

THE DARKNESS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Erat lux vera quae illuminet omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum.

John 1: 9

The period from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century was marked by a revolution in philosophy whose influence changed the thinking of western man. The thinking to which it gave rise dominates the behaviour and the mores of our age. This short study considers its causes and its effects.

Philosophy is not philosophy unless it reflects reality in its terms

Every philosophy looks at the world, at reality, through its own lens. It advances a system which endeavours to explain the whole of reality, endeavours to explain—

- being in general—essence and existence—*what* a thing is; *that* a thing is;
- being natural (what is given) and being artificial (contrived by men);
- being inanimate;
- being animate, in three categories, vegetative, sensitive, intellective;
- the being of man, possessor of intellect, and intellect's proper appetite, will;
- the being of the demands to which these powers give rise, a moral rule at once intrinsic and extrinsic to man, and the demands of that moral rule;
- the being of the sanctions which conformity, or disconformity, with this rule brings;
- the being of knowledge, i.e., in what it is that knowledge consists;
- the being of causality, i.e., how do causes cause and what are their categories;
- the being of human logic and its rules;
- the being of things material;
- the being of things immaterial such as logic, knowledge, love, justice, mercy, and so on.

Some do it better; some do it worse. The better the philosophy, the better and more comprehensive will its explanations be.

What standard are we to apply to determine which of the innumerable philosophies on offer will give the true answer to each of these questions? What is the standard, the measure, to which one is compelled to appeal? What, as Pilate asked, is truth? Is it opinion? Is it what some sage says? Is it the majority view? Or is it something objective? The police officer, the judge, will insist it is objective, as does our common sense. The standard is surely *reality* because truth, *logical truth*, is the identity between what is asserted and what is, i.e., reality. Here is the starting point. The one true philosophy will be that which best reflects reality. This is truly *Philosophy*. All other aspirants to the title are frauds.

The position advanced in this paper is that the only philosophy which addressed reality in its terms was enunciated, some 350 years before Christ appeared, by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Recently historian Henry Sire put the issue succinctly:

“All other thinkers [began] with a theory and sought to fit reality into it; Aristotle is the only philosopher to have begun with reality and devised a system by which to understand it.”¹

Insofar as Aristotle’s thinking had shortcomings, these were corrected by his chief commentator, the extraordinary Italian friar Thomas of Aquino - St Thomas Aquinas - when Aristotle’s works and those of his best of the earlier commentators, the Muslims Averroes and Avicenna, were made available to the thinkers of the Middle Ages.

Aristotle proved that all order is on account of some end and only intellect acts for the sake of an end. Order is found pre-eminently in the world in which we live and in the heavens and their operations. Thus, three hundred and fifty years before Christ’s coming, Aristotle taught that reality demands that we acknowledge that the universe (the world and the heavens) is the work, the effect, of an intellectual being.²

The philosophy of the Enlightenment did not reflect reality in its terms

In his *Physics* Aristotle demonstrated that there is a universal law that of every natural and artificial effect there are four causes, two intrinsic - the *form*, or essence, of the thing, and the *matter* of which it is made, and two extrinsic - the *agent* producing it, and the *end* for which the agent acts. He exposed the essential function of the *final* cause without which the other causes never arise, and its necessary alliance with the *formal* cause which puts in place (‘formalises’) in the thing the end the agent intends.

The progenitors of the Enlightenment were Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626) and René Descartes (1596 - 1650). Bacon reduced the four causes to one: matter. Descartes insisted that thinkers should focus first on their own perceptions. From Bacon the Enlightenment thinker got the idea that everything could be explained by matter alone - whence *materialism*. From Descartes he got the idea that his own ideas ought be his first consideration - whence *subjectivism*. Their joint initiative coloured the thinking of each of their successors.

With these props, *materialism* and *subjectivism*, like the crutches of a cripple, the thinkers of the Enlightenment sought to outpace those who had preceded them, those who walking naturally had adhered to the demands of common sense supported by Aristotle’s moderate realism.³ Bacon rattled the cage of reason, but it was Descartes who formalised its disruption. With his *cogito ergo sum* Descartes turned reason on its head. Realism insists that do follows be (*agere sequitur esse - I am and therefore I (can) think*). Descartes inverted the principle, abandoning reality as the ground in which truth is established, and establishing the subjectivism that plagues modern man.

¹ H.J.A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes; the Making, Unmaking and Restoration of Catholic Tradition*, (Angelus Press, Kettering Ohio) 2015, p. 25

² A being who is not just a possessor of that power but who is Intellect its very self. Cf. *Metaphysics* IX, 1095, 6; & St Thomas Aquinas, *In IX Meta.* XII, lesson 11. Towards the end of his life Albert Einstein, confusedly but forcefully, reached a conclusion that reflects that of Aristotle: “I have no better expression than 'religious' for this confidence in the rational nature of reality and in its being accessible, to some degree, to human reason. When this feeling is missing, science degenerates into mindless empiricism.” 1.1.1951, letter to Maurice Solovine quoted in Walter Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and Universe*, New York, 2007, pp. 462-3

³ As opposed to the *extreme realism* of Plato who would have it that what we know is not what is, not reality, but some shadow of the realities.

The cause that precipitated its attempt to do so was the Protestant revolt

The revolt against the Catholic Church, and against the faith the Church initiated and fostered, was a revolt against right order. The world, the universe and man—the highest of material creatures—are each of them effects of the Divine intellect. So, too, is the Catholic Church, proved by the miracles and teaching of its founder, Jesus Christ, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity become man, as St Thomas shows against the assertion that Mohammed had received revelations from God.⁴

This disturbance of rationality towards the Church that God had established, and towards God Himself began during the Renaissance. The prophets of its progress from disturbance to revolt were Huss and Wycliffe. It graduated to outright revolt with Martin Luther. No matter what excuses Luther gave for his opposition to abuses that had been committed by the Church's ministers, they did not justify the rebellion he initiated. Reason attests that the abuse of some good thing never justifies the removal of that good only removal of the abuse.

Luther's rebellion found support in a consequence of a disruption to right order that had occurred in the English realm some forty years earlier. An illegitimate claimant had usurped the English throne. Henry Tudor's treacherous connivance in the murder of King Richard III in battle, aided and abetted by the pluralist bishop of Ely, John Morton (later Archbishop of Canterbury), disposed his appalling son to undertake a still greater evil, usurpation of the headship of God's Church in England.⁵

The rebellion precipitated by these evil men demanded that the Catholic believer reject God's authority in favour of his own authority. The mentality they proclaimed may be reduced to this: *Not what God requires me to believe, but what (of His revelation) I choose to believe.* Not God's authority, but *my* authority: not objective truth revealed by God, but *the subjective*, what *I* hold to be true. The assertion that its rebellious 'believers' were Christians and that the religion to which they adhered was still Christianity is false. The religion that resulted was not Christianity but *ersatz-Christianity*.

Protestantism's emasculation of the Catholic faith involved acceptance of —

- most-of;
- a-great-deal-of;
- somewhat-less-than-all-of;
- only-a-few-elements-of
- almost nothing of—

what Christ had revealed and taught. If a believer rejects one, *just one*, of the truths revealed by Christ and taught by His Church, he ceases to be a Christian.⁶ The Christian faith, found only in Catholicism, is one and undivided: *ersatz-Christianity* is *legion* and utterly divided.

⁴ "He did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, which alone fittingly gives witness to divine inspiration; for a visible action that can be only divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth." *Summa Contra Gentes* Bk. I, 6 [4]

⁵ Cf. *King Richard III & the Rise of the House of Tudor* at https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/king-richardiii-rise-house-tudor.pdf

⁶ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 11, a. 1

To make the position clear, the term 'faith' when used in respect of Catholicism and when used in respect of one or other of the branches of Protestantism is not univocal: that is, the term does not signify in each of its inferiors the same reality. Protestant faith, whatever its variety, is of man: human. The Catholic faith is of God who, through His Church, sets its parameters and its demands. (cf. *Ephesians* 2: 8) There is a suasive proof of this that any Catholic recognises. One who loses his Catholic faith loses all memory of what it was he once possessed. Australian poet James McAuley expressed the issues well in 1952:

"The divine tradition, the *res christiana* comes to us intact and entire, handed down from generation to generation... we are not free to tamper with it, to cut shape and elide in accordance with our own specifications, or impose our own limits or set out conditions of entrance... we cannot presume to measure the doctrine with our own minds: on the contrary we are to measure our minds by his doctrine... the Church is a realm of infinite wealth and beauty, but over the gate is written the word SUBMISSION..."⁷

If you reject God's authority, if you refuse submission to your Creator and Redeemer you set out on a path that leads to atheism.

After rejection of God's authority in the sixteenth century there followed a denial of God's revelation about himself as three Persons essentially distinct in one God, whence *Unitarianism*. Thereafter there developed an animus against *any* belief in God shown in the device of *Deism*, contrived by Voltaire and his acolytes to protect them against the charge of atheism. Deism reduced 'God' to a human construct. Descartes' distorted understanding of God and his activity along mechanistic lines assisted in promotion of the error.

It sought to justify philosophically the rejection of God and his authority

The man who chooses to reject God's authority in favour of his own must justify his action by showing - or endeavouring to show - that what he has done is reasonable *when it is not reasonable*. Bacon, the Enlightenment's progenitor, was a Calvinist and Calvinism, like the Lutheranism from which it derived, is inchoate atheism. He had to attack Aristotle's philosophy because Christ's Church, grounded in common sense, adhered to Aristotle's defence of common sense. Along with Bacon's attack went rejection of the assertion that God's influence in the world, and his existence, might be shown from the order found in nature. If it should be objected that Bacon maintained his belief in God, one might ask: 'But what sort of God?' A remark of Aristotle's is apposite: "It is not necessary that what a man says, that he believes".

Almost forty years ago Italian philosopher Romano Amerio marked the effects on human thought of the Protestant rebellion:

"[I]n Lutheranism... the divine word is accepted only inasmuch as it receives the form of an individual conviction. It is not the thing which demands assent, but assent which gives value to the thing. If then, by an internal logic, this criticism of divine authority as a theological principle becomes a criticism of the authority of reason as a philosophical principle that is no more than might have been expected..."⁸

⁷ Letter of the convert James McAuley to Donovan Clarke, June 2th, 1952, quoted in Cassandra Pybus, *The Devil and James McAuley*, St Lucia, Queensland (UQP), 1999, p.113

⁸ *Iota Unum*, Kansas City, MO, 1996; transl. from 2nd Italian edition by Fr John Parsons, pp. 23-4 The text was originally published in Italy in 1985.

The asserted superiority of the believer over what was to be believed in the theological order is reflected precisely in the philosophical order in Descartes' focus of the thinker on himself. If Bacon claimed that all man can know is blind matter, Descartes went further. He said all we can know is our own ideas. Whereas Bacon subverted the intellect Descartes diverted it. The effect of each was to deny the intellect's office of knowing what is, that is, of knowing reality in its terms. Every thinker who has followed them down to the present has indulged in a blend of these two delusions.

As the revolt against God was irrational so was this philosophical endeavour

Because it is reasonable to believe in God, the one who rejects belief in God and refuses to acknowledge His authority finds himself rejecting the demands of reason. Among Enlightenment philosophers this manifested itself in a refusal to acknowledge the principal cause (the *final* cause) of the world – that it was made to serve an end - and the order (ordination; subordination) which is its *formal* effect. There followed denial - indeed *positive rejection* of the suggestion - that nature, and the natural order, are manifestations of the Divine Intellect. Nature is what God has given us—the root *na-* means 'given'—but for the one who abandons belief in God nature is cut off from its source, no more than a dumb reality.

Rejection of the final and formal causality in His works necessarily implies, too, rejection of God as *efficient* cause, refusal to admit the need for an agent who made the world and who preserves it in existence which, inevitably, arrives at a refusal to acknowledge that the world was made! There remains the last and least of the causes, the material cause, whose only influence (as a cause) is that it is *what is determined* in the effect.

Bacon and the thinkers who followed him began in the name of reason to reject the authority of reason, to embrace contradiction, to affirm and to deny the same about the same in breach of the first principle of logic.⁹ They could not deny intellect was involved if it was question of a bridge to be built over a river but denied its involvement in the reality of the rabbit on the river bank, though a rabbit is an immensely more sophisticated being than any bridge. The fatuities of Spencer's and Darwin's evolutionary theses a century later are here in bud form.

In time the blend of these two delusions developed to the point where certain of its thinkers, having accepted that intellect has no greater power than that of a sense, came to deny its efficacy completely. They continued, however, to exercise its unique facilities in the practicalities of life. The flight from reason under the excuse that doing so was an act of reason is the singular characteristic of Enlightenment thought. One can see the appeal of a simple answer to the issues that have ever troubled mankind. This is the attractiveness behind evolutionary theory and the *monism* that underlies it (all material being is one; differences are only a question of degree). It was a simple explanation for reality which provided the Enlightenment with its eponymous 'light'.

⁹ The principle of non-contradiction may be expressed this way: A is A; A is not non-A; between A and non-A there is no third. Cf. G. H. Joyce, *Principles of Logic*, Second Edition, London, 1916, pp. 69 – 71.

One of the Enlightenment's heroes was the nominalist William of Ockham (1285 – 1347) who had rejected the scholastic doctrine that the forms of singular things exist universally in mind (ultimately in the Divine Mind), the immateriality and objectivity of which determine their natures as immutable—the *doctrine of universals*. Its ground was laid by Aristotle (in opposition to Plato's extreme realism), elaborated by Boëthius and settled by Aquinas. Ockham rejected the intellect's proper power of abstracting the immaterial realities underlying the singular things the senses perceive. The modern thinker, heir of Enlightenment thought, considers he is being profound in reiterating Ockham's assertion that entities are not to be multiplied unnecessarily when he is simply endorsing a philosophy as facile as that of the Nominalist.

While the Enlightenment's proponents asserted they were advancing reason, the truth is that they were busily managing its retreat, convinced that they knew better than those who had gone before them. Far from being called the Age of Reason the period should have been termed the age of *rationalism* with that term signifying a disorder of the mind—

“on analogy to medical language, in which the term ‘lymphatism’ denotes a disorder of the lymphatic organs...”¹⁰

Indeed, the age might better have been termed ‘the Obscuring’ or ‘the Darkening’ for the effect it has had on the human psyche. Chesterton said something to the point in *Orthodoxy* when he wrote that the madman is not someone who has lost his reason; he is one who has lost everything *except* his reason.

The marks of the philosophical and logical errors that resulted

There are innumerable intellectual errors that resulted from the Enlightenment. Here is a selection:

- a. refusal to admit the immaterial as an essential component of reality;
- b. refusal to acknowledge reality in its terms;
- c. embrace of logical contradiction as a rational protocol;
- d. assessment that truth is not one but many - (the nonsense that something may be ‘true for you’);
- e. loss of understanding of the need to distinguish, i.e., to consider and to weigh, the different formalities to be found in any thing;
- f. rejection of the doctrine of fourfold causality;
- g. confusion of the knowledge of the intellect with that proper to the senses;
- h. reduction of all human knowledge to one field, experimental knowledge;
- i. refusal to admit distinction in the modes of human knowledge;
- j. denial of the power of the intellect to know immaterial realities;
- k. confusion of the intellect with the brain;
- l. refusal to admit the order in nature or an intellectual author of its order;
- m. refusal to admit distinction between real being and mental being.

The consequences for science

The harm their theorising worked is most apparent in modern science where analysts proceed on the basis that their focus should be exclusively on the thing studied to the

¹⁰ Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, op. cit., p. 110

exclusion of any other influence. If you ask a student of science why a soap bubble is spherical, for example, he will reply, “surface tension”. Surface tension is a quality of soapy water, a disposition in the matter which *inclines it* to sphericity of form, but much more is required than material disposition before it assumes that form. The modern scientist is like a man overtaken by a golf ball who declines to investigate its trajectory to discover the cause of its motion and the intent of the agent who drove it, convinced he can find all the answers he needs by dissecting the ball!

Newton, favouring the mechanical thinking of Descartes over the analyses of Aristotle, yet retained a residual metaphysics when he insisted there must be some extrinsic cause of gravitational force.¹¹ His successors, deeper in the materialist well, have treated his assertion with disdain. It never entered Einstein’s head that there must be an efficient (i.e., extrinsic) cause of the phenomena whose operations he was to calculate so comprehensively. When Newton said that calculation was not to be identified with causation he showed himself a better thinker than Einstein.

Bacon had sought to reinvent the meaning of the term ‘philosophy’. God is not material; nor is the greater part of his creation. It is the formal cause, *eo ipso* immaterial, that renders matter to be this thing or that; makes *this* quantity of matter be water, *that* to be stone, *that other* to be a cow, a dog or a man. Moreover, since the act of distinction involves the mind (i.e., the intellect) considering *formal* differences in things, and he had rejected formality, Bacon denied the existence of the faculty. This is what is behind his attempt to reduce ‘wisdom’ to a collection of material experiences. Contrary to his blinkered vision, human science (the knowledge of reality), is not limited to one field; there are three. Two of these fields are *dianoetic*, i.e., knowledge that considers an object according to its essence, and one *perinoetic*, i.e., knowledge that considers an object according to its phenomena or appearances.¹²

The first *dianoetic* category is mathematics whose object is quantity. The mathematician does not need a sensible subject. It is sufficient that he can *imagine* the dimensions of a material thing, or those of a geometric figure such as a triangle. His study is abstracted from both singular matter and sensible matter. Though mathematics is not a science of reality, its conclusions can be applied to reality as, e.g., in triangulation applied in the construction of buildings, bridges and aircraft, and in Einstein’s calculations respecting time and space and motions of the heavenly bodies.

The second *dianoetic* science is philosophy whose object is simply being. It abstracts not only from singular and sensible matter but even from understandable matter. Philosophy considers the essence and/or existence of things as, e.g., the universal reality of *causality*. So Aristotle in his *Physics* (Bk. II ch. 3) uncovered what accords with common sense, namely, that there are four modes in which things can cause or be caused.

¹¹ In his Letters to Richard Bentley,

¹² The Greek prefix *dia-* means through; throughout. The Greek prefix *peri-* means around; about.

Perinoetic knowledge addresses phenomena, the physical properties of things—in Aristotelian terms, accidents of the species *quality*. This is the field of experimental science. It proceeds from signs as, e.g., when the investigator determines that if something is conductive of sound, is ductile, is highly malleable, enjoys supreme thermic and electric conductivity, melts at 960° C, boils at 2000° C, it is in all likelihood silver (Ag). *Perinoetic* knowledge is limited knowledge and, because it proceeds inductively (from effects to cause), it is dependent on sufficient indicators to be certain of a cause. For this reason science is tentative in its conclusions. It cannot say anything about the essence of the objects of its study. The scientist can tell us a lot about silver; he cannot tell us what silver is. In contrast, *dianoetic* knowledge proceeds by deduction. It focuses on its object (e.g., the mathematician with the triangle, the philosopher with causation) and concludes to its properties which are certain because contained virtually in the cause.

Australian philosopher, Dr Don Boland, has remarked how the modern scientific view is not crudely empiricist (i.e., materialistic) because it allows for the contribution of mathematics to the understanding of what it studies, such that the scientific method is coloured by what is conceivable according to human imagination. The scientist may reject the crucial input of the immaterial set forth in Aristotle's analyses, but he has found a substitute in the dianoetic precision of mathematics.

"This introduces a complication and indeed a kind of opposition into the modern concept of (material) reality. We might put it that in the modern concept of science Mathematics plays the role of a meta-physics, not in the Aristotelian sense, but as relating to a strange order or 'dimension' of reality, as we can know it, that transcends the purely empirical."¹³

One need only contemplate the ersatz-realities postulated by Einstein in support of his calculations of gravitational force in the *General* and *Special Theories of Relativity* (a body's mass 'bending the fabric of space-time'), and those asserted in quantum mechanics (light appears to display characteristics both of a wave and of a particle), to appreciate the force of this comment.

The Consequences for the Modern World

There are innumerable consequences for our modern world of the justifications advanced by the thinkers of the Enlightenment for the decision taken by Protestantism to reject God and His authority. Here is a selection:

- Mocking of belief in God as 'superstition';
- Abandonment of the sense that truth is determined by reality, i.e., objective;
- Growth of subjectivism to the level of a plague in society;
- Loss of understanding that man is bound by his nature and the order built into it including a moral law and his need to conform with that law at his peril;
- Replacement of the natural moral law with a 'morality' grounded in ideology;
- Vaunting of atheism, its proponents ignorant of their own engagement in a belief system lacking any ground in reality;
- Loss of the sense of God as the overarching intellect governing the world and ruling man's actions;

¹³ D. G. Boland LL.B, Ph.D, *God and the Theory of Everything*, https://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/d-boland-god-the-theory-of-everything.pdf pp. 2 and 3

- Abandonment of respect for the natural as protective and supportive of life;
- Flourishing of fear for the future in consequence;
- Disappearance of the statesman in favour of the politician who thinks he exists to order the lives of others;
- Loss of understanding that government has no other justification than to guide the body social, with the result that modern government resembles a species of tyranny;
- Harm to society in the entrenching in legislation and regulation of the rejection of the demands of the moral law;
- Harm to society in the passage of legislation and regulation enforcing the new ideological 'morality';
- Flourishing of the bureaucrat, allegedly the politician's lackey but more often his master;
- Rise of the journalist as a prophet of the atheist agenda rather than reporter;
- Inversion of the journalistic principle *Comment is free, facts are sacred* such that reports in newspapers resemble the ramblings of opinion in social media;
- Condign loss of understanding by media institutions of their proper office.

These are what have led to the moral aberrations that afflict us today, indulgence in divorce, fornication, adultery, contraception, abortion, the *in vitro* fertilisation of human embryos and dysfunctional sexual activity. The consequences are a loss of sense of the meaning of one's own being and the nonsense of an individual asserting that he may choose his sexual orientation. The logical end of the process is suicide coupled with a failure to understand that the act of suicide is futile. No man brings himself into existence; neither is it within his power to take himself out of existence.

Henry Sire has encapsulated the evils in a memorable passage:

"In his battle to raise men against God, it is not surprising that the devil has worked to attack a principle that is literally divine. The hierarchy of natural society is the means whereby every man receives the gifts necessary to his humanity. These means begin with the family, and continue with the immediate community and with the nation, the sources from which the individual receives language, culture, the organisation of social life, and nearly everything that make up identity and security. Against that ordering of society, Rousseau introduced an artificial concept when he declared that man is born free. The only way to be born free is to be born abandoned in a ditch. Man is born subject to a nexus of obligations which stem from the essence of human nature, not from an artificial contract. Liberal and humanist thought has progressively sought to break down that nexus and to promote the fiction of man as an autonomous, equal citizen, owing nothing to the ties of family and of place. This atomised society matches the devil's programme for mankind; it will be realised in hell, a world where the bonds of the family, of society, and of respect will indeed be fully stripped away."¹⁴

The Catalyst

One who weighs the considerations advanced above must ask himself the following questions: *Why is it that the evils let loose by the Protestant revolt and sought to be justified*

¹⁴ Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes*, op. cit., p. 169

by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and their heirs have come to a crisis now, in this century? They were kept at bay for centuries. Why do they threaten to bring civilisation to its end now?

One obstacle prevented the flourishing of atheism and its concomitant evils in the world, the religion and Church founded by God, the Catholic faith. That obstacle was removed by a decision of the Church's bishops taken in 1965, provoked, aided, and abetted by the then pope, to embrace the ethos of the world. Under the false irenicism promoted at the Second Vatican Council the devil, the ancient enemy of the human race, has succeeded in removing the obstacle. There is hardly a Catholic bishop in the world who is prepared to stand up for natural principle and the truth. The bishops, priests and lay people prepared to do so are a small minority.

The liturgy these effete bishops and their clergy celebrate is a false reflection of that mandated by the Church at the *Council of Trent* and codified by Pope Pius V in the sixteenth century, as false as the ethos that gave it birth. It is certainly illicit. Because it teaches a theology that departs from what the Church has taught from her inception it is almost certainly schismatic.

When the natural order demands that the Church's bishops should speak out publicly against the legion of errors that affect society, not only as regards abandonment of the principles of the natural moral law but in respect of the new ideological 'moralities', to a man they remain silent.

Yet it would be wrong to seek to attribute to Christ's Church the errors indulged in by her prelates and priests. She is, as St Paul teaches, the spotless of Christ. (*Ephesians* 5: 25-29; *Apocalypse* 21: 2) No. The evil that has allowed the poison of atheism to work its trenchant harm in the midst of humanity has been done by the Church's ministers, and for their contribution to that harm each of them will be answerable.

Envoi

Belief in God (and in God's authority) is the action of a reasonable man. It provides him with an adequate cause of his own existence, his own essence. Since more does not come from less it must follow that the powers of intellect and will a man enjoys must be possessed by the One who made him in a degree immensely greater than the measure of those powers that he enjoys. *A fortiori*, the One who made him must be like him in this, too, that He is a person; and, if he is a person, *it is reasonable to conclude He has revealed himself to his creature, man.*

The act of rejecting God's authority leaves the 'believer' with none but his own authority. Nothing prevents him choosing as his guide some other principle. This is what was behind the Enlightenment thinkers' philosophical initiatives. Words are signs of understandings (concepts) which are signs of things. 'Things' here generally refers to realities but they may be mere imaginings whether of one man or of men collectively. The word 'philosophy' can be taken in its proper sense, and then it signifies the explanation of reality in its terms, or it can be taken in a vaguer sense when it signifies no more than the ideas of different thinkers about how reality is to be understood. The philosophies generated by the Enlightenment were of this latter

category. Their common characteristic was a refusal of their generators to acknowledge reality.

No man brings himself into existence nor keeps himself in existence. Every man is *contingent*; he exists and he may, at any moment, cease to exist (at least as far as having a body goes). Nor is any man self-sufficient: he is *dependent*. Something, *someone*, performs these two essential offices. *This is reality*. Moreover man is possessed of intellect, the highest power exercised by any creature. He did not give himself this power: it was given him along with his essence and existence. More does not come from less. Whatever it was gave man this power along with life and existence must, accordingly, also be intellectual, that is, he must be *Someone!* For men to have closed their minds to these truths in the name of some new intellectual 'light' was utter folly.¹⁵

It is matter that impedes knowledge. When the matter of the body is removed, the soul, the seat of the intellect, is exposed to truth inevitable: that its possessor did not bring himself into existence, that he did not keep himself in existence. Though he refused to face reality and discern its lessons during his earthly life, he is constrained now, willy-nilly, to face them in the being of his Creator and Redeemer, the Word become flesh, Jesus Christ—*He who was the true light who enlightens every man who comes into the world.* But now Christ acts, as he said he would, to judge him and the conduct of his life - what he has done, for good or for ill, with the talents he was given so freely. (II *Timothy* 4: 1; I *Peter* 4: 5)

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November 15th 2022—*St Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church*

¹⁵ Pascal mocked the thinkers of the Enlightenment in his *Pensees*. "I know not who sent me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am... I see the terrifying immensity of the universe... and find myself limited to one corner of this vast expanse, without knowing why I am set down here rather than elsewhere, nor why the brief period appointed for my life is assigned to me at this moment rather than another in all the eternity that has gone before and will come after me... All I know is that I must soon die. But what I understand least of all is this very death which I cannot escape... From all this I conclude that I ought to spend every day of my life without seeking to know my fate. I might perhaps be able to find a solution... but I cannot be bothered to do so; I will not take one step towards its discovery. And then, despising those who concern themselves with this task... I will go without fear or foresight to try the great event, and allow myself un-protesting to be led to my death, uncertain of my future state." (Louis Lafuma Edition, translated by John Warrington, J M Dent & Sons (Everyman), London, 1960, § 11; my edition, 1973 Reprint; quoted material at page 6.)