explained exactly, then a part of reason's axioms would not be taken for the whole of reason, many disputes would be avoided, and those who thought themselves strongly opposed to some other would see that in the end their thoughts were the same.

Themistius: This is the case with Jaquelot: there are hardly any theologians who retreat more often from reason than he does, and even in the very subject which constitutes his principal dispute with Bayle,⁸ as we will prove in its place. He has already been attacked several times on this point,⁹ yet he imagines that he restores to reason and faith the concord that Bayle had broken in retreating from reason. Besides, the reading we gave of the plan that had been traced out for him¹⁰ convinces us of a gross injustice of which he has rendered himself guilty. He supposes¹¹ that he has been required to demonstrate that all the articles of faith are as clear as the proposition, 'the whole is larger than the part,' and that all the questions of religion can be conceived by human reason with the greatest evidence.¹² How can we know the state of this dispute while he disguises it with as much boldness as if he took all his readers for ignorant and illiterate men?

6 Note that even this phrase, "retreating from reason," is not at all exact. It would be better to say "retreating from several maxims of reason."

7 Above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 5, 159–160.

8 The question of the origin and the consequences of moral evil.

9 See *RQP* II, cxxix at the beginning (*OD* III, 762); cxli (*OD* III, 790); and clii (*OD* III, 816).

10 See above, 238.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 286.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 293.

CHAPTER 7

Examination of the Three Differences That Jaquelot Found between His and Bayle's Doctrines

Maximus: Make no mistake: Jaquelot desperately wanted his differences with Bayle to be very real, and he claims to prove that they are: 1. because he denies, but Bayle affirms, that several religious mysteries imply a contradiction;¹ 2. because he rejects, while Bayle does not reject, the doctrine that makes God the author of sin; and 3. because he denies, but Bayle affirms, “that the majority of the articles of faith are in such opposition with reason that they are defeated by the most evident philosophical maxims.” What do you think of these three proofs?

Themistius: Of the first I think that Jaquelot should have cited the page where he claims that Bayle acknowledges that several of our mysteries imply a contradiction, for in matters like the present it is necessary to make an inviolable law never to paraphrase or to interpret the words of the accused author:² one must precisely report the very terms that he used. If Jaquelot had in mind the passage that he had cited on page 119, and if he believed that this passage proved that which needed to be proven, nevertheless he understood nothing of the second characteristic of Bayle's *Dictionary*,³ and he inopportunistly confused things that were the easiest to distinguish.

In the passage that Jaquelot puts forward, Bayle presents what the poet Simonides might have responded to the theologians if they had explained to him the system of Grace.⁴ All the laws of plausibility would have us suppose that he would have responded to them that there is a formal contradiction in the mystery of the Trinity, for all those who are not persuaded of the truth of this mystery see it in this way, and we know that the Unitarians perpetually repudiate it as a contradictory doctrine, and that they are astonished that there are people who do not see the contradictions. Jaquelot must therefore seek better means of justifying what he advances. Even if he had compiled a

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 287.

² See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 1, 132.

³ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 5, 233.

⁴ It encompasses the hypostatic union of the Word and the death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of man.

thousand passages where Bayle had imagined that Aristotle, Chrysippus, etc., had insulted the Christian mysteries, it would be useless to the accuser: he must cite one passage where Bayle expressed his personal opinion. Thus the first of Jaquelot's proofs is, to say the least, a very gross illusion. The second has already been refuted as illusory.⁵ Let's move on to the third.

Maximus: Do not move so quickly, please: allow me to reflect a little on this first of the three alleged proofs.

If there is anyone who should believe that the Trinity contains contradictions, or formal oppositions to reason, it is without doubt Jaquelot, for he confessed in 1690 that with respect to this proposition, 'the three divine persons make only one God,' it seems "that to be above reason is to be entirely inaccessible to reason."⁶ This differs only in words from the phrase 'to be against reason.' At least, he adds, "we cannot see how we can be persuaded of it, and truly believe that which our reason cannot reach anywhere." Is this not to declare in a completely intelligible manner that the mystery of the Trinity seems to be against reason?

Now, this author teaches us that an apparent contradiction produces in him the same effect as a real contradiction. "Insofar as a proposition," he says, "all things considered, all things examined, appears contradictory to me, it is as unbelievable with respect to me as if it truly implied a contradiction."⁷ Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is as unbelievable to Jaquelot, to whom it appears to be against reason, as if it truly implied a contradiction, and nevertheless he protested in 1690 that he believed it.⁸ He could not say, therefore, on the basis that Bayle might have claimed that this mystery implies a contradiction, that there is between them a real difference of opinion.

Jaquelot remarks in his new book that "everyone agrees that there is an eternity that preceded the moment at which" he was writing.⁹ He, too, must therefore agree with that, and nevertheless he shows that "there manifestly follows from this two contradictions," and after having laid them out he concludes with these words: "Therefore, here we have a thing that is certain and indubitable, despite the fact that IT IMPLIES A CONTRADICTION ACCORDING TO OUR CLEAREST AND MOST CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE."

⁵ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 4, 230.

⁶ See *RQP* II, cxxxii (*OD* III, 766).

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 2.

⁸ See *RQP* II, cxxxii (*OD* III, 766).

⁹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 284–285.

I won't make anything of the fact that he must suppose either that matter is eternal or that the duration of God is successive; it is sufficient for me that he confessed that he believes a thing that manifestly involves two contradictions. It could be shown to him that these two contradictions are found in an opinion that I am very certain that he adopts, namely the infinite divisibility of matter, and consequently there are two things he truly believes despite the fact they imply two contradictions. If, therefore, he has faith at his disposal for purely human doctrines, it would be very unreasonable to reject the Trinity if it were the case that it contained contradictions or formal oppositions to reason. He would be obligated in that very case to subject himself humbly to the authority of Scripture. There would not be any difference of opinion, therefore, between him and Bayle, even if the latter had said that several mysteries of the Gospel entail a contradiction.¹⁰

Themistius: Since you have finished reflecting on the first of Jaquelot's proofs, it is time for me to examine the third.

That proof would have been good if he had given the catalogue of the articles of faith that are according to him opposed by evident maxims, and the catalogue of the articles of faith that are in the same situation according to Bayle, and if the comparison of these two lists had made it clear that his catalogue was smaller than that of his adversary. But not having done that, he must permit us to think that this third proof is worth no more than the other two. We can guarantee him that Bayle's list does not surpass that of Jurieu,¹¹ and that if Jurieu wishes to shrink his own, Bayle will imitate him. Now, Jaquelot did not believe he had any reason to quarrel with Jurieu. He had to believe, therefore, that he had no reason to quarrel with Bayle.

He will not be able to respond that according to him there is no article of faith that is opposed by the most evident philosophical maxims, for we have seen¹² that he admits that in the mystery of the Trinity 'to be above reason' differs only in words from 'to be against reason,' and that it is a dogma "entirely inaccessible to reason," and that "reason loses sight of it on all sides," and that "it cannot reach it anywhere." We know that he employed the ordinary distinction for responding to the argument that the Socinians derive from the axiom, *quae sunt idem uni tertio* [things which are the same as a third] etc.,

¹⁰ But it is necessary always to remember the incredible fault of Jaquelot who makes this accusation against Bayle without any proof.

¹¹ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 3, 228.

¹² *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 7, 242.

and that he recognized that it is a response of which “the human mind cannot form any distinct notion.”¹³

He knows that according to Bayle one is victoriously opposed by philosophical maxims when one can defend oneself only by unintelligible distinctions or by excusing oneself on the basis of the impenetrable depth of the subject.¹⁴ He is not ignorant of the fact that he was asked to prove “that a doctrine that implies a contradiction if its terms are understood in the only way that our reason can form of them, ceases to be contradictory provided that we do not give the terms that meaning, but some other of which we have no idea.”¹⁵ He knows well that he did not undertake to prove that, and that he foolishly made use of these words of Bayle to have occasion to accuse him of believing that the mystery of the Trinity implies a contradiction.¹⁶ This is an absurd consequence that confuses things between which there is an infinite difference, since it is to claim that once a man holds that his adversaries respond poorly to an objection, he rejects the doctrine opposed by this objection. Thousands of examples refute this idea, and thus Bayle, while persuaded that the mystery of the Trinity implies no contradiction, could uphold that Jaquelot’s response does not refute the argument by which the Socinians attempt to prove that this dogma is contradictory. But let’s return to the principal issue.

Jaquelot’s silence with respect to the proof that was desired of him¹⁷ shows that he agrees that the mystery of the Trinity is victoriously opposed by several maxims of reason, if we attach to the words ‘victoriously opposed by several maxims of reason’ the idea that Bayle assigns to them.¹⁸ Now you can see that he is in agreement with Bayle over the difficulties of this mystery. It would be easy to show that they agree no less over the mysteries of the Incarnation, etc.

Maximus: The adverbs ‘victoriously’ and ‘invincibly’ frightened Jaquelot too much: he should have reassured himself by the idea that Bayle attached to them, according to which they mean nothing more than being forced, once one is opposed by an evident objection, to employ “a response that can be offered only as possible and that is not understood,”¹⁹ and not to be able “to defend oneself except by unintelligible distinctions or by excusing oneself on the basis

13 See *RQP* II, clx (*OD* II, 834–835).

14 *RQP* II, cxxxiii at the end.

15 *RQP* II, clx (*OD* III, 835).

16 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 425.

17 See several lines above.

18 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 6, 238.

19 *RQP* II, cxxxiii toward the end.

of the impenetrable depth of the subject.”²⁰ Instead of taking the meaning that Bayle gave these terms, Jaquelot supposes that ‘being invincibly opposed by evident maxims’ means that “it is necessary to abandon reason in order to entrench oneself in faith. This is what I deny,” he adds; “reason suffers nothing more in matters of religion than what it suffers in the other sciences, such that Bayle has no more right to say that it is necessary to abandon reason in religion than he has to say this about reason in the context of the other sciences.”²¹ There is nothing here but a miserable misunderstanding that will be easy to clear up, and afterwards we will see that these two gentlemen are in perfect agreement with each other.

20 Ibid.

21 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 294.

CHAPTER 8

Reflection on the Phrases ‘Abandoning Reason’ and ‘being Contrary to Reason’

Maximus: Jaquelot is guilty of a false assumption when he says that according to Bayle it is necessary to abandon reason in order to entrench oneself in faith; for on the contrary, according to Bayle, one entrenches oneself in faith only under the direction and from the orders of the most evident maxims of reason.¹ Is abandoning reason the same thing as taking reason for one’s guide?

What leads Jaquelot astray is his taking the following to amount to the same thing: 1. to prefer several evident maxims of reason to several other evident maxims of reason; 2. to renounce or abandon reason. But that is to confuse two extremely different procedures. If Jaquelot had distinguished these things, he would have known clearly that he abandons reason to entrench himself in faith in the very same way that Bayle does; and in the same sense in which he does not abandon reason, neither does Bayle.

Themistius: Nothing confirms your thought better than the example often repeated by Jaquelot. It is the example of the human sciences. “All the Doctors are in agreement,” he says, “that a dogma should not be rejected because reason finds difficulties with it that it cannot explain or clear away. Not only because reason finds similar difficulties in the human sciences, even in questions grounded on demonstrations, but above all in religion.”²

He says in another place that even if “no fault could be discovered in Bayle’s reasoning on the continuous creation,” we would still be justified in granting creatures an active faculty; otherwise we would find ourselves “soon forced to deny movement, to reject the infinite divisibility of bodies, and so many other propositions that are certain, though they are opposed by arguments to which we cannot give responses capable of enlightening and satisfying the mind.”³ Then he shows that although there are two contradictions in the idea of an anterior eternity, it is nevertheless necessary to admit its existence.

¹ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 6, 239.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 157.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 284.

From all of that we can conclude that his opinions are in perfect conformity with Bayle's. In the passages where Bayle treated these matters there is no principle that he inculcated more often than this one: the incomprehensibility of a dogma, and the insolubility of the objections that oppose it, are not legitimate reasons for rejecting it. He approves⁴ one of Bernard's ideas⁵ that appeared extravagant to several people; he cites the same examples that Jaquelot cites, namely anterior eternity, infinite divisibility, movement.⁶

Maximus: Jaquelot persists most of all, it seems to me, in claiming that Bayle continues to think that our mysteries are contrary to reason; that is, that we manifestly perceive impossibilities and contradictions in them.⁷ But first, it would be necessary to see whether Bayle spoke in such a way when he gave his own opinion, or when he introduced characters to dispute against our mysteries. In the latter case, Bayle would have had a choice between trampling underfoot all the laws of plausibility confirmed by real facts,⁸ or attributing such expressions to his characters. Second, the clarifications that he gives in the third volume of his *Response to a Provincial's Questions* can remove any pretext from Jaquelot to quarrel about the contrariety in question.

Third, it would be necessary to know whether Bayle expressed himself by saying that 'the mysteries seem contrary to reason,' or by saying that 'the mysteries are in fact contrary to reason.' Jaquelot cites nothing specific, but rather limits himself to vague terms, and so what concerns this question cannot be verified. But since he claims that these two manners of expressing oneself are equivalent for any given person,⁹ he should not have taken offence at the second, for he did not take offence at what Saurin said, namely "that there is neither distinction, nor reasoning, nor reflection that can fully satisfy us

4 See *RQP* II, xcvi at the beginning.

5 "I am persuaded that a greater number and more plausible difficulties can be raised against the proposition *that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles*, than against the argument from the consent of the people. If it were worth my time, and if there were somebody to bet against me, I would set about writing a book longer than our author's against this proposition and bringing forth objections to which it would be difficult to respond, and which I admit that I myself would have trouble resolving; I, please note, who do not doubt the truth of this proposition any more than I doubt of my own existence." Bernard, *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, February 1705, 129–130.

6 *RQP* II, cxxxiii at the end.

7 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 240.

8 In their writings the Socinians currently maintain that the mysteries they reject are contrary to reason.

9 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 7, 243–245.

concerning the absurdities and the APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS that the mystery of the Trinity presents to us on all sides.¹⁰ I will leave aside what Arnauld,¹¹ Malebranche,¹² Nicole,¹³ Claude,¹⁴ and several other great geniuses have admitted concerning the same mystery.

I am content to observe that even if Jaquelot had eagle eyes that could perceive the agreement of this dogma with the philosophical maxims that the Socinians use to oppose it, then he would still not have any reason to take action against Bayle, for whom it is surely permissible not to have sharper vision than the great men just named. Let us add that Jaquelot would condemn himself if he condemned those who say that the mystery of the Trinity appears to them to be contrary to reason, that is, contrary to several evident philosophical maxims.¹⁵ Finally, he would offend charity, since he would not communicate to the public these superior lights with which he finds himself so filled, and he would imitate the example of the famous chemists who would rather die with their secret.

Themistius: Up to now he indicated only false points of separation; let's see if in what follows he will more readily find a real difference between his and Bayle's doctrines. He blames Bayle for "abandoning reason at the first difficulty in order to retreat into the entrenchment of faith," and he says that "this is to portray religion as weak and ridiculous, which is a pernicious and detestable consequence."¹⁶

Maximus: If he had had the instruction of his readers in sight then he would have spoken less vaguely and would have given two essential clarifications. The first must contain: 1. the catalogue of the articles of religion over which Bayle abandons reason; 2. the difficulties that urge him toward such conduct; 3. the catalogue of the articles of religion that lead Jaquelot to retreat into the entrenchment of faith; 4. the motives of this retreat. The second clarification must contain what is to be properly understood by 'abandoning reason,' and in what sense Bayle desires that we should retreat into the entrenchment of faith.

10 See *RQP* II, cxxxi (*OD* III, 766–767).

11 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 10, toward the end.

12 Nicolas Malebranche, *Recherche de la vérité* [*Search after Truth*], Book 3, chapter 8.

13 See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 10, 193.

14 Ibid.

15 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 7, 244.

16 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 287.

If Jaquelot had taken the time to give us these two clarifications, we would be in a position to judge this part of the dispute; but as long as we lack the knowledge of what they must contain, this new difference between his doctrine and that of his adversary must remain just as imperceptible as all the others. I am constantly amazed at how Jaquelot imputes several dreadful doctrines to Bayle without quoting a single text, without referring to any book, any page, any chapter. This makes me believe that if he already possesses all the malice of an experienced libeller, he does not yet have any of the skill. An able libeller takes pains to collect proofs and to put them in their appropriate place. He does not flatter himself that we will be content with his testimony.

Themistius: Finally, Jaquelot asks how it is possible that Bayle “believes in the infinite divisibility of matter, since faith cannot serve here as an entrenchment for him, any more than it can in the case of an eternity that precedes us? For it is certain that against one and against the other of these two truths there are objections to which we cannot respond. However, we do not reject reason for that. It is therefore certain that we do not abandon reason in the human sciences, though it finds itself often engaged with inexplicable difficulties. Why, then, would it be necessary to abandon it in religion as a result of several difficulties over which we have trouble satisfying ourselves?”¹⁷

It is as if Jaquelot were saying: ‘Bayle abandons reason in theological matters that suffer from great difficulties, so he must abandon it in philosophical matters that are exposed to inexplicable problems; but for my part, I never abandon reason either in theological or philosophical matters. There is therefore a great difference between my thoughts and those of Bayle.’

This consequence is false, since Bayle never abandons reason, neither in one nor in the other of these two matters. If he accepts infinite divisibility, it is because he prefers the evident reasons of the Peripatetics to those of the Atomists, and if he rejects several metaphysical axioms that the Unitarians oppose to the mystery of the Trinity—that is, if he does not wish to assent to the claim that the truth of this mystery depends on its conformity with these maxims—it is because he prefers several other axioms of reason to them. Jaquelot could not deny that he conducts himself in a similar way, and so he is in agreement with Bayle.

A pitiful equivocation contained in the phrase ‘abandoning reason’ angered Jaquelot. These words often mean that we renounce several philosophical maxims. He understood them as though they always meant that we absolutely

¹⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 287.

renounce the whole of reason. Besides, we can assure him that the confession that he made that there are religious dogmas in which “reason finds difficulties that it cannot explain or clear away,”¹⁸ is all that Bayle wished to say in speaking as strongly as possible about the insolubility of the Manichean objections.

18 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 157.

CHAPTER 9

That It Appears by the State of the Question Given by Bayle That There is No Real Dispute between Him and Jaquelot

Maximus: I am astonished that we forgot one of the most essential remarks for the subject at hand. Bayle, in indicating the state of the question between him and Jaquelot, declared that he grants him “that the past, present, and future state of man contains nothing that is not in conformity with the sovereign perfection of God, and that not only Scripture, but also reason fully convinces us of this, [and so it is only a question of] knowing whether our reason can understand this real and effective agreement which is found between the attributes of God and the system of predestination, and whether it can resolve the difficulties that envelop our knowledge or our ideas of this agreement”,¹ and that “the dispute turns only on the question of whether the natural or philosophical light presents to us the ideas we need to show the agreement of our mysteries with all the axioms of reason and to respond clearly and precisely to the difficulties arising from several philosophical maxims that have always appeared evident.”²

In thus exposing the state of the trial, Bayle believed that Jaquelot upheld the affirmative of the question just asked, but we presently know that Jaquelot either never had this intention, or that if he had it, he changed his mind: he is just as far as Bayle from taking the affirmative position on this question. Is this not what it means to be in agreement? Then why write against Bayle?

Themistius: To all appearances, Jaquelot began this dispute without foreseeing that he would find himself forced to imitate his antagonist in several things, especially in the rejection of common notions, which would entail that the dispute could continue only on account of equivocations and the invention of a hundred imaginary differences of opinion. If he had not possessed the spirit of those duellists who rejected every sort of clarification and who claimed that they knew very well that their dispute was well-founded, then he would have held back and would have been ashamed of the malicious quarrelling that causes him to repeat so often so many vague accusations that he never proves.

¹ See *RQP* II, cxliv (*OD* II, 795–796).

² *RQP* II, clviii at the beginning.

CHAPTER 10

Fifth of Jaquelot's Faults: He Sought a Compromise That Nobody Needed

Maximus: Let's move on to another consideration, which is that nobody needed the peace treaty that Jaquelot wanted to draw up between faith and reason, for he declares that his goal was to demonstrate "that it is not necessary to renounce reason in order to accept religion."¹ Now, everybody already knew that those who admit the Trinity and other mysteries of the Gospel do not renounce reason at all, but on the contrary base their position on philosophical maxims that have the highest degree of evidence and certitude. Their foundation is that God can neither deceive nor be deceived, and that consequently He must always be believed at his word; and then they employ their reason to discern the true meaning of Scripture. If humbler minds cannot examine by the rules of grammar and dialectic the various meanings that can be given to the texts of the word of God, they assume that their Doctors have conducted that examination with all necessary precision.

Themistius: You make me think of something that Jaquelot said after having cited several writers who spoke of the use that ought to be made of reason in theological matters:² "If I crossed the Rubicon," he adds, "then I crossed it in good company and without any intention of making war with religion."³ I can assure him that aside from several ridiculous fanatics,⁴ every Christian, whether wise or ignorant, will cross the Rubicon with him, and Bayle will join the party first of all.

The Roman Catholics have a particular interest in humbling reason, since their doctrine of the Eucharist overturns several very evident philosophical

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 287.

² These citations are useless, since it is rather clear that all our non-Rationalist theologians recognize a wide range of uses of reason in religion. The Rationalists should have been content with this: see *RQP* II, cxxxix (*OD* II, 767).

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 173.

⁴ The faction of Daniel Hoffman that wanted to prohibit the use of philosophy soon died out: see the article "Hoffman" in Bayle's *Dictionary*. A certain Verdenhagen, who was infatuated with the visions of Jaques Boehm, was ridiculed for denouncing the use of philosophical reason. See his *Psychologia vera*, printed in Amsterdam in 1632.

principles. Nonetheless they will board Jaquelot's boat with no hesitation. Innumerable women among them are well-enough instructed in their religion to be able to say that far from renouncing reason when they believe in transubstantiation, they make the best use of reason of all, and that it is reason that orders them to prefer over some of its most evident axioms the voice of God manifested in Scripture. If we object that it is without reason that they believe that they follow the voice of God, they will respond that there is nothing more in conformity with reason than to suppose that the promises that Jesus Christ made to His Church mean that he would never permit that it should decide in favour of lies in matters of faith. What more reasonable thing could we do, these women will say, than to accept the decisions of the Church as true, these decisions that were preceded by an examination in which reason, tradition, study, and science played such a great part? Is there anything more contrary to reason than to suppose that God did not establish on the earth a tribunal that would judge our controversies infallibly? We follow reason, therefore, when we believe in the real presence. If we pressed further, we would get into the details of the dispute, and these women could be silenced; but it would still be true that they did not claim to believe their Eucharistic mysteries without reason or against reason.

Maximus: A famous Protestant theologian said that if the majority of the members of the Roman Church “took some care to inspect and examine in their consciences the reasons for which they so firmly retain their belief in Transubstantiation, they would frankly confess that the principal reason is the prejudice that has preoccupied their minds since childhood, namely that to be a good Christian on this point and others, it is necessary to entirely renounce our intelligence.”⁵

There is an ambiguity in this that only too often finds its way into discourses of this nature. The whole is slipped in for one of its parts. It is certain that innumerable theologians have said that to be a good Christian it is necessary to submit several maxims of reason to the authority of God, but they have never said that it is even necessary to abandon this maxim of reason—*God is more credible than men*—or that it is necessary to renounce our intelligence so completely that we would not preserve even this part that makes us judge that there is nothing more reasonable than to follow the voice of God in preference to several philosophical maxims.

⁵ Amyraut, *De l'élevation de la foi* [*On the Elevation of Faith*], 12–13.

Themistius: Let us conclude that an accord between faith and reason is not necessary when it consists only in teaching us that we act reasonably when we embrace revealed truths. We knew that. We also knew that it is not a just cause for rejecting a doctrine to see that it is exposed to very great difficulties, since there are philosophical dogmas that pass for being very certain though it is not possible to resolve the objections that oppose them. We also knew that the pre-eminence of the divine nature does not permit us to submit that nature to the same duties that bind men. So we did not need these three ways that Jaquelot employs to harmonize faith and reason; we could have found them elsewhere and even in the *Dictionary*. If he had written on behalf of those people who continue to worry about the opposition that the Socinians and Libertines claim exists between reason and our systems, then he would have taught us that the particular axioms that furnish objections against the dogma of the Trinity, etc., are conformable to that dogma.⁶ Now this he did not do.

Maximus: I have noticed in the Scholastic volumes that an author accused of inconsistency sometimes clearly justifies himself. His general principle has been compared with a particular proposition that he had advanced, and it has been shown that this proposition opposes his principle. But in reworking this material he reveals other aspects of his proposition, and he shows that it is bound up with his principle. That is what Jaquelot should have done with the maxims “two things which are equal to a third are equal to each other” and “the affirmation and negation of the same thing cannot both be true simultaneously,”⁷ and with several others.

Themistius: He seems not to have known what the public expects from those who promise to show the agreement between faith and reason. They do not demand a proof that our systems are united to reason by maxims that have both great vividness and great force. We already know that to be the case, and a pagan philosopher would suppose it, provided that he had some general idea of religion and provided that he knew that Christians cultivate the sciences and compose numerous books of polemical theology. What is expected from these conciliators of faith and reason is that they show that our systems are

⁶ An English Roman Catholic named Thomas Bonars undertook in this way to harmonize faith and reason by the new philosophy. His work was printed in 1665, in 4, under the title of *Concordia scientia cum fide e difficillimis Philosophia & Theologia Scholastica quastionibus concinnata*. He refutes the Scholastics well, but what he substitutes in their place is no better.

⁷ These axioms are false in the case of the Trinity. See the words of Nicole cited in *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 10, 193.

united to reason by the very maxims that reason provides to the enemy and that constitute the foundation of his objections. It is expected that the solution given to these objections will reveal the link that joins together these maxims and these theological hypotheses.

Maximus: Jaquelot has a different approach: far from taking the trouble to bring the common notions of goodness and holiness into agreement with his theology, he rejects them; we will speak of this again soon. As for the Trinity, he did not oblige himself to refute the great Arnauld, who said that “we cannot see the way to bring into agreement the principle, *things which are equal to a third are equal to each other*, with what we believe about a single essence in three persons,”⁸ and that it is false “that all that we find in our reason on the subject of the Trinity is that it does not teach this mystery,”⁹ that it is necessary to add that it furnishes “an infinite number of difficulties against this article to those who take the dangerous route of judging the mysteries of the faith.”

What glory Jaquelot would have acquired had he refuted that! And how could it come about that such a vain man neglected this opportunity? He got angry when it was considered inappropriate of him to seek mercy through the incomprehensibility of the subject. “Have I ever claimed,” he responds, “that all the articles of the faith are above every difficulty and as clear as the proposition, ‘the whole is greater than the part?’”¹⁰

Themistius: One would have to be very angry to pass in that way from one extreme to the other. Is there no middle ground between incomprehensible and inexplicable things, on the one hand, and propositions as clear as ‘the whole is greater than the part,’ on the other? And should he not have taken into account that the reproach that displeases him so much was made in connection with free will, which suffices according to him “to destroy all difficulties”?¹¹ But let’s finish our preliminary remarks; I did not think that they would occupy us for so long. Let’s head straight for the Gordian knot on page 304 of Jaquelot’s reply. It’s there that he begins to treat the second point of his dispute with Bayle, the question of the origin of evil.

8 Arnauld, *Apologie pour les Catholiques* II, 57.

9 Arnauld, *Perpetuité defendue*, Book 10, chapter 6, 22–21.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 286.

11 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 250.

CHAPTER 11

Examination of Jaquelot's Reply to the Difficulties Concerning the Origin of Evil. He Abandons Common Notions

Themistius: First of all, I will remark that if something seems to have displeased many people, it is that Bayle admitted that all of our systems concerning the fall of Adam and its consequences are incapable of responding to the objections that show that the conduct of God is not conformable to the common notions we have of goodness and holiness, from which he concluded that it is necessary to reject these common notions as judges over God's providence with respect to evil.

Maximus: Your remark is accurate, since Le Clerc based his case on that foundation when he set himself up as Bayle's public accuser: he had no other pretext for imputing impieties to Bayle except the admission you have just mentioned and the rejection of common notions. People are saying, however, that Le Clerc greatly praises Jaquelot's last book, the manuscript of which was given to him by the author as if to a good old friend and competent judge. But since Jaquelot rejects the common notions of goodness and holiness, and affirms that the damned will suffer eternally, he should consider himself targeted by Le Clerc's denouncement, as an accomplice to Bayle's alleged impieties. How did he not feel this sting? Or how could Le Clerc have been comfortable approving of a book wherein he found the same attacks on religion and the same methods for resisting them as in the *Dictionary*?

Themistius: Leave these two gentlemen alone; they will find a way to agree with each other and they will forgive everything of one another as long as they are united against a common enemy. Notice only the fullness of the victory that Bayle has won against them: the one [Le Clerc] was required to seek asylum in a place [Origenism] struck by lightning and situated in a desert that has been uninhabited for several centuries, and not finding any security there, he left it to escape to a grotto built of conjectures.

The other [Jaquelot] was so frightened by the plan laid out for him¹ to reconcile seven theological propositions with nineteen philosophical propositions,

¹ See *RQP* II, cxliv.

that he did not dare to approach it, and he was not able to do anything but say that these nineteen propositions “are false maxims which we should not use in any way in the question at hand.”²

Bayle could not have wished for a greater triumph, since besides seeing that one of his aggressors refutes the other, he obtained a declaration that shows that he was right to uphold that we ought to reject the common notions of goodness and the love of virtue when we judge divine providence with respect to evil, and that if they were admitted as a rule for the conduct that our systems ascribe to God, we would succumb to the Manichean objections. That is how Jaquelot brings faith into agreement with common notions; he abandons them just as his adversary had desired.

Maximus: Our hopes were dashed! Of all the chapters of the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*³ there was not one for which a refutation was desired more eagerly than the chapter that showed which philosophical maxims Jaquelot had to bring into agreement with our theological systems. There were many people who were surprised in reading this chapter: they had read themselves, or had somebody read to them, a thousand times the story of the fall of Eve and Adam, and they had never realized that it was contrary to the ideas of goodness for God, who had formed Eve with his own hands, to abandon her to the malice of a spirit a thousand times cleverer than she. It was in reading the philosophical maxims reported by Bayle that they saw for the first time that the ideas of goodness and the love of virtue openly collide with this abandonment.

The adder by a natural instinct blocks its ears to the sound of the charmer.⁴ Ulysses blocked his companions' ears so that they would not hear the dangerous song of the Sirens.⁵ Should not Eve have been inspired to raise her hands to her ears so as not to hear the pernicious suggestions of the devil? A hundred similar thoughts have agitated many readers without their faith being troubled; they wished only to learn how the ideas of goodness agree with the victory that God allowed the devil to win over our first fathers and which was so disastrous for humanity.

They set their minds at ease on this topic from the hope that Jaquelot, more fortunate than the ancient and modern Theophrastus, would discover characteristics of goodness and friendship unknown until now that would

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 317.

³ [OD] From *RQP* 11, cxxviii–clxxii.

⁴ See Psalm 58:5–6.

⁵ See Book 12 of the *Odyssey*.

show us a perfect conformity between the love of God for man and virtue, and the permission granted to the devil to cause humanity to fall into crime and misery. In general, all the readers expected something extraordinary on this point, whether Jaquelot took this chapter to be a challenge from Bayle, or whether he took it to be a simple exposition of what he had to do; and I confess to you that I thought his enthusiasm lay principally in this area.

Themistius: I will tell you that I always thought that if Jaquelot was going to shy away from something, it would be from the chapter concerning the nineteen philosophical maxims. I have to praise the ingenuity with which he acknowledged that this post is indefensible, and that there was an attempt to “impose on him the necessity of using a lead sword”;⁶ but I cannot see that he had any reason to say that there is something strange about the method of combat that was recommended to him.

Was there anything more natural than recommending this method to him? He had attacked Bayle on the question of whether moral and physical evil, of which the world is entirely full, agree with the ideas that we have of an infinitely good, holy and powerful being. He had upheld against Bayle that there is on this subject a true conformity between faith and reason. Now, since Bayle had claimed that we cannot reconcile the fall of Adam and its consequences with the common notions that we have of goodness and holiness, it was natural to believe that an author who opposed him on this point would claim to successfully carry out that reconciliation. It was therefore proper to indicate distinctly for that author the common notions that he had to reconcile with such and such theological propositions.

Maximus: Jaquelot observes that it would not have been difficult to come up with fifty-or-so philosophical propositions similar to the nineteen indicated.⁷ Too bad for him, since it is a sign that these common notions have thrown our mind into confusion, or that they are luminous on all sides, so that no matter how we turn them they present the same evidence. I should alert to you that in a digression against Locke, he shows that we open the door to the most extravagant Pyrrhonism if we refuse to assent to evident ideas on the basis that God can do the most incomprehensible things.⁸ That is hardly consistent with his rejection of so many common notions.

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 311.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 311.

⁸ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 57.

Themistius: Let's not forget that he observes that the seven theological propositions do not suit the Pelagian system. This observation is useless, since first of all, it sufficed to indicate the system that Jaquelot embraces—it is that system that he should reconcile with the common notions; and Protestants would not be at all satisfied with him if he showed that Pelagianism was the only system that can be reconciled with the maxims of reason that Bayle claimed could not be reconciled with theology. Second, Jaquelot should have remembered that he was given consent to embrace Pelagianism fully,⁹ and that it was declared that in stretching himself that far he would still not be in a position to weaken the Manichean difficulties.

Therefore it was up to him alone to confound the Zoroaster who attacks every Christian system in the *Dictionary*. It was necessary to show him that by the Pelagian doctrine all the difficulties are lifted. “If Zoroaster”—these are Jaquelot's words—“is confounded by the Pelagians, then his Manicheism has fallen, and all the efforts of Bayle declared vain and superfluous.”¹⁰ That is true: so how did it come about that such a perfect occasion for overturning all of Bayle's efforts was lost? Would you like to know the reason? It is because he knew very well that Pelagianism cannot be reconciled with the nineteen philosophical maxims, that Jurieu in his *Judgment* and Bayle in his *Dictionary* had demonstrated this in arguing against the Socinians. Is it not incomprehensible that Jaquelot dared to deny knowing about the attacks that Pelagianism suffered in the *Dictionary*?¹¹

Maximus: He observes in another passage “that there are Christians in a state of salvation who include neither eternal damnation nor the indispensable necessity of sinning in the punishment that followed the fall of the first man, [that the Saumur theologians] remain in agreement with these Christians on the first point and are not far from agreeing with them on the second.”¹² He makes this note in order to prove that Bayle “errs greatly in placing among the theological dogmas received by all Christians [that Adam and all his posterity were condemned] to eternal damnation and subjected to such an inclination to sin that they abandon themselves to it almost endlessly and ceaselessly.”

But it is Jaquelot who deludes himself excessively in believing that Bayle gave his seven theological propositions as dogmas received by all Christians. From the time we have learned to read we have clearly known that the sixth

9 See *RQP* II, cxlii at the end.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 311.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 306 reports a passage from Bayle where Pelagianism is attacked.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 341.

and seventh propositions are strongly rejected by the Socinians. Bayle had in mind only the system that he believed Jaquelot would not dare to treat as false. I was not aware that Jaquelot had treated in this way any of the seven theological propositions, and you see that even here he does not side with Saumur theologians or with these Christians in a state of salvation whose identities he leaves us to guess.

What he adds concerning the moral virtues that Bayle does not refuse even to atheists does not at all weaken these words, “men abandon themselves to sin endlessly and ceaselessly.” The good actions of men compared to their bad actions are like a stream compared to the ocean. What good that infidels and the damned do is so defective, both in principle and purpose, that we find in it a greater share of vice, if we examine it with all moral rigour.

Themistius: You are forgetting the principal point, which is that the agreement of faith and reason will not cease to be impracticable if it is supposed that the sins and miseries of humanity do not have at their root a proper decree from heaven. The force of the objection will be just as great once we suppose along with Jaquelot that God knew that the fall of the first man would be followed by everything that it has and will be effectively followed by.

Maximus: We now see that there is nothing more deceiving than the title of his first work, *The Conformity of Faith and Reason, or The Defence of Religion against the Principal Difficulties Spread Throughout the Dictionary of Mr. Bayle*. To rectify this title it would be necessary to make the following changes: *The Imperfect¹³ Conformity of Faith with a Few of the Maxims of Reason, or The Dispute with Mr. Bayle wherein it is Confessed that the Philosophical Maxims that he Believed were Irreconcilable with our Theological Systems are Indeed Irreconcilable.*¹⁴

Themistius: If a Roman Catholic had written a book on transubstantiation and flaunted throughout all the reasons that can be imagined to show that the wisdom of God and His love of man brilliantly radiate from Jesus Christ's gift of His own flesh to eat; if this author, instead of reconciling his dogma with the philosophical maxims by which David Derodon had refuted it, rejected

13 On page 310 Jaquelot admits that he had never thought of demonstrating a perfect agreement between faith and reason.

14 Note that in this first book Jaquelot would have us understand that it is not necessary to consult the ideas of goodness and holiness in judging the conduct of God.

these maxims as being very false and then entitled his work, *The Conformity of Transubstantiation with Reason, or The Defence of the Mystery of the Eucharist against the Principal Philosophical Difficulties of David Derodon*, then he would imitate Jaquelot perfectly, and would make a mockery of himself.

CHAPTER 12

Whether Jaquelot Should Have Focused on the Question of Whether Bayle Believes That God is the Author of Sin

Maximus: We have seen¹ that Bayle, in describing the state of the question, formally declared that he was granting his adversary “that the past, present, and future states of men involve nothing that is not in conformity with the sovereign perfection of God.” This is a formal declaration that neither the fall of the first man, nor the consequences of that fall, damaged in any way the attributes of the divine nature, and that consequently, God is in no way the author of sin. Yet it pleased Jaquelot to claim, and to repeat a thousand times,² that this dispute arises from his denial, and Bayle’s affirmation, that God is the author of sin.

Themistius: That is excessive. If you and I had to share an inheritance and you came to me and said, ‘I am in agreement with you over this particular item—you believe that it belongs to you and I believe it too,’ and I responded to you, ‘yet I want to go to court with you over this same piece of the inheritance, and later I will have you subpoenaed by an officer’: would I not deserve to be sent among the American savages? Would it be wrong to think of me as having a lust for lawsuits? Must not Bayle’s adversary be excessively fond of disputing, since he wishes to argue forcefully over articles concerning which Bayle declared that he shared his opinion?

Maximus: If he advanced reasons that might deceive a clever man, then I would indulge him somewhat; but the four reasons that he advances give rise to indignation rather than pity in me. After maintaining that Bayle “claims and affirms, and says too clearly to be able to doubt it, that GOD IS THE TRUE ORIGIN OF EVIL AND THE PROPER CAUSE OF SIN,”³ here are the proofs he offers: 1. That Bayle concluded from the claim that the conservation of creatures is a continuous creation “that God does all and that man is but a

¹ *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 9, at the beginning, 251.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 305.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 305.

purely passive subject of the actions of God.” 2. That Bayle would have it that all the determinations of the human will occur in virtue of absolute decrees that produce them by an act of creation; for since they are not distinct from the will, the will could no more produce them than create itself by itself. On that point a passage from the *Dictionary* is cited. 3. That Bayle said that the objection based on the claim that a principle that can prevent evil, but does not, therefore desires evil, is in no way weakened by the hypothesis of free will.⁴ 4. That Bayle said that the will of God, the determiner of events, and the will of God, the legislator, are contained in one another and combined in such a way that the second is a necessary part of the essence of the first.⁵ Jaquelot is so content with these four proofs that he accompanies them by the words: “God is thus declared the author of sin in all its forms and in every respect.”

Themistius: You must admit that the person who congratulated Bayle on involving himself with Jaquelot did not know the latter very well. “He has a sharp mind,” that person said to Bayle, “he will understand you immediately, and if it should happen that you do not develop one of your ideas, he will develop it for you and take it in its true meaning; relax, then, that great care that you take in making yourself so intelligible that even readers who are dreaming of their mistresses or lawsuits can understand you.”

Maximus: I know the person who congratulated Bayle in that way, and I am sure that he will admit that things have not proceeded as he had hoped. Bayle could not have fallen into worse hands;⁶ Jaquelot is infinitely more suited to obscuring clear things than to clarifying obscure things. He gets lost along the easiest paths, takes everything the wrong way, and works only to hide the true state of the question.

He could have recognized clearly that Bayle established these two articles in his *Dictionary*: first, that it is necessary to believe that God is in no way the author of sin; and second, that it is necessary to admit that we cannot respond to the objections by which the Manicheans demonstrate that our systems ascribe to God a conduct that does not agree with the common notions of goodness, holiness, and justice. The first of these two articles should be considered obviously established in every place where Bayle has recourse to the maxim that “everything that God does is done well,” and to the revelation that

4 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 306.

5 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 307.

6 That is, into the hands of a more sinister adversary.

teaches us that God permitted sin, that He condemns it, and that He punishes it. For it follows very certainly from that maxim that God is not the author of sin.

Now, this certitude should suffice for us though we cannot understand how God does not participate in His creatures' sins, or how men can have all the freedom that seems to us necessary to render their acts justly punishable. It cannot be said that Bayle had recourse to these maxims only in a superficial way, for he very often indicated with great force that the true character of a Christian is to submit his reason to the authority of God. The *Clarifications* that he placed at the end of his *Dictionary* principally attest to this. It is therefore indubitable that if there is any fault to be found with his opinions, it is not with his claiming that God is the author of sin, but with his claiming that since no system can resolve the objections, it is necessary to have recourse to faith, under the auspices of a very certain axiom of the natural light, namely that "everything that God does is done well."

Themistius: Bayle was sure that no case could be made against him except on the second article that he declared in posing the state of the question between Jaquelot and himself;⁷ that it was not at all a matter of knowing whether God's conduct with respect to the creature's sin was conformable to His supreme perfection, but rather of knowing whether our reason could understand the real and effective agreement that is found between the attributes of God and the system of predestination. And since he was persuaded that he agreed perfectly with Jaquelot on the foundation of the dogma, and that their dispute turned only on "an unimportant accessory of Christianity,"⁸ he warned his Provincial not to alarm himself if the force of the objections was pushed freely.

What are these objections? Those that Jaquelot had to clear away as part of the commitment he made to remove all difficulties by means of free will. He could have seen that very easily, yet he blurred things to the point that he asserted that Bayle's objections absolutely tend toward proving that God is the true origin of evil and the proper cause of sin—which is, he adds, Bayle's own opinion.

Maximus: I hope that there is nothing here but an illusion, for it would truly pain me to think that a Minister who has preached the Word of God for so long was guilty of malice as dark as what Jaquelot's would be if he had been

⁷ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 9, at the beginning, 251.

⁸ See *RQP* II, clxiv at the beginning.

deceitful in this case. I defend him in my heart as much as I am able, but I admit that a certain declaration of Bayle's⁹ appears to me to be a strong proof that his adversary has here blatantly spurned the light of his conscience.

Themistius: Though you were my best friend, I would still ruthlessly argue against you if you should tell me that the method that I had used to convince myself that God was not the author of sin was not good. I used Bayle's method, which is that of the Calvinists. I rejected the evidence of the common notions of goodness, etc., in order to join myself to the evidence of the facts contained in Scripture and to the evidence of the maxim that God can do nothing that derogates from His infinite perfection. I rest peacefully in the bosom of faith, and remembering that it is a mystery that was not revealed to me that I might understand it, but that I might believe it, I do not look to explain the incomprehensibilities. I conform myself to the spirit of the Confession of Faith¹⁰ of the Reformed Churches of France.

If you claimed to me that your method, which is to prove by the freedom of indifference that God is not the author of sin, was the only one that ought to be used, I would throw every argument that I could find at you. I would refute all your proofs of the alleged existence of this kind of freedom, and I would overwhelm you with the objection that is furnished to us by the axiom that the conservation of creatures is a continuous creation. In a word, I would not overlook anything to convince you that, far from harmonizing our systems with reason, the freedom of indifference is itself irreconcilable with several evident maxims of reason.¹¹ What would you deserve if you accused me of believing that God is the author of sin, and that my dispute with you tended toward proving that alone?

Maximus: I would undoubtedly deserve your scorn. Heaven grant that I should never fall into an injustice so glaring and foolish as mine would be in such an encounter.

Themistius: If you objected to me, as Jaquelot does, that I pushed the argument¹² "with all my force"¹³ without responding a single word to it, I would reply

9 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 5, toward the end, 237.

10 See *RQP* II, clxxi (*OD* III, 834).

11 Add to this what was said above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 5, 234–235.

12 The argument based on the maxim that conservation is a continuous creation.

13 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 305.

that I treat it as I treat the common notions advanced by the Manicheans, from which I cannot disentangle myself except by rejecting them. Jaquelot found himself in the same bind.

Maximus: It now appears with the greatest evidence that his first proof is a chimera. The second, which he should not have distinguished from the preceding one, is also a chimera. But on the topic of the second proof, note that he cited as Bayle's true opinion that which Bayle reports only as a difficulty that the Scholastics can raise against the Cartesians. This doesn't augur well for his other citations!

The third proof is admirable. It consists in the following argument: the freedom of indifference given to man does not exculpate God, therefore God is the author of sin. All the Reformed theologians deny that the Arminians get out of trouble by their supposition of free will. Does it follow that they believe that God is the author of sin?

The fourth proof is as weak as the others. Everything that Bayle proposes concerning the two divine wills consists in objections aimed at proving that Jaquelot does not establish the concord between faith and reason. It is the only question at issue between these two antagonists. See what Bayle declared in the third volume of his *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.¹⁴ Jaquelot concealed all these things because he wished to interest the whole Reformed camp in this dispute.

14 I am speaking according to the philosophical lights; for once St. Augustine declares that it is by ineffable means that what happens against the will of God nevertheless does not happen without the will of God, I humble myself, I no longer advance natural ideas; but Jaquelot cannot send us back to ineffable means, for since he aims at harmonizing the doctrine of sin with reason, he commits himself to giving us distinct notions. *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 821). I do not deny that this distinction, or some other as yet unknown distinction, is true, and if Jaquelot proposed it as an object of our faith, he could legitimately promise the approval of every Christian; but his project goes further, he promises to satisfy reason, and to push back all the attacks as a pure philosopher. *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 821). Add what he said in *RQP* II, cl and clii (*OD* III, 810 and 815).

CHAPTER 13

Examination of the Five Principles That Jaquelot Substituted for the Common Notions That He Rejected

Themistius: Having cut himself off from reason by rejecting the philosophical maxims that had been given to him to reconcile with theology, he lays down five other principles. He intended to cling to reason by means of them.

The first of these principles is “that the pre-eminence of God is infinitely above creatures, such that it would be crazy for men to claim to enter into all the plans of God and all His designs when He created the universe, and to want to prescribe rules for His providence in conformity with the maxims that men observe among themselves and by which they are mutually bound.”¹

The second is “that we must not judge the intentions of God or the manifestation of all His attributes in the creation of this universe solely by the arrangement of things on the Earth, which is less than a point compared to the whole universe.”²

The third is “that God created men on this earth so they would apply themselves to the search for Him in His works”; and thus “the search for God and His truth is the duty of man, whose end God had before Him in the creation and redemption, adding eternal salvation as a reward for those who would find Him in order to adore Him, love Him, and do His will.”³

The fourth is that “God did everything for His glory since He wanted men to search for Him in His works.”

The fifth is “that God leads His creatures by immutable laws which He established, and from which He never derogates without miracles.”⁴

Maximus: The first of these five principles would have to be admitted by every, or nearly every, theologian. Bayle continually supposes it when he shows that our faith should not be shaken by the weakness we find in ourselves when we

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 312.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 313.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 317.

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 317.

try to reconcile our systems with the common notions that the Manicheans put forward so often. I believe that Bayle was truly pleased when it was acknowledged that from the time he started to write books, he adopted this great principle;⁵ the passages reported from his *Various Thoughts on the Comet* and from his *Critique of Maimbourg* were clear proof of that. But let's admire Jaquelot's *faux pas* here: he wants to make Bayle contradict himself on the basis of the nineteen philosophical maxims. He claims that Bayle wanted his readers to take them for real currency, but did not know that they were counterfeit.⁶

But the contrary of this is true. Bayle has always said that the maxims advanced by the Manicheans should not be taken as a rule for God's conduct; he rejected them outright.⁷ Le Clerc bases his accusations of alleged impiety against Bayle upon this rejection, and now here is Jaquelot accusing Bayle of adopting those maxims. He did not know how to distinguish between what one approves and what one objects against an adversary *ad hominem*; for although Bayle, who does not claim to bring every philosophical maxim into agreement with our theological systems, might reject those maxims that do not suit him, he has every imaginable right to claim that Jaquelot, who guarantees a proof of the conformity of faith and reason, is obliged to bring those maxims into agreement with his theological system.

Themistius: What is most unfortunate for this Minister is that after having rendered the divinity independent of the "maxims that men observe among themselves," he would despise those who dared to maintain that God can produce a morally evil creature, make innocent creatures suffer eternal pain, deceive men and lie, order them to hate Him and to love the devil, command them to despise the light of conscience and to hate virtue. Jaquelot is fully aware that the adherents of absolute predestination oppose his first principle to the objections that are made against them, and nevertheless they are told that they attribute conduct to God that should cause horror in every man.

A famous Lutheran preacher in Hamburg reproached the Calvinists for positing a God worse than all the devils, a God the malice of whose nature surpasses by thousands and thousands of times all the hideous crimes that

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 312, 313.

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 313.

⁷ See *RQP* II, clxxi (*OD* III, 861–862); clxxii (*OD* III, 865); clxxiii (*OD* III, 866); *RBL*, section 5, at the beginning.

can be imagined.⁸ The Roman Catholics and the Arminians are scarcely more modest than the Hamburg preacher toward the Calvinists in this respect.

It is a clear sign of a delusion that in virtue of Jaquelot's first principle, nobody can maintain that the absolute decrees subjected man to the necessity of disobeying God. Jaquelot undoubtedly condemns those who reason in the following way: 'the pre-eminence of God is infinitely above creatures and renders Him independent of the maxims that men observe among themselves; therefore He could have made the decrees of reprobation and predestination as explained in the system of the Supralapsarians.' And he would detest those who derived this consequence from his principle: 'therefore God can produce in the soul of man a morally bad volition, or invincibly force a soul to form such a volition.'

Maximus: I already sense all the uselessness of Jaquelot's first principle. It is a principle that the Supralapsarians use as well as he does, and which could be used in favour of a hypothesis even harsher than theirs. It is a principle that does not prevent us from positing acts that emanate so necessarily from the attributes of the divine nature that God cannot perform acts contrary to those; that for example, He cannot subject an innocent creature to eternal pain, or reveal falsehoods.⁹ It is a principle that does not prevent Jaquelot from believing that the Predestinarians attribute conduct to God that is opposed to His perfections.

What would he respond to those who spoke to him as follows: 'in admitting this principle, we do not lose the freedom to believe that the theologians who maintain that God prefers to place men in circumstances in which He knows that they will sin, though He can place them in circumstances in which He knows they would do their duty well, attribute conduct to God that is wholly unworthy of His nature.' That is the conduct that Jaquelot attributes to God.

8 "The God of the Calvinists is sin itself and worse than every devil. The God whom the Calvinists adore is the Supreme good-for-nothing, the Supreme thief, the Supreme bandit, the Supreme liar, the Supreme traitor, the Supreme idler, the Supreme filth; such that no murder, no robbery, no crime, no fraud, no betrayal, no disgrace, no sin, no evil anywhere in the universe can be discovered or imagined that is so great, so horrendous, so rude, so abominable that the God of the Calvinists, in the evil of his nature, does not exceed it by hundreds of thousands of times" (Philippus Nicolai, *In refutatione Relig. Calvinist.*, 134, quoted from Adamum Contzen, *De Pace Germaniae*, 282–283).

9 What would become of the certitude of the Bible if it were not guaranteed that God cannot lie?

Since, notwithstanding his first principle, he condemns the systems of the Supralapsarians and the Infralapsarians, one can also, notwithstanding the same principle, condemn the system of the Arminians; for what difference is there between 'placing a man in circumstances in which he will necessarily sin' and 'placing him in circumstances in which he will infallibly sin'? The sin in the first case is not willed any less than the one in the second. In a word, the difficulty that our reason confronts when it encounters the claim, 'it is a bad action to permit evil that could have been prevented without any inconvenience,' subsists in all its force even if we admit the first of Jaquelot's principles; such that this theologian cannot derive any assistance from it in order to reconcile the fall of man with reason. There is no other agreement to reach but to say with the Predestinarians that our reason must submit to faith in revealed truths, though these are entirely incomprehensible to it. But if Jaquelot has no other way of showing the conformity of faith and reason, all his pains are useless; his poorly conceived project was even more poorly executed.

Themistius: We can deliver him an even fiercer blow. Let's ask him whether it's not true that in whatever way God is conceived to be released from all duty toward man, we still conceive of God as a being who is naturally beneficent, a friend of virtue, an enemy of vice. If Jaquelot denied this in any assembly, be it before the wise or the ignorant, he would cause the whole audience to tremble with horror, and he would run the risk of being stoned to death. Let's suppose, therefore, that he grants that our proposition is true, and let's beg him to reconcile it with the fall of man.

He will not deny that if God had been obliged to prevent the fall, then it never would have happened; and I will claim to him that effects of natural inclinations are as sure as the effects of duty. A hard and merciless man who does not fail to give alms because he knows that God has commanded it is more likely to leave a poor man to die than a man who does charitable deeds from inclination and from the extreme pleasure that he derives from it, and who consults only his natural propensity. Since, by the proposition that I have supposed that Jaquelot grants me, God is naturally beneficent, the friend of virtue and the enemy of vice, it appears impossible for Him to bear man's falling into crime and misery, just as it would appear impossible if some obligation had committed Him to prevent it. The love of virtue alone is an invincible motive for not allowing virtue to be chased from the soul of man. The hatred of vice alone is a similar motive for not allowing vice to take over in this soul where God had placed innocence and virtue by His own hand.

Maximus: I clearly see that it is useless for Jaquelot to have rejected the common notions that were articulated for him.¹⁰ He thought he had put up a barrier against them by his first principle, but they effortlessly forced it open, and presented themselves with the same importunity as before. I will add that if he imagined that he would close the door on them by his first principle, then he was not very familiar with the common notion of goodness. He thought that it was nothing but the idea of the affection that men should have for one another, but he should have known that it is an idea so abstract that it is mentally separate from all the subjects wherein goodness can exist, and from all the particular species of goodness. It contains nothing but the essence of goodness; it is abstracted from paternal or fraternal goodness, from the goodness of inclination or of duty, and so on with the rest.

That is why Jaquelot, who boasts of reconciling religion with reason, cannot get rid of the common notions of goodness, holiness, etc., in such a cavalier manner: he must discuss them, examine them in depth, and take careful note of the abstraction that I have just proposed, which shows that the whole essence of goodness in general must be found in God because God is good. Now, by the essence of goodness in general it is clear that the misery of those to whom we are good is prevented as much as possible by us. The theologians who urge reason to submit itself to revealed facts, however inexplicable and incomprehensible they might be, can dispense with the discussions that Jaquelot must necessarily engage in.

Themistius: If he had thought through this matter, then he would have seen that from his first principle a consequence can be derived that is wholly contrary to the one that he derived from it. The pre-eminence of God is infinitely above His creatures, therefore God can bear man becoming criminal and miserable, and He can allow an infinite number of disorders to reign on the earth that no Prince should tolerate in his state and no master should tolerate in his household. That is how Jaquelot reasons, but every philosopher can choose to reason otherwise. The pre-eminence of God is infinitely above His creatures, therefore His goodness and His love of order and virtue infinitely surpass the love that the most perfect created minds have for virtue; therefore, He looks after virtue and order with infinitely greater vigilance than would the most perfect created minds who had received a commandment to oppose themselves to vice and to favour virtue.

¹⁰ In *RQP* II, cxliv.

Maximus: The consequence derived by this philosopher agrees far better with the natural light than the consequence derived by Jaquelot, who thereby finds himself exposed to a new abyss and a new powerlessness to demonstrate the concord between the fall of Adam and reason. Is anything more capable of shocking and outraging reason than Jaquelot's claim that because of the pre-eminence of His nature, God possesses a prerogative that is incommunicable to all created beings, namely to be able to allow every sort of crime and confusion, and every sort of physical evil, to reign among men, and this from the beginning of the world until its end, to the detriment of the majority of men for all eternity?

Themistius: His second principle will be no less useless than the first, for though the Earth is "less than a point with respect to the universe," it does not follow that God can produce there that which would be unworthy of Him if produced elsewhere. It is to give oneself a lowly idea of the grandeur of God to imagine that He would carefully guard Himself from permitting disorders among the inhabitants of the stars, but that He would not have the same concern for meager Earth in its small corner of the universe.

Maximus: The trouble into which this author threw himself arises mainly from his principles proving too much; for whatever his disdain for the Earth, he would not dare to say that God would ever behave toward man the way that the hypothesis of Dordrecht describes His behaviour. But all the adherents of this hypothesis will claim to him that if he reasons well, he must reject the conduct that the Arminian system attributes to God, for if it is unworthy of the divine nature to create a man who sins necessarily, it is unworthy of the same nature to place a man in circumstances where it knows that he will infallibly sin.

This retort by the Reformed has never met with an adequate response; their adversaries have sweated blood and water to no avail. Jaquelot has had no more success: "God," he says, "cannot be the author of sin, we can rightfully affirm, because His nature repels it. But to say that God could have permitted sin in this tiny corner of the universe because he wanted to place reasonable creatures there in such a situation that they could abuse their free will—this is what does not in any way appear incompatible with the wisdom and goodness of God. Above all because God is a free being who acts freely and who does not deploy in every part of the universe all of His wisdom and goodness in all their extent."¹¹

¹¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 314.

Themistius: As long as he wants to philosophize, it will be maintained against him that if it is repulsive to the nature of God to produce sin, then it is repulsive to the same nature to produce creatures that will infallibly produce sin in the circumstances in which He places them; for according to our most distinct ideas, it is all the same thing to commit a murder oneself or to place a man in circumstances in which one knows with certainty that he will be killed.

It is up to Jaquelot to prove that it “does not appear in any way incompatible with the wisdom and goodness of God” to have placed reasonable creatures in such a situation on this Earth that they would infallibly sin.¹² Every man who consults only the vast and immense idea of the supremely perfect being as we find it in the natural light, and without any systematic additions, will deny without hesitation this proposition put forward by Jaquelot, who will never be able to prove it because he will always be overcome by *ad hominem* arguments, since he rejects the system of Dordrecht.

Maximus: What do you think of his considering the miserable state of humanity and the eternal damnation of most adults as representing a lesser degree of goodness? In his words, these things prove only that God did not deploy all of His goodness in all its extent on the Earth. Is it not to scorn the world to advance such definitions?

Themistius: My judgment here is in agreement with your own: I cannot cease to be amazed at this author’s ideas which are so different from those of other men, or at his audacity to propose his surly and idiosyncratic ideas as things that will certainly pacify the dissensions of theologians and philosophers.

But let’s consider his third principle. Reason finds nothing offensive in it when it is considered according to the general notion of it that he initially gives; but when reason examines the explanation of it that he gives on page 317, it finds much to ruminate, for it cannot grasp how God could propose to Himself an end at which He will never arrive. The end He proposed for Himself in the creation and the redemption, according to Jaquelot, is that men search for Him. To make that fit with the ideas of wisdom, it is necessary to add a clause that Jaquelot omitted, namely *that men find God*, since nothing appears less worthy of God than to will that men search for Him but not to will that they find Him.

¹² Note that Jaquelot did not dare to represent this part of his system; he contented himself with saying that reasonable creatures would be in such a situation that they could abuse their free will.

Let's say, then, that if the end that God proposed to Himself was that men search for Him, then this end also includes that they find Him. Now, experience shows us that most men have not found Him and that they have taken for their God a Jupiter convicted of crimes, a snake, a tree, a cabbage, a cat, etc. So if God had set the goal of being discovered by men, then He would have been frustrated in his ends, which could not come about unless the measures that He had taken were not appropriate. Now, it would be unworthy of God to propose an end and then take false measures that prevent Him from arriving at that end. It is therefore necessary to say that He did not propose that men find Him, or consequently, that they search for Him.

May Jaquelot strive to resolve these objections: if he succeeds, he will reconcile the third of his principles with reason; if he does not succeed, he will not reunite himself with reason, and he will not compensate for the rupture he made in rejecting Bayle's nineteen philosophical maxims.

Maximus: Jaquelot's fourth principle—"God did everything for His glory"—is invincibly opposed by evident reasons,¹³ and has been rejected by very wise theologians. Bayle named several of them,¹⁴ to whom he could have added Cudworth, of whom Le Clerc approves.¹⁵ Besides, it is a principle that would drag Jaquelot into the labyrinths of the Supralapsarians, and from which a consequence can be derived that overturns the one he derives from it.

Indeed, what is more consonant with common notions than reasoning in this way: 'God did everything for His glory, therefore He rendered all the creatures who were capable of happiness and virtue both happy and virtuous'? And what is less consonant with the idea of the supremely perfect being than reasoning as the Minister of Berlin does: 'God did everything for His glory, therefore He had to permit that moral and physical evil should inundate the entire human race for the duration of the world, and most of the human race for all of eternity'?

The latter reasoning should be placed among those mysteries which most offend reason; while the former reasoning agrees with the natural light without difficulty, for we conceive nothing more glorious for the infinite being than to banish sin and misery from the whole extent of its empire, and nothing less honourable than to make His glory depend on the sin and misery of the human race.¹⁶

13 See *RQP* II, lxxiv at the beginning, and xci (*OD* III, 681a).

14 See *ibid* and *RQP*, cl (*OD* III, 809).

15 See Le Clerc, *BC* IX, 69–70.

16 See *RQP* II, cl (*OD* III, 809).

Themistius: The author does not tell us where his fifth principle is headed, but we discover later on that his thought is that God could not have prevented the fall of Adam without a miracle that would have been unworthy of His wisdom. Now, who will be persuaded that this is a good means of reconciling faith and reason? Won't the least philosopher object that it appears from Scripture that God performed a great number of miracles incomparably less useful and necessary than that one, and that it is never more fitting to derogate from general laws than when it is a question of preventing an appalling corruption of morals and infinite misery from inundating the human race?

"*The well-being of the people is the supreme law.*" It would be a sin against the laws of government not to will to derogate from the old laws when it concerned the well-being of the people. We offend the natural light, therefore, if we suppose that God would not will to derogate from general laws when the well-being of the human race was at stake.

In addition, if a miracle was necessary to prevent the fall of Adam, then that fall was situated in the progression of general laws,¹⁷ all of whose consequences are necessarily tied together. That is incompatible with the hypothesis of the freedom of indifference, and throws Jaquelot into a shameful contradiction. But we will soon prove to him demonstratively that to prevent the fall of man, it was not necessary for God to derogate from any general laws.

Moreover, it is inconceivable how the divinity could be exculpated by saying the following: 'the divinity would surely have willed to save the whole human race in the person of Adam, but the laws that it had established for the government of the world were opposed to this.' It will be asked first of all: 'did the divinity not know that these laws would necessarily result in the ruin of the human race unless a miracle were performed that the divinity would not want to perform? Therefore, the divinity made these laws either with an extreme indifference or ill intent toward man.'

Maximus: Jaquelot was not aware of something that a little meditation would have taught him, namely that before putting these principles to work in reconciling faith and reason, it is necessary for him to go to battle for each of them, and that he cannot ever give any replies on behalf of them that are as evident as what can be objected to them.

¹⁷ Sieur de Vallone, in his defence of the *Apologie des Réformés*, Part 2, page 137, says that by placing Adam in nature, by placing him in the midst of an infinite number of other objects which according to the laws of nature had to act on him for very good purposes, infallibly Adam had to fall in certain circumstances wherein it was necessary as a consequence of these laws for him to be found.

He deserves some censure for saying “that good sense sufficiently teaches us that in disputing with Christians, one must not advance principles that are either doubtful, false, or rejected by Christians,”¹⁸ such as are the nineteen philosophical maxims advanced by Bayle. Good sense would have us assume that common notions are principles that our adversary cannot deny. Now, Bayle’s nineteen principles are common notions. It is such a great advantage to reduce one’s adversary to the necessity of rejecting common notions that good sense would have us reduce him to it whenever possible. It is not true that all Christians reject the maxims in question. Le Clerc claims that if the common notions of goodness, etc., are rejected, then Christianity is exposed to the greatest peril,¹⁹ and we know that the great weapon of the adversaries of the system of Dordrecht consists in placing that system in opposition to the natural ideas we have of the divine attributes.

18 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 317–318.

19 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 11, 256.

CHAPTER 14

Discussion of the Misunderstanding over Human Freedom. Examination of an Argument Based on Jaquelot's Third Principle

Themistius: Bayle, in establishing his position on the same definition of free will that his adversary had offered,¹ supposed that Jaquelot recognized the same difference as the Arminians and Molinists between a determination toward one of two contraries, on the one hand, and a lack of determination toward either contrary, on the other. But when he refined his definition, Jaquelot formally declared² that he ascribes the whole essence of freedom to the good angels and to the saints in heaven who are invariably determined to the good, and that the disputes over the concept of freedom of the Calvinists and over that of the Arminians are but disputes about words.³

Maximus: He thereby exposed himself to a terrible objection, for since it was possible for God to leave our first fathers free in determining them invariably toward moral good, it follows that He did not allow them to fall because He could not prevent that fall without removing their free will, the greatest perfection He could have given them, according to Jaquelot.⁴

Themistius: Would you like to know why God did not give men the skill needed to use their freedom well at all times? It is that He willed that they apply themselves to search for Him in His works.⁵

Maximus: What a pitiful reason! For, on the contrary, this motive of God should make us conclude that He did give them the skill always to use their freedom well. Jaquelot admits that the search for God is surrounded with difficulty: "we are obligated," he says, "to penetrate by meditation and reflection all the sensible causes to arrive at this sovereign and invisible Cause, the first principle

¹ See *RQP* II, cxlv at the beginning (*OD* III, 798).

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 320.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 321.

⁴ See *RQP* II, cxlv (*OD* III, 800).

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 322.

of all things.”⁶ I will leave aside all the other difficulties he articulates, to which he could have added a more ample catalogue if he had wished.

Judge whether the conduct that he attributes to God does not resemble that of a crazy or mean father who, because he was sending his sons off on a dangerous journey, left them to their good faith and abandoned them to every whim of fortune. It was necessary, claims Jaquelot, for men to possess the freedom to go astray as much as they wanted, because they had a voyage to make on which it was extremely difficult not to lose their way. There is not a person so ignorant that would not respond that, on the contrary, it was necessary to place them under the direction of a very able guide, with all the more care given the difficulty involved in keeping to the right path.

Themistius: What can you say? Everyone has his own way of reasoning and Jaquelot has taken to this one: I don’t envy him for it. But why did he not confirm by experience what he said concerning the difficulties that surround the search for God in the works of creation? All men, with the exception of Jews and Christians, have gone astray in a thousand extravagant ways in this search for God. There isn’t a single insane thing that they have not believed about the divinity. The most famous philosophers have scarcely succeeded more than common people in knowing the true God.⁷ If Jews and Christians have hit the target it is not because they have searched for the creator in His creatures any better than other men; it is because God manifested Himself to them by extraordinary means, and left writings to them composed by people whom He inspired.

All of this shows us that the matter cannot be put better than by saying that God’s will that we search for Him in His works led Him not to leave the disposition of free will to men without giving them a sure means of employing it well, since without such assistance they would always employ it badly. Jaquelot prefers to put the matter a different way: God’s will that we search for Him in His works led Him to leave the entire disposition of free will to men despite His

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 315.

⁷ “If we briefly read in Cicero the summary that Velleius makes there of the opinions of the philosophers *on the nature of God*, we will find twenty-four or twenty-five accounts not including those he forgot. And we would find even more in the philosophers’ lives in Diogenes Laertius, all alike in this point, that they are for the most part equally false, extravagant, and unworthy of the name of their authors, who are all commendable people; but otherwise, the accounts are all discordant or contrary” Amyraut, *Traité des religions*, 125.

knowledge that they would continually abuse it and they would only pass from one wrong path to another. Jaquelot, as I said, prefers to combine things in this way.

Let him find a way to prove to a pagan philosopher that this conduct of God is in conformity with reason, or with the idea of a supremely perfect being. I will not repeat the terrible difficulties that I have already proposed concerning God's duty to will that we find Him if He wills that we search for Him, etc.⁸

Maximus: I don't understand anything contained in the following words of Jaquelot: "it sufficed to give man the power to do good or evil, otherwise there would not have been any occasion to search for God."⁹ Would a soul that was led by a light that determined it always to use its freedom well become, on account of that, incapable of searching for God? I understand, on the contrary, that it would become more capable of fruitfully searching Him out, and of finding Him. Nothing is more false than saying that it sufficed to give man the power to do good or evil: was this ability sufficient for the pagans to find God in the works of creation? Was it not necessary to employ an extraordinary revelation every time that God willed that we know Him and legitimately serve Him?

Themistius: Jaquelot should always recall that he is not writing for people who are persuaded of our truths, but for those who offer to embrace Christianity provided that we prove to them its conformity with reason. Would he tell such people, if he thought carefully about it, that God gave enough skill to man for him "always to make a good use of his free will?"¹⁰ What is he thinking about? On his system, God places men in circumstances wherein He foresaw that they would abuse their freedom,¹¹ and refrains from placing them in circumstances wherein He foresaw that they would make good use of their free will. A pagan philosopher will conclude from this system that God preserves the freedom of man only so that it might become the instrument of his perdition, which is clearly repugnant to the idea of a supremely perfect being.

Maximus: Here is a marvellous distinction. God foresaw that men would abuse their freedom, "but He should not on account of that have renounced His plan to put men under the obligation of searching for Him in His works. God must not judge men for what He foresees that they will do, but rather for what they

⁸ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 13, 273–274.

⁹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 323.

¹⁰ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 323.

¹¹ Not including those whom God wills to save.

will actually and freely do.”¹² What God foresees that men will do and what they will actually and freely do are the same thing; thus God cannot judge men for the second article without judging them for the first.

Themistius: I do not want to say anything about the “state of trials” or the “state of reward.” Bayle proposed difficulties on these points¹³ concerning which Jaquelot kept a profound silence, just as he did concerning several other objections contained in the chapter which the title of chapter two of the second part of his work promises to examine. It would be good if readers were warned about these faults of omission¹⁴ which are frequently committed by Jaquelot.

Maximus: Let’s not forget that the reason he gave to explain why God left men with the permission to abuse their free will cannot at all be used for a solution to the great difficulty, which is the fall of Adam; for at the time of the temptation it was not a question of searching for God, and moreover, Adam did not have much need to undertake such a search. God made Himself known to him intimately and immediately, He spoke to him, etc.

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 322.

¹³ See *RQP* II, cxlv (*OD* III, 800), and cxlix at the beginning (*OD* III, 806–807).

¹⁴ That is, difficulties that were proposed to him in *RQP* II and that he passed over in silence.

CHAPTER 15

Examination of Jaquelot's Response to the Question, 'Why Did God Permit Sin?'

Themistius: Before examining Jaquelot's response to the question, 'why did God permit sin?', we must say that according to the system of this theologian, this question does not differ from the following question: 'why did God will that Adam and Eve sin?' There seems to be a great distance between these two questions, but I will draw them together so promptly that you will soon see them end up on the same line.

According to Jaquelot, God placed Adam and Eve in circumstances wherein He knew that they would sin,¹ and did not place them in circumstances wherein He knew that they would obey His law. Therein lies the permission that God gave them to sin. Now, it is clear that God did not prefer the first circumstances to the second without positively willing that they sin, for He did not place them in the first without willing to place them there, and He did not will to place them there without willing everything that He had foreseen would result from it, including, consequently, sin. Therefore, He willed that they sin and He placed them in the first circumstances in order that they sin. And thus, according to Jaquelot's principles, 'why did God permit sin?' and the question 'why did God will sin?' are really the same question.

Maximus: I am delighted that with this remark you have finally brought us to the main issue that is before us. Let's press ahead, if you please, to examine whether Jaquelot frees himself from every difficulty, and let's leave aside everything that is not related to the principal part of the question.

Themistius: I strongly agree that we should press ahead, and for this reason I will move straight to the response that Jaquelot made. We can reduce it to this argument:²

God made men "so that they would search for Him in His works."

¹ Not only could Jaquelot not deny this—see *RQP* II, cxlvii (*OD* III, 803–804)—but also see what he confesses in *ETB*, 350.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 326.

Now they would not have been able to undertake this search if they had not had the “ability to do what they willed, whether good or evil.”³

It was therefore necessary for God to give them that ability.

He proves the minor as follows:

1. Because “if men had only the ability to do good, if they were determined toward it, there would no longer be either the search for God, or faith, or religion properly speaking”;⁴
2. Because if God had not given men the ability to do what they willed, whether good or evil, He “Himself would have destroyed His plan, He would have given with one hand what He took back with the other, and God would have imposed on man a duty that God Himself would have accomplished,”⁵ which does not agree with reason.

To confirm his argument, Jaquelot adds that God, having “finally formed man on the Earth to exercise the freedom that He gave him,” did not derogate from the general and immutable laws that He had already instituted to conduct the universe and which could “furnish men with occasions to sin.”⁶

Maximus: I do not think that from the time we began to debate this matter, a response as miserable as the one you just related has been given. For in the first place, it proves only what was not contested in Jaquelot’s case. He was permitted to suppose that it had been necessary for man to be able to turn toward both evil and good;⁷ he was told that nobody found it strange that man had been created mutable;⁸ and that all the difficulty stemmed from man’s changing from good to evil, which was not necessarily tied to his mutability.

Despite all of that, Jaquelot exerts his mental effort to prove that it was necessary for man to receive free will from God; he does not say a single word to show that sin was an inevitable consequence of this gift that was necessary for

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 327.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 329.

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 330.

⁷ Note that this too is contestable and suffers from great difficulties, as we will see below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 21, 310–311.

⁸ *RQP* II, clxxiii (*OD* III, 866).

God to give man. He responds as though the question asked of him had been, 'why was it necessary for sin to be possible?' But that was not the question: the question asked was why sin actually exists.

Themistius: You have discovered the first defect in Jaquelot's response; I will show you the second. The minor premise of his argument is completely false, for if men were led by interior aids in such a way that their wills never chose evil, they would be far better equipped to search for God in His works according to His intention, and to find Him, than they are equipped while they are abandoned to every whim of their freedom. Experience teaches us all too well that they hardly succeed in this search, and that they even fail to think of it.

Let's take for a third fault the fact that Jaquelot visibly contradicts himself when he asserts that if they were determined to the good, there would no longer be either the search for God, or faith, or religion properly speaking. He recognizes that the whole essence of freedom is preserved in the system of Dordrecht, for he admits that there is only a dispute over words between the Counter Remonstrants and the Remonstrants, and that the saints in heaven, so determined to the love of God that they no longer have the immediate ability to hate Him,⁹ possess everything that is essential to free will. Now, according to the system of Dordrecht, a man who is assisted by efficacious grace necessarily does the good, and a man who possesses no grace whatsoever does evil necessarily; nonetheless, Jaquelot is persuaded that the search for God, faith, and religion exist in the Reformed Church. Therefore, he cannot suppose what he puts forward in the first proof of his minor premise without contradicting himself, and nothing more is needed to destroy that proof, as well as the next one, than to remind him of what he admitted concerning the dogma of the Counter Remonstrants on free will, namely that it is a dogma that preserves the whole essence of freedom.

Maximus: The Roman Communion possesses a considerable Augustinian sect which teaches, just as the Reformed do, that efficacious grace is not subject to the instability of the human will, but determines that will infallibly, inevitably, even necessarily toward the good. Here is a passage that I have copied to demonstrate this.

Nicole "finds in Father Thomassin that the difference between the grace of Adam and that of Jesus Christ consists in this, that the grace of Adam was subject to the flexibility of free will, while the grace of Jesus Christ 'arrests and

⁹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 320–321.

fixes' the mutability of our will, although it leaves it 'its indifference';¹⁰ for God willed to test 'only once' the forces of free will, 'in leaving to it the choice to accept or to reject grace,' but after man had lost his way with this grace subject to his free will, God judged that it was better no longer to expose to uncertain events the graces that He gives men for their salvation, and 'no longer to trust anything but His omnipotence' and His immutability."¹¹

I am not asking Jaquelot to consider as true the Augustinian and Reformed dogma on the efficacy and necessity of grace; I ask him only to pretend for a moment that they teach the truth on this matter, and to ask himself if among the predestined who are led by this grace there is neither the search for God nor religion properly speaking. I am sure that while this fiction lasts he will find that it would be a ridiculous calumny to claim that these predestined are reduced to such a miserable state. I am also sure that he would not dare to say that if Reformed theologians reasoned properly they would have to believe that the elect no longer search for God, that the elect are without faith and without religion. Those are, however, the consequences of his response. Moreover, the example that we have just given him is mundane,¹² and taken from this state of trials that he distinguishes so carefully from the heavenly state.

Themistius: It cannot be admired enough how a man who claimed with such pomp that free will destroyed all the Manichean difficulties could contradict himself so often on the subject of freedom. Take careful note, if you will, of these words on page 367: "the goodness of God should not have been opposed to the fact that man was placed in the state of searching and trials, and that he received for this state the freedom to do as he willed, whether good or evil. For if man had been determined necessarily to recognize God, it would follow that the wisdom and power of God would be involved, such that man would not have recognized them by choice and freely."¹³

What imaginary enemies he makes in supposing that it was objected that the goodness of God should be opposed to man's ability to do good and evil! That isn't the grievance. It was objected only that the goodness of God should be opposed to man's losing his way by the use of his freedom. He searches

10 It strongly appears that Father Thomassin slipped this word in for the good of peace, and that he understood it in his own way.

11 *Journal des savans*, 11 January 1706, 18, in the excerpt of Nicole's *Instructions theolog. & morales sur le symbole*.

12 We thereby refute what he says on page 327 that Bayle errs in offering whenever possible the example of angels, etc.

13 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 367.

out imaginary enemies again when he supposes that it was objected that the goodness of God should be necessarily determined to the good of man's soul. Bayle contented himself with showing on several occasions¹⁴ that according to the hypotheses of most Christians God has infallible means of bringing about that men employ their freedom well, and thus without any determination toward the good, natural or permanent, the soul of man would always make good use of its freedom if God employed those means.

Finally, let's give Jaquelot an enemy that is not chimerical, but is Jaquelot himself. He says here that men would not have given honour to the wisdom and power of God if they had been necessarily determined to recognize them; for, he adds, they would not have "recognized them by choice and freely." But in a hundred other places he asserts that the whole essence of freedom is preserved with the determination toward the good, and he even says that we make use of our freedom when we affirm an evidently demonstrated rule of arithmetic.¹⁵ He confesses that he says only what the Supralapsarians say about freedom.¹⁶ Why, then, does he not say with them that a soul, necessitated to love God, loves God by choice and freely?

Maximus: I praise you for pressing him in this way. It is a pitiful thing that he could not forge a pivot for this dispute without refuting himself and without justifying his adversary's objection that, according to him, it is not glorious to God that the saints in heaven recognize His power, His wisdom, etc.

You have placed him between two chasms so that he must fall into one or the other. He must assert that it is a necessary consequence of the Reformed and Augustinian doctrine of freedom that there is no longer "any search for God, or faith, or religion properly speaking" among men; that God Himself destroyed His design and gave with one hand what he took back with another, etc. If politics prevent Jaquelot from instituting proceedings against the Reformed Churches on the grounds of so many abominable accusations, then in avoiding this last precipice, he must throw himself into the following one, namely that there would be among men the search for God, faith, religion; God would not Himself destroy His design; He would not give with one hand what He took back with another; all of this, even though Adam and Eve, and all their descendants, would have been certainly led to the good in all the circumstances of their life by interior aids that would not have prejudiced their freedom in any

14 See *RQP* II, cxlvi (*OD* III, 802).

15 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 340.

16 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 341.

way. This last dogma is a precipice for Jaquelot because he cannot proclaim it without contradicting himself in a childish fashion, and without destroying his work as Penelope did.

Themistius: As for these general laws which “furnish men with occasions to sin” and from which, according to Jaquelot, “God never derogates except by a miracle, which His wisdom permits Him to perform only when other means are lacking that are capable of giving men what is necessary and sufficient to fulfill his duty,”¹⁷ he will permit me to believe that they are useless. He gives himself too small an idea of God and imagines here that minor issues encumber Him. He should disabuse himself of this error. The divinity has a thousand infallible ways of preserving virtue in man’s soul without derogating from general laws. These laws influence men’s souls only as much as it pleases God by the use of His arbitrary power. It depended solely upon God to bring it about that these laws never excite in man anything more than feeble temptations, and it is always up to His good pleasure to send a solid counterweight.

Jaquelot can say nothing to elude the question that pagan philosophers would put to him: ‘why did God permit the first man and first woman to lose their innocence, and then permit their entire posterity to abandon itself over to moral evil?’ His whole response is 1. that man had to possess free will in order to search for God in His works, according to God’s intention; and 2. that God does not derogate from general laws.

But, these philosophers would respond, if the intention of God was what you say it was, men would not have searched for the divinity so poorly, for it is against the ideas of the perfection of God for Him to demand of them what they are ill-fitted to do, or for Him not to correct the defects that prevent them from responding to His intentions, or for Him to have, by His own laws, tied His hands with respect to healing the soul’s illnesses.

Maximus: In reporting the question that these philosophers might propose, you have forgotten a very essential clause. You should have said that they would ask, ‘why does God will for all men to be sinners and unhappy? That obviously offends the idea that the natural light gives us of the infinitely perfect being.’ Notice that Jaquelot supposes that when God does not make use of miracles all men have “what is necessary and sufficient to fulfill their duty.” How does he dare to say that?—he who teaches that sinners are placed not in circumstances wherein they would be honest men, but in circumstances wherein God had foreseen that they would make bad use of their freedom.

¹⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 331.

Can it be said that God grants everything that is necessary and sufficient when He grants only what He knows must be useless and even harmful? But let's suppose with him that all men receive from God what is necessary and sufficient to fulfill their duty: do they not receive it without God derogating from general laws? He could, therefore, without derogating from these laws, furnish men with sure means of avoiding crime.

Themistius: Our mediator between faith and reason is closer than ever to giving up his initial hope, and perhaps he has already felt that he has engaged himself in matters that surpass his abilities. The response he made to the question would be good if the question had been completely contrary, namely 'why did God not will to endure men becoming sinners?' You satisfy that question admirably if you respond as Jaquelot did: it is because God willed that men search for Him in His works, for to the degree that a soul clean of all vice is fit to make continual progress in the search for God hidden behind the veil of secondary causes, to that degree a soul full of vice is not fit. Thus the link that this author found between his question and his response is really disunity.

Maximus: I'm guessing he was walking on pins and needles, and that, having not dared to give the single response that he could offer, he hid himself the best he could behind vague terms. Having feared to upset those to whom he promised the conformity of faith and reason, he did not dare to say what he had necessarily to respond, namely that God willed that men search for Him, and then fall, each of them, into crime, in order to damn the ones eternally and have mercy on the others. That is what a sincere writer would have ingenuously confessed, if it had been necessary to renounce his project of reuniting theology and philosophy. From the same fear of upsetting his readers, Jaquelot kept himself from faithfully representing the state of the general laws from which God does not will to derogate. He represents them simply as things that could furnish men with occasions to sin. But had he been sincere, he would have said that God knew very certainly that they would have definitely brought into the midst of men every impurity, every murder, every false religion, and in a word, every disorder that has ever been and that ever will be in the future of the human race.¹⁸

¹⁸ Because He would permit men to grant victory to their temptations in every circumstance where He had foreseen that they would succumb; for besides, according to the dogma of free will, there is no necessary connection between general laws and the determinations of the human will.

CHAPTER 16

That a Pagan Philosopher Would Easily Prove That, According to Jaquelot, the Goodness and Holiness of God Entered into the Creation of the World for Nothing

Maximus: Jaquelot was criticized for his strange tendency to distance the ideas of the goodness and holiness of God in order to bring into sole focus the glory of the divine wisdom.¹ This criticism was well-founded: Jaquelot declares in his last book that “if we search for which [of the divine attributes] prevails in creation, we recognize without trouble that it is primarily *His power* which beams in the production of beings pulled from nothingness; next *His wisdom*, which shines in their structure and in the order in which they are arranged; after which comes *His goodness*, principally with respect to man, whom He formed in His image and likeness.”²

Themistius: A pagan philosopher would conclude from that passage that God created the world only in order to demonstrate His power and His infinite knowledge of architecture and mechanics, without His attributes of goodness and friendship to virtue having any part in the construction of this great work. This philosopher would not fail to exclaim: ‘*what God! this God of Jaquelot’s!* He doesn’t pride Himself on anything but knowledge: He would prefer to let the whole human race perish rather than allowing a few atoms to go faster or more slowly than the general laws prescribe; He would not disturb the least part of the symmetry of His work in order to prevent vice from dominating among men and exposing all of human nature to innumerable dreadful disorders and calamities.’

‘Such a God is not the one of which the natural light gives us an idea. By this idea we know that goodness is the principal attribute of God, and that if it were necessary to choose between a physical irregularity or a moral irregularity, He would choose the first.’³ No creature is harmed when the architecture of the

¹ See *RQP* II, cxlviii at the beginning (*OD* III, 804).

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 326.

³ Cf. *RPQ* II, clv (*OD* III, 825).

universe suffers from some defect; but if moral evil is introduced among men, that damage spreads itself to an infinite number of subjects.’

Maximus: The discourse you lend to this philosopher is entirely plausible, and if Jaquelot responds that he did not leave the divine goodness without work to do because he said that Adam was formed in the image of God, the philosopher will maintain that this ornament was not given to the first man by any principle of goodness, but by a principle of hatred for the human race and for virtue. He will easily prove his thesis by this argument:

God had foreseen that Adam and Eve would soon lose all the advantages that they had received from Him: that they would abuse the free will He shared with them; that as a result of this they would be shamefully banished from the Garden of Eden and obliged to earn their living by the sweat of their brow; that they would be left both to sin very often and to suffer a thousand sorrows; that they would see one of their sons killed by the other and their descendants plunged into the most criminal abominations. In a word, God had foreseen that the prompt abuse that they would make of their freedom would be followed by all the crimes and all the miseries that dishonour and afflict the human race. There is no enemy of man and virtue who on this condition would not have conferred upon the first man all the advantages contained in Jaquelot’s expression.⁴

To this difficulty he responds⁵ that God’s intention is good and holy, while the intention of an enemy is wicked and criminal; but the philosopher will ask for proofs of the good intention of God, which appears neither in the fall of man nor in the consequences of this fall. The whole affair looks extremely similar to the project of an enemy. Therefore it is necessary to show by clear and incontestable proofs that the intention of God was good. Jaquelot can’t put forward in his defence a single example or any philosophical maxims, while those who attack him will have in their favour the whole of inductive experience as well as several common notions.

If he cites the threat made to the first man, they will maintain that this is visibly an act of enmity, since God knew that it would not serve any other purpose than rendering man more criminal and punishable. If he says that after the fall of man God destined a certain number of people to His paradise, it will be responded that this is not done from goodness, since we have no idea of a goodness that, being accompanied by the power to act according to its nature,

⁴ “Formed in His image and likeness.”

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 343.

leaves people exposed to misery from the first moment of their lives right to the end, and exposed to sin from the first sparks of reason until death. All the ideas we have of goodness indicate that a beneficent nature renders the objects of its friendship happy and virtuous as promptly as possible.⁶

It will be maintained, therefore, that what Jaquelot calls mercy is no sure sign of goodness, for there were hard and barbarous conquerors who without feeling any movement of compassion gave the order to exempt from the general punishment inflicted on the inhabitants of a village those who had escaped the soldier's sword, and to give them many gifts. Political reasons and ostentation are sufficient motives for this conduct without humanity needing to play any part in it.

Jaquelot would be astute if he imagined another expedient than the one Bayle has come up with, namely that we must believe, whether we understand it or not, that everything that God does is well done. But if he has no other expedient, he will never show the conformity between faith and reason on the origin of evil. If he denied along with the Socinians the foreknowledge of contingent events, he would give himself more space, for he would be able to hold that the intentions of God were good: but how will he prove that a nature that knew all the unfortunate consequences of the gift he made to Adam had a good intention?⁷

Themistius: He could not have done anything more opposed to his project of reunion than giving the goodness of God such a weak and meager use in the creation of the universe. Every sect will rise up against him, the Christians as well as the Infidels, for there is no notion more widespread than the one that makes us consider goodness to be one of the principal attributes of the divine nature. The natural light clearly shows us that nothing is more fitting for true grandeur and supreme perfection than to put its power and knowledge to work for the happiness of others.

6 And yet Jaquelot, credulous as a child, imagines on page 389 "that a philosopher could not fail to behold the goodness of God toward man every time he represented to himself the excellence of human nature." But what would this philosopher do every time he represented to himself the meanness, craziness, extravagance, and misery of the human race, which are things infinitely more sensible and available to every man than the excellence of a human nature that can be reduced to stupidity or violence by the sap of a hundred sort of plants. See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 9, 186.

7 When he takes free will for a sign of the goodness of God he exposes himself to a comparison with those who proved their friendship and liberality toward Mevius by giving him a nice piece of rope with which they knew he would strangle himself the next day.

We are more impressed by the glory of Alexander and Caesar than by that of Titus and Marcus Aurelius, but this results only from the tumult of the imagination. Let the storm pass; consult pure reason; it will tell you that the Alexanders and Caesars deserve to be hated, for they used their valour, their military knowledge, their minds, only to ruin people and to make blood spill; while the beneficent characters of Titus and Marcus Aurelius are an honorary title infinitely more glorious than any trophy or victory of the most famous conquerors. The Panegyriste emphasize this idea, as appears in Pliny's reflections on the goodness of Trajan. Bayle brought to bear on that topic many reasons and authorities⁸ that Jaquelot pretended not to notice.

⁸ See *RQP* II, cxlviii (*OD* III, 798); cl (*OD* III, 809); cli (*OD* III, 812); clii (*OD* III, 816); cliii (*OD* III, 820); cxxx (*OD* III, 764a–765); and clv (*OD* III, 825).

CHAPTER 17

Reflections on What Jaquelot Said Concerning General Laws. Whether He Could Criticize Bayle for Having Contradicted Himself on This Subject

Maximus: We haven't said enough about general laws. Let's get back to them, if you don't mind. Jaquelot asserts that "Bayle does not agree with the assumption that God established general and invariable laws according to which He acts as much toward bodies as toward minds."¹ This is to misrepresent Bayle's opinion badly, for he does not deny general laws, he believes only that they are not absolutely invariable, and that they cannot serve to resolve the difficulties over either the origin of evil or predestination.

Themistius: Father Malebranche, the inventor of the system of general laws, admits that God derogates from them every time that order calls for it. Now, it was shown to him that God acts very often by particular volitions, not only in the order of grace, but also in the order of nature, and that it is not possible to explain His providence if He is given only general volitions, whether we consider what profane history teaches us or whether we examine what happened among the Jews. There are three volumes on that topic composed by Arnauld against Malebranche.

A pagan who had studied these well and who was to dispute with Jaquelot would overwhelm him in various ways and impel him to admit that wisdom very often permits God to derogate from general laws. After which, if Jaquelot responded that God permitted the fall of Adam because He could not prevent it without derogating from general laws, he would be reduced to dire straits. 'What!' the pagan would respond: 'God did nothing else during the six days of creation but derogate from general laws to make stones, plants, and animals; yet He could not derogate from them a little after in order to save the human race from moral and physical evil, which reign among men and will reign eternally in Hell?'² He derogated from these same laws on a thousand less important occasions, yet He could not derogate from them when it was a question of the salvation or the ruin of the human race, the noblest creature He had produced in our world?

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 330.

² See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 13, 275.

Maximus: I don't believe that Jaquelot could fend off this blow. But here is another that he will not fend off any better. Either God had foreseen the fall of Adam as a necessary consequence of general laws, or only as something to which those laws disposed Adam by surmountable temptations. In the first case it will be certain that Adam sinned necessarily: don't speak to us any further about free will. It will also be certain that God flatly and precisely willed Adam's sin, for once something is willed that is known to be necessarily tied to certain consequences, those consequences are positively willed, especially if a sure remedy is known, such as derogating from general laws would be in this case, yet a firm decision that is well weighed and considered is taken not to derogate from them.

In the second case God would have been able to save Adam without derogating from the general laws; their whole effect was to excite in him several conquerable temptations. They would have effectively excited them in him, and would have consequently taken their entire course; and if God, by some moral assistance, had helped Adam infallibly to make the right decision, He would have spared Himself any miracle derogatory to the general laws, and He would have closed the door to moral and physical evil.

Themistius: Jaquelot falls for a great illusion when he supposes that a miracle changes the order of the universe, and that this change is "of infinitely greater importance than the well-being of a good man."³ He imagines that the divinity would cease to see in His work all the beauties of architecture and mechanics that He placed in it if He derogated from general laws in order to miraculously heal a victim of plague, and that this miracle would alter the entire machine of the universe. But that is an excessive view:⁴ the miracle of the wedding at Cana caused no other change to the air in the room than making it receive into its pores several corpuscles of wine rather than corpuscles of water. Corporeal nature elsewhere remained in the same state in which it found itself before the miracle and in which it would have rested if the miracle had never happened.

If God, immediately before Eve succumbed, had saved her from peril by the inspiration of some thought, nothing would have changed appearance in the Garden of Eden—all the leaves, all the plants, all the waters would have remained in their state. It would not have been necessary for any corpuscle, whether in the air, or on the earth, or in the rivers of the garden, to move either

³ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 208; *ETB*, 336.

⁴ See *RQP* II, xci (*OD* III, 681–682).

more or less quickly. And yet here is a Doctor, who has been a Minister for over thirty years, who dares to assert that if God had furnished Eve with this aid, all of nature would have been disturbed. What ridiculousness! The sun would undoubtedly have left its place; the moon would have retrograded; the vortices of the stars would have swirled together and formed a horrible chaos! Isn't this a nice way to prove to philosophers the agreement between faith and reason on the origin of evil?

Maximus: I find that Jaquelot does not distinguish the general laws of the communication of movement from the laws of the union of body and soul. These are two different sorts of laws, of which the second sort has no natural connection to the first. The laws of the communication of movement could be executed without anything lacking in them even though the shock that they would cause in the fibres of a man's brain did not excite any sensation in his soul. There is no natural connection between local motion and sensation,⁵ not even on the supposition of the materiality of the soul.⁶ Therefore it is necessary for the correspondence that we experience between certain modifications of our organs and certain thoughts to have been established by an arbitrary law of the Creator. Following this reasoning, we can assert that it was open to God to make a general law to the effect that immoral objects should never excite any pleasure in us that could distract us from our duty, and so on for every other temptation.

But if Jaquelot obstinately believes that it was not wise for God to make such a general law, then we will take another path, we will say that it was open to God to add to the general laws of the union of body and soul this one: 'that immediately before the soul is conquered by temptations, a movement corresponding to a thought by which reason makes free will turn to the good will be formed in the brain.' Thus, without a miracle, without derogating from any law, whether of the first or second kind, God would have maintained the perpetual good use of free will in the soul of man.

Experience teaches us that we are subject to other laws; if Jaquelot claims that these are laws that expose us only to surmountable temptations, then it will be necessary for him to admit that God can always preserve us free of sin without having any need to derogate from general laws. If he said that they expose us to invincible temptations, then it would be necessary for him to

⁵ See *RQP* II, lxxxiii (*OD* III, 665b–666a); lxxiv (*OD* III, 667b–668a).

⁶ This is what Bayle proved in his refutation of excerpts that Bernard gave of *RQP* II. See *RQP* III, ix–end.

believe that we are not any more responsible for a bad volition than for the pain that we sense when a pin pricks us. This is what Jaquelot does not want to consider, or what he cannot consider without a ridiculous contradiction.

Themistius: Indeed, those who acknowledge free will must speak of it as an absolute empire established in man's soul, independent of all the rest of the universe. Objects can excite passions, reason can counsel a thousand things, the will can be disposed on account of reason and passion to lean to a certain side: but the will preserves nonetheless full authority over its determinations; it chooses because it wants to choose; it has some consideration for the counsels of reason because it pleases it to have such consideration, and it is up to the will alone not to have such consideration, but to prefer instead other motives; with the result that in all the circumstances of life, if the will chooses this rather than that, it is because this is its good pleasure. Human freedom is therefore something with no connection to general laws;⁷ it is detached from the rest of the world. Adam and Eve's choosing well or badly was therefore indifferent to general laws and to the whole of nature.

Maximus: That is as clear as possible. Jaquelot is obliged to admit that to produce a determination in the human will is beyond the sphere of every general law, whatever that law, and of every particular being. He must admit that God did not foresee the fall of Adam as a consequence of general laws, but rather by a privilege that some Christians ascribe to His knowledge, namely to know with certainty things that are purely fortuitous, even from God's own perspective.

He must say, therefore, that the universe, governed by general laws, had no interest in the obedience or disobedience of Adam. It was of no concern to any of these laws, or to nature in general, whether Eve was assisted by a good inspiration, or abandoned to her own strength. Nevertheless, Jaquelot, through inconstancy and prodigious disparity, says and repeats in a thousand places that it was in the universe's general interest for Eve not to be assisted, for if she had been, he claims that disturbances and disruptions would have taken place in the works of creation. What conformity to natural light!

Themistius: Let's conclude without delay that the system of general laws cannot supply Jaquelot with any argument with which to respond to a philosopher who

⁷ Note that Jaquelot, on page 357, denies that the situation of Adam in the garden was linked to sin.

begged him to say why God permitted sin. It is therefore with great justice that Bayle renounced this system. Jaquelot takes great pleasure in reporting what Bayle said on this subject incidentally in his *Various Thoughts on the Comet*. He even cites the *Dictionary*. But all of this is in vain when an author gives solid reasons for why he changed his mind.

If Jaquelot had wished to deliver a serious blow to Bayle, he would have refuted the objections against Father Malebranche that are found in the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.⁸ The public would have known thereby that Bayle had been guilty of an inexcusable inconstancy. How did it come about that Jaquelot did not take advantage of this occasion to mortify his adversary? It is because it would have been impossible. "There must not be anything more mortifying for Bayle," he says, "than to deny what he said and to fall into contradiction."⁹ And I respond that it must be very mortifying for him who speaks in this way to be unaware that an author who warns the public that he has changed his mind does not fall into contradiction. The least schoolboy knows that.

Greater authors than Jaquelot and Bayle have rejected opinions that they had held as true for several years in a row. Why do we study? Is it not to acquire greater illumination day by day? In preparing to write against Bayle, hadn't Jaquelot begun to reject the system of Dordrecht that he had signed at the Hague?¹⁰ Can it be said that the contradiction into which he falls is mortifying? I am of the opinion that we should reserve this epithet for the diversity that is found between his last two books. He renounced in his *Examen* several dogmas that he had affirmed in the *Conformity*.¹¹

8 See *RQP* II, cli (*OD* III, 811) and clv (*OD* III, 825).

9 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 338.

10 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 1 at the beginning.

11 We can see an example of this above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 5, 233–237. We will see a mass of further examples below.

CHAPTER 18

New Considerations to Show That Since He Can No Longer Use the System of General Laws, Jaquelot Has No Other Resource to Justify the Permission of Sin

Maximus: Our philosopher could claim that goodness is, of all divine attributes, the one that had to have the greatest part in the creation of the world, and must have shone above all in God's works. Nevertheless, he would let up in order to curtail the dispute, and would consent to Jaquelot's doctrine that the power of God had to take first place, that His infinite knowledge of architecture and mechanics had to take second, and that goodness had to take third place. But our philosopher would maintain that Jaquelot could never show that goodness actually took third place, or any other place in the construction of the world, since God's conduct toward Adam and Eve bears all the characteristics of hatred, or at least of indifference to the human race.¹

Themistius: Jaquelot, who nearly always misrepresents Bayle's opinions, imputes to him "stopping uniquely at considering the goodness of God, as if man had been the only object of God and creation."² This is neither Bayle's thought nor the goal of the objections he made on the origin of evil. "He agrees," as his adversary admits, "that men pass successively into virtue and happiness."³ Therefore, he does not ask God to heap on them every treasure of His beneficence; he supposes only that the objections are based on God's not having had the degree of goodness toward man that would prevent those who could be saved very easily from perishing right before His eyes. As for the rest, he consents that God expressed His other attributes to the full extent that they demanded. In another place Jaquelot asserts that according to Bayle "the most appropriate plan for displaying the wisdom of God had to be changed."⁴ Another misrepresentation.

¹ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 16, 288.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 326.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 322.

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 335.

Maximus: Here is, it seems to me, what should be from now on the point of view of this controversy. The interests of the wisdom of God, that is to say, of His infinite abilities in architecture and mechanics, do not require men to abuse their freedom. They do not prevent God, therefore, from putting His goodness to use in continuously preserving virtue in man's soul. Therefore, it can no longer be claimed that if God did not prevent the ill use of human freedom, it is because He could not prevent it without prejudicing His wisdom, which is more precious to Him than His goodness, since the interests of wisdom are preferable to those of goodness, which is an attribute subordinated to wisdom.⁵

Jaquelot believed he could satisfy the objections provided that he supposed this preference for divine wisdom, and that he added that God would be obliged to derogate from His laws, that is, to act against His wisdom, in order to prevent the ill use of man's free will. We have chased him so often from this post that he will surely not set his foot there again, for we have shown him that it would be easy for God to prevent sins even if all the general laws were executed without any interruption, and without ever derogating from them in any way.

Themistius: To convince him better of this truth, it is necessary to make several remarks about what he said about the laws of the union of soul and body. "In virtue of this union," he says, "[the soul had to have] sensations of joy, of pleasure, or of sadness in relation to such and such movements of the body ... This truth is beyond all dispute."⁶ He is wrong: the majority of theologians, including him,⁷ maintain that pain, illnesses, and sorrows are punishments for sin, and that the state of innocence would have been exempt from them. The author does not take into account that if the laws of the union of soul and body subjected innocent souls to pain and sadness, then these laws would bear neither the character of goodness, nor that of justice, nor that of wisdom.

Concerning goodness and justice this is clear; as for wisdom, I will prove it in this way. The admirable symmetry of the parts of the universe, the fecundity of a small number of general laws, and in a word, everything that, according to the author, gives to the interests of the wisdom of God what they demand, would equally remain intact even if men never sensed any pain or sadness.

Maximus: He will reply that it is an act of wisdom to have subjected the soul to pain and sorrow because these are prompt warnings to distance oneself from

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 327.

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 334.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 395, 405.

objects that can harm the organs to which the soul is united. But he must know that in order to use such a reason with some sort of propriety, he must first have refuted all the arguments⁸ that undermine it completely in the second volume of the *Response to the Provincial*.⁹ Moreover, he must remember that he believes that the state of innocence was not subject to any evil, and that beasts are machines,¹⁰ yet they distance themselves nonetheless, or approach as is needed, objects that can harm their machine or contribute to maintaining it in its state. Therefore, he must believe that the sensations of pleasure or of pain are not necessary for man to approach or distance himself from certain objects, and that a law established to this end would be superfluous, and consequently unworthy of the wisdom of God.

He claims that God gave our soul love for itself,¹¹ which “causes hatred to be born, as well as vengeance, pride, etc.”; that the ill use of self-love and corporeal pleasures were the cause and origin of sin, and that God could not prevent sin “by one impression more or less in the soul, [for] that would have been to disturb the whole universe and to renounce the general and immutable laws that the infinite wisdom of God had established. A man born with such and such a temperament according to the general laws, exposed in the midst of such and such circumstances to such and such objects, will receive such and such impressions from these objects following the same laws; and God does not will to change those impressions because He does not will to change the laws that He established to manifest His infinite wisdom. If it happens, therefore, that a man who detests or forgets his duty determines himself to follow these impressions which urge sin upon him, it is his own fault, and God is in no way the author of that sin.”¹² He cites his treatise on the *Conformity*, and finds it deplorable that Bayle passed over in silence “the example of David’s conduct toward Saul, and that of Jeroboam toward Roboam.”¹³

Maximus: This example served for nothing in the affair in question, which is why Bayle gave it no attention. But let’s bring back the pagan philosopher and he’ll overturn the alleged solution of Jaquelot by the request that we have

8 Jaquelot has somewhat taken a stab at them, as we will see below in *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 31.

9 See *RQP* II, lxxxvii. It is necessary to see also the refutation of the abridgment that Bernard made of this second part. It is found in *RQP* III, from chapter ix to the end.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 401.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 334.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 336.

13 This is close to his heart: he repeats this complaint several times.

already made. Either the general laws of the communication of movement and those of the union of soul and body expose the human will to invincible temptations or to conquerable temptations. According to Jaquelot, it is merely to conquerable temptations. Therefore, our philosopher will conclude, all of these laws can be fully executed without men ever abusing their freedom. Therefore, the wisdom of God leaves Him free to use every efficacious means of supporting men in the most violent temptations. Not a single atom needs to be disturbed to that end, and every general law can accomplish its full and entire effect: it is therefore in vain to say that God could not have prevented the ill use of human freedom without acting contrary to the laws that His infinite wisdom established; for this would be to insinuate that God had wanted to preserve the reign of moral goodness among men but could not, because His wisdom opposed it and impelled Him to let the human race fall into corruption and misery. Such language will deceive several superficial minds, but people of solid mind will clearly see that God could save the human race without derogating in the least bit from His wisdom, that is, from wisdom's plan as Jaquelot conceives it. The result is that in the future, this author will be obliged to say: 'God permitted sin because it was His good pleasure; I cannot give any other reason.'

Themistius: The philosopher would not ignore Jaquelot's constant illusion. He believes, or he pretends to believe, that the objections tend to impute the whole of sin to God alone. By this false supposition he imagines that he responds very well as long as he shows that men are guilty when they abuse their free will. Two of Bayle's examples could have made it clear to Jaquelot that Bayle agreed with him over the crime of Adam and Eve.¹⁴ So what is being objected?

It is that God cannot be innocent of their sin, and that He is one of its principal causes. The most evident notions drive us to this conclusion: the disturbances that inferiors commit in the sight and in the home of their superiors render the latter criminal, though this does not exculpate the former. The superior becomes criminal not only when he commands, when he excites, and when he causes others to hope for impunity; but also when his entire fault consists in connivance or permission alone.

Maximus: Jaquelot's reply is ready to hand: God is not obliged, as other superiors are, to prevent the disturbances of His inferiors. He will receive this response: so be it, we will cease objecting to you that God is complicit in Adam

¹⁴ See *RQP* II, cxlviii (*OD* III, 805) and cliv (*OD* III, 821b–822a).

and Eve's sin; we will content ourselves with saying that He was one of its principal causes, and that He positively willed that they sin, which, on account of the pre-eminence of His nature, cannot prejudice His infinite perfections. Not only was He driven to this by a sort of necessity, for He subjected Himself to the servitude of allowing vice to reign out of consideration for His wisdom, but also the general laws prevailed over goodness and the love of goodness in general. God found the general laws so beautiful, so admirable, so worthy of Himself—these general laws which were to cause every crime, every heresy, and in a word, every disorder of the human race—that He committed Himself to the continuous and perpetual execution of these laws.

Themistius: I don't know whether Jaquelot would be happy with such an explanation, but I am persuaded that there are many Christians who would take it for malicious irony on the part of the pagan philosopher.

CHAPTER 19

The Uselessness of the Remarks That Jaquelot Makes to Show That His System is Not That of the Supralapsarians; Exposition of His New System

Maximus: Jaquelot was not criticized for following the system of the Supralapsarians, but only for retreating in their way behind the entrenchment of the glory of God. Furthermore, it was proven to him¹ that because of the way he asserted the interests of this glory as a solution to all the difficulties surrounding the permission of sin, he had to establish an indissoluble connection between this permission and these interests. It was shown to him that the response that he made to a certain objection was vain and illusory, unless he supposed “that it was necessary for free beings to abuse their freedom.”² Finally, it was shown to him that he had so conformed himself to the Supralapsarian doctrine on the subject of the inevitability of sin based on the reasons of the glory of God that he was just as responsible as they were for the prodigious difficulties that emanate from saying that the interests of God rendered the fall of the first man inevitable.

As for the rest, it was well known that he distanced himself from the rigid Predestinarians in the details, and nothing was said to him that indicated that there was any doubt about this. Nevertheless, he seriously applied himself to showing the difference between his system and that of the Supralapsarians, and having recognized the abyss into which he had thrown himself, he changed his language and sought every detour that he could imagine to break the necessary connection between the glory of the Creator and the sin of the creature. Bayle could not have guessed that his adversary would abandon his first style and adopt a completely new one. So I feel sorry for Jaquelot when, in considering his new language, he finds that it must be a result either of ignorance or of bad faith that he was accused of retreating with the Supralapsarians behind the entrenchment of the glory of God.³

¹ See *RQP* II, cxlviii (*OD* III, 804).

² *RQP* II, cxlviii (*OD* III, 805–806). Jaquelot could not respond in any way to this remark; he rejected in a general way, on page 355, the phrase, ‘it was necessary for free beings to abuse their freedom.’

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 345.

Themistius: You feel sorry for him for that? You would be more reasonable if you filled yourself with indignation toward his deception. As for me, I feel all the distaste for him that theologians of bad faith deserve. I find him guilty of bad faith on every page, and here is a remarkable example of it: he says that according to Bayle, the Supralapsarians teach “that man contributes nothing more to sin than being the subject in which God produces it, that man receives sin as though he were only a purely passive subject of it.”⁴ He cites neither page, nor chapter, nor book, and I guarantee you that in this passage he behaves like an infamous forger.

Maximus: I have carefully noted that the hypothesis that he gives us, and which is the principal part of Malebranchism, does not resemble any of our systems; which reminds me of Sieur de Vallone, who having embraced the Reformed position in Germany, published an apology of its doctrine of predestination, and then a defence of this apology. To do something useful he needed to justify the system of Dordrecht, but instead of that, he scattered about new thoughts on predestination and played the part of a Malebranchist. A Lutheran might have embarrassed him by asking, ‘wouldn’t proselyte zeal urge you to justify the system of Dordrecht if you believed yourself able to do so? Is it not entirely useless to the Reformed for you to justify a hypothesis that you invented at will?’ Jaquelot finds himself in the same situation, for even if he could satisfy reason with a newly fabricated system, the agreement of the faith of the Protestant churches with reason would not advance one step; and if these churches wished to benefit from Jaquelot’s lights, they would be obligated to sacrifice all their systems to his, that is, to adopt a hypothesis whose *précis* is that the method for manifesting Himself that God preferred over every other reduces His goodness and love of virtue to inaction. But this is a monstrous idea that resembles an infernal Fury far more than it does the notion given to us by the natural light of a supremely perfect being. I doubt that Jaquelot would dare to spread this idea among the people; he would fear that his listeners would begin to murmur.

Finally, by these novelties we can sufficiently agree that Bayle was right to judge our systems in the way he did, for no defence was undertaken of any hypothesis already established within Christianity, but rather a newly established one received all the attention.

Themistius: You are forgetting an essential point, which is that even if Jaquelot could harmonize his new speculations with philosophy, there would be a

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 346.

prodigious discord between his speculative theology and his practical theology. There has never been a religion that did not suppose that the providence of God toward man involves an infinite number of particular volitions. The Christians clearly suppose it, and it is even the basis of the public worship they render to God, for it is the foundation of their prayers and their acts of individual and public grace. But according to Jaquelot, God nearly never derogates from general laws. Let him harmonize that a little with the prayers that he makes to God in the name of an entire church.

Maximus: I admit that there is nothing that is more capable of throwing him into confusion than this discord between his system and the public worship that he must render to God in his function as Minister.⁵ But let's lay out his system a little if we can, for it is as poorly digested as a thing can be.

- (I) God resolved to create the world in order to manifest His power and wisdom, and He created free beings so that they might search for Him in His works.⁶
- (II) God had formed this first plan, this first design, which was His "great and general design," without having paid any attention to sin, and without informing Himself⁷ of whether or not free beings would abuse their powers.⁸
- (III) But since sin had introduced itself into the world by accident,⁹ God benefited from this by making His justice and His mercy appear.¹⁰
- (IV) Therefore, it is only by accident that sin entered into God's decrees; it did not enter into the first design of the formation of the universe or of the creation of man.¹¹
- (V) Therefore, it must not be said that it was necessary for sin to occur, or that sin was necessary to the interests of the glory of God, or that God willed sin: His wisdom could have done very well without it.¹²

5 See Abbé Faydit, *Rémarques sur Virgile et sur Homère ...* (Paris: 1705), 128 ff.

6 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 326.

7 This is what, it seems to me, is meant by these words of Jaquelot on page 347: "sin did not enter into the first design of the formation of the universe or of the creation of man."

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 346.

9 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 347–348.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 342.

11 Ibid.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 348.

This is how Jaquelot retracted everything that he had said in his first book to justify the permission of sin by the interests of the glory of God.

Themistius: He was forced into this retraction by his powerlessness to answer the difficulties that Bayle proposed to him. I would forgive him this inconstancy if he had had the ingenuousness to admit the cause of his change of language. But presumptuous authors would rather die than confess such things.

Maximus: To the five articles that you have already listed, this sixth maxim must be added:

- (VI) God “did everything that sufficed to turn the freedom of man toward the good,” for He threatened him with death; but since He could not “oppose the fall of man without changing the order of the universe, and without derogating from the immutable laws that He had established,” He let man succumb to the temptations of the devil.¹³

This is what he lays out more amply on page 350. God, he says, “in creating this vast universe, chose the most appropriate circumstances for manifesting His power and infinite wisdom. Among these circumstances there are some that concern men on this Earth, this little corner of the universe. By this arrangement, God willed to place man in the state of searching for Him in His works and gave him the power to do as he willed, well or badly. Once this was done, God foresaw that man in such circumstances would abuse his freedom, yet He willed to permit it, because He did not wish to change the first order that He had wisely established for the manifestation of His glory. Is there anything there from which to conclude that God efficaciously willed sin? Not at all: He willed to permit it, and this is the only consequence that is justifiable.”¹⁴

From all of this we can gather this seventh proposition:

- (VII) Adam and Eve lost their innocence because God did not will to disturb the “plan that He had formed in order to show His infinite wisdom.”¹⁵

¹³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 346.

¹⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 350.

¹⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 337.

CHAPTER 20

Examination of Jaquelot's New System

Themistius: There are many censurable passages in Jaquelot's new system. Let's no longer insist on his first article, namely that men were created in order to search for God in His works. We have already shown¹ that he ascribes conduct to God that would be extreme folly or dark malice among men: namely, that instead of giving men, who were supposed to undertake the extremely difficult task of searching for God in His works, guides that had the skill never to go astray, it was instead necessary for Him to give them guides that could go astray at every moment.

I will say nothing of the second article of this system because in order to judge it properly it is necessary to make use of remarks that will be made concerning the third and fourth articles, where Jaquelot asserts that sin entered the world and the decrees of God by accident.

Maximus: The words, 'by accident,' are so shocking when applied to God's providence that Jaquelot was indispensably obliged to explain them,² for readers would be able to believe, if he did not explain them, that he wanted those words to be taken in the ordinary sense. But if we take them in that way it will be necessary to say that things took place that deceived the piercing eye of providence, such that they forced their way into the world without God knowing it, without His intention or His participation. We never say that we changed, or added, or took away from a project 'by accident' something that we knew only to be a result of chance events, events that the directors of the enterprise had never considered, events that were the cause of abandoning in part the first plan and accommodating it to the unexpected events that arose. It would be horrible impiety to understand Jaquelot's words, 'by accident,' in that way. So what will we do? I don't see how he could make use of any other meaning of them.

Themistius: Let's show that the author of this system poorly linked its parts. He says "that God, having created the universe to be conducted by such and such completely general and immutable laws, finally formed man on the earth"

¹ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 14, 277–280. See also chapter 13, 273.

² This *by accident* is the linchpin, or the key to the vault, of Jaquelot's new system: this is why it is entirely inexcusable for him not to have given an explanation of it; for until he gives one, it will be impossible to understand his new system.

and left him exposed to the action of these “constant and invariable laws” from which He did not wish to derogate.³ Now it must be observed that these laws, considered naked and in themselves, contained nothing that deserved the choice and approbation of the divine wisdom; they did not become worthy of this honour except by the beauty, the regularity and the fecundity of the effects that they were to produce from the beginning of the world to the end of the ages. God examined all of these effects one by one; He inspected each of them, He gave them His approbation, and in a sense, His blessing before decreeing to establish these laws for the government of the universe, and to render them immutable and invariable.

According to Jaquelot, the fall of Adam and Eve was a consequence of the general laws⁴ because God could not prevent it except by derogating from these laws, and He did not want to derogate from the general laws to prevent this fall. It is therefore false that sin entered into the world and into the decrees of God by accident. It entered by the usual door taken by all the other effects of general laws. It entered into the first design of the formation of the universe and the creation of man, since God did not approve any general law until He had known, one by one, all the events to which they would lead, among which the fall of man and the consequences of this fall rank very high in importance. So you see that there are many falsehoods in this system, as well as things which mutually undermine each other.

Maximus: Allow me to cast new light on what you have just said. We can suppose that God initially considered merely as possible the effects of a certain number of laws executed in a certain manner, but having found them most appropriate for manifesting His power and wisdom, He pulled them from the state of pure possibility and rendered them actually future. To do that necessarily demands the decrees of the divine will; and since God, in examining one by one all the effects of the general laws, would have eliminated those that would cause Him displeasure if He had found such effects, we can say that among those which He rendered future there were none that He did not approve, that He did not love, and to which He did not destine actual existence with all the consent of His good pleasure.

According to Jaquelot, the fall of Adam and Eve was one of the events to which the general laws had to lead. Therefore, since God rendered this event future, it follows that this fall entered into the first plan of God and into His

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 330.

⁴ To see Jaquelot's contradictions on this point consult *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 17, 295.

decrees just as the other consequences of the general laws; the consequences, I say, that God approved of as very fitting for the execution of His great design. It would be a childish illusion to claim that in the system of general laws God is not the arranger and the dispensator of every particular event, for He established these general laws as immutable only after having approved all their consequences, and He is properly speaking the author of these consequences, given that He chose the laws that would lead to them.

Themistius: I don't know what Jaquelot could respond to that, or to a man who might say coldly to him, 'you did not learn either from Scripture or from the natural light that sin did not enter into the first, into the great, and into the general design of God; it is a pure fiction of your mind that everyone has the right to reject; you will never be able to prove it.' As I say, I don't know what he would respond to this, but I do know that his system fails everywhere, and that if he wants to make something tolerable out of it he will have to lick it into shape for two or three years as if it were a little bear.

Maximus: I am just as convinced of this as you are and I will give you a new example. Jaquelot supposes in his fifth article that sin has no relation to the interests of the glory of God, and yet he says elsewhere that God could not prevent the fall of man without derogating from the general laws, which His wisdom did not permit Him to do. Once one is obliged to consent to the sin of man under pain of departing from the rules of wisdom, is it not true that one is necessarily obliged to consent to it out of interest for one's glory? Moreover, is there any necessity more invincible or more inevitable than that which arises from the execution of the general, immutable, and invariable laws from which God did not will to derogate?

From that I conclude that the fall of Adam and Eve occurred just as inevitably and necessarily as the lunar eclipses, since according to Jaquelot, it was one of the consequences of the general laws, and God willed that these laws be executed according to their form and content. Nevertheless this new forger of systems would like us to cease saying that it was necessary for sin to occur. Do you admire the pain he took to fit together his aphorisms? Can you imagine that from the first sight of them he did not realize their defects and contradictions? Do you not find that the more we study this author, the more we find him incomprehensible?

Themistius: What shall we say about his sixth aphorism, in which he asserts that God, having threatened Adam and Eve with death, did what was sufficient to turn their freedom toward the good? One of the Polish Brethren might justly

speak in this way, but Jaquelot, who cannot deny that God foresaw that, on the one hand, His threat would render no service, and that on the other, it would render the sin of man more punishable, should be ashamed to affirm what he affirms. It is utterly impossible to believe that everything sufficient is given when it is known that all that is given will be useless and pernicious.

Jaquelot feels so little shame on this point that he dares to accuse his adversary of having contradicted himself in asserting that God showed very little consideration for the freedom of man by the threat of death given for its defence, and in asserting that God intervened in the sin of Adam as a moral cause.⁵ He claims that Bayle wished to say in the first place that God's threat "should have necessarily determined Adam to do the good." I cannot understand from what source the Theologian of Berlin derives so many contradictions that he objects gravely to Bayle. Is there even the shadow of a contradiction in this thesis?: 'According to our manner of judging things, the threat of death should have produced a very good effect in the soul of Adam; but according to God's judgment, and according to His foreknowledge, it should have served only to render the crime of the first man even greater.'

5 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 351.

CHAPTER 21

Continuation of the Same Subject. That It Clearly Follows from Jaquelot's System That God Willed Sin and That He was Properly Speaking One of Its Causes

Maximus: Let's abandon all other particular criticisms of his system. Let's rather attack it broadly, in its entirety, and show that it would be useless to resolve the difficulties in question. Let's have Jaquelot wrestle with a Zoroastrian philosopher and then we'll see that he can't escape his troubles. He nicely reduced the whole state of the question to the following: "from the claim that God permitted sin, does it follow that God is the EFFICIENT cause of evil and the TRUE author of sin?"¹ It will be shown to him that his retreat behind the word 'efficient' is only an artifice that the least skilled theologians should recognize as vain.

Themistius: I am eager to imagine this Zoroastrian philosopher in Jaquelot's cabinet; perhaps he would begin with the following remark:

1. 'The conduct that you attribute to God manifestly shows that He never had good intentions toward virtue and that His penchant was rather to promote vice. You teach that He gave Adam and Eve the power to do good and evil: this augured badly. Would He have done this if He had wanted virtue never to be troubled while it was possessed? Wasn't the true and infallible means of always preserving virtue in the world this: never to allow there to be a cause that could produce vice? Therefore, to have produced such a cause and to have placed it in the soul of man is to have wanted the door always to be open to moral evil; it is to have placed the wolf in the sheepfold; it is to have obligated man to nourish a domestic enemy and to hold in his breast a snake that would pierce his heart sooner or later.'

'I don't see how you could say that after reviewing His works in general He did not find anything that was not good,² for the faculty of doing evil could not be a good thing, since it is impossible for evil to arise from the good. You will

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 324.

² This refutes what Jaquelot advances against the Manicheans: see *ETB*, 344.

tell me that this faculty is united to the faculty of doing good, but I respond that the union of a bad thing to a good thing does not do away with the natural qualities of either, and that all that we can grant to you is that since free will is comprised of both the faculty of doing good and that of doing evil, it is in part a good thing and in part a bad thing.’

‘Christians, generally speaking, are so persuaded that the power to do evil is a defect in man and a capital imperfection that they teach that souls are stripped of it once they enter heaven. Those who describe the love of God for His elect with the greatest force say that even from the time of this life He rids them very often of this unfortunate power in acting on their wills with irresistible grace. From several prayer formulas it is seen that the most ardent desire of devout souls is to be freed from this grievous faculty of offending God. Of all the moral virtues, the one desired most strongly by those who aspire to perfection is a habit which determines them to the good and renders them incapable of listening, without an extreme aversion, to the solicitations of evil.³ I conclude that even if the faculty of doing evil were never actualized, it would still be an evil thing in the universe. A viper that has never harmed anyone is still a pernicious beast.’

Maximus: If you don’t mind, leave the second point to me; that is, allow me to report what would follow these objections of the disciple of Zoroaster. It seems to me that he would continue in this way:

II. ‘The way to silence all calumny would have been to keep in sight the faculty of doing evil, or to put it under the direction of something that would prevent it from executing that of which it was capable. But you teach that God did not make use of such direction, and that, on the contrary, having foreseen with certainty that Adam and Eve would put their freedom to good use in some circumstances and to very bad use in others, He did not will to place them in the first, but willed instead to place them in the second. These second circumstances involved, among other things, a clever and cunning tempter entering into battle against Eve, and ultimately triumphing over the innocence of this good and simple woman.’

‘God, an attentive spectator of this battle, followed its progress closely; He knew of all the harmful impressions that Eve allowed herself to receive, and He observed the fatal moment at which she would be infallibly overcome if she were not given some aid. But far from providing her with aid in a time of such pressing and important need, and far from pulling her off this dangerous path,

³ See *RQP* II, lxxxiii (*OD* III, 666); cxi (*OD* III, 682).

He refused her every sort of assistance and left her as prey to the tempter who went off victoriously. From that time, what was once a well-founded conjecture became a matter of scientific fact: God gave men the faculty of doing evil only so that evil could inundate the human race. Thus, the consequences of your doctrine are that God created man only from a principle of enmity for human nature and for virtue, and in order to benefit vice. The threat He made to Adam is a powerful confirmation of this.⁴

‘It cannot be doubted, on the basis of what has just been said, that God willed formally, fully, and positively that Adam and Eve sin; for there is no more certain sign of a complete volition than to observe that the measures taken to render something successful are infallible and as sure as could possibly be invented. Now, such are the measures that God took to introduce sin: He chose circumstances in which He knew with certainty that Adam and Eve would sin, and He placed them precisely in those circumstances to the exclusion of all other circumstances in which He knew that they would use their freedom well. Therefore, God made use of them in so far as He knew that they had necessitated themselves toward evil by the ill use of their free will. The event was therefore just as certain as it would have been if a cause naturally determined to sin had been used.’⁵

‘I ask you, Mr. Jaquelot, to suppose for a moment that God had willed with as much force as possible that Adam and Eve sin: could He have employed more efficient or more infallible means to arrive at His goal than the ones that He in fact employed in the Garden of Eden? I challenge you to deny that with some sort of acceptable proof. I know very well that on the question—‘what difference is there between placing a man in circumstances in which it is known that he will necessarily sin, and placing him in circumstances in which it is known that he will infallibly sin?’—you have advanced two differences;⁶ however, they bear no relation to the question, for it concerns only knowing whether the will of those who place individuals in circumstances in which they know that they will sin infallibly is just as full and as entire and arrives just as certainly at its goal as the will of those who choose circumstances in which they know that the individuals will necessarily sin. You were not able to say anything about this difficulty, which was the only one put to you, and you will never be able to invent any quibble to elude the clear and evident principle that serves as a foundation for this objection.’⁷

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 16, 289.

⁵ See *RQP* II, cxliv (*OD* III, 798), maxim 17.

⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 358.

⁷ Note that Jaquelot puts much weight on the claim that God did not have any efficacious

'I will confirm all of this by several remarks. In the first place, I note that these two things were equally impossible: one, that Adam and Eve neither obey nor disobey God; the other, that they obey Him and that they disobey Him at the same time. From this it follows that: 1. It was absolutely necessary for their obedience or for their disobedience to pass from a state of pure possibility to future actuality; 2. By the decree that rendered their disobedience a future event, their obedience became impossible.'

'In the second place, I note that while the different determinations of their wills, according to the diverse combinations of circumstances, were the object of middle knowledge, they were properly speaking only possible, for their conditional futurity did not make them change state before an absolute decree of the divine will intervened to choose a determination that had been conditionally foreseen.'

'I note in the third place that the decree, by which God established absolutely that Adam and Eve would be placed in circumstances wherein He had foreseen that they would sin, rendered their disobedience so infallible, so inevitable, that their obedience would have implied a contradiction; for it would be contradictory if an event that had been rendered future by a decree of God's will did not take place, but instead, some contrary event took place.'⁸

'Finally, I note that by this decree their obedience (as possible as you like, considered abstractly) became impossible, since it was impossible for that which God had decreed not to occur, and for that which He had not decreed, to occur.'⁹ From which I conclude that the measures that God took for the introduction of sin by the disobedience of Adam and Eve were so inevitable that the most consummate and powerful will for them to sin could not have chosen more certain measures, and thus one would have to be nearly hallucinatory to assert that sin entered the world merely by accident.'

volition that absolutely decreed that sin exist. This is pure illusion: he will be shown in chapter 26 that on his hypothesis, such a decree was impossible.

⁸ Cf. *RQP* II, clii (*OD* III, 819).

⁹ Normally we say that whatever does not imply a contradiction is possible: consequently, the obedience of Adam and his disobedience were equally possible, since neither one nor the other implied a contradiction; but one must remark that this ceases to be true once we do not consider these two acts in themselves, but rather relatively to God's decree; for just as it would be contradictory for Adam to obey and to disobey at the same time, so too if God's decree had rendered his disobedience actually future, then from that time his obedience would become impossible and imply a contradiction. It is of no importance whether the decree was anterior or posterior to the divine foreknowledge.

Themistius: I left you the second point, now leave me to recite the third remark of our Zoroastrian. It is again to Jaquelot that he continues to speak:

III. 'You surprise me by supposing that all the objections are nullified provided that God is not the efficient cause of sin. Do you not know that there are several ways of being the proper cause of a crime? I will only indicate four of them to you: One is guilty of murder: 1. when one kills somebody; 2. when one has somebody killed by people whom one necessitates to perform the killing; 3. when one places somebody in circumstances in which one knows that they will be killed; 4. when one allows somebody to be killed whom one could easily have saved.'

'I believe that in Calvin's day there were fanatics who made God the author of sin in the first sense. He is the author of sin in the second sense according to the system of Dordrecht, assuming we rely on the claims of the Lutherans, the Arminians, and the Molinists. You will not be able to deny that He is the author of the sin of Adam and Eve in the third and fourth senses, since He placed them in circumstances in which He knew they would sin, and since He abandoned them—though He could very easily have saved them by refreshing some idea in their minds—to the malice of a tempter, and endured the sight of this cunning spirit causing them to perish miserably.'

'If you maintain that the third and fourth ways of being the cause of something are improper and metaphorical, you delude yourself; for no man was ever more properly the cause of the death of another than David was of that of Uriah; and it is generally accepted that a mother who might easily feed her son but instead leaves him to starve, or who permits in cold blood a snake to slip into the cradle of her son and kill this innocent creature, is just as properly the cause of the death of this child as if she had killed him herself.'

'By common notions we join together these two duties:¹⁰ 1. That one must not do harm to one's neighbour; 2. That one must not permit harm to be done to one's neighbour. These are two of the characteristics of the predestined in one of the Psalms of David.¹¹ This union indicates that to fulfill one's duty, both of these two things are required, not merely the first. You have not reflected enough on the confidence with which Reformed theologians maintain that once the Lutherans, the Arminians, and the Roman Catholics admit that God did not preserve the innocence of humanity as He might have, they are no

¹⁰ "I suppose that you know that two kinds of injustice are spoken of: one, when we inflict injury on somebody; the other, when we do not prevent somebody's suffering, though the means to do so are in our power" (Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Orat. 1 in Erasmus*, 14).

¹¹ "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Psalm 15:3).

longer able to resolve the objections. This is because it is a principle of the natural light that the permission of an evil that can be prevented is itself an evil action.'

'I am surprised that at your age you could have hoped to remove all the difficulties provided that you maintained that sin was committed by a free agent. Are you not aware that one is just as guilty of murder when one has a man assassinated by people who perform the act only after a long deliberation as when one causes a man to die by having the floor collapse under him? Are these old madams who oversee so many impurities any less criminal because they do not themselves commit them, but only leave all the young people whose meetings they arrange to their own free will?'

Maximus: It's my turn now to recite the fourth remark of our philosopher.

iv. 'There remains one other resource at your disposal, which is to say that it is true that according to our common notions it would follow from your doctrine that God willed that Adam and Eve sin, and that He was in two ways properly speaking the cause of their sin, but that one must not judge God according to our common notions that you have rejected, for God is above all comparisons by the pre-eminence of His nature, and He can do, without harming His holiness, that which men could never do without being guilty of a crime. You believe that you have thereby escaped a great labyrinth, but you do not realize that you have fallen into another even more terrifying one.'¹²

'For what would you respond to the fanatical contemporaries of Calvin who might have maintained that God is the efficient and immediate cause of sin, without this taking away in the least from his infinite perfection, because of the pre-eminence of His nature? What could you tell them, other than that it is evident by the natural light that God cannot be the author of sin in this way?¹³ But, they would reply, it is no less evident by the natural light that He cannot be the author of sin according to the two methods properly speaking that you admit.'

'It is evident that if David could be exculpated for what he did to Uriah, or if the mother could be exculpated for allowing her son to die in the two

¹² See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 13, 272; *DHC* III, "Pyrrhon," rem. B, 733a.

¹³ Note that we can see here a sample of what Bayle offered to Jaquelot (*OD* III, 809). What is amusing is that Jaquelot, in *ETB*, 359, accepts the challenge, but not in remaining with the principles with respect to which the challenge had been made, but in adopting a completely different system. What is more pitiful than that?

cases described above, then they could be exculpated even if David and this woman had killed with their own hands Uriah, in the one case, and the son in the other case. It is up to you to offer us a sure and evident rule by which we can judge that the natural light must be followed up to a certain point regarding the conduct of God, but that it must be abandoned for all the rest. Where will you find such a rule? We defy you ever to indicate a certain fixed point, and thus by the same liberty with which you reject all the common notions that are inconvenient for you, we reject those that you wish to retain, for you retain them only by caprice or by the interest you have in your hypothesis.'

'Will you allege that Scripture teaches us that God is not the efficient and immediate cause of sin? That is where we want you; for it is Scripture that brings us to believe by precise and formal texts that God produces sin in this way when the interests of His glory demand it. Witness Pharaoh, whom He hardened several times in a row because it was necessary to manifest the superiority of His power. If you say that it is necessary to explicate these passages by others, these will only be words to make your case; but if, finally, you reduce yourself to saying that the literal sense, which ascribes conduct to God that is manifestly opposed to the natural light, is false, you will fall into a pitiful contradiction, since you have rejected the natural light in as many articles as it pleased you to reject it, besides which you have no right to set limits for us after having extended yourself as far as you wished.'

'You will declaim against the appalling consequences of our doctrine, you will say that we will no longer be able to assert that God does not deceive, that it is the introduction of the most dreadful Pyrrhonism. You will say all that you please; nobody is more interested than you are in these consequences, for they are born of your dogmas and of your principle of the pre-eminence of God; and your disregard for the natural light drags you there necessarily: you will never be able to make an objection that we cannot retort in an invincible manner.'

Themistius: I feel that there remains for him yet another objection. Allow me to describe it to you in the following way:

v. 'I have another small question to ask you that will place you between two labyrinths, into one of which you will necessarily fall. Could God have prevented the fall of Adam, or was He not able? If He could have prevented it, it follows that He did not will to prevent it, but that He willed it positively and formally, since it was a necessary consequence of His not willing to prevent it that it happened infallibly, for He had placed Adam and Eve in circumstances in which He had foreseen that they would sin. Therefore, you must say that, having

the complete freedom to save the human race or to let it perish, He chose the latter without reluctance and because it was His good pleasure.'

'So there you find yourself in a labyrinth in which, far from being able to hope that you will be seen as a man fit to demonstrate the conformity of faith and reason, you must rather fear that every philosopher will look at you loathingly as a Doctor who attributes conduct to God that is diametrically opposed to the idea of a supremely perfect being. Nothing shines with greater brilliance in this idea than goodness, the love of virtue and the hatred of vice.¹⁴ Will you ever persuade those who contemplate this idea that, though God had the capacity to make men happy and virtuous, His good pleasure was for them to fall into the lamentable and abominable condition in which they have stagnated since the beginning of the world, and in which they will eternally stagnate?'¹⁵

'If you reply that God could not have prevented the fall of Adam because He was obliged by very important considerations for the general laws that He had established, and for the freedom that He had given to man, then I will ask you another question. Either these important considerations were inviolable or they were violable. If they were violable, your response is worthless. God preserved His freedom of indifference either to prevent the fall of man or not to prevent it. If they were inviolable, then this fall emanated from the divine nature, which was absolutely necessitated to render it actually future. You fall into the labyrinth of the necessary connection between sin and the interests of God.'

'You were treated so badly by Bayle over this issue that in order to heal your wounds you invented a new, completely different hypothesis according to which God had no regard for sin, and took notice of it only after the fact, that is, after sin had introduced itself into the world by accident. You do not have less reason to fear in this second labyrinth than you did in the first that all the contemplators of the idea of a supremely perfect being will look at you with horror.'

Maximus: I am of the opinion that we should put an end here to the attacks of the Zoroastrian philosopher. They will suffice to exercise those who have endured them.

14 This agrees perfectly with Scripture, which does not speak of any other attribute of God more strongly than of His goodness and His love of virtue and hatred of vice.

15 With the exception of a handful of predestined souls.

CHAPTER 22

Confirmation of the Preceding Chapter by the Refutation of Several of Jaquelot's Maxims

Themistius: You are right: those were five blows that destroyed all of Jaquelot's machinery. But let's have him mount his great battle-horse to see whether he can put some order back into his sorry affairs.

Maximus: I see: you want to observe what will happen if he has recourse again to the immutability of the general laws. But have we not already reduced to rubble everything that he had built on this miserable foundation?¹ Let's just say that this great battle-horse has already died from his wounds.

Themistius: Jaquelot claims two things: 1. that God did not will the sin of Adam; 2. that the great design of God was already formed, already prepared, even to the point of having received its final touches, although God had not yet deliberated on the fate of man, when sin entered by pure accident into the universe, after which God considered that state of affairs.

Maximus: Against the first of these claims, I observe that there is no prosecutor impudent enough who would dare to suggest to a mother, who had left her son to die of hunger, to offer the following quibble: 'tell the judges that you indeed willed to permit your son to die of hunger, but that you did not at all will for him to die of hunger.' What a distinction! How insane; how extravagant! Yet it pleased Jaquelot to make use of it in order to exculpate God before the pagan philosophers. God, he says,² did not will sin;³ He willed only to permit it.

Let's remember that the conduct of God as He stood by and watched Eve's combat with the snake, and the conduct of the mother who was overflowing with milk but let her son die of hunger, are very similar. If Jaquelot insists that there is a difference in that the permission of the mother is a crime while God's permission is innocent, then the pagan philosopher will reply in two ways to him: 1. That on this footing it would be easy to maintain that God can innocently

¹ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 17, 292, and chapter 18, 300.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 350.

³ Here he adds *efficaciously*, which is nothing but chicanery. So does he claim that God willed sin *inefficaciously*? It's pure gibberish. See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 21, 312n7.

necessitate people to sin and even innocently produce sin in the soul of man; 2. That it is not a matter here of examining the moral difference between these two permissions, but rather of knowing whether by their physical state they are not equally joined to a complete will that their objects actually occur.

Jaquelot will make Christianity the laughing stock of outsiders if he insists on maintaining that it is truthfully impossible for a mother to permit her son to die of hunger while nevertheless not willing that he die of hunger, but that it is very possible for God to permit Eve to die under His eyes while not willing that she die. As for his second claim that sin did not enter into God's original plan, we have already refuted that invincibly.⁴

Themistius: He is stubborn enough in his pettiness that I can suppose with some plausibility that he will claim that the conduct of this mother toward her son, and that of God toward Eve, should not be compared because the child cannot resist hunger, while Eve could resist her tempter.

Maximus: I believe he is very capable of offering in all seriousness a difference as illusory as that one, and which I can refute with the following two arguments. The first is that God was more certain that Eve would perish if she was not given aid than the mother was certain that her son would perish if he was not given aid. From which it follows that the resolution not to aid Eve indicates in God a complete will that she die just as much as the resolution of the mother not to aid her son indicates fully that she willed his death.

Second,⁵ once Eve was reduced to a state wherein she no longer knew how to make use of the weapons God had given her, it was just as great an act of hatred not to help her then as it would have been if she had never been given any weapons in the first place; for being completely unarmed, and having weapons that are entirely useless because one does not know how to use them when the need arises, are the very same thing. I would feel no more indebted to a man who had given me weapons from which he knew I would derive no benefit than to a man who had absolutely refused me all weapons.⁶

Themistius: Your second argument is so evident that I could make even the crudest peasant understand it immediately. I would ask him: 'if you were swimming with one of your neighbours, saw him at risk of drowning, and left

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 20, 306–307.

⁵ I am still supposing that it is the Zoroastrian who is attacking Jaquelot: this holds once and for all.

⁶ See *RQP* II, clxix (*OD* III, 858).

him to perish instead of saving his life as you could infallibly have done by extending your hand to him, would you believe that you could justify yourself by alleging that you knew that he was a good swimmer, but a good swimmer who had lost his mind, and who no longer remembered any of the rules of the art of swimming, so greatly had the fear of death disturbed his soul?' I am sure that this peasant would reply that he would feel guilty about his neighbour's death if he had conducted himself in the manner that I described.

Maximus: If Jaquelot does not perceive the evidence of these things, then his mind is constituted differently than those of other humans. Let him not dare to reject our comparisons proudly, for he must admit them at least in order to discover the sense of several essential phrases, such as 'to will something,' and 'to will something fully,' etc.; expressions which are naturally clear, but which he strives to cover over with impenetrable obscurities in order to hide the bad state of his cause.

Themistius: Let's spare him the shame of examining trifles that are unworthy of a man of good faith and judgment, such as those which you have refuted. Let's not use the example of a mother who leaves her little son to die of hunger, but that of a mother who can tell by a number of different signs that her daughter will soon allow a cajoling gallant to do all that he wishes to her, and who nevertheless does not stir to action, nor say a single word, but pretends to look elsewhere; a mother, in short, who endures the sight of this tempter making off with his prey. There is no longer any difference between our examples left to invent. They now resemble each other like two drops of water, and if the mother of whom we have just spoken could not say without rendering herself ridiculous, 'I indeed willed to permit my daughter to give herself up entirely, but I did not will that she give herself up entirely,' she would not render herself any less ridiculous by excusing herself on the basis of her daughter's free will.

Maximus: The only response that Jaquelot could make to the last comparison is to say that it is indecent, but a Manichean would justly mock such subterfuge.

Themistius: We can put an objection to him that he will find disagreeable. Sacred History teaches us that the Garden of Eden was formed by a particular volition of God, that Adam and Eve were placed there by a similar volition, and that God prescribed a single law to them and appended to that law a very harsh threat—two more things that cannot be the effects of a general law. We see, therefore, that God took a particular interest in the use they would make of their freedom, and thus Jaquelot contradicts Scripture when he affirms: 1. That

God paid no attention to sin except after a pure accident had given rise to it; 2. That God permitted sin only in order to leave the general laws that He had established immutable.

Maximus: This second response involves an absurdity that we have already sufficiently refuted. But let's continue to show that he has forgotten Scripture. He would like us to say not that God places man in such and such circumstances, but "that man finds himself placed in the midst of such circumstances by an effect of immutable laws of the universe."⁷ If he applies that to our first fathers, then he brazenly contradicts Sacred History, and if he confesses that he was wrong not to except them, he will still meet with strange difficulties, for he will give us ideas of divine providence that are conformable neither to Scripture nor to our systems, and that directly oppose what he had taught concerning the efficacious permission of God.⁸ He said positively in his book, the *Conformity*, "that God is the Master of the disposition of objects and of the circumstances IN WHICH IT PLEASES HIM THAT WE FIND OURSELVES."⁹

Themistius: I would add that either he understands nothing about the system of general laws, or that he must say that on this system the will of God is as much the cause of every particular event as it is on the common system. Let's have no respect for passages from Scripture—Jaquelot will very willingly consent to this—and let's say that Cyrus, without any particular volition of God, but by the consequences alone of general laws, became King of Persia and Babylon: we will still be forced to assert that it was by the will of God that he walked from day to day along the route he took from his birth to his death. God knew, before choosing the general laws that He ultimately established, all the events that would be consequences of their execution,¹⁰ and not one of these events became actually future except because God approved it and willed its existence in such a time and place. Having found among the consequences of the general laws the whole fortune of Cyrus, God commended it, and bound it up in the decrees concerning the government of the world, such that it is only by the divine will that this monarch was what he was. It is to speak very properly to say that God placed him in these circumstances, but it would be impious to say that he found himself placed therein by an effect of general laws without God having

7 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 358.

8 See *RQP* II, clxvii (*OD* III, 852); and below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 27.

9 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 138.

10 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 20, 307.

any hand in it. Bayle's sixth theological proposition¹¹ is as true on the system of general laws as it is in the ordinary system; namely that God eternally foresaw everything that would happen and that He ordered all things and placed them each in its place.

Maximus: Jaquelot could not bear the assertion "that God DESTINES nearly every free creature to a sequence of combinations of circumstances in which He had foreseen that they would sin."

"The term, 'destines,' is a poor choice here," he adds; "it is not God's intention to make use of combinations of circumstances for the damnation of men. Does he not know that according to a large number of very learned Reformed theologians, the intention of God was to save men by the death of Jesus Christ?"¹²

I fear that this minister is concealing a monstrous doctrine concerning the providence of God, for the proposition that he condemns is in the style of the majority of the theologians, and could be false only by supposing that a thousand things occur that God neither fixed nor determined. As for these theologians who assert that the intention of God was to save all men by the death of Jesus Christ, the Zoroastrian philosopher could very well be reasonable enough to counsel Jaquelot in friendly terms to keep such a doctrine hidden in the Christian schools, for, he would show him, if you were surrounded by learned pagans, they would ridicule you and would write songs against your God just as the Jews did against the idols of the Gentiles. The subject matter would favour these pagans: "The God of the Christians wills that all men be saved; He has the power necessary to save them all; He lacks neither the power nor the good will; and yet nearly all men are damned." Contemplate from all imaginable sides, and in whatever way pleases you, the vast and immense idea of the supremely perfect being; you will discover nothing that opposes this doctrine. It is clearly repugnant to such a being to fail in any of His designs; everything He wills must occur; and if anything does not occur, it is because He did not will that it occur. This is clear by the most evident natural light; it is not a proposition similar to the many aphorisms by which you wish to reconcile your faith and reason, and which are not in agreement with the natural idea we have of a being eternal and necessary, infinite in every sort of perfection.

¹¹ RQP II, cxliv (OD III, 796).

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 351–352.

CHAPTER 23

Collection and Examination of Several Propositions That Show, among Other Things, That Jaquelot Abandoned the Principles That He Shared in Common with the Supralapsarians

Themistius: We could end our examination of Jaquelot's reply here, for after having ruined his new system, and after having shown that his free will, which was supposed to destroy all the difficulties, does nothing to explain the origin of evil, what does it matter to us if several of his critical observations scattered here and there were successful? The fate of this dispute does not depend on such observations, and we could legitimately release ourselves from all sorts of new discussions. We can above all abandon a hundred insignificant things that Jaquelot repeats on nearly every page concerning the foreknowledge and permission of sin, etc. They should be set to fall to pieces along with the total destruction of the building.

Maximus: I agree with you. However, I would like to tell you about something that I noticed, and that perhaps you noticed as well: namely, that I found only one solid observation¹ among all those that Jaquelot joined to the citations of the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.² These citations, as you know, are very numerous and ordinarily very short. This will deceive gullible readers who, in reading this latest work by Jaquelot, will not remember the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*. They will judge that since there are so many passages of this second part³ in Jaquelot's book accompanied by refutation, he has replied very well to Bayle.

Themistius: Let's not worry about what this kind of reader will say or think. Their judgment deserves only scorn from connoisseurs. Let it suffice to know

¹ It is on page 361 and concerns the accusation of begging the question which Bayle incorrectly believed that the Manicheans could make [against Jaquelot's doctrine of the permission of evil].

² [OD] Citations from *RQP* II, cxxviii–clxxi.

³ [MH] Recall that the third *volume* of *RQP* contained the second *part* of that work.

that the connoisseurs who confront the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* and the *Examination of Bayle's Theology* will judge that Jaquelot did not reply to anything while remaining committed to the principles on the basis of which he was attacked. He had no other resource than to invent a new hypothesis that had not been exposed to Bayle's arsenal. He left his first work crushed beneath the weight of objections, he did nothing in favour of his old doctrine, he merely forged new principles that permitted him to escape from objections that he never could have eluded if he had persisted with his first doctrines.

Thus the prognosis of the public voice was fully realized.⁴ Jaquelot was forced to cede complete victory to Bayle over his book, the *Conformity*. He in no way undertook its apology; all he could do was change his opinion and present himself with a new system that had been unknown and had not been attacked in the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*. It is no great exploit to respond to invincible objections made against another doctrine by means of some new doctrine.

Maximus: What is regrettable here for the Minister of Berlin is that the weapons that we set up against his new system have been at least as devastating as those used in the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* in order to demolish his design, his project,⁵ and all his work; such that if, after having failed shamefully twice in a row, he is not disheartened, it will be necessary for him to forge a third new hypothesis. Religion's peacemakers are so stubborn in their undertaking that no ill success discourages them. We can therefore predict that the theologian whom we are refuting will try again.

Themistius: He might finally end up with something if he had the genius for systematization; but this is visibly lacking in him. We have seen this from how many poorly assorted pieces his new system is built,⁶ and we are about to see a collection of propositions that would be very difficult to fit together.

1. "Supposing that men had never sinned, the manifestation of the wisdom of God in the creation of the world would have been the same."⁷

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, 219.

⁵ Understanding, as always, that we are speaking only of those passages that concerned Bayle.

⁶ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 20, 306–309.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 336.

- II. If God had willed to prevent the fall of man, He would have derogated “from the plan which He had conceived in order to demonstrate his infinite wisdom.”⁸
- III. If God had “prevented sin by a stronger or weaker impression in the soul [of man], He would have disturbed the entire universe and renounced the general and immutable laws which His infinite wisdom had established.”⁹
- IV. If God were a benefactor “so beholden to man that He could have no other goal than that of rendering him happy at whatever price,” then He would not have given graces which according to His foreknowledge were to serve only to ruin those to whom He had given them; but it is false that God is a benefactor so beholden to man.¹⁰
- V. “In creating this vast universe, God chose THE MOST FITTING combinations for manifesting His power and infinite wisdom.”¹¹
- VI. God “willed to permit [sin] because He did not will to change the original order that He had wisely established for the manifestation of His glory.”¹²
- VII. “The goodness of God toward man is ruled by the wisdom of God and subject to the principal end, which is the manifestation of His glory in the creation of the universe.”¹³
- VIII. God could have found in virtue a suitable means proportioned to His ends.¹⁴
- IX. “Sin occurred by accident; it was not a part of God’s original design.”¹⁵
- X. It is false “that God necessarily loves all the means without which He could not arrive at the manifestation of His glory.”¹⁶
- XI. If there were only four means of manifesting God’s glory, and alone each was sufficient, then God would not love any of them necessarily, since He might leave any to take another.¹⁷

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 337.

9 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 337 and 347.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 343.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 350.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 350.

13 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 355.

14 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 364.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 365.

- XII. “Sin became by accident one of these means; God did not choose it by any efficacious decree, He only permitted it.”¹⁸
- XIII. “It was not impossible for God to form this Earth in another way, nor to place men there in another state and in different circumstances.”¹⁹
- XIV. It is false “that the method God chose to manifest His glory was the only one suited to His wisdom.”²⁰
- XV. “Sin is not the only method that was suited to God’s wisdom for the manifestation of His glory.”²¹
- XVI. “The goodness of God did not have to oppose itself” to the existence of intelligent and free beings who sought God in His works.²²
- XVII. If it had been so opposed, then the wisdom and power of God would have been sacrificed to His goodness.²³
- XVIII. This proposition, “the infinite wisdom of God could do nothing more worthy or more excellent than what it in fact did,” as though it had exhausted all its energy, “is rash and false.”²⁴
- XIX. It is false that God created the world for His glory, if by that is meant that He created it in order to manifest His mercy and His justice.²⁵
- XX. “Having given freedom to man in order to recognize His power and infinite wisdom in the creation of the universe—which was God’s original plan—God should not have taken back this freedom because He foresaw that man would abuse it. To say the contrary is to attribute to the all-perfect Being an inconstancy that is unworthy of a craftsman with any skill whatsoever; from which it follows that God, seeing this, had to permit sin.”²⁶

Maximus: Allow me first of all to make two general remarks about these twenty propositions. The first is that it is not possible to go further astray than Jaquelot of the principles he established in his first book. I am referring to the necessary connection that he recognized between sin and the interests of the glory of God. Today it is no longer the case: sin was something entirely indifferent to the

18 Ibid.
 19 Ibid.
 20 Ibid.
 21 Ibid.
 22 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 367.
 23 Ibid.
 24 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 367.
 25 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 371.
 26 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 377.

glory of God; it entered the world only by accident. This new hypothesis is able to resolve several difficulties that were insoluble when Jaquelot's first principles were followed. If he prides himself in responding to these objections, then he will revel in an imaginary victory.²⁷ There is no schoolchild who in passing from 'yes' to 'no' cannot get out of invincible objections.

My second remark is that these propositions sometimes mutually destroy each other, and they do not have the clarity that is necessary for them to be useful for the reconciliation of faith and reason. Far from sensing that they emanate from the idea of a supremely perfect Being, we find that they oppose the notions that the natural light gives us of the divine attributes. In a word, most of them give rise to many new difficulties.

Themistius: These three defects will appear as clearly as possible if we dissect each of these twenty propositions to some extent.

Proposition I agrees neither with II nor with III nor with VI nor with XX, for if the obedience of Adam and Eve was just as suitable to the manifestation of the wisdom of God as their disobedience, then it is clearly false that God was obliged to permit their fall in order to conserve the plan that He had formed to demonstrate His infinite wisdom.

Proposition II, in addition to III and VI, recalls that which Jaquelot took great pains to avoid, namely the necessary connection between sin and the interests of the glory of God.

Proposition IV is chimerical, since those who find that the fall of Adam and Eve does not agree with the goodness of God do not claim that God was so beholden to man that He could not have had any other goal than to render him happy at whatever price. They claim only that without prejudicing His other attributes or the other parts of the universe, His goodness and love of virtue could have permitted Him to exempt the human race from all moral and physical evil. What is more absurd than opposing such a claim with Jaquelot's fourth aphorism?

Proposition V does not fit well with XIII, XIV, XV, or XVIII, for if the combinations which God chose are the most appropriate "of all"²⁸ for manifesting His power and infinite wisdom, then it is not easy to understand how He might have chosen less appropriate ones. Those which He chose are unique means, for there are not two means each of which contains the most appropriate combinations of all. Thus, these unique means deserved preference over all others and the divine wisdom had to fix itself upon it.

²⁷ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, 323–326.

²⁸ This "of all" is not in Jaquelot's book, but it must necessarily be understood.

What Jaquelot asserts in VI, and what he had already uttered in II and III, is so false that we have already refuted it by invincible arguments. But when we need only object to him that what he advances is in no way suitable to the common notions we have of an infinitely perfect Being, then we can very justly disregard him. What trait did he find in the idea of the divine nature that evidently taught him that the preservation of the innocence of Adam and Eve would have disturbed the entire universe and would have changed the plan for the manifestation of the glory of God? To whom is this gibberish intelligible? Where are the men who cannot conceive clearly by the idea of God that His knowledge can furnish Him with a thousand ways of reconciling His goodness and His wisdom, and of conserving the universe in the same state whether or not men are virtuous or vicious? Jaquelot confesses as much in Propositions I and xv.

Thesis VII is entirely useless because we conceive clearly that although the goodness of God toward man is ruled by the wisdom of God and subordinated to the manifestation of the glory of God in the creation of the universe, the human race could still be both happy and virtuous.

Proposition VIII exposes Jaquelot to unusual difficulties: here's how. If a system from which sin had been banished was suitable to the ends for which God created the universe, it would be impossible to understand that God did not prefer it to the system which contains the crime and misery of men. By the idea of God we evidently conceive that, all things being equal elsewhere, He will prefer a system in which virtue reigns over a system in which vice reigns; yet Jaquelot asserts that the system of virtue, however suitable and proportioned it was to God's ends, and although it was equally fitting for the manifestation of the glory of the Creator,²⁹ was rejected in order to make room for the system that favours vice.

If the Zoroastrian philosopher attacked Jaquelot on this point, he would soon reduce him to silence or to the necessity of employing the energy of his lungs only for uttering absurdities. The philosopher would ask: what kind of divinity are you producing for us? A divinity who cheerfully delivered a contradictory judgment in favour of vice and against virtue; a divinity who, having compared side-by-side the system that contained neither moral nor physical evil, and the system that was completely inundated with this double evil, preferred the latter to the former, despite finding that they were equally suitable to the interests of His glory.

Proposition IX of our theologian agrees neither with II nor with III nor with VI. We have refuted it invincibly³⁰ and we can add here that it is opposed by

29 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, Proposition I, 324.

30 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, 306–307.

Sacred History, which teaches us that God did not abandon the fate of man to general laws, but that He instead took an interest in it by particular volitions which are, according to Jaquelot, derogations from general laws. God came to convey to our first fathers that they were to abstain from a certain tree and that He would condemn them to death if they did not obey;³¹ He came, that is, to convey this message by a derogation from general laws and without fearing that He would disturb the universe.

He feared no such thing, according to Jaquelot, and He found himself obliged to respect the general laws only when it was a matter of deciding whether men would be vicious and unhappy, or virtuous and content. The decision fell upon the first option because otherwise it would have been necessary to make use of a particular volition. Is there anything further from plausibility and from the idea of God than these dogmas that Jaquelot employs to reconcile theology with philosophy on the difficulties surrounding the origin of evil? What becomes of a man's good sense when he dogmatizes in this way? I have no idea.

Proposition x is so evidently false that it would be pointless to refute it.

Proposition xi becomes a completely useless *hors-d'oeuvre* in light of proposition v.

Concerning proposition xii let's say only that Jaquelot will never be able to respond to the objections of the Zoroastrian philosopher related above,³² nor escape the ridiculousness of his position that we have shown him.³³

The difficulties that accompany propositions xiii, xiv, and xv were indicated when we discussed proposition viii.

Proposition xvi is ridiculous because it gives no other task to the goodness of God than to have consented to man's searching well or poorly for God in His works. There is nobody who will conceive of this as an act of goodness, and nobody who will not conceive that in order to make of this an act of goodness, it is necessary to join to it that men are led with certainty in their search for God, such that they would not fail to find Him.

Proposition xvii is no less ridiculous than xvi, for if the goodness of God had arranged for men to be led with certainty in the search for their creator, then the divine power and wisdom would not have failed to conserve all their advantages. What prejudice could be done to the power and wisdom of God if His goodness prevented men from straying from the right path? Where did

31 See *Genesis*, chapter 2.

32 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 21, 310–317.

33 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 22, 318–320.

Jaquelot derive such rare knowledge, so opposed to common notions? I would like to know.

Proposition XVIII hardly agrees with v.

Proposition XIX is founded solely upon IX and XII, the falsity of which is easy to show.

Proposition XX shows us that Jaquelot finds plenty of difficulties where there are none. For who told him that there was no mean between these two things—‘take back the freedom that was given,’ and ‘permit that this freedom be abused’? The most limited minds will easily find a mean between these two propositions, namely that by congruent graces God will always appropriately assist the human will so that it is determined toward the side of the good. By means of this, free will can be preserved entirely in man, who will never make a bad use of it.

Jaquelot confesses³⁴ that the evidence of an arithmetical demonstration does not prevent the use of freedom. He must therefore confess that a light communicated to men to enlighten them concerning their true interests in every temptation would not prejudice their free will even though it would surely aid them always to make good choices. It does not appear necessary for this light to be extremely bright, for we see that with mediocre attention a great number of people make good use of their freedom in some matters all their life. How many old painters, old musicians, old preachers, old lawyers (and so on with other professions) are there who can sincerely say that they have never wished to paint poorly, sing poorly, preach poorly, plead poorly, etc.?

This is why we can maintain that a certain amount of light communicated to men when they were destined to use their freedom in search of their creator in His creatures could have brought about that they always searched freely for the creator and that they never abused their free will.³⁵ Jaquelot will be forced to recognize this since he admits that man, acting according to the principles of the Supralapsarians, would not fail to act with the whole essence of freedom.

Although he doubted that any could be found, in fact a second mean between these two things can be demonstrated. God had only to place men in circumstances in which He had foreseen that they would fulfill their duty well.

34 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 15, 285.

35 Note that it is necessary to suppose, in order to understand that a certain amount of light would have sufficed for man, that man would thereby have been delivered from the violent inclinations that he had contracted toward evil. In this last state it appears more difficult for him to be led toward the good. See below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 28.

It is therefore false that it is necessary to speak as Jaquelot does, or to attribute to God “an inconstancy unworthy of a craftsman with any skill whatsoever.” But if it were necessary to choose between these two extremes, or to attribute to God the revocation of the freedom that He had given to man, or the obduracy to leave the human race to perish, there is nobody who would not reject the last option.

To persevere in a resolution which according to the natural light has all the appearance of cruelty is a greater defect than to move to a contrary resolution after having considered the harmful consequences of the gift one might have given. I add that it marks no inconstancy, but is rather a firm attachment to the same principle that recommends removing what one has given once one realizes that it is a present that will cause the ruin of the one to whom it is given. It is from a principle of goodness³⁶ that magnificent gifts are given; it is therefore from a principle of goodness that such gifts are taken back once it is a matter of preventing them from causing harm.³⁷

How base and injurious to the divine nature is the idea that Jaquelot forms of the power and wisdom of God!³⁸ He claims that after having given men freedom, God was devoid of the power to save them from crime and misery because there was only one way to save them from it, but this way was absolutely impracticable, since it was unworthy of a craftsman with any skill whatsoever. I will leave aside the variations of this author; he gives us here an argument very different from the one he has given so many times, and which he derives from the commitment God made to Himself to observe the general laws.

Maximus: The criticisms you have just offered are very fitting to disillusion those who might have thought that Jaquelot was a clever man.

36 Jaquelot confesses (*ETB*, 323) that the spirits which God endowed with free will are the creatures whom He loves the most. The distinction he joins to that is pure gibberish.

37 See *RQP* II, lxxxi (*OD* III, 662); xci (*OD* III, 680).

38 We will return to this below, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 28.

CHAPTER 24

Reflection on Jaquelot's Pomp in Claiming That Free Will Lifts Every Difficulty Concerning the Origin of Evil

Themistius: If a twenty-year-old student of theology allowed himself to be infected with the Pelagian heresy, and then at twenty-five published a text filled with all the praises that Jaquelot has given to the faculty to sin or not to sin, I would not be astonished by it. I would say to myself: 'the great fire of youth did not permit him to examine this question on every side; he considered it only from the side that pleased him and he applied himself to it only in order to become an even greater admirer of free will, thereby avoiding all that might trouble his admiration.' Jaquelot had all the necessary leisure to examine dispassionately the strengths and weaknesses of free will; that he should reveal that he considered it only from the side that enticed him is what will surprise and appal me for a long time.

Maximus: I am no less surprised, nor any less scandalized than you are by his conduct; but alas, each has his own method of studying and meditating upon a subject. Take Jaquelot's method: it is in no way the path toward solidity and precision of the mind. But that's his problem and means little to me; let's just say that it appears in his case to give rise to a very crass ignorance of everything in the writings of the Reformed theologians concerning retortions against the permission of sin; for if he had known the force of these retortions,¹ which is even greater against him than against the other Arminians on account of the way he explains God's permission,² he would have spoken more modestly about human freedom. He would not have asserted so proudly that free will suffices to destroy all the difficulties, which is the same as saying that it suffices to level all the Zoroastrians, all the Manicheans, all the freethinkers, all the philosophers. He would not have said that because of this admirable virtue of free will, those who wish to emphasize the Manichean objections "turn against this freedom in

¹ See *RQP* II, clxvii.

² Writers are so persuaded that the retortion against permission must push back and confound their adversaries that Mr. King even used it against the Manicheans. See *RQP* II, lxxv (*OD* III, 654).

order to destroy it.”³ Experience could have cleared this matter up for him, for he was overwhelmed with insoluble difficulties even when, following his lead, the free will of the Arminians was assumed. It depends on him alone to know by the way of sentiment that his free will is that broken reed that pierces the hand of him who leans upon it.

Themistius: If he had paid the least attention to the fact that so many maxims, so many examples, and a certain light cast upon every mind lead us to acknowledge the complicity of those who have no other part in a crime but to have arranged the occasion and to have adroitly brought the passions of others into play, would he have said with so much confidence that every difficulty is removed by proving by appeal to free will that God was not the efficient cause of the sin of Adam?

Maximus: If he had known what is most commonly objected when this matter is disputed, he would not have dared to employ a distinction that is capable only of making Christianity seem ridiculous, and of exposing it to the cruellest and bloodiest gibes of the pagan philosophers.⁴

Themistius: Finally, if he had not limited himself to the admiration of what pleased him about free will, and if he had spent some time informing himself of the difficulties that accompany the project of the reunion of theology and philosophy over the origin of evil by means of human freedom, then he would have contented himself with having failed once, he would not have made any other attempt, and he would not have hoped that in piling up several principles and in forging a new system he would come to the end of reconciling faith and reason. This is what a judicious man cannot ever hope while he advances only maxims that can be denied and of which he can offer no proof when they are denied; or while he constructs a system, not in consulting the vast and immense idea of the supremely perfect being, but in consulting the needs of his present situation.

Maximus: You have marvellously described the weakness of Jaquelot’s last book. This author bases himself on principles that contain no evidence and therefore will be contested by the first to confront them; such that, instead of making great strides toward his goal of reconciliation, he will at every moment

³ See *RQP* II, cxlii (*OD* III, 791).

⁴ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 22, 318–322.

need to engage himself in particular disputes in which he will be detained for as long as it pleases his opponents. Moreover, his new system is entirely built on gratuitous assumptions that can be denied and that he can never prove. The rule he followed in introducing one assumption rather than another has not been the idea of the supremely perfect being, or the evidence of the natural light. His only rule has been to avoid the disadvantages to which he had exposed himself in his first book, and the objections that Bayle made against him. I will say nothing about the awful discord that rings throughout the parts of his system, and nothing about the opposition he leaves between his maxims. The worst is that he advances nothing that we have not wholly overturned.

Themistius: That is what stubbornness is capable of bringing about in a presumptuous mind that does not take the time to study what might diminish the admiration it has conceived for a certain dogma.

CHAPTER 25

Why We Will Not Refute Several of Jaquelot's Objections to Various Passages from the Second Part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* Which He Took Out of Context Whenever It Pleased Him and Which He Paraphrased However Much It Pleased Him. Several Characteristics of His Mind

Themistius: I have just remembered something you said to me to which I have not yet responded; it's time I did so. You told me that perhaps I had noticed the same thing as you concerning the quality of the criticisms that Jaquelot joined to his citations of the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.¹ Your conjecture is well-founded, for it appeared to me that among these critical notes there is hardly a single one that could honour a mediocre writer. They are nothing but scratches similar to those a cat makes on its wooden post. That is why I am of the opinion that we should not amuse ourselves with their refutation; we would merely fall into boring minutiae and would pointlessly tire ourselves since the fate of this dispute does not depend on the refutation of each remark that Jaquelot made, but rather on the fact that his system and the bulk of the tree were reduced to ashes.

Maximus: What necessity is there to follow an author in every detail of his critique when it is seen clearly that he seeks only to quibble and to disguise things? Tell me your opinion of an example that I will recount for you. Bayle had remarked² that his adversary had left many things without a response and had reused observations without mentioning the arguments by which they had already been refuted. He had indicated in the margin an example of the latter.³ Jaquelot concluded that he was guilty only of this single fault.⁴

¹ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 23, 323.

² *RQP* II, cxliii (*OD* III, 794–795).

³ *RQP* II, cxliii (*OD* III, 795), note (o).

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 304.

Themistius: Since you would like to know my opinion of that, I will tell you that it is something that is just as unworthy of a serious author as it is worthy of a petty sophist. But here are two examples to show you that Jaquelot's preoccupation resists even the strongest lights. Bayle had shown with the greatest evidence⁵ that a prince who chose one hundred people to make a voyage, on the condition that if the money he gave them for the voyage was in fact sufficient for them, then they would be rewarded, but otherwise they would be punished, would lack goodness toward those who employed their money poorly, assuming the prince had been assured of this beforehand. Jaquelot coldly maintains that this prince would not lack any goodness.⁶

Bayle had shown evidently that if it is impossible for men to accomplish the law of God, then it is impossible for them always to avoid sin.⁷ Jaquelot, ignoring this evidence,⁸ maintains that even if it were impossible for them always to avoid sin, they would nonetheless never sin necessarily, that is, each time they sin they would have the proximate ability⁹ not to sin. Does a man who maintains these two things at the same time—1. 'it is sometimes impossible for men to avoid sin'; 2. 'men never sin without the possibility of not sinning'—deserve that we follow him in all the details of his defence? Does he not rather deserve to be abandoned to his obstinacy and stubbornness?

Maximus: This deception and bad faith of Jaquelot are sometimes so inane that it is astonishing how much he disdains the public; but no doubt his boldness stems from his confidence that the majority of readers compare nothing, such that he prides himself on being able to mutilate the arguments of his adversary with impunity. This is what he did in an infuriating manner on page 375. He rashly supposes there that the fourth of Bayle's reflections¹⁰ is based only on the passage cited in that place, which provides an occasion for him to act as though he were a great wit, to make jokes, and generally to puff himself up. The whole spectacle is the display of a Sophist that would cause shame in any author who still had a conscience. There is nothing easier to show every reader than this

5 *RQP* II, cxlviii (*OD* III, 804).

6 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 353.

7 *RQP* II, clii (*OD* III, 816).

8 Note that he falsely states that it was a question of man in his innocence, emerging from the hands of God. If the entire passage from Bayle is read, however, it will be seen clearly that it was a question only of the men of today.

9 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 374.

10 But which he erroneously gave as the third reflection.

point of fact: the fourth of Bayle's reflections is based on a very great number of demonstrative passages that he faithfully pulled from Jaquelot's book.

Themistius: He is sometimes so careless that he undermines his own principles. "Who can be made to understand," asked Bayle,¹¹ "that the fall of Adam and its consequences contributed something to the regularity of the heavens or else to the good of some part of the Earth?" I don't know whom he is addressing here, responds Jaquelot, "but as for me, I neither said nor believe this."¹² How did it come to be, then, that he repeated hundreds of times that if God had assisted Eve in her time of great need, the whole universe would have been disturbed? He adds "that he never preached that sin introduced disorder into the elements; that he would consider such an idea to be foolish." The sacred historian therefore said something foolish when he reported that the Earth was damned as a result of the sin of Adam.¹³ Honestly, our theologian gives himself over to his presumption too often. He should have respected the large number of great men who have written and preached what he calls foolish.¹⁴

Maximus: We have already collected enough of his character traits to dispense us from having to follow him step-by-step; let's leave aside several of his remarks, notably all his new quibbling over the comparison with a mother. He tormented his mind and ended up saying nothing reasonable, when a single thing sufficed, namely to say that 'a mother is obliged to take care of her daughters' virtue, but it is a prerogative of God to be dispensed from the care of preserving the virtue of men and of opposing the progress of vice.' Now there's an admirable subject for a sermon!

11 *RQP* II, clii (*OD* III, 817).

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 377.

13 Note that Bayle cited this passage, and another from St. Paul, in the place that Jaquelot seeks to refute.

14 Compare what King declares: *RQP* II, lxxix (*OD* III, 658).

CHAPTER 26

On the Two Species of Divine Will

Themistius: Here is a subject concerning which we cannot avoid following Jaquelot, for it is too tied up with the principal matter at hand. It is, moreover, very difficult, so that if one had succeeded in coming to agreement with the pagan philosophers on the questions that we have encountered, this article alone would be able to cause a rupture and to put to an end to all peaceful negotiations.

Maximus: This is where I expected to witness Jaquelot's enthusiasm.

Themistius: I was sure that he would lack the necessary resolve in this instance, and I was not wrong in my prognosis. I compared with his chapter 18 Bayle's chapter 154, and I found that it was not possible to respond more pitifully than Jaquelot responded. He met with several objections there that he respected, or rather dreaded, such that he did not even approach them and took no side on the issues besides that of the mute. His silence here is a remarkable sign of the triumph of his antagonist. His babbling over several other objections will not indicate the victory of Bayle any less, as we will demonstrate shortly, and he must not congratulate himself if, in denying that there is any necessary connection between sin and the interests of God's glory, he avoids several difficulties that overwhelm and crush the doctrine that he spread throughout his first book.

Maximus: We will finish our examination of his chapter 18 all the more quickly since it contains a great deal of verbiage aimed uniquely at treating Bayle disagreeably. Recall that we made a law for ourselves not to pay any attention to vague reproaches or the insults of authors.¹ We are focusing only on the passages where the authors engage in reasoning. Following this method, I will

¹ See *Dialogues*, Part 1, 129. It is because of this that we have paid no attention to Jaquelot's repeated complaints that Bayle follows no order in his thinking, that he leaves things in a confused state, etc. These are commonplaces and formulas of reproach that Jaquelot could have copied in the first polemical book that fell into his hands. Very often he pretends to speak of Bayle's book with the greatest disdain. This is how he responds to the honesty and the praise that Bayle had heaped on him.

pass immediately to the fourth page of Jaquelot's chapter 18, where he begins to enter into the matter at hand.

He complains² that Bayle left out several words in citing a passage from the *Conformity*. It says there "that nothing happens against the will of God, or even without His permission." Bayle contented himself with citing "that nothing happens against the will of God," and then it was alleged that this suppression marked the "culmination of a fallacy." What an absurd claim! For the terms that Bayle omitted were far more favourable to his cause than those that he did report, considering the manner in which Jaquelot explains the dogma of God's permission. It is certain that Bayle left out the words, "or even without His permission," only because he did not want to engage in that place material that he claimed to treat elsewhere and that he in fact did treat in two chapters, doing great damage there to his adversary. I will never understand by means of what mental feat he could have persuaded himself that these words, "or even without His permission," even more than the preceding words, are the culmination of the alleged fallacy. His character has some peculiar features.³

Themistius: Let's continue to press him, this time with this observation of Bayle's,⁴ namely that since God is incapable of the indifference of the Epicurean gods who take notice of nothing and who will neither sin nor its absence, it is necessary that everything be either in conformity with, or contrary to, the will of God, such that if something occurs that is not contrary to the will of God, it occurs according to the will of God. Let's see how Jaquelot tries to recover from this.

"If by 'according to the will of God' he means that it is in conformity with an efficacious will that had absolutely decreed the event, then it is false; but if, by 'according to the will of God,' he means that God did not will to prevent it by an efficacious act of the will, and that He even permitted it, then it is true. And there you have a mean between the two terms 'against' and 'according to,' such that it is true to say that things happen that God did not decree absolutely and before the foreknowledge of the use that men would make of their freedom, which He did not will to prevent and which He even permitted."⁵

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 386.

³ If he had understood the writer's trade in which he is getting himself mixed up, he would have put Bayle's argument into syllogistic form and would have shown the four terms. Without that, he disregards his readers and neglects their instruction by saying in a vague way that it is a fallacy.

⁴ See *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 821).

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 386.

Maximus: This solution is the vainest in the world; it presents us with the very distinction that we had undermined: “God, the spectator of Eve’s battle with the serpent, willed to permit that she be conquered, but He did not will that she be conquered.” Do you not, therefore, look upon as nothing, a philosopher would respond to Jaquelot, that the creator of human souls, which are the creatures He loved most,⁶ willed to permit that they lose their way? If you spoke this way with some timidity, you would not offend me; but the confidence, or rather the arrogance, with which you repeat at every opportunity this will to permit the ruin of the human race—a will so obviously opposed to the ideas that the natural light gives us of a God infinite in goodness, holiness, power, and wisdom—horribly scandalizes me, especially when I pay attention to the force you give to the word ‘permit’ when it concerns God.

Moreover, if God did not will that Eve be conquered, then she was conquered against the will of God. *‘Distinguo,’* Jaquelot will respond: ‘I admit that this occurred against the inefficacious, or moral, will of God; but I deny that this occurred against the efficacious, or physical, will.’⁷ What a pitiful distinction! For what use is it in exculpating God to say that the disobedience of Adam and Eve relates to the physical will, from which everything happens inevitably in its time, and that this disobedience does not relate to the moral will of God, but on the contrary, the obedience of the first man relates to it. None of that can lift any of the difficulties, since Jaquelot is obliged to teach that the objects of the moral will of God never attain existence unless they are the same as the objects of the physical will. The majority of the objects of the moral will are never realized, a clear indication that God cares little for them. What can be concluded, therefore, from the supposition that the obedience of Adam and Eve was the object of the moral will of God while their disobedience was contained in the decrees of His physical will? We cannot infer anything from this that does not demonstrate the discord between philosophy and theology.

But we are amusing ourselves too much with this examination of the Minister of Berlin’s response; it would have been better to defer this response to the philosopher who proved demonstratively to Jaquelot that the decrees posterior to God’s foreknowledge are no less a consummate will than the event in question occur than the absolute decrees; for by the absolute decrees, the event does not become more certain and more inevitable than by the decrees of Jaquelot.

⁶ Jaquelot admits this.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 390.

Themistius: What an illusion to speak to us of a physical will and of a moral will of God, and to say that the objects of the physical will are always realized while the objects of the moral will often fail to be realized! What an illusion, I say, to speak to us of these two species of will without proving that it is possible for a single substance to will by its physical will that something occur, and by its moral will that it not occur.

Maximus: He refers us to his first book in vain;⁸ all that can be found there is an exposition of the ordinary doctrine without the resolution of any difficulties. Is that what we get for consulting an author? All his clarifications, all his examples with which he seems so pleased, do nothing but teach us that God deludes human beings into believing that He does not will certain things, and yet they are things that He set infallibly in the future by decrees of His physical will, which nothing can resist. Now, far from removing any of the problems, on the contrary this gives rise to a terrible problem, concerning which we would like to remain silent, following Jaquelot's example.

He is on no more solid ground when he asserts that Bayle "did not say a single word about the explication [of the two wills of God contained] in the *Conformity*; [that Bayle] wished to ignore the pages that he had before his eyes; that when one wants to hide the arguments of one's adversary it is necessary to remain more modest;⁹ that it is surprising to hear the same difficulties repeated so often without saying a single word about the clarifications that are given."¹⁰ This discourse teaches us two things: first, that Jaquelot is full of admiration for his clarifications, which nevertheless, instead of resolving any difficulties, give rise to terrible ones; second, that he was poorly instructed concerning what Bayle had done.

Here is what we find in chapter XLIII on page 819 of the second part of the *Response to the Provincial*: "Jaquelot will easily win the approval of the docile and humble faithful by the doctrine that he shares in common with all the Predestinarians and that he explained very well.¹¹ I am referring to the doctrine of two wills, of which one suits God in His capacity as Sovereign Director of the Universe, and of which the other suits Him as well, this time as supreme Legislator. Aristotle, with his analytic mind, could find much in that topic to keep himself busy, in which case the Rationalists who might happen

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 385–387.

9 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 384–385.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 387.

11 Note that Bayle cites the same pages to which Jaquelot refers.

to hear him dispute this matter would find themselves in the state in which Cicero places one of the characters of his dialogue." I would like, Cicero has his character say, the Stoic dogma on the formation and the nature of the world to be true, but it is incomprehensible, and I see the torrent of Aristotle's eloquence demolishing them. What will I hold on to? In the following chapter Bayle examines in some depth the dogma of the two divine wills and he crushes Jaquelot. Judge after that the audacity of the latter, who dares to complain that not one word was said of his explication of the two wills of God, and that his arguments were hidden, etc.

Themistius: I would not be able to excuse him any better than by supposing that he wrote this last book without paying any attention, and if we should be surprised at his laziness, we should be even more astonished that even though he wished to reconcile his theological commitments with philosophy, he recognizes velleities in God,¹² that is to say, imperfections that are manifestly incompatible with the supreme majesty of an infinite and necessary being.

Maximus: The apology he offers on behalf of one of Descartes' examples is so poorly expressed that it is not worth our time to point out its faults. Besides, since he did not dare to touch the great and capital difficulty surrounding the two wills of God,¹³ and since he judged it appropriate not to move this *Camarina*, let's imitate his discretion, let's be just as mute as he. I congratulate him on the fact that his attachment to the Pelagian free will has not yet completely ruined his mind. The stubbornness that this attachment has produced in him hardened his intelligence to the point that what has always appeared to the greatest geniuses to be a very difficult question seems to him to be no more than a trifle; but the difficulty surrounding the two divine wills removed all his calluses and Jaquelot became sensitive to it. If philosophers pressed him a little on this, he would have great trouble escaping their hold.

Themistius: It seems to me that we have not shaken harshly enough the passage where Jaquelot tries to demonstrate that there are events that are neither in conformity with nor contrary to the divine will. So let's deliver it an even stronger blow and bring it to the ground.

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 392.

¹³ See *RQP* II, cliii (*OD* III, 819–820).

First, I notice that this author contradicts himself when he asserts in his first work that “nothing happens except in such a way that it is IN CONFORMITY WITH GOD’S PLANS,¹⁴ and that every event is driven and led by Providence such that nothing happens except IN CONFORMITY WITH THE DIVINE WILL.”¹⁵ Second, I observe that he gives no examples of these events that are neither in conformity with nor contrary to the divine will, and that he does not teach us what name we ought to give to this third species of things that occupy the middle position between events in conformity with and events contrary to the divine will. Is this what it means to know the method of clarifying difficulties and instructing one’s readers?

Third, I observe that he takes the word ‘will’ to mean two very different things when he searches for a mean between ‘being contrary to’ and ‘not being in conformity with’ the divine will. First he means an efficacious will, then he means a permissive will. The former decrees *the event absolutely*, while the latter orders nothing and only releases the bridle so that we might go where we please. It is clear that he understands nothing about the state of the question or that he writes solely for the sake of confusing matters. Who can doubt that Bayle always attached the same idea to the word ‘will’ when he said that under a providence to which nothing is indifferent, “everything that is not in conformity with the will of God is contrary to it, and everything that is not contrary to it is in conformity with it.”¹⁶ Now here is his antagonist responding to him by assuming that there are two species of will.

In the fourth place, I observe that however much he takes refuge in these two species of will, even if the two wills exist, he would have to abandon the efficacious will that decrees events absolutely; for according to him, God never exercised such a will with respect to free actions. Nothing, therefore, can be either in conformity with, or contrary to, this will, or occupy a mean between these two extremes, since this will is pure nothingness.

Thus Jaquelot is left with only the permissive will, concerning which I observe, in the fifth place, that such a will is sometimes accompanied by complete indifference. A father who permits his sons to go to war is sometimes in a state of equilibrium. If they go, he is not sorry; if they do not go, he is not sorry. This is because his will to permit forms neither an act of approbation, nor of condemnation, nor of hope concerning the thing permitted. A similar permissive will cannot be imputed to God; this would be to attribute to Him

14 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 315.

15 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 312.

16 *RQP* II, cliv (*OD* III, 824).

the indifference of the Epicurean gods. Jaquelot is one of the theologians who can least sidestep this issue, considering what he has said about the permission of God.¹⁷

Let's establish, then, as a certain fact, that the permissive will of God was accompanied by an act by which He willed either that Adam and Eve do what He permitted them to do, or that they not do it. He permitted them to sin; therefore, He willed either that they sin or that they not sin. If He willed that they sin, the event was in conformity with His will; but if He willed that they obey His orders, the event was contrary to His will. Search for a middle position all you want: you will never find one. The Minister of Berlin, under attack now by my dilemma, will have some trouble escaping.

Maximus: Since you are stopping yourself there, you will not have all the spoils, and so I will have some part in the plundering of Jaquelot. He does not cease to repeat, as if it were something that removes every difficulty, that God did not have an efficacious will relating to sin, that His decrees are posterior to His foreknowledge, that they are not absolute, that they leave man with all his free will, and in a word, that God merely permitted man to sin. It's to wish to exculpate the divinity at the expense of the Reformed churches; it's to give Him the honour of something that was impossible for Him. Let me demonstrate this.

It is impossible for a workman who is infinitely wise and skillful, for God in other words, the Sovereign Perfect Being, to err.

It is an error to do pointless things.

Pointless things are done whenever two means are employed where one alone is sufficient.¹⁸

It is therefore impossible on Jaquelot's hypothesis that God made any efficacious decree concerning sin, since this decree would have been very pointless; the fall of Adam was as sure, as infallible, and as inevitable without such a decree as with such a decree.

I wish Jaquelot could have gone and told the pagan philosophers that he reconciles reason with the difficulties over the origin of evil by showing that the divinity has always willed that men use their freedom well. Since the divinity has never decreed anything efficaciously concerning sin, they would

¹⁷ See the following chapter.

¹⁸ There is no more certain or evident maxim than this one: *It is vain to do by means of many things what can be done just as well by means of few things.*

have responded to him that this conduct shows not love of virtue, but only a skill in avoiding pointlessness which, in so far as such pointlessness is a fault, is impossible for the divine nature. We see that even among men, when one knows how to exercise enmity with skill, even then one does not push an enemy to his ruin in order to be certain that he will soon fall, assuming that this enemy is running toward his ruin well enough on his own. Prudence requires that in such a case one remain silent; it condemns everything superfluous.

CHAPTER 27

Examination of Jaquelot's Doctrine of God's Permission

Themistius: Since he never ceases repeating that all the difficulties disappear provided that we say that God merely permits sin, let's no longer put off considering what he understands by the permissive decrees of God. The second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* contains few chapters where he was reduced to such regrettable extremes as he was in the 167th and 168th, where his doctrine of the permission of God was examined. Those who compare these two chapters with the chapter in which he tried to refute them will clearly witness his collapse. He behaved like a mute regarding a large number of embarrassing objections, and he manages only a few weak skirmishes against several other passages that he chose at random in the two chapters of his adversary. I guess he realized the bad state he was in, for he was more boastful in the chapter that we are about to discuss than in any other in his book.

Maximus: To keep things in good order I think that we should begin with this remark, namely that according to Jaquelot, it is not necessary for God to permit the soul of man to use or to misuse its forces in general; this permission is necessary only regarding the actual and particular uses in the various combinations of circumstances. "God," he says, "foreseeing that man will make such and such a bad use on such and such occasion, indeed willed to permit him to do so, though He might have prevented him."¹

It follows that it is necessary to say that all the acts of middle knowledge by which God knew that if He put Adam and Eve in such circumstances, they would employ their freedom now well, now badly, contained a decree of permission such that we must conceive those acts of middle knowledge in this way: 'if I placed Adam and Eve in the circumstances of the Garden of Eden, and I permitted them to do so, they would sin.' Now since the object of this act of middle knowledge went from being conditionally future to absolutely future by a decree of the divine will, we must conceive this decree in the following way: 'I will to place Adam and Eve in the circumstances wherein I foresaw that with my permission they would sin, and I will to permit them to sin.' Jaquelot will agree

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 448.

without doubt that all these things are natural and necessary consequences of his principle. It is now only a question of knowing what he means by these words, 'God permits' this or that.

Themistius: We will find his doctrine on this subject on page 313 of his first book. "God," he says, "as the Creator and Sovereign Master of events, governs the world in such a way that NOTHING happens against His will, OR EVEN without His permission. This cannot be contested. This permission of God must not be considered as a simple permission of something indifferent; rather, because God DIRECTS EVERYTHING by His wisdom, when it is said that He permits something, it is not only to say that He does not will to prevent it, for He directs as well the things that He permits in the execution of His designs. He places limits on the iniquity of the wicked and prevents it from going here or there in order to conduct it precisely to the goal that He set for Himself ... the permission of God brings it about that things happen when it pleases Him and as it pleases Him."²

From this we manifestly see that according to Jaquelot the permission of God is the result of an activity and infallible efficaciousness which always make things arrive at the goal that God proposes. Since, therefore, God's decree concerning the first sin must be conceived in these terms—"I will to place Adam and Eve in the circumstances wherein I foresaw that with my permission they would sin, and I will to permit them to sin"³—it is necessary to say that in willing to permit their sin He committed Himself to directing things so certainly toward their disobedience that it occurred when it pleased Him and as it pleased Him.

It is necessary to say that He placed limits on the iniquity of the serpent, and that He prevented it from going here or there *IN ORDER TO LEAD IT PRECISELY* toward the goal that He had proposed. Now, this goal could not be a thing that did not occur, for the direction of God is infallible; it is therefore necessary to say that it indeed occurred—I mean the fall of the first man—and who can doubt that the immediate goal of God in permitting a thing is not the existence of that thing? This immediate goal leads to another, and so on, accordingly as it pleases God to make use of secondary causes in the execution of His designs.

Maximus: Jaquelot is now caught in his own net: he believed he was employing only vague terms, without influence and without consequence, while he

² Jaquelot, *CFR*, 313.

³ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 27, 346.

repeated at every moment that God merely permitted sin; but he finds himself falling into the same difficulties as the Predestinarians by the explication that he gave of divine permission. Nothing is better than this explication for confirming the arguments by which the Zoroastrian philosopher proved that according to Jaquelot's system, God's will that Adam and Eve sin was just as complete and just as strong as it was on the hypothesis of absolute predestination. I will leave aside the consequences that Bayle derived from this doctrine of his antagonist; they can be seen in the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.⁴ Jaquelot rested in respectful silence regarding the majority of these consequences; he felt too weak to attack them.

Themistius: He would have been wise to remain mute concerning all of them, for his replies further reveal his weakness. The proof of this will soon follow. He admits that once the permission of God is granted, "it cannot come about that the thing permitted does not occur, for," he adds, "the permission assumes the foreknowledge that God had before the permission of the bad use that Adam would make of his freedom on such an occasion."⁵ He is mistaken, for we have shown him that the foreknowledge assumed the permission;⁶ but this is not the heart of the issue. Here is the main point. If I admit, he says, that assuming the permission of God, it is impossible for the thing permitted not to occur, Bayle would claim that "I am introducing a necessity just as fatal as the one the Remonstrants attribute to an absolute decree." That is no worry; "nothing is further from the truth than this consequence," he continues, "as everyone sees."⁷

Maximus: But on the contrary, everyone sees the necessity of this consequence, for what is the fatal necessity that the Remonstrants attribute to absolute decrees? Does it not consist in the fact that, assuming such a decree, it is necessary for the thing decreed to occur? Have the Remonstrants ever accused their adversaries of maintaining that the obedience of Adam was impossible even when it was considered without relation to God's decrees? They have never been unjust enough to attribute such craziness to them; they knew too well that their disputes did not turn on the question of whether, antecedent to God's decrees, it was equally possible for man to employ his freedom well and to employ it badly; they knew, I say, too well that on this point they were

⁴ *RQP* II, clxvii and clxviii (*OD* III, 852–855).

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 450.

⁶ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 26, 344.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 450.

in agreement with the Counter-Remonstrants, such that the only fatality for which they reproached them is the one that arises from the fact that the decrees of God are absolute, and that on the assumption that they contain some event, it is necessary for that event to occur, and impossible for it not to occur.

Now Jaquelot admits that once the permission of God is supposed, it is impossible for the thing permitted not to occur, and he is obliged to acknowledge that the permission of sin is contained in the decree because of which Adam and Eve were found in the midst of circumstances in which God had foreseen that they would be disobedient. Therefore, the fatality that he introduces is perfectly similar to the one that the Remonstrants attribute to an absolute decree. If he did not understand that, then he had a more limited understanding than the weakest schoolboy; if he understood it, but by pride and a spirit of contradiction spoke the way he did, then he deserves the disdain of all his readers.

CHAPTER 28

Digression Containing Remarks Concerning What Jaquelot Teaches about Free Will, and Several Difficulties with His Claim That God Could Not Prevent the Fall of Man

Themistius: It would be useless to pause over the remarks in which he introduces free will, which is something he can employ with both hands: with one hand, in the manner of the Molinists; with the other, in the manner of the Supralapsarians. These are, he says, disputes over words. Let's allow him to say, therefore, that when God prevented the Jews from executing their plan to arrest the Messiah He did not destroy their freedom, "ALTHOUGH THEY COULD NOT carry out their plan."¹ What could be objected to him on this point? If he does not find any advantage in the Molinist account of free will, he will escape to the freedom of the Supralapsarians.

Maximus: I don't believe you've successfully entered into his way of thinking. As I see it, he is very persuaded that in whatever way God represses the wicked in order to prevent the execution of their plans, this divine repressive action is so tempered that it leaves men with their entire Molinist free will, just as, on the other hand, the heavenly graces by which good people are certainly motivated to the practice of good works do not prejudice the freedom of Molina.

I don't doubt that this is the constant faith of Jaquelot, and I won't press him on any of this; I will only tell him that by an absurd and impious fallacy he believes that in Adam and Eve's case, the Divinity had no other way of preventing the bad use of their will than by removing their freedom. The power, the wisdom, the knowledge, the goodness, the holiness, and all the other divine attributes found themselves utterly exhausted; they could discover only one single method that was impracticable.

If Jaquelot is displeased with the renewal of this objection, we will remind him that he renewed his fallacy, for he said in the chapter that we have before us that "God foresaw that Adam, in the midst of such circumstances where he found himself, would make a bad use of his will. HE DID NOT TAKE BACK HIS

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 451.

FREEDOM, SINCE HIS WISDOM DID NOT PERMIT THIS, BUT LEFT HIM TO ACT.”²

Themistius: I concede that you’ve grasped this theologian’s thought better than I had, and I congratulate you on the blow you’ve just dealt him. What an impious and extravagant paradox to suppose that the divine nature was entirely exhausted when it came to finding some means of preventing the fall of man! This alone could prove that Jaquelot is the least fit of all authors to demonstrate the conformity of faith and reason, for how will he demonstrate it, the philosophers would demand, he who cannot discern when a dogma is in conformity with or opposed to reason? Does he sincerely believe that this total exhaustion of the divine nature is a philosophical truth, or rather that he must judge it to be a manifest impiety?

Some ideas are coming back to me that make me realize that not only did I not entirely understand Jaquelot’s thought, but also that it was not clear enough to you, either. You said³ that it seemed to you that according to Jaquelot Molinist free will is preserved throughout every means by which God represses the wicked and assists the elect by His graces. I don’t doubt, you added, that this is his constant doctrine. These expressions do not show the certitude that you ought to have. He explained himself clearly on that topic in his first book⁴ as well as in his second.⁵

Before telling you the consequence that I would like to derive from his dogma, I ask you to notice that there are not two men who resemble each other perfectly in taste, inclination, and passion. One and the same man differs from himself depending on the changes in the air, whether he has had a good night, whether he has heard good or bad news, etc., such that we realize that the approaches that we have often taken with a person successfully can infuriate that same person if he is bothered at the time we approach him again in that way. This gives us a vast idea of the variety of approaches that God must employ in order to direct free will toward the execution of His plans. What might have repressed a reprobate at noon has no effect two hours later; perhaps he has had time to drink or to get excited about doing evil through some favourable opportunity. In a word, the means of repressing the wicked and of exciting good people to virtue must vary according to the infinite diversity of the soul’s dispositions and of the circumstances wherein each man has been placed.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 455.

³ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, 350.

⁴ See Jaquelot, *CFR*, Part 2, chapters 11 and 12.

⁵ See Jaquelot, *ETB*, 470–471.

According to Jaquelot, from the fall of Adam until the end of the world, divine providence has been, and will always be, continuously occupied with employing this infinite diversity of means in order to bring it about that men, both good and bad, arrive at His end without their Molinist free will suffering the slightest infringement. How does it come about, then, that with respect to Adam and Eve, God cannot find any means of reconciling their freedom with their obedience? Is it that in this fatal moment, from which the Devil profited so greatly, God's knowledge fell into a total eclipse from which it emerged only when there was no longer any remedy to offer? If Jaquelot dared to propose such things to serious people, they would believe he wished to insult them by leaving them to imagine that he took them for boors. In any case, he must give a reason why, as Eve was being tempted, God knew of no way to aid her other than removing her freedom, which was absolutely impossible for Him, while since the time of the first sin, God has known an infinite number of ways of aiding the faithful and of surely conducting them to the gate of salvation without infringing on their free will in the least. The one who can give a good reason for this change in the divine nature must have a great mind indeed.

Maximus: This change was very considerable, for while the divinity knew of no means during the time of Eve's temptation, it knew infinitely many afterwards. Man is a creature so fickle, so capricious, so full of disparities, of inconsistencies, of contradictions, and of passions, all of which dispute the terrain of his heart, that according to our ways of judging things, we would easily convince ourselves that the direction of the human race causes more trouble for God than the government of the whole rest of the universe. The manoeuvre that is required to conduct so many people who are so poorly conditioned to a certain goal of which they are ignorant and to which they are always brought without their ceasing ever to employ their freedom however it pleases them, can never be admired worthily enough.

Themistius: I fear that if Jaquelot sees our exchange, he will accuse us of acting like declaimers. He can say what he wants, I will forgive him as long as he sincerely acknowledges that he was wrong to advance a doctrine that gives occasion for accusing him of subjecting the divinity to exhaustion, or to black-outs, or to eclipses, or to lethargic acts, or to apoplexy that causes Him to lose all knowledge, if only for a while. I demand of him once again that he demonstrate for us the conformity of his dogma with the immutability of the divine nature. He can play the outraged declaimer, he can work himself up into enthusiasm; all of this would be a pleasure to me as long as I found the solution to these difficulties.

Maximus: He is an influential man; it is said that he can both help and ruin people, which is why he will find only flatterers in Berlin who will heap compliments on him for having acted as the defender of the faith.

Themistius: I am sure that if a powerful faction in the Prussian Court rose up against him, he would be exposed to the same affront to which Vorstius⁶ was exposed when the Count of Bentheim, his master, ordered him to justify his faith before the Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg. Various propositions could be extracted from Jaquelot's book concerning which he could be sent to Frankfurt-on-Oder in order to explain himself before the Faculty of Theology. I believe that if he were dependent on the Walloon Synod, as he once was, he would be in some trouble.

⁶ See *DHC* IV, "Vorstius," rem. D.

CHAPTER 29

Continuation of the Examination of Jaquelot's Doctrine of God's Permission

Maximus: Let's return to our subject, and let's not forgive the Minister of Berlin for the contradiction he falls into when he says that "this proposition—'God permitted the sin of Adam'—assumes this one—'God foresaw beforehand the bad use that Adam and Eve would make of their freedom when they could have made a good use of it.'"¹

How can we reconcile this with what he affirms elsewhere, namely "that nothing happens without God's permission," that is to say, without having been directed "precisely to the goal that God proposes to Himself, and that the permission of God brings it about that things happen when it pleases Him and how it pleases Him?"² It is certain that all things happen precisely in the way that God foresaw that they would happen. Since, therefore, nothing happens without God's permission, it follows necessarily that God foresaw that things would happen according to the way He would permit them to happen, that is to say, according to the direction by which He would lead them to one goal rather than to another.

This proves that, before foreseeing the fall of Adam and Eve, God knew that He would permit it, that is to say, that He would lead toward this goal the circumstances and secondary causes that had to concur with this event. It is therefore clear that the foreknowledge of the first sin was posterior to the divine permission concerning that sin, such that Jaquelot, in assuming the contrary in his new book, completely overturns what he had taught in the earlier work.

Themistius: If he knew how to reason consistently, he would have found in the efficacious and directive permission a reason for the foreknowledge of contingent events more certain than the one he employs. For once this efficacious and directive permission is granted in the way in which he describes it, the thing permitted could not fail to come about. Therefore, God necessarily sees the futurity in the act by which He wills to permit this thing to come about.

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 470–471.

² See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 27, 347.

Maximus: Allow me to warn you that Jaquelot cannot dogmatize in that way, for he will pass over to the hypothesis of those who say that God foresees contingent events only in His decrees. Now, there is no hypothesis less agreeable to him than that one. Notice, by the way, that he changed his opinion since the year 1690. He believed at that time that it was rash to try to say precisely how God knew the future.³

But in the book that we are examining and that he had printed in 1706, he finds it possible to discover this knowledge in God “because we must represent to ourselves that God’s knowledge follows, if we can express ourselves in that way, from one moment to the next the dispositions of man and those of all the circumstances that surround him. Thus, when He arrived at the moment that immediately preceded the determination of man, who does not easily conceive that an infinite mind would be able to know infallibly what would happen?”⁴

“Therefore, I am” he continues, “entirely of the opinion of Mr. Amyraut, who believes that God disposes all circumstances in such a way that it necessarily follows from them that man will do this or that, although very freely. It is true that I would not employ the word necessarily; but that does not change anything at bottom, since it is merely a dispute over words.”⁵

Themistius: With that comment he brings down all that is wonderful in the foreknowledge of contingent events,⁶ and instead of saying “that it is not impossible to conceive that it is in God,”⁷ he should have declared magisterially that there is nothing easier to understand. For if there is a necessary connection between the determination of the will of man and the dispositions and circumstances that surround man when he determines himself, the disobedience of Adam and Eve was foreseen just as God foresaw solar eclipses. Jaquelot cannot evade this criticism by rejecting the term ‘necessarily,’⁸ for it would be necessary for him to replace that word with the word ‘infallibly’ or some other that, as he himself asserts, “changes nothing at bottom, since it is merely a dispute over words.”

3 See *RQP* II, cxlii (*OD* III, 792).

4 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 300.

5 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 302.

6 He does not appear to have studied this matter. Had he leafed through the books that the Thomists have published against the *Concordia* of Molina, etc., he would have known that this question is far thornier than he imagines. See *RQP* II, cxlii (*OD* III, 792).

7 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 300.

8 Jaquelot is extremely delicate when it comes to the word ‘necessary,’ for on page 319, he does not wish us to say that the love of God for virtue is necessary. This is mere quibbling, for when we love something that we cannot hate, this love is properly speaking necessary.

In addition, I would advise him to consult the Scholastics, who undoubtedly understand far better than he the nature of the freedom of indifference. If he understood it, he would not say⁹ that the human will, attracted from one side and not from the other, loses its equilibrium, and he would not have employed the frivolous distinction that he did¹⁰ against “the equal power” that Bayle had objected to him.

I also believe that he is hardly familiar with the world, since he affirms that, “since man always acts wisely with respect to his knowledge and his inclinations, it is rare for him in matters of some importance and seriousness to act solely for the sake of demonstrating his freedom rather than to determine himself on the basis of the serious and important reasons that he has for acting.”¹¹ The whim to exhibit freedom is not the only whim that brings men to abruptness and ridiculous temerity. The bizarreness of the human will and the craziness it produces in every time and place are immeasurable.

Maximus: I am astonished that you did not warn me about the fault that had escaped me when I said that there was no hypothesis less agreeable to Jaquelot than the one that makes the divine decrees the source of the foreknowledge of contingent events. I was seriously mistaken. He clearly adopts this hypothesis in a very prompt revolution in his opinions. He proves on page 292, by a syllogism in proper form, that the knowledge of contingent events must not be refused to an infinite mind, even though such knowledge is incomprehensible. He says on page 295 that the infinity of God’s knowledge is a sufficient reason to assert that God foresaw the determinations of the human will. “It is unjust,” he says on page 297, “to demand of me that I explain precisely how and in what sense God knows the diverse determinations of free will.”

After these observations and several others, Jaquelot embraces on page 303 the opinion of Amyraut, according to which God foresaw the determinations of man’s freedom only by His decrees, for this disposition that God makes “of all the circumstances in such a way that it necessarily follows from them that man will do this or that, although very freely,” can be only an execution of the will of God by which He established from all eternity that each thing would occur in that way. Jaquelot has found an invention unknown until now, namely a way of avoiding his enemies’ weapons by lining himself up under the enemy’s banner.

9 Jaquleot, *ETB*, 299.

10 Ibid.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 297.

Themistius: If one had been charitable enough to believe that Jaquelot would not want to renounce a doctrine that did him honour among the most orthodox theologians—I mean his doctrine touching God’s permission—one would be mistaken. He renounces it, and here is the proof. He says here that the foreknowledge of sin was anterior to the permission of sin. What he adds—that the goal that God proposed to Himself to employ sin for this or that end is posterior to the foreknowledge of the fall of Adam¹²—is completely useless; for God’s immediate goal must be considered before considering the goal of this goal, and so on successively until the end. Now, God’s immediate goal in permitting sin could only have been the existence of the thing permitted. It is therefore false that this immediate goal was posterior to the foreknowledge of sin.

Maximus: It is amusing that Jaquelot reproaches Bayle for supposing “always that there is no mean between a pointless permission and an efficacious permission,”¹³ for Bayle never advanced any position of his own on the dogma of the permission of God, he only examined the doctrine of his adversary; consequently, since the latter had not supposed any mean between these two permissions, Bayle did not suppose there was one. Another amusing peculiarity is that Jaquelot does not at all teach us the nature of that mean.

Themistius: He reproaches Bayle for something else, namely “always” confusing “permission with direction.”¹⁴ I repeat your response to the first reproach: Bayle merely followed Jaquelot, who declared in these very words that when it is said that God permits something, it is necessary to understand “THAT HE DIRECTS the things He permits in the execution of His plans,” and that He drives them “precisely to the goal He set for Himself.” Is this not to say that direction is included in His permission as its essential and distinctive character? If Jaquelot could elude some difficulty by supposing today that permission is distinct from direction, what would he do but refute himself?

Maximus: He teaches us “that [permission] properly concerns only the resolution that man forms in himself, and that direction belongs to the execution of this resolution.”¹⁵ This diminishes permission considerably. Nothing happens without this permission by which God directs things infallibly to a certain goal:

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 451.

13 Ibid.

14 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 452.

15 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 452.

this is what Jaquelot teaches in his *Conformity*. But presently he says that all the determinations of the human will occur without this permission, and that there is only the execution of the acts of the human will, that is to say, the movement of arms and legs, of the tongue, etc., that occur by this permission of God. Is this not to subtract from the direction of the divine wisdom the most considerable events, whether we consider their number or their quality? What comparison is there between the local motion of bodily organs and what takes place in souls before they form their good or bad resolutions? God, according to Jaquelot's last book, is an idle spectator with respect to the resolutions of the soul; and with respect to everything that precedes them, He simply permits it and leaves things alone; He employs His direction only when men will to move their arms to execute some plan.

Themistius: You will see that he gets muddled in two doctrines, of which one is incompatible with the other. It is certain that the execution of the soul's resolutions greatly influences several other resolutions of the human will, for those who see that Titius undertakes such and such motions in order to carry out the resolution that he has settled upon, and who find themselves affected by that resolution, enter into deliberation and eventually form their own resolutions in which the actions of Titius play a great role. Now, since, according to Jaquelot, the divine direction belongs to the execution of the soul's resolution, God directed the movements that Titius undertook. These movements were the principal motives of the resolutions that other souls undertook; thus they are related to these resolutions. If Jaquelot admits that this relation depends on the direction of God, it will be necessary for him to admit as well that this direction concerns not only the execution of acts of free will, but also the formation of these acts. If he denies that this relation depends on the divine direction, he overturns everything that he has said concerning this direction.

Maximus: You've raised a great difficulty for him. Experience teaches us that that there is a continuous correspondence between the executions of the determinations of the will, and the production of several other determinations of the soul. It has happened to me more than once that in executing some act of my will, I formed others that I had not foreseen; I was adjusting myself to the circumstances. Now, the meeting of these circumstances must not be ascribed to chance, but to the providence of God.

Themistius: I would like someone to tell me how Jaquelot learned in so few months so many beautiful things of which he could give no proof if somebody

denied them. And anybody can deny them with the same confidence with which he affirms them.

Maximus: I think he has regretted having been so orthodox on the nature of divine permission, for he attracted terrible objections to himself on account of that, and it is not clear that he can reconcile his new system, in which general and immutable laws play such a great role, with this doctrine. He had not reflected on the consequences of that doctrine; he felt them only by the confusion they caused him.

Themistius: I wouldn't think that at all; there has never been a man who felt less shame than Jaquelot feels in spinning himself around like a weather vane. It matters little to him when he is escaping some difficulty whether he upholds what he had previously maintained or whether he advances the contrary. You have examples of this in chapter 25, which we are presently criticizing, and which it is finally time to abandon, since several things that are repeated therein are of the same nature as those about which we said¹⁶ that they must be considered part of the ruins of the building.

¹⁶ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 23, 323.

CHAPTER 30

How Jaquelot Responded to the Authorities Cited by Bayle to Prove That Several Solemn and Venerable Authors Have Acknowledged That Reason Cannot be Satisfied Concerning the Mysteries of the Gospel, and Notably Concerning Predestination, but That It is Necessary to Oblige Reason to Submit Itself in Obedience to Faith

Maximus: Bayle collected these passages in order to convict Jaquelot of extreme rashness in his attempt to render suspect the faith of those who teach that our reason, not finding that our mysteries agree with all evident maxims, ought to sacrifice all its difficulties to the authority of God.

Themistius: The two chapters that Jaquelot devoted to this are without doubt the most pitiful of his entire book. He seems stunned by the cudgelling he took from so many citations that he had not expected. His goal is undiscoverable; he fears endangering his reputation so much that he speaks vaguely, he withdraws at strange moments, he needlessly dogmatizes like an Arminian about chapter 9 of the Letter to the Romans, and he never forgets his darling, I mean the illusory differences that he calumniously forged between Bayle's doctrine and that of the Counter-Remonstrants.

Maximus: I am delighted that he conducted himself in that way, for if he had made several plausible remarks, we would have had difficulty in disputing them, and would not have arrived at the end of our work as soon as we had hoped.

Themistius: I am not quite of the same mind as you, for I don't think that the ridiculousness of his remarks ought to dispense us from discussing them. To convince you of this, I will insist a little on the first thing he observed.

Bayle reproached him¹ for having judged the faith differently than did Jesus Christ, who declared them happy who believe without having seen. Here is

¹ RQP II, clxi (OD III, 863).

Jaquelot's reply: "This is to abuse miserably the words of the Son of God. He teaches us on the occasion afforded by the doubting Apostle that we must receive with faith the promises that God made to us, without expecting to see the accomplishment of them. Therefore, according to Bayle's logic, we are well-grounded in asserting that religious dogmas are opposed by evident maxims, such that they are nearly always opposed to reason. Does he call this reasoning?"²

I have trouble imagining in what state Jaquelot composed what I have just recited to you. Is there not a completely rash imprudence involved in revealing the shameful inclination that leads him to favour the Socinians? All the Orthodox use these words of Jesus Christ to prove that reason must submit itself to the authority of Scripture with respect to our mysteries, whether reason can respond to philosophical objections or not. They oppose by these same words of Jesus Christ those who refuse to believe what does not appear to them to agree with evident maxims of reason; they employ them notably against the Socinians; and here you have a Counter-Remonstrant Minister by profession who wishes to take this passage of Jesus Christ away from us. He reduces it to next-to-nothing by a false gloss of his own invention; or rather, he copied it from the book of some member of the Polish Brethren.

Finally, a man does not appear to be in his natural state, but animated by a violent passion, when he imputes an illusory absurdity to his adversary who can promptly justify himself. This is how Jaquelot acts, for he wants Bayle to have made the following argument: 'Blessed are those who have not seen, but have believed. Therefore the dogmas of religion are opposed by evident maxims, such that they are nearly always opposed by reason.' There isn't the slightest trace of this ridiculous argument in Bayle's book. It is pure fiction written by his adversary, which demonstrates that there is not a single lie that he does not have the audacity to publish.

Maximus: As you can imagine, I feel some aversion for the unreasonable methods of this man: he tramples good faith underfoot and hands himself over to the most worthless quibbles. He acknowledges the truth of three principles that Bayle established,³ of which the first maintains "that it is necessary to abandon what the natural light dictates when it does not agree with Holy Scripture." Then he supposes that this argument is useless unless this falsehood is established: "God teaches us several things that are manifestly contrary to reason.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 431.

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 432.

This reasoning," he concludes, "is therefore just as ridiculous as the following one": Reason's testimony must be believed rather than that of the senses. Now, reason dictates that a man is no different from a tree. "Therefore, etc."

If I could be sure that he spoke in this way during some moment of distraction, I would feel true compassion for him; but it appears instead that sophistry directed his pen and did not permit him to see what everyone else would have seen, namely that the natural consequence of the three principles that he recognized as true is this one: "therefore it is necessary to believe the mysteries of the Gospel whether or not they appear manifestly contrary to reason." There you have our theologian convicted of finding ridiculousness where there is only reasonableness, which is not a lesser fault than finding reasonableness where there is only extreme ridiculousness. These two faults reign equally over this author's character.

Themistius: I am quite patient, but not patient enough to put up with the arrogance with which he maintains that he has proven that the dogmas of religion are not contrary to reason,⁴ which is something that he assumed and affirmed thousands of times, but never proved. I challenge him to indicate, either in his first or second book, any passage where he examined the objections and proofs of the Socinians. Now, short of undertaking such a discussion and of showing that the last reply made to the Socinians is more evident than the last objection made by them, it is in vain that he boasts of having proven that our mysteries do not oppose several of reason's maxims.

How pitiful is the manner in which he shakes off the Manichean objections, which prove that the fall of Adam and its consequences are manifestly contrary to the evident notions that reason gives us of God, that is to say, of a being infinitely perfect, infinitely good, infinitely opposed to vice, and infinitely friendly to virtue. He escapes this labyrinth only by treating these notions as false,⁵ thereby usurping a right that belongs only to those who confess that it is impossible to resolve the difficulties surrounding the origin of evil, and he falls for a method that favours proponents of Transubstantiation and other sorts of visionaries just as much as it favours the Orthodox. Besides, if he engaged in a purely philosophical debate concerning his claim that these notions are false, he would be overcome; everything that would be answered to him would be more agreeable to the natural light than his replies.

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 432.

⁵ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 11.

Maximus: If he had had the same idea as Nicole⁶ of the verb ‘to prove,’ and if according to this rigorous notion he had proven everything he boasts of having proven, then it would have been a noble and legitimate confidence in his exploits, and not vanity, to advise his readers from time to time that he has given proofs of a certain thing; but we clearly see that he took the verb “to prove” in its popular sense.

Themistius: He is all the more inexcusable for not having proven (according to the idea of Nicole) the evangelical mysteries, since he maintains that they are in conformity with reason although reason cannot comprehend them in their entirety,⁷ and that when it is said that they are above reason, what is meant is that they are not comprehended in their entirety, which is what is needed to respond clearly and precisely to all the difficulties that can be raised against them. The situation is the same in religion as in all the sciences.⁸ Two things follow from these statements: 1. that reason comprehends the evangelical mysteries almost in their entirety;⁹ 2. that they possess nothing loftier than what the most common objects of physics possess, for it is certain that we do not understand entirely what the philosophers tell us about heat and cold, about weight and fluidity, etc., and that nobody responds clearly and precisely to all the difficulties that present themselves on these matters.

Jaquelot, who debases our mysteries in this way, will appease the other theologians however it pleases him, and I won’t burden myself with this; but he is blameworthy indeed for not having ever proven what he so positively affirms concerning the comprehensibility of the mysteries. He must know this by experience, which is a fortune unique to him, since nearly every theologian confesses that the mysteries entirely absorb their reason and that they consider them to be objects of faith. If Jaquelot, either by an extraordinary sagacity, or by a special favour from God, has penetrated what nobody has yet understood, that is to say, our mysteries nearly in their entirety, he should hurry to make known to the public how his reason elevated itself so far beyond what is above reason, for if he dies with his secret it will be a very great misfortune,

⁶ See *RQP* I, xvii (*OD* III, 525–526).

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 416.

⁸ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 420.

⁹ This is how we ordinarily understand the expression, ‘I do not understand that in its entirety.’ In any case, Jaquelot should have indicated whether the extent to which we understand the mysteries surpasses or equals the extent to which we do not understand them.

considering that for many years now there has not been a Doctor who has matched him in the wise penetration of our mysteries.¹⁰

I know very well that he does not ascribe this quality to himself, for he blames reason for rejecting our mysteries whenever it “cannot comprehend them in all their entirety.”¹¹ That means: 1. that reason would not be blameworthy for rejecting them if it understood only little about them; 2. that reason is capable of conceiving a large extent of them. I will nevertheless not retract what I have said.

Maximus: I did not believe that the two chapters opposed to Bayle’s citations would occupy us at length, despite comprising 16 pages. I hoped we could abandon all their parts as poorly digested superfluities. However, I have discovered on the last page¹² an illusion that very frequently occurs in Jaquelot’s reply, because he employs principles completely different from those his adversary had attacked. What is even more shameful is that even with this change he does not remove the difficulty; let’s leave intelligent readers to be the judge of that, for they will see without needing to compare the writings of the two antagonists that Jaquelot did not dare to bite at the proof that Bayle gave of this proposition: “the fall of Adam was absolutely inevitable and, ANTECEDENTLY, even one of God’s decrees.”

Themistius: Do not call that an illusion; it is the guile of a sophist who proudly scorns good faith.

¹⁰ See *Dialogues*, Part 2, 248.

¹¹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 280.

¹² That is, Jaquelot, *ETB*, 446.

CHAPTER 31

Response to Several of the Remarks Contained in Chapter 21 of Part 2 of Jaquelot's Book

Maximus: Nothing is more admirable than this chapter by our theologian. We find nearly nothing other than the repetition of thoughts and calumnies that had already appeared in a hundred passages of his work. This author cannot satisfy the admiration that he has for himself, except by pouring it out every day onto paper.

Themistius: This admiration does not occupy him so much that he can no longer remember his sophistical maneuvers. Bayle had claimed that “the most orthodox confess that we do not perceive the conformity of our mysteries with the maxims of philosophy. It appears to us, therefore, that they are not in conformity with our reason. Now, that which does not appear to be in conformity with our reason appears to us to be contrary to reason, just as what does not appear to be in conformity with the truth appears to be contrary to the truth; and so, why would we not say equally both that the mysteries are against our feeble reason and that they are above our feeble reason?”¹

Jaquelot derived from this passage the consequences dictated to him by his spite,² but he did not say one word about this confession made by the orthodox. That is because he saw how this confession refuted his calumnies; for how can an author be reproached who acknowledges that it does not appear to him that our mysteries are in conformity with reason, which means the same thing as, *it appears to me that our mysteries are contrary to reason*; how can he be reproached, I say, if the most orthodox make a similar confession?

Maximus: We have seen more than once that Jaquelot is not lucky when it comes to reproaching Bayle for contradicting himself. The reproach on page 419 has some plausibility to it, which makes it astonishing that he did not repeat it in several places for his own pleasure. Bayle, he says, “must reconcile himself with himself when he admits that, if it were true to say that what is false in philosophy can be true in theology, this would open the door to every sort of

¹ *RQP* II, clix (*OD* III, 833).

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 419.

error. How can he now say that what appears *contrary* to our reason can be true with respect to reason in general, to the universal reason that is in God? For to be false in philosophy is nothing other than to appear *contrary* to our reason, such that if what appears contrary to our reason can be true with respect to the supreme reason, it follows demonstratively that *what is false in philosophy can be true in theology*, a proposition that Bayle nevertheless has rejected and condemned.”³

Themistius: As you say, there is an air of plausibility in that charge, but no reality. In order to clarify this, I must report what Bayle observes when he teaches us that, according to Luther, there are propositions that are true in philosophy and false in theology. “Misunderstandings and much verbosity can slip into this debate, but Luther’s doctrine would be unjustly blamed if it had been expressed in this fashion: the same dogmas that appear false and impossible when they are judged only by the natural lights are true and certain when they are judged by the light of the word of God. But it is a mistake to claim that even after revelation has taught us that a doctrine is true, it continues to be false in philosophy. It is far more just to acknowledge that the philosophical lights, for which evidence appeared to us to be a certain guide for judging things, were deceitful and illusory, and that it is necessary to rectify them by the new knowledge that revelation communicates to us.”⁴

There is Bayle’s observation: it clearly demonstrates that he does not believe along with Jaquelot that ‘to be false in philosophy’ is the same thing as ‘to appear contrary to our reason.’ His opinion is that there are things that can appear contrary to reason even though they are true, and this is the opinion of the most orthodox theologians, since they have no trouble admitting that there are apparent disagreements between our mysteries and reason.⁵ They also acknowledge apparent contradictions in Scripture without persuading themselves that these are real.

I don’t know if you would accept the observations of Antonio Bernardi della Mirandola,⁶ the Italian Bishop, one of the most learned and ingenious authors

³ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 419.

⁴ *DHC* III, “Luther,” rem. KK.

⁵ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 3, 228; chapter 8, 248; chapter 10, 255; and *RQP* II, clx (*OD* III, 835).

⁶ He determines by arguments and examples that Christians believe things that differ from the conclusions of reason. “*We who are Christians do not deny that natural reason sometimes leads to conclusions that differ from what we believe ... Of those of us who truly profess the holiness and compassion of Christ our redeemer and saviour, there is no one who does not know that from*

of his century, but in any case we cannot conclude with certainty, from the fact that a thing appears to us to be contrary to something, that it in fact is; we cannot, I say, conclude this with certainty if we have not completed all the necessary examinations. How many times have we seen that there is some opposition between a certain consequence and a principle.⁷ When we consulted a man of skill, or meditated for some time, then we rid ourselves of this error. In this way Jaquelot's objection is wholly overturned.

Maximus: All that he adds⁸ concerning the necessity that he wants there to be in the claim that our portion of reason is always in conformity with the supreme reason that is in God, and concerning the distinction, 'to be above reason' and 'to be contrary to reason,' should not give us pause; these are matters that have been dealt with too often. It is only necessary to beg him to remember his doctrine from 1690 and to reconcile that with his current position.⁹ He wrongly treats what Bayle said about reason in general as pure illusion and an escape mechanism "invented at will to deceive his readers."¹⁰ 'Reason in general' is a reasonable phrase: it means either our reason with all its evident maxims without excluding a single one, or reason such as it is in the Divinity, in the angels, and in the glorified souls.

Themistius: To see what little sound judgment Jaquelot possesses, one needs only to consider the consequence that he derives from these words of Bayle's: the orthodox "conclude that since [a mystery] has been revealed, we must pass beyond all the philosophical arguments and sacrifice them to the authority of Scripture."

That is false, responds Jaquelot: "There is not a single theologian who accepts the mystery of the Trinity while maintaining that it implies a contradiction. There is consequently no philosophical argument that we are obliged neces-

*natural principles we cannot arrive at the conclusion that 'from nothing, something can be made' or the conclusion that 'the word became flesh'. Yet none of us fails to believe firmly that the whole world was created by the most high God from nothing, and that the word became flesh, and none of us would fail to give his life gladly, if it were necessary to do so, for the sake of defending and spreading these truths" (Anton Bern. *Mirandula lib. 27 Eversionis singularis certaminis sect. 6 apud Launoium de varia Aristot. fortuna*, 79).*

7 See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 10, 254.

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 420.

9 See *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 7, 242.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 416.

sarily to sacrifice to the authority of Scripture.”¹¹ What a blunder! He considers every argument that does not prove that our mysteries imply a contradiction to be despicable. Does he not know that there are other arguments that are very capable of showing the falsity of a doctrine and that are so troubling that we cannot extricate ourselves from them?

Maximus: Let me make another observation. It is almost impossible for an author who lays out his arguments and clarifications at some length not to make, on occasion, several incidental remarks that do not pertain to his principal subject. If they are false, the principal affair is hardly affected; if they are true, the affair derives no advantage. What must a great author do when writing against this author? He must ignore all the incidental remarks, since even if he found errors in them, the result of the dispute would not change on account of it. Jaquelot did not follow this advice; he exhibited a mind so punctilious and quibbling that he ran after all the incidental remarks of his adversary that appeared to him to be susceptible to censure.

Would he not have been better off ignoring this remark: “Concerning the mystery of the Trinity, the evidence of the object was not greater in the soul of Martin Luther than in the soul of Socinius”?¹² If he shows that it is false, what profit will he gain in the principal dispute? But it is unfortunate for him that he does not show its falsity.

“The Socinians”—these are Jaquelot’s words—“on the assumption that the word ‘person’ necessarily means a singular nature, as when it relates to creatures, conclude on that basis that there would be manifestly three Gods in one single God, which implies a formal contradiction; such that on this assumption, they are right to reject this mystery in the manner in which they conceive it. But since this is neither the thought nor the meaning of the orthodox, the question ought to be reduced to these proper terms: that Scripture reveals to us that in the Divinity, who is simple and unique, there is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and these are all intended by our use of the word ‘persons,’ because it is the only word that we have that expresses a principle of action, even though it does not signify a singular nature in this mystery as it does when referring to creatures.”¹³

Themistius: There is very little precision in this passage. The issue involved proving that the evidence of the object with respect to the mystery of the

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 421.

12 *RQP* II, clix toward the end.

13 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 422.

Trinity is not greater in the minds of the orthodox than it is in the minds of the Socinians; and instead of proving that, Jaquelot settles for showing that the consequences drawn by the Socinians differ from those drawn by the orthodox, which is something Bayle had formally admitted.¹⁴

If Jaquelot believes that he is unravelling the mystery of the Trinity by saying that the three persons are three principles of action, then he no longer knows what he is saying, for nothing is more incomprehensible than a substance that is three principles of action. The purest natural lights show us that a principle of action is a substance, from which it follows that principles of action cannot be multiplied without multiplying the number of substances.

14 *RQP II*, clix.

CHAPTER 32

On Physical Evil

Maximus: After wandering in order to follow Jaquelot, we finally meet up again with the main issue, the origin of evil. The Manicheans powerfully fortify their objections by means of the innumerable miseries to which men are subject. For if these miseries are a necessary consequence of sin, the difficulties they advance in order to show that the Being who permitted the fall of man is malevolent, the enemy of the human race and of virtue, become even more insoluble, since they will maintain that He permitted the fall only because it would subject the human race to an infinite number of diseases, misfortunes, and pains. There is nothing weaker than what Jaquelot opposes to these great difficulties.

Themistius: He believed he worked wonders in his other book and he accuses Bayle of having left what he taught him there without any reply, and of not having said a word of the responses that were made to his difficulties.¹ All readers who hope to convince themselves of this point of fact are referred to chapter 7 of the second part of the *Conformity* and to Bayle's responses.

Maximus: The old gibe, *he who owes me demands of me*, was never better applied than in this instance. But let's not waste our time in amusing ourselves with the verification of the point of fact that Jaquelot proposes. Let's leave that to readers who might have this curiosity: I am sure that their verdict will be in favour of Bayle; I am, I say, all the more sure since I know that Jaquelot's chapter 7 contains nothing considerable that has not been refuted in the third volume of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*, such that Jaquelot remains in debt even when he replies to the best of his ability.

Themistius: It is amusing when he imagines² that he will silence Zoroaster by proposing to him five principles from which he concludes that the sorrows and miseries of life stem from the fact that men are sinners and that the justice of God joined sorrow to sin.³ Does this bring us closer to the great, capital objection? Does it not rather distance us from it in a thousand different ways?

¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 394.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 395.

³ He does not wish to quarrel with the theologians (see *ETB*, 405); he believes along with them that the state of innocence was not troubled by any pain or misfortune.

It is no less amusing when he cites a response by Bayle and deprives it of its eight most important lines.⁴

He claims to have refuted the other part by saying that “the goodness of God, though infinite, is nevertheless directed by the wisdom of God in conformity with His plans.”⁵ What does he hope to do with such a vague response? He could not derive the slightest benefit from it without first proving that the wisdom of God could not exercise itself in a way worthy of itself unless His goodness and His love of virtue were reduced to inaction. I challenge him ever to show the conformity of this article of his faith with reason, or to satisfy the philosophers who will prove to him by the natural light that this article is formally contrary to reason. If we took the trouble to bring together all of Jaquelot’s maxims that would be needed for this task, and if we put them to work, we could prove to him that his doctrine contains this monstrous and abominable blasphemy: ‘if men were wise, God would not at all be wise.’ Yet he admits in other passages that a system exempt from sin would have furnished God with something to manifest perfectly His wisdom.

Maximus: You might call his books an abyss of contradictions. He saves all the children who die before the age of reason; that is to say, they are exempted by him from punishment for sin.⁶ Several lines later, he asserts that the little children who do not die from their illnesses must be subject to the same pains to which they will be subject once they will actually be sinners; “unless,” he adds, “we suppose continuous miracles, which the wisdom of God does not permit us to do.” Thus, according to Jaquelot in one and the same paragraph, little children are not subject, and are subject, to punishment for sin.

Recall that he determines 1. that a judge who “knew with certainty that a twenty-year-old man would become a killer or a thief at the age of forty would not have the right to punish him while he was innocent”;⁷ 2. that a mother who currently disinherits and chases from her home one of her daughters who is “at the time very wise and very innocent; and if the mother does this because” she foresees “with certainty that her daughter would eventually behave badly,” then this mother would not perform “an action in conformity with exact justice ... for in order for punishment to be just, it must necessarily have a relation to the crime, and there is no crime in this case.”⁸

4 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 396.

5 Ibid.

6 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 396.

7 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 353.

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 380.

Themistius: Let's see his response to this objection of Bayle's: "if, in order to know virtue, it is necessary for there to be crimes, it will no longer be a contingent thing that man uses his freedom either well or badly; it is entirely necessary that he employ it sometimes well and sometimes badly, and thus vice and virtue would be things equally necessary and inevitable. Try to accord that a little with our free will."⁹

"There is nothing easier than this accord," responds Jaquelot.¹⁰ "Let us suppose, then, that it was just as necessary that man do GOOD OR EVIL as it is necessary" that I will go for a walk today or not go for a walk. "These are contradictory statements and so there is no middle position; it is completely necessary to do one or the other. Who will dare to say, however, that I will not act freely whether I go for a walk or do not go for a walk, even though it is an absolute necessity that I do one or the other?"

Maximus: If he has no better secret for bringing into agreement things that appear opposed to one another than changing the whole state of the question, then he is to be pitied. Now, without a doubt, he had no other secret here than this one: he used the disjunctive 'OR' when, according to the state of the question, it was necessary to use the conjunctive 'AND'. Bayle's objection does not suppose that it is necessary that man do either good or evil, but that it is necessary that he do both good and evil, such that the necessity falls equally on one and the other of the opposed terms; while in Jaquelot's example, it falls only on one of the two. Thus his alleged solution is merely a puerile sophism, and here is a good way of demonstrating its invalidity.

Virtue, according to Jaquelot, cannot exist without vice. Therefore it is impossible for man always to abuse his freedom and impossible for him never to abuse it. It is entirely necessary that he abuse it sometimes and that he use it well other times, for if he always used it well, virtue would exist without vice, and if he always used it poorly, vice would exist without virtue, which is contrary to his assumption. Now, if it is impossible for man always to abuse his freedom and impossible for him never to abuse it, then he does not act with the freedom of indifference that Jaquelot attributes to him. Those who act with this freedom have the immediate ability to choose badly when they in fact choose well, and the immediate ability to choose well when they in fact choose badly; from which it follows that it is always possible for them to perform an

9 *RQP* II, clv (*OD* III, 826). Note that this objection is followed by another with respect to which Jaquelot was mute.

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 397–398.

act of virtue and always possible for them to fall into sin; from which it in turn follows that it is possible for there to be only virtue or only vice in the soul of man, and that it is consequently false that the existence of vice is necessary for the existence of virtue, and that the existence of virtue is necessary for the existence of vice.

However, Jaquelot assumes this reciprocal necessity which ruins his Pelagian free will: for how would he bring it into agreement with the fatal necessity that renders impossible the existence of virtue without vice and the existence of vice without virtue? By this free will it is possible for man either always to do good or always to do evil; there is consequently no necessity attached to the existence of vice in the world. Yet we assume that if there were no vices, there would be no virtues. The explication of this supposes that man acts with necessity and not with an equal power to choose one or the other of two contraries.

Themistius: He makes a second remark concerning the same objection: “according to this rare discovery, he says, it would follow that it is thoroughly impossible that there ever was, or that there ever could be, free actions either in God or in creatures. That is because there can be no action that is not contained in this necessary alternative—either the action will be done, or it will not be done.”¹¹

Jaquelot’s inference does not give us a very flattering impression of his dialectic. He demonstrates that he was unable to tell the palpable difference between a necessity that falls only indeterminately¹² on one or the other of two contradictory terms, and a necessity that falls precisely on one and the other of two contrary terms. Let us assume a fact that is certain and that Jaquelot brazenly denied,¹³ namely that virtue could exist without vice and vice without virtue; human freedom is conserved in its entirety. Man is always free to employ his powers well and always free to use them badly. It is incomprehensible how this Minister could lose himself along such easy paths.

Maximus: I am more willing to excuse him for the weakness of a reply he made to an objection that could not fail to be devastating, given that the things he had said were entirely devoid of good sense. He had said that, in the end, it makes little difference “whether a city is consumed by a flame carried by the wind, or

¹¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 398.

¹² That is to say, with respect to us.

¹³ See *RQP* II, cxliii (*OD* III, 795, note *o*).

by arson: society is no less burdened in either case. The only distinction is that the arsonist brought guilt upon himself and will have to account for his crime before God. But the universe is no more burdened by him.”¹⁴

Bayle finds in this passage neither the mind of a philosopher nor that of a theologian: for where is the philosopher—but above all, where is the theologian—who is not far more troubled in seeing the combination of moral evil and physical evil than in seeing physical evil alone? The orthodox theologians assert that if we could save a city only by committing a crime, it would be necessary to let the city perish, because the loss of a city is only a physical evil, while the crime is an offence against the infinite majesty of God. If the most pious theologians could not obtain the preservation of a city by their prayers, they would ask of God that, at the very least, it perish by the sole action of bodies rather than by the violence of soldiers, or by the mutiny of the inhabitants;¹⁵ for in the latter cases the crimes that would be committed would be innumerable and dreadful. Jaquelot does not judge things in that way. He does not have such a delicate conscience; it is a matter of indifference to him whether pestilence and famine ravage a country, or whether the Goths, Huns, and Bulgars massacre the population and display every sort of lewdness, profanity, and sacrilege.

That is why it has been said that he spoke neither as a philosopher nor as a theologian. It was easy to understand that, and yet he comprehended nothing of it and complained that Bayle failed to indicate “precisely in what the theologian’s error consisted. I want to believe for his honour that he recognized that he advanced too far and that he recalled that it was taught in theology, especially in his system, that God often punishes one sin by another.”¹⁶ It is regrettable to dispute with such a hard-headed antagonist. One would have to cover the same ground with him thousands of times if one wanted to refute his quibbles, and then one would still have to fear that he would misinterpret the most intelligible things.

Themistius: This proposition of Jaquelot’s—“the universe is no more troubled”—was refuted in a demonstrative manner.¹⁷ He concealed this disgrace; he neither justified nor retracted what he had said: this is the method of proud

¹⁴ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 200.

¹⁵ Without a doubt Abraham would have more greatly afflicted by the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc., if enemies as wicked as the inhabitants of these cities had pillaged, sacked and then burned them. The crimes that they would have committed would have constituted a new source of affliction for this pious patriarch.

¹⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 400.

¹⁷ See *RQP* II, clv (*OD* III, 826).

minds. But to be able to say that he and Bayle would soon be equal, he discovered a rather remarkable expedient. He shows that the physical evils that are independent of human crimes combine together with moral evil: several inhabitants of a city that has been flooded and “nearly destroyed become thieves in neighbouring cities and along the major roads.”¹⁸ The misery of those on a ship who have been obliged to toss their goods overboard “gives rise in them to a desire to become corsairs.” The corsairs whom necessity has forced to become pirates have often caused divisions among princes. People whose lives have been “ruined by weapon fire commit robberies and assassinations in the land of a neighbouring prince who seeks reprisal in war.” Jaquelot derives this conclusion: “that Society is no less troubled whether a city is consumed by a chance event or by ambush.”¹⁹

Maximus: Where did he learn to reason and to calculate in such a ridiculous manner? All the crimes that he articulated as if they were consequences of physical evils independent of man do not arise any less from physical evils of which man is the cause. Moreover, since all the physical evils of this last sort are accompanied by all the disorders that Bayle indicated, it is evident: 1. that Jaquelot did not attain the equality that he claimed to reach; 2. that his thesis, “the universe is no more troubled,” remains just as false as before.

The blunder that I am about to refute surpasses the one of which I have just convicted him. He concludes on the basis of his entire discourse that “neither the theologian nor the philosopher should have been invisible to Bayle’s eyes, but,” he continues, “no man is blinder, as the proverb says, than the man who does not want to see.”²⁰ He is blind, however, for he did not see that if the addition that he made to his former doctrine rendered him visible under the character of theologian and philosopher in his new work, then it would still remain true that he had been invisible under these two characters in the preceding work.

Themistius: I have never met with his vain sophistry more than I did in reading pages 403 and 404 of his *Examination*. We see him in his element there when he employs the most unjust and narrow quibbling. He is in perfect agreement with Bayle on the difference between extended and thinking substances. Therefore he must be firmly persuaded that all the interactions between the thoughts

18 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 400.

19 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 401.

20 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 401.

of our souls and the modifications of our body that experience has taught us are only an arbitrary institution of the creator. From which it follows that our souls could have been united to our bodies without being subject to pain, or to sorrow, or to jealousy, etc.

He admits elsewhere²¹ that no physical discomfort would have bothered the peace of man in his innocence. And nevertheless he spared no sophistical manoeuvres in arguing against Bayle's claim that the feelings of pain were not necessary for the conservation of animals. He is not content with quibbling: he puts on a pleasant and agreeable air, and he distracts himself with cold and tasteless gibes. What a character this man has!

²¹ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 405.

CHAPTER 33

Collection of Various of Jaquelot's Contradictions and Quibbles Relating to Physical Evil

Maximus: I will start the analysis, you can finish it.

I. The first of Jaquelot's quibbles involves saying "that a reduction of pleasure is always attended with sorrow." That is not true when it is applied to Bayle's hypothesis, according to which those who felt that their pleasure had diminished would be determined to search for a greater pleasure that they would certainly find at the same moment. Moreover, on Bayle's hypothesis there is no consequence to be derived from our experiences: if we feel that a reduction of pleasure and a feeling of sorrow go hand-in-hand, it does not follow that there is between them a natural and necessary relation. God was free to make another interaction; I mean, to join pleasure in such a way that contentment would continue even though pleasure suffered some small decrease.

II. The second quibble is in opposition to these words of Bayle's: "it will be responded that this very necessity to flee from peril is a disorder, and that the works of an infinitely good, wise, and powerful being ought never to run any risk."¹ Jaquelot concludes from this, "that to be obliged to take a detour in order not to hit a tree or a wall, not to fall into a grave or a great fire, is a disorder that exposes the works of an infinitely good and wise being to critique."² "I am persuaded," he continues, "that such a censure deserves nothing more than scorn." But the censure of this censure—what does *it* deserve? To be sent to school to learn what is meant by 'peril' and 'running a risk'; for Jaquelot does not understand these words, and since he does not know their meaning, it is very likely that a very great number of less common terms are unknown to him, such that a language teacher would be most appropriate for him. Where is the man of good sense who would dare to say that he had run a risk because along his path he met up with a tree, a wall, a grave, a great fire? These would not even represent 'peril' to many sorts of madmen, but only to frenetics and maniacs.³

¹ See *RQP* II, clv (*OD* III, 827).

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 403–404.

³ "There was a man of privilege who lived in Argos,
Who believed he was hearing extraordinary tragedians ...
Who looked after the other duties of life properly ...
He was able to avoid a cliff or open well"
HORACE, *Epistles*, Book 2, epistle 2

III. I won't relate the whole of Jaquelot's third quibble, since this time he had the good faith to indicate⁴ the reflection by which Bayle destroyed the difficulty. It suffices, therefore, to refute what he objects to Bayle. Jaquelot denies that the foretaste of a greater pleasure can determine a man who is content to distance himself from a fire. "Nothing is lacking to the one who is content," he adds. If an ass who is beaten by his master "with a thousand blows of a stick in order to make him walk" is content, then he will rest "firm in his place in order to taste for a longer time the pleasure of the blows of the stick." If another animal is hungry or thirsty, why would it "take pains to find something to eat or drink?" It is content in its state; it finds pleasure in it. Jaquelot concludes that this criticism of the works of God is insensible.

If he did not demonstrate a great deal of ignorance in all of this, we could have some consideration for his critique, but it turns out that he lacks several experiences shared throughout the world. There are times when the cold does not yet bother us, but if we felt the warmth of the fire we would taste a certain pleasure that would easily attract us toward it. When the sun begins to regain its intensity in spring, if it imparts a gentler warmth than that of the fire, we leave the fire in order to go to the window, even though we find nothing disagreeable about the fire. If a group of people had a meal catered and were perfectly content with all the meats and wines provided, but the caterer then announced that he had just made a stew that surpassed everything he had served them, and had just received several bottles of finer wine than what they were drinking, it is certain that they would immediately want to have this new stew and this new wine. Not only would the voluptuous act in this way, but also many people who are far from intemperate, for they would say that since they were there to enjoy themselves honestly, they could take pleasure in the most exquisite gifts of nature. There you have several common experiences that nobody would fail to recognize.⁵

What should we think, therefore, of the theologian of Berlin who wishes to prove that we care little about greater goods when we are content with our current condition? Can arguments refuted by experience be anything other than hollow and illusory speculations? He should consult Balzac who mocks these shameless quibblers. Let's take up his book and read what he recounts:

⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 404.

⁵ We could put forward many others and take as our witnesses those who appreciate listening to good music or to hearing good preaching to watching good dancing, etc. They would say that when they leave one pleasure to seek out another, it is not necessary that they find some fault in the pleasure being abandoned, for it suffices to hope that the pleasure they are seeking will be greater.

“A gentleman from Saintonge, [having arrived at the home of the French Prior at la Rochelle], gave him the news that the Duke of Espernon returned from England two days ago. Father ***, a famous and formidable dialectician who was also present, did not give the great Prior the pleasure of speaking or of saying what he thought about this piece of news. But rising from his chair, with the expression and gait of a gladiatorial philosopher, cried out to the gentleman of Saintonge: ‘but that cannot be, on account of precisely four indisputable reasons! And now I will prove to you with the strictest necessity that the Duke of Espernon is still in London.’ The gentleman responded: ‘Yet I have just seen him in Plassac.’ ‘That matters little,’ replied the Father, ‘it is more believable that the eyes deceive than that reason deceives. You saw a phantom; I know the truth. I think you are a man of honour and that you did not wish to delude anybody; but I maintain that the senses are imposters, that the external man is subject to illusions, that the news you have reported implies a moral contradiction, and perhaps a physical contradiction.’”⁶

Shall we pardon Jaquelot for the boldness with which he distorts Bayle’s thoughts? In my opinion, we should not. Bayle teaches that God might easily have joined a feeling of pleasure to all the modifications that objects excite in our organs, which would not prevent man from appropriately distancing himself from, or from approaching, such and such places accordingly as the preservation of the human bodily machine demanded. But according to Jaquelot, he teaches that men would let themselves be burned and be reduced to ashes,⁷ and “that a rock falling on their heads would not crush them.”⁸ Another misrepresentation: Bayle supposed that all the actions of objects on our organs might have been joined to feelings of pleasure; Jaquelot assumes that according to this supposition animals would nevertheless feel hunger and thirst.

Themistius: Your analysis was long; mine may be even longer. You exhausted all the quibbles on pages 403, 404, and 405. I am going to reveal others.

Jaquelot, who had his work cut out for him by a real adversary, nevertheless invented an imaginary adversary to whom he lent a declamation against the works of God and a critique in which rocks complained that they were not crowned with flowers, plants that they were not endowed with the faculty of self-motion, flies and ants that they were not peacocks and eagles, etc.⁹ He was

⁶ Balzac, *Socrate Chretien*, 78.

⁷ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 404.

⁸ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 405.

⁹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 245.

told,¹⁰ among other things, that it makes no difference to insensible creatures whether they are rocks or mud or trees; that it matters only to thinking substances whether they are under some form rather than another; and that the infinite goodness would act sufficiently in accordance with its nature provided that from the lowest degree of grace up to the highest, there was no degree that did not content the creature that received it,¹¹ so that if ants are content with their condition, then it matters little to them that they are not peacocks or eagles.

Any man who sincerely searched for the truth would approve of these responses by Bayle; but Jaquelot, starving for a dispute, takes up the defence of his imaginary censurer of the works of God. He maintains that this critic would say: "considering that the wisdom of God formed plants to produce fruit, why did He not give them the faculty of moving themselves and of sinking into the earth in order to avoid the hardships of excessive cold and heat, which often deprive them of leaves and fruit?"¹²

But if we showed this critic that it is a matter of indifference to plants, which feel nothing, to avoid cold and heat or to have leaves and fruits that cause them neither good nor evil, would he understand that his censure cannot undermine the goodness of God? For it would not be a result of His goodness that God would give plants the advantages mentioned by the censurer, since these advantages would not be felt by them. Therefore, if we wish to remain within the boundaries of the state of the question, it is necessary to speak only of creatures endowed with sensation and subject to a thousand evils. They alone give rise to great difficulties. Let's count this as the fourth quibble of our theologian.

The fifth is contained in this question: since Bayle "gives some knowledge to beasts, why would he not want ants, tortoises, and hares to have a desire for wings, like those of birds. We ourselves, though entirely reasonable, would envy the fortune of certain men if we knew they could fly in the air at every moment they wished to travel."¹³

Never has anything been proposed with less judgment; for if Bayle supposed that the beasts that cannot fly wished to have wings, he would augment the misery of animals which have never sinned, as well as the force of the objec-

¹⁰ See *RQP* II, clvii (*OD* III, 831).

¹¹ The claim here is just what the theologians say of the several degrees of the glory of paradise; on the following page, the claim concerned what they say about the subordination of the good angels.

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 412.

¹³ *Ibid.*

tion that a Manichean could base on that. It would then be up to Jaquelot to find some escape. Thus in thinking that he was embarrassing Bayle, he falls himself into his own trap. I don't know whether tortoises, ants, and hares envy birds: I don't think they do. But it is hardly possible to doubt that beasts are subject to certain kinds of jealousy, which is incontestably a very incommensurable physical evil. The misery of men in that respect surpasses that of beasts without comparison, for "though they are entirely reasonable," according to the claims of Jaquelot, who has perhaps never regarded human life through any other lens than that of Pelagianism, envy and jealousy perpetually eat at them.

Many people would want to persuade us that this passion and several others were given to man as something useful to him. It is as much against these people as against those who claim that man has been subjected to pain for his own good that Bayle proposes the hypothesis that Jaquelot persecutes, even though it does not at all differ from Jaquelot's dogma concerning the state of innocence; for if anything is asserted by this hypothesis it is only that God could join feelings of pleasure and total contentment to every impression of objects on our organs. Nothing is said in this hypothesis to the effect that man would allow himself to be reduced to ashes with pleasure or that he would not be crushed by a rock that fell on his head. These are fictions and lies told by Jaquelot.

His sixth quibble consists in the claim that his imaginary censurer can uphold that an infinitely good and powerful being is obliged to confer the same graces and privileges on every creature, "for why would an infinitely good being will to prefer some creatures over others, rendering some of them more perfect than the others? Doesn't less excellence imply less goodness? ... Can the benefits not be both finite and equal?"¹⁴

Jaquelot has a great need for us to advise him that when an argument has been solidly refuted, those who advance it without any consideration for the refutation resemble those who would like to call as their witness a man whom justice has declared intestable. It is evident that such a man cannot bear witness before judges until he has regained his honour. Let's say the same thing about a well-refuted argument: it should never be used until a solid reply has been made to all the arguments employed to refute it. There you have a very certain maxim unknown to Jaquelot, or at least not used by him to guide his actions.

He knows that the argument that he returns to the scene had been entirely ruined by Bayle,¹⁵ and he proposes it once again without resisting its destruc-

¹⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 411–412.

¹⁵ See *RQP* II, clvii (*OD* III, 831); clxv (*OD* III, 846); clxxiii (*OD* III, 866).

tion and without taking notice of the fact that since God acts with a sovereign freedom, nothing obliges Him to distribute graces equally. In fact, order demands on the contrary that He distribute them more and less because variety is one of the most beautiful and most necessary ornaments of the universe, and even though the goodness that He would show several of His creatures would be greater than that which He would show others, He would do nothing that was not in conformity with goodness, if in addition He rendered every sensible creature perfectly content with the portion of goodness that fell to it.¹⁶

The seventh of Jaquelot's quibbles stems from his considering the supposition of the contentment of all sensible creatures to be illusory. Bayle, he says, brings us back "to his illusory world. Earlier we saw¹⁷ in this wise Republic of his invention a man who burns himself with pleasure and contentment," and now we will see another spectacle that will be no less enjoyable, "namely that the poor as well as the rich, etc., are subject to a thousand sorrows, a thousand pains, and a thousand vicious inclinations."¹⁸

The fact is certain, it is a spectacle that we have always in front of our eyes and that afflicts good souls, and that cannot be *enjoyable* except for people who resemble Timon the Misanthrope. It is, moreover, a difficulty that Jaquelot had to resolve; he was warned of it¹⁹ and it is certain that he will never show that the spectacle that seems *enjoyable* to him is in conformity with what reason and the natural light teach us about the infinite goodness of God and about His love of virtue.

But, finally, let's look at the reasoning of our theologian. If there is no problem, he says, "in seeing men both rich and poor, then there should not be any problem in seeing some men sorrowful and some in pain, for the conditions of these men follow from the fact that they are poor. Or if a rich man is unhappy with his situation, it is because he considers himself poor in some respect, for something is lacking that he would like to have."²⁰ This reasoning would be tolerable if the connection between sorrow, on the one hand, and the knowledge that we are poor or that we lack certain terrestrial goods that other men enjoy, on the other, was natural, necessary, and inevitable. However, since it was very easy for God to join to such knowledge a total contentment of the soul,²¹ Jaquelot's observation is the most vain and illusory in the world.

16 See the marginal note (e) in *RQP* II, clxxiii (*OD* III, 865).

17 That is false, and a ridiculous lie.

18 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 412.

19 *RQP* II, clvii (*OD* III, 831).

20 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 413.

21 See *RQP* II, xci (*OD* III, 682–683); clvii (*OD* III, 831).

The eighth quibble is merely an extension of the seventh. There is nothing easier, he says, “than to make suppositions; but to imagine a poor man eating his stale and dirty bread, and working night and day to earn that bread, while the rich man lives in the lap of luxury and pleasure; or to imagine a rich man who sees other wealthy people who are happier than he is; and then to imagine nonetheless that the poor man and the rich man are equally happy and content: this does nothing more than bring us back to the man who burns himself with pleasure. Bayle will not find it strange if we do not buy into these illusions.”²²

There are a number of gross faults to be found in this discourse, for first of all, the introduction of the “poor man eating his stale and dirty bread, working night and day to earn that bread,” was introduced by Jaquelot by his own private authority into the hypothesis he was opposing. Not only does Bayle’s hypothesis not contain such things, nor anything that is probably connected with such things, but also it is natural to say that his hypothesis even excludes them, at least implicitly.

Second, one places boundaries injurious to the divine power when one supposes that it is impossible to join the soul’s contentment with the necessity to work night and day, and to eat only stale and dirty bread, while others live lavishly. Jaquelot extends the impossibility of such a juncture to the rich who know that there are people even wealthier than they.

Third, by often repeating the remark that a man burns himself with pleasure, etc.,²³ Jaquelot displays a bad heart that takes pleasure in the continual needless repetition of its deceptions.

Fourth, Jaquelot attacks himself, for other than his shameless distortions of Bayle’s hypothesis, this hypothesis is, in all its purity, Jaquelot’s own doctrine concerning the state of innocence. Thus, everything that this Minister alleges against Bayle—“this illusory world, this wise Republic of his own invention”—crashes equally on the state of innocence as he describes it.

Does he want us to object to him that after the resurrection, the union of the soul and body will be just as real and just as hypostatic as it was in this world? The person of each glorified saint will be essentially composed of body and soul. Is it not true that the body of the blessed will never cause any disagreeable sentiment in the soul to which it is united, and that it will rather be the vehicle

²² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 413–414.

²³ He repeats in these words (*ETB*, 444): “That brings us back to the new Republic of Bayle’s invention, in which the man pulling the carriage would be just as content as the people sitting in the carriage, other things being equal, and the one who was hungry and thirsty would be just as content as the one who was satisfied. What a rare and happy country, which no doubt appears on the map of imaginary places.”

of diverse pleasures? How is it possible that Jaquelot did not foresee this *ad hominem* argument or recognize that he himself was striking down this part of his theology?

Maximus: You were right to believe that your analysis would be longer than mine. I am not surprised that in addition to the quibbles that you wished to collect, you also found several contradictions, which are the predominant sin of the Minister of Berlin. Here is a considerable one: “As for *the particular laws of the human soul joined to an organized body*, once it is supposed that the body of man is subject to being destroyed, there is nothing more wisely established than these laws, which warn men and animals by the afflictions and pains they feel to work for their preservation.”²⁴

Let’s recall: 1. that he rather openly declared himself for the opinion of Descartes that beasts are merely automata; whereas here he grants them feelings; 2. that he said in precise terms that physical evil is punishment for sin, and that man in the state of innocence was not subject to any physical inconvenience; whereas here he wants the afflictions and pains to which God subjected animals to be useful to the latter, rather than to comprise their punishment.

Another contradiction: “If Bayle,” in order to uphold his hypothesis, “sends us back to the state of innocence, then we will tell him that we are not familiar enough with that state in order to describe it.”²⁵ Here you have a man who is about to quit his post and seems to regret what he has confessed. But if he has made a mistake, he will bear its burden throughout: we will press him to reconcile these two theses taken from his book: 1. “I would like to believe along with the theologians” that neither pain, nor sorrow, nor any other physical affliction would have disturbed Adam’s peace if he had preserved his innocence;²⁶ 2. “Bayle, in order to uphold the hypothesis according to which modifications of our organs might have been always joined to feelings of pleasure cannot send us back to the state of innocence, for we are not familiar enough with it in order to describe it.” A pitiful escape: is it not enough for the success of Bayle’s plan that Jaquelot recognize what he admitted in the first thesis above concerning the state of innocence?

Here is yet another contradiction, more shameful than the preceding ones. He asserts that Bayle “perpetually argues about the infinite goodness of God as though it always had to act with the whole extent of its power; and then

²⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 447–448.

²⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 445.

²⁶ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 405.

he concluded that if this were the case, then creatures would be the best and most perfect beings that could have been produced. He responds that this consequence does not hold, but I don't see his reasoning."²⁷ I will not be employing any hyperbole if I tell you that there is not one drop of common sense in this objection.

There is nothing more false than to assert that Bayle claims that the infinite goodness of God must always act with the full extent of its power. The contrary manifestly appears in passages of his book that Jaquelot cited and criticized. It is rather Dirois and the adversaries of Bayle who, in order to elude the objections, attempt to conclude that they prove that the goodness of God must always act with the full extent of its power. Bayle denied them this consequence and showed them the falsity of it, but without opposing the other consequence that Jaquelot alleges, namely that if the divine goodness acted with the full extent of its power then creatures would be the best and most perfect beings that God could have produced. To represent his adversary's text in this way is to distort it miserably. Bayle never said that this consequence does not hold; he merely refuted a far stronger consequence that Dirois and Le Clerc had objected.²⁸

Themistius: "I don't see the reason"—this is Jaquelot speaking²⁹—why this consequence³⁰ does not hold. "Why would men and animals not be immortal, considering that matter, as well as mind, can be destroyed only by a total annihilation? It was solely a question of maintaining organized bodies in the same state. Why, therefore, couldn't an infinite all-powerful goodness, that maintains them for forty or fifty years, conserve them forever? Is it that this eternal duration would not be compatible with the perfect idea of their species, or with the goodness of God? But we do not see this incompatibility; rather we see the contrary."

To clear away all these minor difficulties we need only recall: 1. what we have already said concerning the sovereign freedom with which God distributes His favours. He selects either strong or weak favours, and He directs the beginning and the end accordingly as He sees fit in order to vary the events; 2. that our reason finds nothing contrary to goodness except doing evil, and thus it judges that it does not derogate from the infinite goodness of God to return sensitive creatures to the nothingness from which He pulled them, for that is a state in

27 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 445.

28 See *RQP* II, clxv (*OD* III, 847–848); clxxiii (*OD* III, 865–866).

29 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 445.

30 That is to say, the one that he had reported and that he falsely claimed Bayle rejected.

which they are not unhappy in any way. That beasts live only 10, 20, 30, 100 years more or less, though if God willed it they could live forever, is not something opposed to His goodness.

Maximus: You spare Jaquelot by stopping there. You could have said that he displayed himself as a bad logician. He wanted to prove that this consequence is good: "if the goodness of God acted with the full extent of its power, creatures would be the best and most perfect Beings that God could have created." For the whole proof of this he alleges that men and animals could be immortal. Yet when they became immortal, their perfections would never increase:³¹ an ant would always be merely an ant; no beast would equal man; and it would consequently be false that the beasts would have been produced the best and most perfect way that God could have produced them. There are a hundred qualities that they would not have and that God could have given them if He had willed.

Themistius: I would regret the time that the details of this chapter have cost us if I did not realize that Jaquelot believes that he surpassed himself in these passages, that he caused such a brilliant fire of imagination to shine, and that he believes he deserves praise to be heaped upon him from all around.

³¹ See *RQP* II, clxv (*OD* III, 847).

CHAPTER 34

On Eternal Punishment

Maximus: Eternal punishment certainly deserves its own chapter. Those who will compare Bayle's difficulties with the responses made to them will be astonished that Jaquelot, who is usually so sensitive to human glory, took so little trouble to conceal from his readers' eyes the rout in which he was placed. He leaves it entirely visible to them.

Themistius: Let's renew for him, therefore, our congratulation: the calluses of his understanding are not impenetrable; several difficulties pierce them straight through and become so noticeable that since he does not take himself to be strong enough to attack them, he honours them with respectful silence. It is in this way that he treats the difficulty that he himself proposed in his first book, namely the one that "depends on the great number of wicked and unhappy people in comparison with the few good and blessed ones."¹ Bayle employed every possible insinuation to get him to resolve this objection,² but Jaquelot played deaf and kept a profound silence.

Maximus: He acted the same way toward the objection that was made to him³ based on his saying that the damned, finding themselves excluded from the eternal happiness enjoyed by others, would allow themselves to be devoured by jealousy and remorse.

Themistius: He was bolder with respect to the five remarks that it was supposed that nearly every philosopher would oppose to his system.⁴ But this boldness is at bottom an act of cowardice, since he attacks these remarks only after having crippled them, or rather, only after having masked everything in them that had any force. The first remark⁵ presented us with philosophers who judged that if the infinitely perfect Being had known that if He gave existence to free creatures, then it would be necessary to punish them eternally on account of their sins, He would have preferred to deprive them of any being, or not to

¹ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 232.

² *RQP* II, clvi (*OD* III, 828–829).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *RQP* II, clvi (*OD* III, 829–830).

⁵ *Ibid.*

permit them to abuse their free will, rather than to see Himself obliged to inflict punishments that would never end on them. Is there anything more evident than this proposition when we consult only the natural light?

What would we say of a man who boasted that, like Prometheus, he had the power to breathe life into statues, and who said, 'I am going to grant movement to this one here; it will have eyes to guide it, and it will be able to visit places that are most agreeable; however, I am sure that it will visit only those places where it will suffer thousands of afflictions.' 'You do not have the heart of a man,' we would say, 'but the heart of a tiger, for you do not wish to breathe life into this statue except to see to it that it passes from a state wherein it feels no evil to a state wherein it will feel only evil.'

Jaquelot failed to address this first remark; instead he contented himself with saying that "all the philosophers, except the atheists, have granted the divinity knowledge of the future, and have conjectured that there are punishments after death for the wicked, although they have accompanied this conjecture with a thousand fables."

Maximus: It is clear that this vague manner of representing the opinions of philosophers cannot elude the objection. For in order to know how they would judge some particular matter, it is nearly useless to know what they have said in general when they were not at all considering the matter in question. It is instead necessary to imagine that we are consulting them on the very subject, that we faithfully explicate for them the whole state of the question, that we ask them to examine attentively the arguments on both sides, and then finally to give their opinion. This is how Bayle treated the philosophers: he supposed that they were asked, concerning the doctrine of hell, to say what they considered most in conformity with the wisdom of God by consulting only their natural light.

Themistius: It must be said that Jaquelot is a master when it comes to making an objection worse before undertaking to refute it. I don't deny that he submits his system of freedom for the consideration of the philosophers, but he masks what they must necessarily know; he does not tell them that all men would have made a good use of their freedom if they had been placed in the circumstances wherein God had foreseen this good use, instead of which they⁶ were placed by the very hand of God in circumstances wherein God had foreseen that they would fall. If he hopes that philosophers well-instructed in this article of his

⁶ Meaning, "those who will be damned."

system will pronounce in his favour, he must be so infatuated with the Pelagian doctrine of free will that he will never be able to hear the voice of reason on this subject.

What can be expected from a Doctor who affirms⁷ that a philosopher will profess that God fills everything with what goodness demands of Him; but first He gives men the power to do good, a power that He knows must be infallibly the cause of their eternal damnation. If this exhausts the idea we have of goodness, then why does Jaquelot renounce common notions when it comes to judging God's conduct? Is it not to contradict oneself visibly to renounce them and to suppose nevertheless that a philosopher would profess what we have just said?

Maximus: It strikes me that Jaquelot understands the word 'goodness' just as poorly as he understands the word 'peril,' which augments the need for our discussion above. He says that eternal punishment involves "nothing opposed [to divine goodness], unless we form an idea of goodness that includes indifference or insensibility toward good and evil."⁸ This mix of gibberish and error appears inexplicable to me.

Themistius: The second remark of Bayle's philosophers turns on the uselessness of the punishment of the damned,⁹ which only renders them more wicked, and serves no purpose for other men. Jaquelot responds:¹⁰ 1. that the first difficulty is nothing, since the punishment that God inflicts on the damned consists only in the privation of beatitude; 2. that the second difficulty is uncertain because the state of the damned "might serve to augment the gratefulness of the blessed," and because it is very useful in this life to fear hell.

If Jaquelot had refuted the objection that ruins his first response,¹¹ then he would have been permitted to repeat that response; but since he was as mute as a fish when faced with the objection, he is rather bold to repeat his response. This principle cannot be doubted: 'when we will to inflict punishment, we also will to inflict all the consequences that we know will certainly follow from it.' A husband who is perfectly assured that if he scolds his wife in the presence of all the maids, then she will die from her sorrow, cannot scold her in this way without willing her death; and it would be useless for him to argue before the

7 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 409.

8 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 407–408.

9 *RQP* II, clvi (*OD* III, 829).

10 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 409.

11 See *RQP* II, clvi (*OD* III, 828).

Tribunal of God that the whole punishment he inflicted on his wife consisted in scolding her and that, consequently, he is not responsible for the sorrow that killed her. In reality, he willed, and was the cause of, the death of his wife. Let's say in like manner that if God knew that the privation of beatitude would plunge the damned into a sombre melancholy that would augment their wickedness, then He plainly willed that they fall into this state.

Jaquelot could have found his other response in the *News from the Republic of Letters* as one of King's opinions. But what is baser than claiming that the glorified saints would not be grateful enough unless they cast their eyes upon hell? And who would dare maintain that unless God revealed to them what happened in hell, they would run the risk of flagging in their duty? Our philosophers would believe that Bayle's antagonist attributed behaviour to God that resembles that of a great Emperor who said: 'I want to ruin ten provinces, destroy a hundred towns, make a million men perish, because these would be new motives to lead my favoured ones to think of me; though they think of me already night and day, and they remain fixed to me even without such motives by a relation so firm that I am sure that nothing will ever be able to release them.' As for the usefulness of the fear of hell in this life, it cannot be extended to cover the time that will follow the resurrection, and it is principally to this time that we refer when we discuss this matter.

Maximus: By the third observation of Bayle's philosophers, annihilation is, of all forms of punishment, the one that appears to conform best to the ideas of God's wisdom. They give reasons for this that Jaquelot leaves without reply. He contents himself with saying that the annihilation of several creatures would "demonstrate an inconstancy that seems hardly worthy of the infinite wisdom of God."¹² He continues to imitate those who call witnesses who have been declared intestable by justice. The reason that was given why God must always conserve beings once He has created them, namely the one given based on the constancy of God, was so badly destroyed and annihilated¹³ that it is very imprudent of Jaquelot to make use of it without having rehabilitated its honour. If among the spirits created by God there are some who have merited this capital punishment, that is to say, the loss of life, does order not demand that he inflict this punishment? Could his decrees not comprise such behaviour? Or would it be inconstant?

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 408.

¹³ By Arnauld. See *Continuation of the Various Thoughts on the Comet*, cix (*OD III*, 338–339).

Themistius: The response to the fourth remark of the philosophers has great affinity with the response made to the third. By this fourth remark “the annihilation of the wicked would not be a void opposed to the wisdom of the creator, for there was once a time when there were only two human souls, and yet the universe lacked nothing essential.”¹⁴

“[That] appears to me to be unworthy [of Bayle],” Jaquelot responds. “There was no void in the universe when God had yet created only two souls. Now, if He had destroyed them after having created them, then there would have been a void, and it would have marked an inconstancy unworthy of God; *a fortiori* it would be a void and an inconstancy if God annihilated millions of souls after having given them being.”¹⁵

Jaquelot has an extraordinary talent for finding distinctions where there are none. Several ancient philosophers believed in a void, and it is an opinion much in vogue with the most celebrated mathematicians of our day. But has anybody ever believed in the hypothesis that a void that has been filled at some time is different from a void that has never been filled? We should think ourselves absurd if we affirmed such a difference. Jaquelot doesn’t fear being called absurd, however; he supposes that the two voids that were in the universe before Cain and Abel were in the world and the two voids that there would have been had Adam and Eve been annihilated are of a very different nature, for neither the universe nor divine constancy can tolerate these two latter voids, though they can easily tolerate the first two. If, in order to avoid this stumbling block, he wishes to maintain that there was no void when there were only two souls on the Earth, he will fall into another absurdity: he will claim that the destruction of souls would be a void while their existence fills no void.

Maximus: To finish this matter with some consideration for Jaquelot, let’s grant him that the annihilation of the damned would form voids in the universe, and afterwards let’s compare together the spectacle that Jaquelot puts before God and the spectacle that our philosophers would put before Him. The latter would have God contemplate as many voids in the universe as there were human souls that were annihilated. This phenomenon, which is incapable of removing any perfection from the universe, would be nothing new; God has always seen such voids, because He created our souls successively and because their number was finite, leaving an infinite number of places vacant, since God can always produce new beings.

¹⁴ RQP II, clvi (OD III, 829).

¹⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 409.

The spectacle provided by Jaquelot is a vast number of men plunged into a dismal melancholy and dark hatred for the creator. God will know that He alone might have brought it about that these men became worthy of eternal happiness by their proper actions and consequently became the artisans of their own happiness. This would have happened infallibly if He had placed them in circumstances wherein He had foreseen that they would put their freedom to good use; but it pleased Him instead to put them in circumstances wherein He had foreseen that they would sin. With pleasure God will perpetually and eternally contemplate the sad state of these unhappy and wicked men, and will derive glory from it.

If Jaquelot hopes that his spectacle will appear more worthy of God than that of the philosophers to those who consult only reason, that is, what the natural light teaches us about the divine nature—that it is infinitely good, infinitely friendly to virtue and to order, infinitely wise, etc.—if he hopes, I say, to show that his opinion is most in conformity with reason, then it must be the case that his stubbornness and his blindness are incurable.

Themistius: I would advise him to consult not theologians or the devout in Berlin, but rather members of the court, whether of the robe or of the sword. He will find among them many who have a sharp mind, and knowledge, and much good judgment. Let him ask them to put aside for fifteen minutes everything that the faith has taught them and to consider only the idea of a supremely perfect being, and to decide afterwards which of the two spectacles, of which he will have given the description as we have just given it, appears to them most in conformity with the divine nature. I am quite sure their responses will not please him.

Maximus: What he says about the fifth observation of Bayle's philosophers serves no purpose.

Themistius: You have surely remarked as well as I have that he speaks of the punishments of the damned more nobly than anyone in the world, and that, citing various passages from the New Testament, he avoids with extreme affectation those who give a strong idea of this punishment. However, he was catechized on that topic in a marginal note.¹⁶

¹⁶ RQP II, clvi (OD III, 829–830).

CHAPTER 35

On Pyrrhonism, the Third and Final Issue in the Dispute between Jaquelot and Bayle

Maximus: This final subject of controversy between these two antagonists will not give us much pause. In Bayle's *Dictionary*, in the article "Pyrrho," there is an account of a dispute between a Pyrrhonian abbé and a good Papist abbé. The two parties share the common principle that the mysteries of the Roman Church—the Trinity, the Incarnation, transubstantiation, the fall of Adam—are dogmas that are indubitably true. From this assumption acknowledged as true by the two disputants, the Pyrrhonian infers that evidence is not a certain characteristic of the truth, since there are various evident propositions that are false, assuming we admit the truth of these mysteries. That is the goal and a complete analysis of the whole discourse of this abbé.

These things are so visible to every reader that has any common sense that it cannot be sufficiently admired that Jaquelot understood nothing of it,¹ and that he imagined that the goal of the Pyrrhonian abbé was to prove that the Trinity and the hypostatic union both imply a contradiction. It is for this reason that he took it to be his duty to rush to the aid of these two mysteries by explicating with great care what is said about them in every part of theology and what every student responds when upholding some thesis related to them.

Themistius: Bayle made it known as justly as possible that his adversary lost his way. A modest author, sure of his reputation, would have admitted his error; but Jaquelot, too proud to confess that had ever made a mistake, stubbornly maintains that he understood the Pyrrhonian abbé's thought, and he attempts to prove it by this new argument: Bayle introduces Simonides, who asserts that the idea of one God, who is also three persons, is a formal contradiction; therefore, his Pyrrhonian abbé objects the same thing.²

Maximus: What a bizarre argument that you've recounted there! Even if it were a hundred times more probable, would it undermine a fact of which everyone who knows how to read can be assured at any moment? Is arguing against

¹ Le Clerc fell into the same error. See above, *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 6, 165.

² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 425. See also *ETB*, 119.

experience a form of behaviour befitting a sane mind? What should we think of a man, therefore, who wants to prove that the Pyrrhonian abbé objects that the Trinity implies a contradiction because that abbé's dispute is narrated by a writer who says elsewhere that Simonides would object such a thing to Christians? Is this not to try to prove that a fact, of which there is not a single trace in some book, is clearly and precisely found in that book? How should we define this strategy? It would sting Jaquelot too fiercely if we honestly said what this amounts to. Let's spare him this embarrassment in case these *Dialogues* are published, which they very well may be.

Themistius: In order to excuse him, his friends will perhaps say (because he will probably consider it beneath him to excuse himself) that a very great plausibility is the cause of his mistake. He found it so probable that his adversary lent Simonides' objection to the Pyrrhonian abbé that he asserted this without further thought. But I can assure you that anyone who makes his apology in this way is ignorant of something known in all the universities, namely that a good disputant does not change his middle term in the same session. The consequence is that, since the Pyrrhonian abbé appeared in the character of a good disputant, Bayle would have overturned the rules of plausibility if he had lent him two middle terms.

Maximus: We have seen that this disputant counts transubstantiation among the mysteries of the Roman Church. Jaquelot maintains that Bayle "could have and should have done without specifying that."³ It was replied to him that "in introducing a Roman Catholic it would have overturned all the laws of plausibility if that Catholic mystery were left out."⁴ Jaquelot finds this response peculiar.⁵ "If Bayle," he continues, "had wanted to introduce an Anthropomorphite, he would have been right to charge the Christian religion with several other absurdities."

Themistius: If we judged Jaquelot's knowledge only by this passage from his last book, we would swear that he had never read anything, not even the poetic art of Despreaux. The rules of the art of speaking and writing dictate that it is necessary to attribute to people a language that befits their character. An Anthropomorphite brought onto the scene would have to speak like an

³ Jaquelot, *CFR*, 293.

⁴ *RQP* II, clx (*OD* II, 835–836).

⁵ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 429.

Anthropomorphite,⁶ without which, the one who makes him speak renders him ridiculous. And since there are no Christian societies that follow the error of that sect, which has never cut a good figure, everyone sees that it is indifferent to them whether we make such a man speak according to the rules or against the rules.

Maximus: It seems to me that Jaquelot's misstep here shows that he is hardly versed in the knowledge of Church history. For it would seem that he supposes that if some writers did in the name of the Anthropomorphites what Bayle did in the name of the Manicheans, they would throw all the Christian systems into a disarray as great as the one the Manicheans threw them into. The difference is nevertheless very great and well-known to everyone. The Manicheans find that in all the systems confessed and recognized by Christians they have an advantage. But an Anthropomorphite would not find anything in any Christian system from which to derive some advantage.

Themistius: Let me come back to the qualification of 'peculiar' that Jaquelot gives to Bayle's response concerning the inclusion of transubstantiation among the mysteries of the Church of Rome. This response is as natural as can be. But Jaquelot himself suffers from so many little peculiarities that do no honour to a writer; he judges things so often in a way different from that of other men, that it is not astonishing that he made this last error.

Maximus: We had reason to believe that he took transubstantiation for a monster so detestable that its very name should not have been pronounced by the orthodox. Indeed, he even blamed Bayle for having recounted that a Pyrrhonian abbé said to a Catholic abbé that the Roman Church believes in transubstantiation. It was therefore thought⁷ that Jaquelot deserved to be warned that the extremeness of his ideas offended Lutheranism and did not agree with the commitment he was under in France to give communion to a man who was persuaded of the doctrine of impanation, which in certain respects is subject to the same philosophical difficulties as transubstantiation.

His response was that he did not receive "Lutherans to communion except after having warned them of their errors, for which he is not responsible, and which do not overturn the foundations of salvation."⁸ He would admit the

⁶ See *Dialogues*, Part 1, chapter 6, 165.

⁷ *RQP* II, clx (*OD* III, 863).

⁸ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 429.

same about transubstantiation if the Lutherans taught it independently of the rites and practices with which it is accompanied in the Roman Communion. In that case, the National Synod at Charenton in 1631 would not have judged Lutheranism less favourably than he judged it.

I won't pause over the judgment of several Reformed theologians who passionately maintain that impanation overturns fundamental dogmas; the ardour of this dispute makes these men go too far. But I will tell you that not too long ago a Professor of theology in Leipzig published an account of the Synod of Charenton in which he seems to want to ridicule the indulgence displayed there for Lutheranism.⁹ I return to Jaquelot to tell him that this response frees him from no difficulties, and that if he had remained as mute as he did regarding Bayle's other objection added to the first, then he would have been more prudent.

Themistius: One of the subtleties of the Pyrrhonian abbé was his use of the maxim that conservation means continuous creation. From that he inferred that we cannot be sure of being the same man at two subsequent moments in time.

"A wise theologian [responded to him] that once creation is supposed, it was as easy for God to create a new soul at every moment as it was for Him to reproduce the same one; but that nevertheless, the ideas of His wisdom, and more importantly, the light that we draw from his word, can give us a legitimate certainty that we have the same numerical soul today that we had yesterday, the day before yesterday, etc. He concludes that it is not necessary to amuse oneself in disputing with Pyrrhonians, or to imagine that their sophisms can be comfortably eluded by the forces of reason alone; that it was necessary above all things to make them feel the infirmity of reason in order that this feeling bring them to seek a better guide, namely faith."¹⁰

These last words serve as text in a long remark where Bayle clarifies and even confirms them by the baptismal liturgy of the Reformed churches.

Maximus: The way in which the wise theologian refutes the subtlety of the Pyrrhonian in question, by means of the ideas of the wisdom of God, pleased Jaquelot,¹¹ but a few lines later he asserts that on the subject of this subtlety Bayle does not give preference to the solid reasoning based on the wisdom

9 See *Thomae Ittigii Dissertatio Theologico-Historica de Synodi Carentonensis erga Lutheranos indulgentia* (Leipzig, 1705).

10 *DHC* III, "Pyrrhon," rem. B, 733b.

11 Jaquelot, *CFR*, 295.

of God, but on the contrary, he “indirectly pronounces in favour of this overt Pyrrhonism in concluding” that it is not necessary to amuse oneself in disputing with Pyrrhonians. I am amazed that Bayle did not hit upon such an obvious blunder; that he did not reproach his adversary for having refuted his own judgment on the same page. But the prescription is no longer in effect here, so we can justifiably shame Jaquelot for his lack of judgment.

Themistius: He repeats his mistake in his last book, where he maintains that with respect to this very thesis—“reason cannot assure me that I am today the same person with respect to my soul that I was twenty years ago”—Bayle again pronounces in favour of the Pyrrhonian abbé.¹² If he had stayed there, then he would not have opened himself up to the mortifying objections that we now have to make against him. But in bitterness he took his former blunders even further.

“If reason,” he says, “is not sufficient to assure me” that I am today the same person that I was twenty years ago, then “heavens! what can it do?”¹³ You see that he constantly assumes that the Pyrrhonian objection in question was taken to be valid, and yet he had said that it was refuted very well by the ideas of God’s wisdom. Bayle adds, he continues, “that it would be easy to show him very pious, enlightened people, very zealous for evangelical orthodoxy, who have based themselves on this foundation. But I challenge Bayle to point to a single passage from a Christian Doctor, of whatever communion he pleases, who has degraded reason to the same extent as Bayle, who believes that reason is not even sufficient for guaranteeing that a man is always the same person.”¹⁴

Maximus: We see by these repetitions of the same falsehood that he worries little about contradicting himself, and that although he accuses people wildly, it matters little to him that he can be defeated by his own arguments. I don’t believe he would blush if he realized that we can refute by his first judgment the lies he has just repeated; but too bad for him that we cannot apply these words of Terence to him: “*he blushed, all is well.*”¹⁵ I blush for him, or for the honour of his character, which is something dishonoured not only by committing gross crimes, but also by trampling good faith underfoot in order to follow the instincts of personal hatred. Would an author who had been guided by

¹² Jaquelot, *ETB*, 430.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jaquelot, *ETB*, 430.

¹⁵ Terence, *Adelphi*, act IV, scene 5.

the integrity that guided a pagan, who was even remotely just, have believed that the words of Bayle are a just foundation of the challenge that the Minister of Berlin proposes after having acknowledged that the sole quibble of the Pyrrhonian had been refuted in the *Dictionary*?

Themistius: We will better appreciate the little mystery of this Minister's iniquity if we supplement the passage that he reports with a part that he omitted. Bayle notes that Jaquelot finds it highly suspect that it was said "that it was necessary above all things to make the Pyrrhonians feel the infirmity of reason in order that this feeling bring them to seek a better guide, namely faith," and then he adds what Jaquelot cited and makes a marginal note that advises that the three or four following chapters will prove that very pious and learned people with a great zeal for orthodoxy have based themselves on the foundation of the necessity that reason is under to submit its difficulties to the authority of Scripture and to acknowledge its incompetence faced with our mysteries.¹⁶ Jaquelot saw in this compilation something that he had not expected: that Luther, Calvin, Beza, several confessions of faith in the Protestant churches, various professors of theology, of which some are still living,¹⁷ strike down both his principles and his suspicions.

Maximus: I don't think that he understands yet what he must do in order to make what he publishes useful to his readers, and usefulness is nevertheless the principal goal that a writer should set for himself. It was important for the instruction of the readers to know the judgment that they ought to make concerning the passage that we have cited from the *Dictionary*. Jaquelot was thus indispensably obliged to teach us whether it is necessary to pursue the Pyrrhonians wherever they go until we have forced them to agree that our mysteries are in conformity with reason; and if, while these disputes are taking place, it is necessary to suspend the acts of faith with respect to our mysteries, for to believe these mysteries before having refuted all the sophisms of these men would amount to believing things rashly.

¹⁶ RQP II, clx (OD III, 863).

¹⁷ We can add to this list Mr. Van Til, who is still full of life and who is professor of theology at Leiden. For in 1704 he had published, along with an approbatory preface written in his style, the *Theologia naturalis* of feu Mr. Bachman, professor of theology at Duisbourg. Now, Bachman declares on pages 88 and 89 that it is necessary to count among incomprehensible things, *akatalepta*, that the fixed knowledge of God and the free determinations of man always end up at the same point. This incomprehensibility, he adds, does not prejudice the truth of the thing in question.

If he embraced this approach then he would have to prove the conformity of our mysteries with reason by solid arguments and by strong responses to the objections of his adversaries. If this approach did not please Jaquelot any more than Bayle's approach did, then he would have been obliged to invent a third way and to support it with arguments. We would then indicate to him whether we wanted greater detail fitting for the instruction of readers. Instead of doing such things, he contented himself with saying in his first work, as well as in the second, "that it is suspect."

Themistius: At least he should have explained whether the doctrine contained in Bayle's passage was suspect in itself, or whether Bayle rendered himself personally suspect in offering it. It is beyond doubt that he understands the matter in the second way; thus all the instruction that he gave his readers amounts to nothing more than an insult against his antagonist and a confirmation of his prejudice against Bayle. Now, all of this is just a skirmish of no interest or importance to the public.

Maximus: If he were obliged to explain himself, I am sure that he would not dare to say that the doctrine in question is dangerous, for bold as a tiger against Bayle, and cowardly like a hare faced with Jurieu, he would fear that someone would show him that this Minister of Rotterdam had spoken even more strongly against reason than did the theologian of the *Dictionary*. Let's note that the dogma of this theologian, about which Jaquelot makes his general pronouncement—"that it is suspect"—responds marvellously to the spirit of Scripture, to that of the ancient Fathers, to that of the vast body of Greek and Latin Christianity, and to that of the two Protestant communions: only Socinians and Arminians find trouble with it.

Themistius: Besides, if Jaquelot had embraced the first approach, which is to say that it is necessary to push the Pyrrhonians to the farthest extremity, then he would have imitated the Pharisees,¹⁸ who placed heavy yokes on the shoulders of others without so much as touching themselves; for of several great and terrible difficulties contained in the Pyrrhonian's discourse, he did little more than rub up against several of the less difficult ones, and he left all the others completely undisturbed.

18 Matthew 23:4.

CHAPTER 36

Why We Will Not Examine the First 303 Pages of Jaquelot's Last Book; and Why We Will be Content with Only a Few Observations Concerning the Collection of Difficulties Amassed in Bayle's *Dictionary*

Maximus: Please stop urging me to discuss a certain number of passages from the first 303 pages of Jaquelot's book. I've taken my position: I no longer want to think about that book; I'm becoming tired of these disputes; yet I must reserve some energy for our meetings concerning the last reply of Le Clerc to Bayle.¹

Themistius: If we had wanted to take the trouble to examine step-by-step the first part of Jaquelot's book, the harvest of triumphs would not have been less great for us than what we found during our consideration of the last part. I don't understand why you would want to miss so many opportunities to refute invincibly a man who has a great need to be humbled. The abundance of subjects worthy of censure frightens you, but I'll remedy that by offering you the choice of a certain number of passages among the most considerable ones. We will remain focused on these and abandon the rest.

Maximus: I beg you not to speak to me any further about this. Jaquelot had principally in mind to demonstrate that he could write a fairly thick book in a short period of time. We know that while he was working on it he used to show everyone he visited or who visited him how much his writing was advancing from week to week. This motive made him forget what authors with good judgment who are convinced of the importance of their subject would never forget. He did not remember that a reply to the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions* had to lead its readers straight to the solution of the Manichean difficulties and to the proof of this important doctrine, namely that

¹ [OD] The reference is to *Dialogues*, Part 1, which was printed first, though from this passage it would seem not to have been written first. [MH] The inference of the editors of the *OD* that *Dialogues*, Part 1, was not written first is invalidated by Bayle's correspondence. See above, "Note on the Text," 111.

the fall of Adam and its consequences can be accorded with reason provided that it is supposed that man was endowed with free will. Jaquelot should have begun immediately with this subject, and drawn a straight line from which he who would never stray, not even to respond to objections that might attack free will, since his adversary permitted him to act as a Pelagian and assumed him always to be a good Molinist. There is not a single reader who has a just idea of their controversy and of the true means of carrying it out that did not believe that he would find in the first pages of Jaquelot's book the beginning of this straight line of which I've just spoken. But instead of that, we find:

- I. General remarks on the second part of the *Response to a Provincial's Questions*.
- II. Two long chapters aiming to show that Bayle compared Christians to atheists, and discussing several things that Bayle said about atheism.
- III. A chapter devoted to examining whether Bayle made a great error in his article "Perrot" concerning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and whether Locke's principles are pernicious.
- IV. Several observations about things that should be considered merely incidental and matters of personal difference. We usually consider complaints that authors make that the state of the question was miserably disfigured by their adversaries to be such incidental things. Jaquelot makes complaints of that sort here and in a hundred other passages.
- V. An ample collection of passages from Bayle's *Dictionary* with Jaquelot's reflections, all of which aim to show that Bayle attacks religion. Even the *Clarification on Obscenities* was attacked, even though it is related neither directly nor indirectly to the dispute between these two authors. But in the end these were collections that Jaquelot was happy to share with his readers in order to thicken his book more quickly. This collection of passages from the *Dictionary*, along with the glosses of the collector, comprise 78 pages.
- VI. An examination of whether Bayle's position on the creation of matter changed.
- VII. A long discourse on the use of reason in religious matters.
- VIII. A long series of passages touching the same subject. Jaquelot treats Bayle here as the author of the *Philosophical Commentary*, which is fraudulent and malicious, since Bayle always disavowed this *Commentary*, not only privately, but also publicly in proper form,² and Jaquelot cannot have

² See *News from the Republic of Letters*, April 1687, and the *Addition to the Various Thoughts*

forgotten that once this book appeared, Jurieu refuted it and attributed it to the dangerous cabal of Refugee Ministers,³ of which we spoke above.⁴

- IX. A second discourse, again on the use of reason.
- X. Finally, a tiresome and boring examination of everything that Bayle replied or objected concerning free will. That alone takes up 108 pages!

What? Because Jaquelot found it convenient to make use of several long collections in order to accomplish his plan to win over the public by composing a long book in a short time, you expect me to discuss everything in his book that precedes the principal matter in the dispute and that, for the most part, bears no relation to that issue? I have everything that I was looking for; along with the other keen readers, I took an interest only in what touched on the origin of evil. We have discussed everything that Jaquelot could have said about that; I ask for nothing more.

Themistius: Unless your ears are plugged or you plan to leave this room, you will get more than what you demanded, for don't forget that I told you about several observations that I've made concerning several of the articles that you've just listed.

Maximus: Since there are only a few observations, I will sit patiently and listen to you.

Themistius: I can assure you that on the basis of the second article, we can humble Jaquelot very rudely. Without any necessity, and only in order to follow the ill intentions of his heart, he touched on something concerning what Bayle had said about atheism, but he did this so ignorantly that he was soon overcome by convincing arguments. Because of the shame of having been caught committing so flagrant an offence, and because his heart had been long ago spoiled, he engaged in even more malicious quarrelling. Every malicious thing that a hard-

on the Comet, chapter 5 (OD 11, 179–180). [OD] Although Bayle disavows the *Philosophical Commentary*, he is nevertheless very certainly its author, the proof of which can be seen in *The Life of Mr. Bayle* (by Pierre DesMaizeaux) along with the reasons Bayle had for disavowing the work.

3 The words he uses in his *Preface to the reader* have great weight and so readers are encouraged to consult them. Note what he repeats on page 9: "This book is not the work of a single author. This appears to be the work of a cabal and of a conspiracy against the truth. There is nothing less uniform than its style."

4 *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 1, 221.

ened sophist enflamed with hatred might have invented without any concern for good faith was put into practice by Jaquelot when he tried to justify himself on this point.

If he succeeded in anything, it was in proving that Bayle spoke of Vanini without having first informed himself of certain facts. This occurred in the *Various Thoughts on the Comet*, composed in 1681, when Bayle had little leisure and very few books. He learned after a while of this error concerning Vanini, and nevertheless he left it in all the following editions; he did not wish to correct it, or to add anything to it. This was because he did not want to change a single letter of that work in 1681, and so he later took it to be a more sincere course of action toward his readers if he refused to present himself as having known in 1681 more than he in fact did know and what he would only later learn. A further reason obliged him not to correct the error concerning Vanini; namely that he had the intention of offering a long article on this man in his *Dictionary*.

I have the same judgment to make of the third article you've listed as I had of the second, but I would add in particular that the Minister of Berlin, as unlucky as possible in imputing contradictions to Bayle, claims to convict him of contradicting himself in a chapter by means of these two propositions: 1. "when Jaquelot assumes that according to Bayle religion is always obliged to retreat before reason, it is a calumny as ill-founded as it is atrocious";⁵ and 2. "the portrait that Jaquelot paints of Bayle's doctrine on atheism does not resemble the original at all; I cannot persuade myself that he disfigured it on purpose, for I take him to be too conscientious to want to deceive in such a way and too prudent not to want to avoid ill success."⁶ There is not the slightest trace of a contradiction there; a calumny is always a calumny whether or not the person who utters it knows that it is false. The same person can have enough conscience not to want to affirm publicly what he knows to be a calumny, and enough credulity and abruptness to publish a calumny as though it were true.⁷

The fifth article led me to imagine a clever and erudite man who goes to Jaquelot to seek clarification in the following way:

'I believe that you are incomparably more skilled than Bayle, and consequently, all the difficulties that he found in questions of religion had already presented themselves long ago to your mind as being even stronger and more troubling, for what is the penetration of your genius not capable of perceiving

⁵ *RQP* II, cxxxiv (*OD* III, 771).

⁶ *RQP* II, cxxxiv (*OD* III, 772–773).

⁷ This person has the character of a calumniator. See the eighth volume of the *Morale Pratique* of the Jesuits, page 3.

and what have you not already meditated on profoundly? If these difficulties have already appeared to you, then why have you not already refuted them in some book? If you thought that your responses would not be solid, and that it would be dangerous to make known to the public such a mass of difficulties that could not be well refuted, then you have not acted in good faith, and you have maintained the interests of religion only fraudulently. I ask you once again if the difficulties related by Bayle are so much his own invention that no vestige of them can be found in the writings of the ancients or those of the moderns? I would find it difficult to believe this even if you swore to it, for it is highly implausible that the appearance of such thoughts would await the birth of a simple individual in the seventeenth century after infinitely many great men had already penetrated so deeply all the most important subjects. If our authors have not refuted these difficulties, I distrust either their hearts or their minds. If they had sharp minds, they had to discover all of these difficulties just as well as, if not better than, Bayle. If they have discovered them but passed them over in silence, then this is a pious fraud.'

Maximus: You've piqued my interest; I no longer want to sit by and listen; I want to share with you the care of developing this curious matter. Let me suppose that your clever and erudite man asks three further things of Jaquelot, in the following words:

1. 'Can the difficulties which Bayle spread throughout his works, and which you partially collected in your own, be easily refuted, or are there some that are difficult to resolve? If the former is the case, then you have made a lot of noise for nothing, and you should have rather said that this author furnished the orthodox with the most favourable occasions to make the truth triumph with renewed pomp. You in particular, Mr. Jaquelot, should have seized this occasion and destroyed all of the difficulties in Bayle's writings. You were not ardent enough about this; there are even some objections that you did not combat even though you transposed them from the *Dictionary* into your last work.'

'Now if there are some difficulties in the *Dictionary* that are not easy to resolve, then you make a lot of noise imprudently; for you make it known that you cannot endure the sincerity with which an author admits the strong and the weak side of what he examines. You would have us rest content with proposing only those objections that we can answer, and if there should be any that present themselves as invincible, you have us suffocate them like monsters. You might make us conjecture that your books on the existence of God and on various points of religion and controversy were written in that way.'

2. 'You should consider that there is a noteworthy circumstance that excuses Bayle for having proposed certain difficulties freely and sincerely. It is that the remedy that he furnished against all his readers' scruples appeared infallible to him.⁸ He made use of a principle that has always reigned among Christians and that reigns over them now as much as ever, excepting a hand-full of heretics, schismatics, and several individuals hidden within the Reformed church who are called the Rationalists. This principle is 'that reason must submit itself to revealed truths even if it has not been able to resolve all of the difficulties, which it must then sacrifice to the faith.' It would not be surprising for an author who wanted to resolve the difficulties by a principle in which we can put so much confidence to dare to say what Bayle said.'

3. 'Notice that Jaquelot never ceases claiming that the triumph that Bayle grants to faith over reason is a principle that is very pernicious and dangerous to the Christian religion. This is a lost cause, since this objection cannot harm Bayle unless it is first demonstrated that his opinion differs from that of the vast body of Christians. You would have done infinite damage to Bayle's work if you had shown by means of a parallel in two columns that Bayle goes further than the innumerable Doctors cited by Bayle in his *Dictionary*, in his *Clarifications*, and in his *Response to a Provincial's Questions*; and in particular, that he goes further than Jurieu, whom the Walloon Synods have found orthodox since the time of the publication of the books from which four remarkable propositions were drawn. Why have you neglected to instruct the public by a parallel of passages that what Bayle says most strongly surpasses what has ever been said strongly concerning the necessity of submitting reason to the authority of the faith? As long as he can boast of following the general spirit of the Christian religion, he will coldly respond to anyone who objects to him, 'your principle is pernicious,' that they go take up the issue with the whole body of Christianity, or at least with the Walloon Synod, which has declared Jurieu orthodox.'

Themistius: If we were making a complete compilation of all the difficulties spread throughout Bayle's writings and wished to print the result as a book, we could entitle it, *Proofs of the Truth of Jurieu's Four Propositions*. Moreover, Jaquelot employs all his arts of deception in order to bias his readers when he reports what Bayle made Simonides say. All of that is barricaded in the *Dictionary*, and our theologians show no scruples in acknowledging the incomprehensibility of God. Amyraut shows that the difficulties that remain once we have gotten rid of those surrounding the Trinity are terrible and numerous.⁹

⁸ See above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 5, 233.

⁹ See his *Traité des religions*, 406, and his book on the *Elévation de la foi*, 56.

To spare your patience I will not make any observations about articles 6, 7, 8, or 9,¹⁰ and I will merely brush up against article 10, which treats the subject of free will, the discussion of which gives you so much displeasure.

1. There are few pages where Jaquelot does not accuse his adversary of having made every effort to reduce man to a purely passive subject. Nevertheless, the accuser collects reasons why the accused “treated so lightly this important subject [of freedom], which decides the whole debate.”¹¹ He is “greatly surprised and astonished”¹² that Bayle did not wish to make the dispute over free will a preliminary to the rest of the dispute, under the pretext that “it would have been a means of putting off for a long time the principal subject. As if it were not the principal matter in a dispute to examine the foundations of an opinion that is contested.”

I searched in vain in these words for some sign of an author who thinks about what he writes. Instead everything there reveals distractions that overturn common sense. What! Even though Jaquelot was given complete permission to employ the doctrine of Pelagius on free will, he still finds it central to the dispute to examine and to establish positively and with certainty whether man is endowed with free will? Could anything more superfluous be discussed? The principal question between Jaquelot and Bayle was to know whether, assuming the freedom of the will, all the Manichean objections could be resolved. Bayle denies it, and since he claims to give authentic proofs of his thesis even while granting everything one could desire concerning the power and reach of human freedom, he did not need to ask whether man is free: freedom was to be taken as a common principle between him and Jaquelot. It therefore sufficed for him to respond to the difficulties raised against his former arguments.

One of the strongest proofs that Jaquelot claims to have of the freedom of the will is that we have a lively feeling of the authority with which our will chooses one thing rather than another. Now, if this lively feeling did not prove necessarily that we are masters of ourselves, and that our freedom determines itself by itself as it pleases, God would be the cause of our error. I have three questions to put to him. First, whether he consulted diverse people or merely stopped at his own experience, which would mean nothing since nature might have given him a happy temperament that would make his will flexible in all

10 Concerning those who have written about the use of reason, see above, *Dialogues*, Part 2, chapter 10, 252.

11 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 203.

12 Jaquelot, *ETB*, 204.

sorts of cases. But this would tell us nothing about other men. Second, I ask him whether the experiences that have convinced him of the empire he has over himself had for their object ordinary affairs of everyday life—going for a walk, buying a house, bringing someone to court, paying visits, etc. Third, I ask him whether it is not rash to have recourse to the argument that God would deceive us.

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