

Issue 2:
January 26, 2010
More on Atheism

Since I am reading a giant tome including the works of various people, I have decided not to include a lot of excerpts from their writings. I am also not going to include everything I read. Naturally, some of the writers repeat the same theories. What I have done instead is captured the main essence of the piece I have chosen and included my points of dissention. So, consider this a Cliff's notes kind of newsletter.

Benedict De Spinoza (1632 – 1677) – Theological-Political Treatise

Dutch philosopher.

People susceptible to superstition are ones who are in danger and seeking help from God. Reason in such people is blind. They believe "the phantoms of imagination, dreams, and other childish absurdities." It is emotion that produces the belief in the supernatural. Church is a theatre. Human commentaries are accepted as divine records.

David Hume (1711 – 1776) – The Natural History of Religion & From An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

Scottish philosopher and historian.

A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence. In other cases, he considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments. Even one contradictory experience or instance can discount the other side.

Reports of eyewitnesses and spectators must be taken into account. The character of witnesses should also be considered. "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature...There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event." Some people pass on the information regarding a miracle in order to excite the admiration of others. "It is strange...that such prodigious events never happen in our days...The solution of the phenomenon is obvious...shall we allow of a miraculous violation of the most established laws of nature?" "Our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason."

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822)– A Refutation of Deism

English poet.

"The same energy cannot be at once the cause of the serpent and the sheep; of the blight by which the harvest is destroyed, and the sunshine by which it is matured."

The laws of motion and the properties of matter can account for every phenomenon in the Universe.

"There is no attribute of God which is not either borrowed from the passions and powers of the human mind, or which is not a negation."

"We can have no evidence of the existence of God from the principles of reason."

John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) – Moral Influences in Early Youth: My Father's Character and Opinions

English philosopher, political theorist, political economist, civil servant and Member of Parliament.

His father... "found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness."

"Who made me?' cannot be answered, because we have no experience or authentic information from which to answer it."

"[My father] never varied in rating intellectual enjoyments above all others."

Karl Marx (1818 – 1823) – Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right

German philosopher, political economist, historian, political theorist, sociologist, communist, and revolutionary.

"Man makes religion, religion doesn't make man."

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature."

George Eliot (1819 – 1880) (Mary Anne Evans) – Evangelical Teaching

English novelist.

A man espousing religion is a man "with moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence and great glibness of speech, what is the career in which...he may most easily attain power and reputation...?"

"Let such a man become an evangelical preacher, he will then find it possible to reconcile small ability with great ambition, superficial knowledge with the prestige of erudition, a middling morale with a high reputation for sanctity."

Those who look to Scripture "do not seek out facts."

"...the fact that doubt may be the stamp of truth-loving mind..."

"Everywhere he supposes that the doubter is hardened, conceited, consciously shutting his eyes to the light..."

"If I believe that God tells me to love my enemies, but at the same time hates His own enemies and requires me to have one will with Him, which has the larger scope, love or hatred?"

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