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Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism

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Citation

Berg, J. van den. (2018, November 8). *Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/66795>

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Author: Berg, J. van den

Title: Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism

Issue Date: 2018-11-08

***Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743):
from Presbyterian Preacher to Christian Deist***

A Contribution to the Study of English Deism

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 8 november 2018
klokke 15.00 uur
door Jan van den Berg
geboren te 's-Gravenhage
in 1951

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Thomas Morgan considered as deist

*

§1: An introduction

*

During the course of my theological studies in Amsterdam in the 1970s, while I was writing my MA thesis on Old Testament interpretation, I came across Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743), who had said some awful things about the stories of the Old Testament. Everyone who studies with pleasure the Jewish part of the Scriptures is struck when he encounters someone who is determined to kick the Old Testament out of the Canon. The history of Christian theology has seen some particular examples of this attitude. Naturally, the name of Marcion springs to mind. But we find kindred spirits in later ages, including the prominent German scholar, Adolf von Harnack, and most recently the Berlin theologian, Notger Slenczka.¹ Thomas Morgan is commonly classed as a deist, particularly on the basis of his most famous publication, *The moral philosopher*, which appeared anonymously in three volumes between 1737 and 1740. With Morgan, we enter the arena of English Deism, and Deism in general. Nowadays, Deism presents the historian with various complex questions about its history, its concepts, and its proponents, even leading some scholars to ask the fundamental question whether such a thing as a deist movement existed in the 18th century.

In general, Deism has had a negative reputation for a long time. In the mid-1960s, Peter Gay observed in his classic work on the Enlightenment that the reputation of the deists was not high: ‘they lie unread and are in fact for the most part unreadable’.² This certainly seems to apply to Morgan’s major work, *The moral philosopher*: in 1860, a writer who signed himself Fitzhopskins remarked: ‘The style of *The moral philosopher* is not inviting, and I should not read the three volumes’.³ He probably did not read them.

Reading the catalogues of the British Library during a stay in London in the 1970s, at a time when Internet search was not yet possible, I found that Thomas Morgan was not only a religious writer, but that he had been a Presbyterian minister and a medical practitioner as well. As an author, he was quite active, publishing some 3500 pages about philosophy, theology, and the practice of medicine, respectively. Moreover, he turned out to have been a vigorous pamphleteer. He was at odds with nearly everyone, quarrelling with many in the religious and medical world around him. He seems to have been much disliked by his contemporaries. There was much gossip about his life and morals, especially after his death. Since John Leland’s classic *View of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England during the last and the present century* (1754-1756), Thomas Morgan has been steadfastly reckoned among the deists.⁴ It is all the more surprising therefore that his name does not appear in some late 20th-century and early 21st-century encyclopedias about the

¹ N. Slenczka, ‘Die Kirche und das Alte Testament’, in: E. Gräb-Schmidt, ed., *Das Alte Testament in der Theologie*, (Marburger Jahrbuch für Theologie 25), Leipzig, 2013, 83-119.

² P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: an interpretation*, Volume 1: *The rise of modern paganism*, reprint, London, 1973, 374; in spite of his criticism of the reputation of the Deists, Gay has called the historical significance of the Deists considerable: ‘They redrew the religious map of Europe’.

³ Fitzhopskins, ‘Mosheim and Morgan’, *Notes and Queries*, second series, 10 (1860) 518.

⁴ J. Leland, *A view of the principal deistical writers*, Volume 1, London 1754, 177-213, letter ix; in later editions Morgan is referred to in letter x.

Enlightenment and the 18th century.⁵ In many historical and theological handbooks, he is only mentioned incidentally.⁶ Only in some well-respected, older theological encyclopedias one does encounter very short articles about the author of *The moral philosopher*. One does find Morgan in the literature about Anti-Semitism.⁷ Although in the present day some highly interesting articles exist about him in specialised journals, there is as yet no modern biography about him. Jeffrey Wigelsworth has observed that ‘Eighteenth-century English deism is enjoying something of a renaissance in scholarly interest’.⁸ This dissertation hopes to contribute to the fresh scholarly interest in Morgan’s life and work.

*

§2: Deism in the view of its English opponents

*

Although it may seem rather strange to begin an exposition about Deism with some anti-deist views, there is a certain logic to it, because for a long time Deism was known only through the description given of it by its opponents. In past centuries, Deism was generally referred to in a negative fashion.⁹ Leslie Stephen would remark later on that against deist writings, ‘appeared all that was intellectually venerable in England’.¹⁰ There are indeed a host of anti-deist utterances, nearly all of them referring to the destructive dimension of deist convictions. This negative view has accompanied Deism from the very beginning.

Looking at the *Early English Books Online* one finds some fifty English books and pamphlets with the word *deism*, *deist*, or *deists* in the title, published in the 17th century. The *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* contains more than 370 English books and pamphlets with these words in the title. Nearly all these titles characterize Deism as something negative. It was common among adversaries of Deism to point to the critical mind of the deists. In one of the first books published in England on the question of Deism, Edward Stillingfleet’s *Letter to a deist* (1677), the deist is advised by the future Anglican Bishop ‘not to hunt up and down the

⁵ Such as J.W. Volton, ed., *The Blackwell companion to the Enlightenment*, Oxford, 1991; G. Newman, ed., *Britain in the Hanoverian age 1714-1837, an encyclopedia*, New York/London, 1997; A.Ch. Kors, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, 4 volumes, Oxford, 2003; H. Chisick, *Historical dictionary of the Enlightenment*, Oxford, 2005.

⁶ Such as W. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, (Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen iii/2), Berlin, 1989, 63; A. Beutel, *Die Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, ein Kompendium*, Göttingen, 2009, 321.

⁷ B. Glassman, *Protean prejudice: Anti-semitism in England’s age of reason*, Atlanta, 1998, 19; L. Poliakov, *The history of anti-Semitism*, volume 3: from Voltaire to Wagner, translated by M. Kochan, Philadelphia, 2003, 65; A. Julius, *Trials of the diaspora; a history of anti-Semitism in England*, Oxford, 2010, 389.

⁸ J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘Review of Hudson, *The English deists*’, in: *English Historical Review*, 126 (2011) 449-51 (449).

⁹ W. Hudson and others, ‘Introduction: Atheism and deism revived’, in: W. Hudson and others, eds., *Atheism and deism revalued: Heterodox religious identities in Britain, 1650-1800*, Farnham, 2014, 1-12 (4): ‘deism has long been trivialized and neglected’; Hudson, ‘Atheism and deism demythologized’, in: Hudson, *Atheism*, 13-23 (22) claims that ‘deism ... is a neglected field of research’; cf G. Gawlick, ‘Vorwort des Herausgebers’, in: G.V. Lechler, *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus*, reprint of the Tübingen 1841 edition, Hildesheim, 1965, v.

¹⁰ L. Stephen, *History of English thought in the eighteenth century*, Volume 1, London, 1876, 86.

Scriptures for every thing that seems a difficulty to you'.¹¹ In the eyes of the Bishop, deists did not believe that the Bible was a revelation of God Almighty. Likewise, the Anglican divine William Stephens complained of the growth of Deism and he defined Deism as 'a denial of all reveal'd religion'.¹²

Many pamphlets against Deism were published in those years.¹³ Some anti-deists saw the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza as the evil impetus behind all this. Thus, the Master of Wye Grammar School in Kent, Matthias Earbery, wrote *Deism examin'd and confuted. In an answer to a book intituled, Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (1697) in which he quotes a deist who 'threw away his Bible, and set up this Book in the room of it'.¹⁴ The impact of Spinoza's Bible criticism is a particular topic in relation to Deism.¹⁵

Joseph Smith, Chaplain to the Princess of Wales, tried to prove *The unreasonableness of deism* (1720), maintaining that Deism is 'the not believing such a thing as a revelation of the will of God'.¹⁶

Some tried to diminish its importance by stating that deists were hardly read. Thus, at the end of the 18th century, Edmund Burke remarked:

Who born within the last forty years has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world.¹⁷

¹¹ (E. Stillingfleet), *A letter to a deist, in answer to several objections against the truth and authority of the Scriptures*, London, 1677, 135.

¹² (W. Stephens), *An account of the growth of deism in England*, London, 1696, 4.

¹³ N. Taylor, *A preservative against deism shewing the great advantage of revelation above reason*, London, 1698; N.N., *The case of deism fully and fairly stated*, s.l., 1706; Th. Smith, *Two compendious discourses: ... Published in opposition to the growing atheism and deism of the age*, London, 1708; W. Brown, *Impiety and superstition expos'd: a poetical essay. With a discourse by way of preface, wherein is discovered the original of deism, libertinism and superstition. The three great enemies of religion*, Edinburgh, 1710; N.N., *The prodigious appearance of deism in this age*, London, 1710.

¹⁴ M. Earbery, *Deism examin'd and confuted*, London, 1697, 3; see on Earbery, L. Simonutti, 'Spinoza and the English thinkers. Criticism on prophecies and miracles: Blount, Gildon, Earbery', in: W. van Bunge and W. Klever, eds., *Disguised and overt Spinozism around 1700*, (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 69), Leiden, 1996, 196-211 (205-9); see also R.L. Colie, 'Spinoza and the early English deists', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959) 23-46; R.L. Colie, 'Spinoza in England, 1665-1730', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963) 183-219.

¹⁵ I shall return to this below in Chapter 3 § 8.

¹⁶ J. Smith, *The unreasonableness of deism*, London, 1720, 226; other works had likewise titles as W. Lorimer, *Two discourses against deism*, 2nd edition, London, 1721; J. Henley, *Deism defeated, and Christianity defended*, London, 1731; G. Adams, *The deist confuted. Wherein his principal objections against revealed religion, especially against Christianity are briefly stated and answered*, London, 1734; (E. Smith), *The cure of deism*, 2 volumes, London, 1736.

¹⁷ E. Burke, *Reflections on the revolution in France*, 5th edition, London, 1790, 133.

Now Burke may have had his own reasons for his sarcasm, but as far as Morgan is concerned, he was right: by 1800 Morgan had practically been forgotten. The anecdotist William Seward, for example, called him in one of his ‘Drossianas’ in *The European Magazine, and London Review* in 1790 the author of a now-forgotten performance against religion.¹⁸ Only the London booksellers were still familiar with his name.¹⁹

In the 20th century there are still many orthodox Christian theologians who have quite a negative view of Deism. Deism placed reason on the throne above either Church or Bible, it was said with some disdain in 1934 by the Calvinist, John Orr.²⁰ In the 1970s the future Roman Catholic Cardinal Avery Dulles called Deism the first full-fledged attack on the traditional Judaeo-Christian notion of revelation.²¹ In a similar vein, by the end of the 20th century, Deism was still seen by an evangelical author as the foremost threat to Christianity.²² In short, in the opinion of anti-deists the major lamentable issues of Deism were the denial of revelation and the criticism of Scripture. This denial of revelation implies the criticism of miracles and priestcraft and the existence of natural religion, as we will see later. This brief sketch shows the relevance of Deism, at least in the eyes of its opponents.

*

§3: Deism as natural religion

*

In the Preface to his religious poem *Religio Laici*, the poet John Dryden called Deism ‘the principles of natural worship’. Natural religion is the other side of the coin of Deism, as something that is known about religion without the knowledge of revelation. Deism is ‘the sufficiency of natural religion and the superfluosity of revealed religion’.²³

In the poem, Dryden gives in a neutral way the opinion of the deist:

The deist thinks, he stands on firmer ground;
cries *eureka*: the mighty secret’s found:
God is that spring of good: supreme, and best;
we, made to serve, and in that service blest.

And further on:

But stay, the deist here will urge anew,
no supernatural worship can be true:
because a general law is that alone,
which must to all, and every where be known.²⁴

¹⁸ (W. Seward), ‘Drossiana viii’, *The European Magazine: and London Review*, 17 (1790) 329-33 (332).

¹⁹ See Appendices §§ 2-3.

²⁰ J. Orr, *English deism: its roots and its fruits*, Grand Rapids, 1934, 23.

²¹ A. Dulles, *Revelation theology: a history*, London, 1970, 52.

²² D.N. Daily, *Enlightenment deism: the foremost threat to Christianity and the role it has played in American Protestantism*, Pittsburgh, 1999.

²³ P. Byrne, *Natural religion and the nature of religion: the legacy of deism*, London/New York, 1989, xiii.

²⁴ J. Dryden, *Religio Laici or a laymans faith, a poem*, London, (1682), preface, 3, 11; see on the origin of *Religio Laici* M.B. Prince, ‘*Religio Laici* v. *Religio Laici*: Dryden, Blount, and the origin of English deism’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 74 (2013) 29-66.

In the 18th century, many books were published about the religion of nature. Well known is William Wollaston's *Religion of nature delineated* (1722).²⁵ In it, he refers to the definition of the religion of nature as 'the pursuit of happiness by the practice of reason and truth'.²⁶ Viscount David Shute Barrington wrote about the several dispensations of God to mankind with the subtitle *A short system of the religion of nature and scripture* (1728). Most famous is the publication by Matthew Tindal: *Christianity as old as the creation: or, the gospel, a republication of the religion of nature* (1730). Tindal received many contemporary criticisms on this book.²⁷

Some antagonists of Deism tried to explain it in another way. Francis Gastrell, the future Bishop of Chester, mentions as the first and main principle of Deism a pure ethical device: 'Follow nature; and do no man any wrong'.²⁸ Gastrell's view seems to anticipate that of the well-known German student of Deism, Günther Gawlick, who views the history of English Deism to some extent as 'the history of successive efforts to settle the mutual relation between ethics and revealed religion'.²⁹ Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity at the University of Saint Andrews, took a more historical stand. He recalled that 'the first sect of Deists ... did satisfy themselves with the rejection of all supernatural revelation. The learn'd Lord Herbert was the first who did cultivate this notion, and lick'd Deism'. He called Herbert 'the great patron of Deism', which in later literature has led to the term 'Father of Deism'.³⁰ But natural religion was not only insufficient, according to Halyburton; it became dangerous in the eyes of others. The poet and painter William Blake offers a typical instance for the identification of Deism and natural religion in the beginning of the 19th century, when he states in his *Jerusalem*: 'All the destruction therefore, in Christian Europe has arisen from Deism, which is Natural Religion'.³¹ Blake fought against Deism all his life.³²

²⁵ Quoted by Th. Morgan in his *Physico-Theology: or, a philosophic-moral disquisition concerning human nature, free agency, moral government and divine providence*, London, 1741, 224. In the 18th century eight editions and many reprints of Wollaston's book appeared. See on Wollaston D. Lucci, 'William Wollaston's Religion of nature', in: Hudson, *Atheism*, 119-138.

²⁶ (W. Wollaston), *The religion of nature delineated*, s.l., 1722, 37. For similar ideas of Morgan see Chapter 3 § 7 and Chapter 6 § 5 below.

²⁷ St. Lalor, *Matthew Tindal, freethinker. An eighteenth-century assault on religion*, London, 2006.

²⁸ Fr. Gastrell, *The principles of deism truly represented and set in a clear light*, London, 1708, 67; it was a very popular tract, which reached the 5th edition in 1729.

²⁹ G. Gawlick, 'Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac viewed by the English deists', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth century*, 56 (1967) 577-600 (577); see also Gawlick, 'Vorwort des Herausgebers', in: Lechler, *Geschichte*, xxi; the same author described Deism later as 'Grundzug der Religionsphilosophie der Aufklärung', see G. Gawlick, 'Der Deismus als Grundzug der Religionsphilosophie der Aufklärung', in: W. Walter and others, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694- 1768), ein 'bekannter Unbekannter' der Aufklärung in Hamburg* (Veröffentlichungen der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften), Göttingen, 1973, 15-43.

³⁰ Th. Halyburton, *Natural religion insufficient; and reveal'd necessary to man's happiness in his present state*, Edinburgh, 1714, 219, title page.

³¹ W. Blake, *Jerusalem: the emanation of the giant Albion*, ed. by M.D. Paley, Princeton, 1998, 213.

³² S.F. Damon, *The Blake dictionary: the ideas and symbols of William Blake*, Hanover, 2013, 111.

*

§4: Did an English deist movement exist?

*

Turning to the question of whether the English deists constituted a movement, one might point to the observation of church historian Norman Sykes, who has spoken of Deism as a complex and amorphous movement.³³ Whereas in the older historiography reference was made of the deist movement,³⁴ according to a modern historian Deism was not in fact an organized ideological movement.³⁵ It was not even a organized group. Perhaps to a certain extent for safety reasons, its representatives did for the most part not call themselves deists. The nineteenth-century church historian John Henry Overton stated that it is extremely difficult to assert or deny anything respecting the deists as a body, 'for as a matter of fact they had no corporate existence. They formed no sect ... they were genuinely "freethinkers" '. According to him, we look in vain for any common doctrine, and there is little or nothing in common between the heterogeneous body of writers who passed under the vague name of deists.³⁶ Questions about whether this Deism can be regarded as a movement have augmented in modern times.³⁷

Most critical of all is the historian S.J. Barnett, who claims that the scare surrounding Deism was a great propaganda coup, the results of which can be felt till today. He maintains: 'Beyond the virtual reality of history books, the deist movement never existed'. According to Barnett, to make a list of deists is problematic in numerical terms, and also with respect to their set of beliefs. There was only a tiny group of European intellectuals who advocated deistic or similar ideas.³⁸ Barnett's views have been criticized without much comment by Wayne Hudson, one of the current prominent scholars of Deism, as an underestimation of the significance of Deism in England.³⁹ But even according to Hudson there is not much proof for that which is normally called the English deist movement. He has justly remarked that 'it is not certain that the writers dubbed "the English deists" regarded themselves as deists'. Only Thomas Morgan and Peter Annet claimed to be deists. According to Hudson the term English

³³ N. Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker. Aspects of English church history 1660-1768*, Cambridge, 1959, 169.

³⁴ J.M. Attenborough, 'The deists and the deistic movement of the eighteenth century', *Westminster Review* 156 (1901) 620-41; E. Royston Pike, *Slayers of superstition: a popular account of some of the leading personalities of the deist movement*, New York and London, 1931.

³⁵ R.M. Burns, *The great debate on miracles from Joseph Glanvill to David Hume*, Lewisburg, PA, 1981, 13.

³⁶ J.H. Overton, 'The Deists', in: Ch.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, *The English church in the eighteenth century*, new edition revised and abridged, London, 1887, 75-112 (76-77).

³⁷ Gawlick, 'Der Deismus' (18): 'Die Deisten waren ... in der Regel auch voneinander isoliert; es gibt keine deistische "Schule" im Sinne einer kontinuierlichen Überlieferung und Weiterbildung deistischer Gedanken'; Byrne, *Natural religion*, 146: 'If any thing unites the thinkers now called 'deists', it is there readiness to question aspects of traditional revealed religion'; D.A. Pailin, 'Deism', in: P.A.B. Clarke and A. Linzey, eds., *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, London, 1996, 222-226 (224): it is a mistake ... that the deists formed a clearly identifiable group'; W. Hudson, *The English deists: studies in early Enlightenment*, (The Enlightenment World 7), London, 2008, 19: 'These writers were not united by a single philosophy, Spinozist or otherwise'.

³⁸ S.J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and religion: the myths of modernity*, Manchester, 2003, 12, 13, 19, 20.

³⁹ W. Hudson, *Enlightenment and modernity: the English deists and reform*, (The Enlightenment World 13), London, 2009, 172 note 2.

deists is used as ‘a label for constellationally related writers whose historical significance depends on contextually related publications’.⁴⁰ It is not so clear what he means by constellationally related writers or contextually related publications. The so-called English deists did not belong to the same constellation, nor did their publications emerge in the same context. They did not belong to the same religious family, nor were they members of the same social-economic group. Most of them were not in contact with each other.

Hudson states correctly that ‘the notion that there was something called “English deism” ... needs also to be called in question’.⁴¹ In accordance with Hudson’s view, I do not believe that there was something like an organized deist movement.⁴² In general, it can be said that they are lumped together by their opponents. Of course, there were persons with deist convictions. Most of them were critical of divine revelation.

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§5: The study and definition of English Deism

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Wayne Hudson has noted that ‘the history of deism has been misunderstood insofar as historians have projected generic conceptions of deism onto the deists’.⁴³ Whereas the term ‘English deists’ was used in the 18th century, it seems that the term ‘English Deism’ was, as far as I know, only used for the first time in the early 19th century by the Reverend A. Holmes in a Letter to the Editor of *The General Repository and Review*, the Unitarian preacher Andrews Norton, dated May 27th 1813.⁴⁴ In nineteenth-century Germany the orthodox theologian August Tholuck was one of the first to speak of ‘English Deism’. With the appearance of the *Geschichte des englischen Deismus* (1841) by Gotthard Victor Lechler English Deism grew into an established concept. Lechler defined Deism as the raising of natural religion as norm for all positive religions.⁴⁵ He discussed all the known deists from Leland’s list.

The modern study of English Deism started with Lechler. In the 20th century many publications about Deism followed. It became fashionable to look on Deism as something that belonged to modernity, for example, as the beginning of modernity in English theology.⁴⁶ The deists were, in the view of Hudson, catalysts of Enlightenment.⁴⁷ It also became increasingly

⁴⁰ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 1.

⁴¹ Hudson, *The English deists*, 3.

⁴² Cf also G.C.B. Roberts, *Historical arguments in the writings of the English deists*, thesis Oxford University, 2014, 3: ‘there was never an organized deist movement’.

⁴³ Hudson, ‘Atheism and deism demythologized’, in: Hudson, *Atheism*, 13-23 (21).

⁴⁴ A. Holmes, ‘Reply’, *The General Repository and Review*, 3 (1813) 312-15 (313).

⁴⁵ A. Tholuck, ‘Abriss einer Geschichte der Umwälzung, welche seit 1750 auf dem Gebiete der Theologie in Deutschland stattgefunden’, in: *Vermischte Schriften grösstentheils apologetischen Inhalts*, volume 2, Hamburg, 1839, 1-147 (24); Lechler, *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus*, 460: ‘eine auf den Grund freier Prüfung durch das Denken gestützte Erhebung der natürlichen Religion zur Norm und Regel aller positiven Religion’.

⁴⁶ F.R. Tennant, *Miracle & its philosophical presuppositions*, Cambridge, 1925, 96; cf R.S. Franks, *The work of Christ. A historical study of Christian doctrine*, London, 1962, 475: ‘Modern theology begins with the deist movement in England’.

⁴⁷ Hudson, *The English deists*, 25-6: ‘Catalysts of Enlightenment’.

problematic to define Deism.⁴⁸ Roland Stromberg, in his well-known study on eighteenth-century religious liberalism, devoted a whole chapter to the definition of Deism, formulating it cautiously in the following manner: ‘We do by usage classify as deists a group who thought, at least, that they occupied ground between traditional Christianity and atheism. They believed in some august First Cause, and in some sort of natural religion without a special act of revelation’.⁴⁹ In general, like the ancient opponents of Deism, modern literature has regarded Deism as a denial of revelation.

David Pailin made some sharp observations about the use and abuse of the term ‘deist’. The notion of ‘Deism’ is unclear and has been used to refer to a wide range of positions. ‘When people describe others as “ deists ”, they are not in practice conveying much more than that they judge the latter to be deficient in unspecified beliefs which the former consider to be essential to authentic religious faith’.⁵⁰ It is interesting to see how our friend Morgan was of the same opinion: ‘Our Christian divines ... cry out and complain of the growth of deism, by which they mean nothing else but opinions contrary to their own’.⁵¹

Paul Hazard resolved the problem in another way by accepting various Deisms: ‘it is clear that there was not one deism, but several, all different, all mutually opposed, and even at daggers drawn with one another’.⁵² Another scholar has argued that ‘Deism is a term which in the early eighteenth century was used with only a loose connotation, rather as is the epithet “radical” today. It could cover almost any derivation from the orthodoxy’.⁵³ So we are back again to the observation made more than fifty years ago: ‘What deism really is still needs to be discussed in depth’.⁵⁴ Deism requires more study. This thesis wants to be a contribution to this. In spite of all the difficulties around the concept of Deism I will in this thesis use the term for the sake of convenience.

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§6: Who were the English deists?

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⁴⁸ S.G. Hefelbower, ‘Deism historically defined’, *American Journal of Theology*, 24 (1922), 217-223 (217), stated that there is no accepted definition of deism; A.E. Baker, *Bishop Butler*, London, 1923, 2: ‘Deism is difficult to describe, impossible to define’; P. Harrison, *‘Religion’ and the religions in the English enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1990, 62: ‘This label is notoriously difficult to describe with any degree of precision’.

⁴⁹ R. Stromberg, *Religious liberalism in eighteenth century England*, London, 1954, 52-69: ‘chapter 5: the definition of deism’ (56).

⁵⁰ D.A. Pailin, ‘Should Herbert of Cherbury be regarded as a ‘deist’?’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 51 (2000) 113-149 (130-1).

⁵¹ (Th. Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, London, 1737, 177.

⁵² P. Hazard, *European thought in the eighteenth century*, translated from the original *La pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle*, by J.Lewis May, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1965, 417-59 (417); cf also the plural in the titles of W. Schröder, ed., *Gestalten des Deismus in Europa*, (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 135), Wiesbaden, 2013; and G. Artigas-Menant, and others, eds., *Déismes et déistes à l’âge classique*, (La Lettre Clandestine 21), Paris, 2013; Hudson, *The English deists*, *passim*, speaks also of ‘multiple deisms’.

⁵³ B.M.G. Reardon, *Kant as philosophical theologian*, London, 1988, 189 note 10.

⁵⁴ Fr. Venturi, ‘The European Enlightenment’, in: *Italy and the Enlightenment. Studies in a cosmopolitan culture*, ed. by St. Woolf and translated by S. Corsi, London, 1972, 1-32 (5).

It is also difficult to determine who was a deist. According to some well-known students of Deism, even the so-called Father of Deism, Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, should not be regarded as a deist.⁵⁵ At the time, his paternity was not acknowledged by most of those who have commonly been described as deists. He did not deny revelation.⁵⁶ In spite of the various views according to which there is no such thing as 'English Deism', there existed such things as 'canonical' lists of deists in the 18th century. As mentioned above, Thomas Morgan got himself a name as a deist and would earn a place in such renowned lists of deists as those of Philip Skelton and John Leland. The Irish divine Philip Skelton was the first to put a canon of deistical writers on the title page of his work *Deism revealed* (1751). He lists most of the 'usual suspects' including: Herbert of Cherbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Thomas Hobbes, John Toland, Matthew Tindal, Anthony Collins, Bernard Mandeville, Thomas Woolston, Henry Dodwell the younger, Thomas Morgan and Thomas Chubb. John Leland refined this list some years later by leaving Mandeville out, but by adding Charles Blount, David Hume, Henry Saint John, Lord Bolingbroke, and one anonymous author, whom we know to be Peter Annet.⁵⁷ In later times figures such as the moral philosopher William Wollaston and the Cambridge librarian Conyers Middleton were also considered deists.⁵⁸

There are earlier versions of these lists. With regard to Thomas Morgan it is interesting to note that he was assigned a position in a sort of deist genealogy. Thus, the Anglican John Chapman referred to 'the Blounts, Tindals, Shaftesburys, Woolstons &c' as Morgan's predecessors. He appeared, together with many others, as a member of 'the tribe of free-thinkers', which consisted of 'Toland, Tindal, Collins, Coward, Blount, Strutt, Chub, Dudgeon, Morgan, Tillard, and their fellows'.⁵⁹ One might adduce other instances which demonstrate that Morgan was viewed as belonging to a group of deists and freethinkers.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ D.A. Pailin, 'Herbert of Cherbury, a much-neglected and misunderstood thinker', in: C. Peden and L.E. Axel, eds., *God, values and empiricism: issues in philosophical theology*, Macon, 1989, 168-78; Pailin, 'Should Herbert of Cherbury be regarded as a 'deist'?', cf Harrison, *'Religion' and the religions*, 62: 'The problem of Herbert's relation to the deists'; Pailin, 'Deism', 224; Hudson, *The English deists*, 41: 'His relation to deism is contested and complex'.

⁵⁶ Pailin, 'Herbert of Cherbury', 176.

⁵⁷ Ph. Skelton, *Deism revealed, or, the attack on Christianity candidly reviewed in its real merits*, 2nd edition, 2 volumes, London, 1751, title page; Leland, *A view*; cf Hudson, *The English deists*, chapter 1: 'Who were the English deists?'.

⁵⁸ A. Altmann, 'William Wollaston, (1659-1724), English deist and rabbinical scholar', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 16 (1952) 185-211; J. van den Berg, 'Should Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), principal librarian of Cambridge, be regarded as a deist?', *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009) 255-57.

⁵⁹ J. Chapman, *Eusebius, or the true Christian's defense against a late book entitul'd The Moral Philosopher*, Cambridge, 1739, 70; W. Warburton, *A critical and philosophical commentary on Mr. Pope's Essay on man*, London, 1742, xix; in a book ascribed to the satirist Jonathan Swift one finds Morgan among the wicked authors of the present age: 'The trumpery lately written by Tindal, Toland, Morgan', *A modest address to the wicked authors of the present age*, reprint, London, 1745, 15; see H. Teerink and A.H. Scouten, *A bibliography of the writings of Jonathan Swift*, 2nd edition, Philadelphia, 1963, 266 nr.78.

⁶⁰ The famous novelist and actress Eliza Haywood née Fowler noted that 'Toland, Woolaston (sic!), the Moral Philosopher, and a great number of other modern writers have, with impunity, contemned and made a jest of all the mysteries, by which either Jews or Christians hope salvation', (E. Haywood née Fowler), *The parrot*, London, 1746, nr.8; also the moralist and poet John Brown, a friend of Warburton, made such a list in his very

Since Collins' *Discourse of free-thinking* (1713) the terms deist and free-thinker are used side by side.

The various lists which circulated at the time contributed to the idea of the existence of the movement of English Deism. Grouping them together was the first step to construct the danger of English Deism. As to those figuring on these lists as deists, it must be said that not all of them were pleased to see themselves thus mentioned. At least one of those listed by Leland, David Hume, vehemently denied being a deist. Hume once said in a discussion with a lady who referred to him as a deist: 'I am no deist. I do not style myself so, neither do I desire to be known by the appellation'.⁶¹ Thomas Chubb denied in 1739-40 that he was a deist.⁶² John Toland also denied that he was a deist and Conyers Middleton reacted ironically to the accusation of being a deist.⁶³ Of course, one should not take such denials at face value. There were good reasons for trying to escape the label 'deist' since it might very well harm one's reputation.

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§7: Thomas Morgan as a 'Christian Deist'

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In the case of the central figure in these pages, Thomas Morgan, definitions of Deism become even more complicated because he styles himself a 'Christian Deist', a special label as we will see. He does so in the title of his most important publication *The moral philosopher, in a dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew*, anonymously published in London in February 1737. But not only in the title, also in the work itself does he call himself a Christian Deist.⁶⁴ What did he mean when he labelled himself in this manner? A contemporary critic of Morgan, the Jesuit John Constable, wrote cynically:

popular Estimate of the manners and principles of the times: 'These are your triumphs, o Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Tindal, Mandeville, Morgan, Hume!', J. Brown, *Estimate of the manners and principles of the times*, volume 2, London, 1757, 86; before this he combined some of them in a poem written in 1743, entitled 'Honour a poem', lines 174-5: 'Gordon's thin shallows, Tindal's muddy pages, And Morgan's gall, and Woolston's furious rage', in: R. Dodsley, ed., *A collection of poems by several hands*, 4th edition, volume 3, London, 1755, 293.

⁶¹ Reported by Lord James Charlemont and quoted by D. Coleman, ed., *Hume, Dialogues concerning natural religion and other writings*, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy), Cambridge, 2007, xxviii, note 30; see also Th.S. Yoder, *Hume on God: irony, deism and genuine theism*, London, 2008, 51-76: 'Hume and deism', (especially 76): 'it is a mistake to name Hume a deist'; cf F. Müller, *David Humes Stellung zum Deismus*, Dissertation Leipzig, 1906; J. O'Higgins, 'Hume and the deists: a contrast in religious approaches', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 22 (1971) 479-501; G. Gawlick, 'Hume and the deists: a reconsideration', in: G.P. Morice ed., *Hume bicentenary papers*, Austin, 1977, 128-38; J.C.A. Gaskin, 'Hume's attenuated deism', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 65-6 (1983) 160-73; and the confusion in D. O'Connor, *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Hume on religion*, London, 2001, 16: 'Hume is a deist, in one sense of the term, and at the same time an atheist, in one sense of that term'.

⁶² Th. Chubb, *The true gospel of Jesus Christ vindicated*, London, 1739, 73; Th. Chubb, *An enquiry into the ground and foundation of religion*, London, 1740, 119.

⁶³ Hudson, *The English deists*, 3; van den Berg, 'Should Conyers Middleton ... be regarded as a deist?'; the same about Wollaston, see Ch. Chapin, 'Was William Wollaston (1660-1724) a deist?', *American Notes and Queries*, 7 (1994) 72-6.

⁶⁴ (Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, 165, 392.

‘A Christian Deist is indeed neither Christian nor Deist’.⁶⁵ For Constable Christianity was the true religion, while Deism denied the Christian revelation and its absoluteness. As far as Morgan is concerned, he belonged to those persons who more or less denied revelation in Scripture.

In his *Moral philosopher* Morgan never refers to others as deists.⁶⁶ There is only one clear reference to the battle around Collins’s *Scheme of literal prophecy considered* (1727), when he – without mentioning Collins – refers to ‘the learned men among us, who of late years have attempted to defend the literal accomplishment of the prophecies, (who) have been so manifestly baffled and confound’.⁶⁷ Only once, late in his life, did Morgan speak ironically and mockingly in the name of ‘a society of gentlemen’: ‘We the Deists and Free-thinkers of *Great-Britain*’.⁶⁸ Even Warburton attributed the authorship to Morgan, calling him ‘the forwardest Devil in the crew’.⁶⁹ Warburton may have referred to ‘the tribe of freethinkers’, but the crew consisted of one man only, as was confirmed by the printer Thomas Cox who promoted this book as Morgan’s in the *London Magazine* for May 1741.

Morgan is a fine example of how a man, educated in the tradition of English dissenting Christianity, turns away from his traditional faith, looking for the truth, criticizing the Biblical message, and finding himself in the position of a deist, even styling himself a Christian Deist. His rebellion against authority brings him from a traditional credo to a rational view of the Christian message. His theological position is radical, but not so radical as some students of the radical Enlightenment would like to have it. An earlier student of Deism did go so far as to characterize Morgan as a conservative and a moderate deist.⁷⁰

Morgan has very rarely been seen as a radical deist.⁷¹ Jonathan Israel has defined the radical Enlightenment as ‘all deistic, naturalistic, and atheistic systems that exclude divine providence, revelation, and miracles including reward and punishment in the hereafter’. Following this definition, Morgan is only partially an adept of the radical Enlightenment. Indeed, Israel calls Morgan a providential deist and an advocate of divine providence.⁷²

⁶⁵ (J. Constable), *Deism and Christianity fairly consider’d ... to which is added ... two letters to a friend upon a book intitled The Moral Philosopher*, London, 1739, 242. In a totally different context the American jurist at Harvard Law School Alan Morton Dershowitz noted that ‘Christian deist’ is an oxymoron, a figure of speech that combines contradictory terms, see A.M. Dershowitz, *Blasphemy: how the religious right is hijacking our Declaration of Independence*, Hoboken, 2007, 81.

⁶⁶ See Appendix § 5.

⁶⁷ (Th. Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, volume 2, second part, London, 1739, 33; see J. O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins the man and his work*, (Archives Internationales d’Histoire des Idées 35), The Hague, 1970, 155-90: ‘the attack on the prophecies’.

⁶⁸ (A Society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination of the Rev. Mr Warburton’s Divine Legation of Moses*, London, 1742, 1.

⁶⁹ J. Nichols, *Literary anecdotes of the eighteenth century*, volume 2, London, 1812, 152 note.

⁷⁰ W.M. Merrill, *From statesman to philosopher, a study in Bolingbroke’s deism*, New York, 1949, 24, 119, 192.

⁷¹ Morgan has been called ‘a radical deist’ by A. Altmann in his commentary on Moses Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*, Lebanon, NH, 1983, 202-4.

⁷² J.I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, 2001, 13; ‘Providential deist’ is a term which Israel uses to indicate such different figures as Boulainvilliers, Challe, Lessing, Gottsched, Morgan, Reimarus, Turgot and Voltaire; see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, passim; J.I.

Sometime he is called a Christian rationalist.⁷³ How complex this all is for a just characterization of Thomas Morgan we can see in an attempt by Hudson to describe him as ‘a Presbyterian rationalist and Newtonian physico-theologian with a genuine concern for the inner spiritual life’ and as ‘a complex and many-sided figure who had to earn his living in a world where very few agreed with his theological views’.⁷⁴

The fact that Morgan calls himself a *Christian* Deist makes him all the more interesting as the topic of this study. In what follows it is my intention to explore the meaning of this term in the context of the intellectual development of this highly interesting person. It seems appropriate to look into Morgan’s life and work more seriously. A major question will be: what did Morgan mean with the term ‘Christian Deism’? How did this term relate to his views on the Old Testament? To what extent can he be said to be original in his religious views? More generally, what was his vision of Christianity? The analysis of these and other issues should help us to answer the question of how Morgan is to be positioned among English deists. In a wider sense, this study of the ‘Christian Deist’ Morgan hopes to contribute to the complex relation between religion and Enlightenment. All this will be placed in the context of his life, which has never been dealt with in a separate monograph.

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§8: The structure of the thesis

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The first chapter will provide the reader with the description of the life of Thomas Morgan in the historical context of early eighteenth-century England. Then we will discuss his theological and medical writings prior to the publication of his main work, *The moral philosopher* (chapter 2). Chapter 3 deals extensively with *The moral philosopher*. The next two chapters are devoted to contemporary reactions to *The moral philosopher* as well as to Morgan’s answers to his critics.

Chapter 6 is devoted to Morgan’s *Physico-Theology*. In Chapter 7 we study the reactions following Morgan’s death, at home and abroad, whereas Chapter 8 is dedicated to Morgan as harbinger of the disparagement of the Old Testament in modern theology. The thesis ends with conclusions, followed by five appendices, a bibliography and two indexes.

Israel, *Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity and the emancipation of man 1650-1752*, Oxford, 2006, 960; J.I. Israel, ‘Bayle’s dual image during the Enlightenment’, in: W. van Bunge and H. Bots, eds., *Pierre Bayle (1647-1706): the Philosophe of Rotterdam: philosophy, religion and reception*, (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 167) Leiden, 2008, 135-152 (143); J.I. Israel, *A revolution of the mind, radical Enlightenment and the intellectual origins of modern democracy*, Princeton, 2010, 7, 113; J.I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: philosophy, revolution and human rights, 1750-1790*, Oxford, 2011, 712; as far as I see Israel in this last book only once called someone – Jean Levesque de Burigny – ‘a radical deist’, 1049.

⁷³ C.Fr. Stäudlin, *Geschichte des Rationalismus und Supernaturalismus*, Göttingen, 1826, 25.

⁷⁴ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 74.

Chapter One: Life of Thomas Morgan

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§1: Introduction

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Half a century ago, in 1967, Peter Gay expressed the wish for reliable biographies of the leading deists.¹ Since then, a lot of studies have appeared about English Deism and its coryphées, such as Blount and Bolingbroke, Toland and Tindal, Collins and Chubb, but nothing up till the present day has been written about Thomas Morgan. Among the English deists, he is the least known and the least studied.² One might say, of course, that Morgan did not belong to the leading or prominent deists.³ Sometimes Morgan is not discussed, because no substance can be found in him.⁴ He is sometimes negatively represented as ‘a somewhat disreputable figure among the Deists, despite his self-proclaimed medical credentials’.⁵ This chapter relies first of all on the chronological and topological indications in his extant works and in the reactions to these works. We have almost no existing archival documents about Thomas Morgan which makes it hard to compose a full-blown biography.⁶ In the second place it relies on the comments of contemporaries such as the prolific writer and scientist William Whiston, the Scottish historian Robert Wodrow, and many other published eighteenth-century sources. Thirdly, it is based on publications by his relatives and local historians, mostly from the 19th century.

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§2: Youth in Somerset

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Thomas Morgan was raised and educated in Bridgwater in the county of Somerset. The dissenting minister, historian, and prolific writer Joshua Toulmin noted in 1794 that ‘Thomas Morgan was in early life a poor lad in a farmer’s house near Bridgewater, in the county of

¹ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 550.

² J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘The disputed root of salvation in eighteenth-century English deism: Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan debate the impact of the fall’, *Intellectual History Review*, 19 (2009) 29-43 (31): ‘Of all the English deists, Morgan is the least known’; cf J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘A sheep in the midst of wolves: reassessing Newton and the English deists’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 25 (2009) 260-86 (278): ‘He (Morgan) is a figure in need of more study’; cf M. Jackson-McCabe, ‘“Jewish Christianity” and “Christian Deism” in Thomas Morgan’s *The Moral Philosopher*’, in: F. Stanley Jones, ed., *The rediscovery of Jewish Christianity*, (Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Studies 5), Atlanta, 2012, 105-22 (105 note 2): ‘The literature on Morgan is unfortunately limited’.

³ Harrison, ‘*Religion*’ and the religions, 62; A. Plummer, *The Church of England in the eighteenth century*, London, 1910, 97.

⁴ M.A. Stewart, ‘Revealed religion: the British debate’, in: K. Haakonsson, ed., *The Cambridge history of eighteenth-century philosophy*, Volume two, Cambridge, 2006, 683-709 (707 note 24).

⁵ D.S. Katz, *God’s last words: reading the English Bible from the reformation to fundamentalism*, New Haven and London, 2004, 147.

⁶ On November 20th, 2017, Liz Grant, archivist of the Somerset Archives at the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton, wrote to me: ‘I have searched our catalogues and cannot find anything which relates directly to Thomas Morgan’.

Somerset'.⁷ Bridgewater is the older form for modern Bridgwater, which lies in the Sedgemoor district in the centre of Somerset. Somerset is a populous and agricultural part of the south-west of England. It still is a rural county with a strong agricultural industry. It has a long historical tradition within the realm of Britain. It has been called a county of contrasts and the cradle of English Christianity.⁸ Besides the City of Bath – the old Roman *Aquae Sulis* –, and the Cathedral City of Wells, there were market towns everywhere such as Bridgwater, Bruton, and Frome – places which play a role in the life of Thomas Morgan. The rural setting is visible in the many observations, which the agriculturalist John Billingsley made in the survey of this county in 1794, in the heyday of agricultural interest. This author is lyrical about the riches of Somerset: 'The richness of its pastures furnishes not only a sufficiency for its own consumption, but also a considerable surplus for other markets'. The book was very successful and was reprinted in 1798 with considerable additions and amendments in which the author also lamented the increase of the poor in the county.⁹ Morgan was a poor boy who knew the hardships of making a living as a farmer from the beginning of his life. We do not know whether he was an orphan, but we can imagine that his youth was difficult. Much has been written about the poor in eighteenth-century Britain: 'The poor were a familiar part of the British social landscape of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.¹⁰ Many people in the 18th century were unable to survive on their earnings. In the beginning of the 19th century the London Police Magistrate Patrick Colquhoun made calculations for the year 1806, which made clear that 12% of the inhabitants of Somerset and even 23% of the inhabitants of the neighbouring county of Wiltshire were to be considered as paupers.¹¹

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§3: Year and place of birth

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No certainty exists about the year and place of Thomas Morgan's birth. This has led to much speculation in modern times. In 1958, a German church historian noted 1680 as his year of birth, but without providing any evidence. Yet until today, we find this year of birth repeated, without any uncertainty in many German encyclopedias, as well as in a lot of other German Biblical and historical publications.¹² From Germany this date crossed borders and is found in British, French, and American literature as well.¹³

⁷ (J. Toulmin), 'Biography. The life of the Rev. Samuel Chandler', *The Protestant Dissenters Magazine*, 1 (1794) 217-23, 257-64, (258 note).

⁸ M. Searle, *Somerset*, reprint, Bristol 2002, 7.

⁹ J. Billingsley, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Somerset, with observations of the means of its improvement*, London, 1794, 7; 2nd edition, Bath, 1798, 35-8.

¹⁰ L.H. Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English poor laws and the people, 1700-1948*, Cambridge, 1998, 21.

¹¹ P. Colquhoun, *A treatise on indigence; exhibiting a general view of the national resources for productive labour*, London, 1806, 265-6.

¹² M. Schmidt, sub voce 'Deismus III: Englischer Deismus', in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edition, Volume 2, Tübingen, 1958, 59-69 (63); H. Hohlwein, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edition, Volume 4, Tübingen, 1960, 1135; M. Schmidt, sub voce 'Aufklärung II', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Volume 4, Berlin/New York, 1979, 597; Chr. Gestrich, sub voce 'Deismus', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Volume 8, Berlin/New York, 1981, 400; U. Krolzik, sub voce 'Deismus', in:

This German conviction about Morgan's year of birth contrasts with the Scottish sobriety of John Cairns, the Presbyterian divine and Principal of United Presbyterian Theological College, who simply stated that the year of birth is not ascertained.¹⁴ Consequently the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* sub voce Morgan does not mention a year of birth.¹⁵ As far as we know, there has never been any certainty whatsoever about Morgan's year of birth. The only certainty being that the year 1680 was not based on any factual evidence. Yet another author stipulated the year 1695.¹⁶

Recently, I found an eighteenth-century source with an indication of Morgan's age at the time of his death: 71 years of age. If this source, written by his friend the novelist Thomas Amory twelve years after Morgan's death, is reliable, then the year of his birth would seem to have been 1671 or 1672.¹⁷

Another question concerns his geographical origin. Most authors mention he originated from Wales.¹⁸ Others state that he was born in the neighbourhood of Bridgwater in Somerset.¹⁹ One

Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde, Volume 1, Wuppertal/Zürich, 1992, 409; H. Busche, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edition, Volume 7, Freiburg, 1998, 470; K.S. Walters, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th edition, Volume 5, Tübingen, 2002, 1501; Fr. Jaeger, ed., *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, Volume 16, Stuttgart/Weimar, 2012, 768; A.H. Gunneweg, *Vom Verstehen des Alten Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik*, 2nd edition, Göttingen, 1988, 127; Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, 63; B. Lang, *Die Bibel: eine kritische Einführung*, 2nd edition, Paderborn, 1994, 212; Ch. Voigt, *Der englische Deismus in Deutschland: eine Studie zur Rezeption englisch-deistischer Literatur in deutschen Zeitschriften und Kompendien des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 121), Tübingen, 2003, 10; H. Graf Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum (Deismus) und Apologetik', in: H. Holzhey, ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe: Die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Volume 1, Basel, 2004, 177-245 (208); H. Graf Reventlow, 'English deism and anti-deist apologetic', in: M. Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible Old Testament. The history of its interpretation*, Volume 2: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Göttingen, 2008, 851-874 (867); Chr. Bultmann, *Bibelrezeption in der Aufklärung*, Tübingen, 2012, 124 note 30; and many others.

¹³ V.J. Bourke, *History of ethics*, volume 1, New York, 1970, 210; R. Morgan and J. Barton, *Biblical interpretation*, (Oxford Bible Series), Oxford, 1988, 322; G.L. Bray, *Biblical interpretation past and present*, Leicester, 1996, 231; E. Feil, sub voce 'Déisme', in: M. Delon, ed., *Dictionnaire Européen des Lumières*, Paris, 1997, 314-6 (315); J.H. Hayes, 'Historical criticism of the Old Testament canon', in: Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible Old Testament*, 985-1005 (1003 note 76); B.K. Waltke and J.M. Houston, *The Psalms as Christian worship. A historical commentary*, Grand Rapids, 2010, 67; and many others.

¹⁴ J. Cairns, *Unbelief in the eighteenth century as contrasted with its earlier and later history*, (Cunningham lectures for 1880), Edinburgh, 1881, 71.

¹⁵ P. Harrison, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 39, Oxford, 2004, 148-9.

¹⁶ St.J. Vicchio, *Jefferson's religion*, Eugene, OR, 2007, 60.

¹⁷ (Th. Amory), *Memoirs of several ladies of Great Britain; Interspersed with literary reflections, and accounts of antiquities and curious things*, London, 1755, 519; see for the details J. van den Berg, 'A new suggestion for the year of birth of Thomas Morgan M.D. (d.1743)', *Notes and Queries*, 59 (2012) 180-2.

¹⁸ R. Williams, *A biographical dictionary of eminent Welshmen, from the earliest times to the present*, Llandovery, 1852, 342; B. Young, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: J.W. Yolton and others, eds., *The dictionary of eighteenth-century British philosophers*, Volume 2, Bristol, 1998, 641; and many others.

author marks him as Scottish.²⁰ Yet another author seems to know that he was born in France.²¹ Morgan family tradition pleads in favour of Wales.²² Certainty is not to be had; the oldest source refers to Bridgwater, which I think the most likely.²³

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§4: Education in Bridgwater in Somerset

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Joshua Toulmin tells us in his note about Thomas Morgan:

The pregnancy of his genius was conspicuous, and the Rev. John Moore, who kept an academy in that town for the education of youth intended for the ministry among the Dissenters, offered him tuition gratis, if friends could be found to discharge his board and other necessary expenses.²⁴

In 1695, Bridgwater was a town of about 2200 people. The times were difficult. Not long before, in 1685, terror had taken place in the county of Somerset. Four miles south east of Bridgwater in Westonzoyland - in the early morning of July 6th 1685 - the last battle on English soil was fought by the troops of the rebel James Scott, Duke of Monmouth and natural son of King Charles II, against the royal army of King James II. Many nonconformists fought in Monmouth's army. Afterwards, in the autumn of 1685, many rebels were executed, and this had a lasting moral effect on the region. A famous British historian described 'the general horror felt at the long rows of tarred and gibbeted Dissenters along the roadsides of Wessex'.²⁵ In these difficult times, the young Thomas Morgan grew up.

The dissenting academy of Bridgwater was founded by the Presbyterian minister John Moore, in 1688. From 1698, his son John Moore junior assisted him in the academy. It was for theological students only. The course took four years and it was open to Independents and Presbyterians. Four students received grants from the Presbyterian Fund in London. The pupils had to study philosophy, pursue preparatory studies and read a body of theological texts. In total some seventy-nine students at Bridgwater academy are known.²⁶

¹⁹ Chr. Schmitt, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas' in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Volume 6, Herzberg, 1993, 117; J.V. Price, 'Introduction', in: (Th.Morgan), *The Moral Philosopher*, reprint, London, 1995, v; Busche, *Lexikon*, 470; Walters, *Religion*, 1501.

²⁰ B. Lohff, 'Lebenskraft als Symbolbegriff', in: E. Rudolph and I.O. Stamatescu, eds., *Von der Philosophie zur Wissenschaft. Cassirers Dialog mit der Naturwissenschaft*, (Cassirer Forschungen 3), Hamburg, 1997, 208-219 (213 note 20).

²¹ G. Stein, *Freethought in the United Kingdom and the commonwealth*, Westport, CT/London, 1981, 10.

²² (S. Merriman under the pseudonym) Hilaranthropos, (Memoir of Dr. Thomas Morgan), *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832) 10-12 (10).

²³ (Toulmin), 'Biography', 258 note.

²⁴ (Toulmin), 'Biography', 258 note; Morgan never was an Anglican as mentioned by Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 472.

²⁵ G.M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, reissue, London, 1952, 467.

²⁶ H. McLachlan, 'Bridgewater academy 1688-1756?', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 8 (1943/1946) 93-97 (94-96); see the website of the *Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies*; this site has materials about in total more than 9750 students at dissenters' academies (retrieved 13.12.2017).

The contribution of these dissenting academies has been called the birth of modern education and a noteworthy milestone in the history of higher education in England. It has been said that the dissenting academies probably provided the best education available in England. Because the universities of Cambridge and Oxford became accessible only to members of the Established Church after 1662 some dissenting ministers sought an alternative for the education of new ministers. There were more than seventy such academies in England. Many ministers of Presbyterian and Independent churches met each other during their studies at these Non-conformist academies.²⁷

We do not know when Morgan entered this academy. The terminus post quem is the start of the academy in 1688, when he was tentatively about sixteen or seventeen years of age. But it could also have been later. Nor do we know when he left the academy. Probably he studied at Bridgwater academy in the nineties of the seventeenth century.²⁸

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§5: A Geneva connection?

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The name Thomas Morgan also appears in the registers of the University of Geneva on October 5th 1701. The editor of these registers interpreted this student Morgan as our subject.²⁹ But only the name appears without any other indication. Chronologically it is quite possible that Morgan studied in Geneva after his period in Bridgwater. But there is no further indication whatsoever that he went to Geneva. He himself gives no hint at all of a stay there. Knowing that the name of Morgan is very common in England and Wales, it makes little sense to identify the Geneva student Morgan with our subject on the basis of the name only. We need more detailed information, which for the moment is not available. But otherwise a gap exists in our knowledge about the life of Thomas Morgan in the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century. It is tempting to adopt the thesis of a Genevan intermezzo to fill this gap.

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§6: The dissenting community

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As Thomas Morgan was educated at a dissenting academy, it is important to look at the background of the dissenters. The dissenters were not dissenting from the doctrine of the Church of England. There were other points at stake. Richard Baxter, the most important theologian of the Non-conformists, stated it in 1660 in a request to the new king, Charles II:

²⁷ J.W. Ashley Smith, *The birth of modern education. The contribution of the dissenting academies 1660-1800*, London, 1954; N. Sykes, *The English religious tradition*, London, 1953, 57; G.R. Cragg, *The church and the age of reason 1648-1789*, (The Pelican History of the Church 4), reprint, Harmondsworth, 1970, 136; H. McLachlan, *English education under the test acts: being the history of the nonconformist academies 1662-1820*, Manchester, 1931; D. Coomer, *English dissent under the early Hanoverians*, London, 1946, 50.

²⁸ Nowadays, there is a dissenting academies project at the *Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies* in London with a publication forthcoming about the history of the dissenting academies in the British isles, 1660-1860, under the direction of Isabel Rivers. For the same project Mark Burden prepared *A biographical dictionary of tutors at the dissenters' private Academies, 1660-1720*, London, 2013; Registration records of Bridgwater academy do not exist (retrieved 13.12.2017).

²⁹ S. Stelling-Michaud, ed., *Le livre du recteur de l'académie de Genève (1559-1878)*, Volume 1, 'Le texte', Geneva, 1959, 261; Volume 4: 'Notices biographiques des étudiants H-M', Geneva, 1975, 592; the suggestion was already made by A. Chopard, 'Genève et les Anglais', *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève*, 7 (1939-40) 176-280 (195).

We humbly acquaint your majesty that we do not dissent from the doctrine of the Church of England expressed in the Articles and Homilies, but it is the controversial passages about government, liturgy and ceremonies, and some passages and phrases in the doctrinal part which is scrupled by those whose liberty is desired.³⁰

With the Act of Uniformity, promulgated in 1662, came an end to this unity. The Act of Uniformity of public prayers and administration of Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies: and for establishing the form of making, ordaining, and consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in the Church of England. This Act led to the great ejection of those who did not conform. It has been called the cataclysm. Nearly 2000 clergymen chose to leave the established church. That was probably one-fifth of the total clergy. It has been calculated that about 1760 incumbents were ejected from their livings and it has been characterized as the parting of the ways.³¹

The Test Act of 1673 made reception of Holy Communion in the Church of England a necessary qualification for Government posts and public office.³² It meant that many dissenters had to look for other ways of gaining prosperity in life. Many of them gained important places in commerce and trade. We may here recall Trevelyan's words: 'While religion divided, trade united the nation'.³³

With the coming of William III and Mary the Toleration Act was promulgated in 1689: An Act for exempting their Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws. 'Henceforward a man might be a citizen of England without being a member of the English Church'.³⁴ After the Toleration Act of 1689, of the thousand meeting-houses which sprang up at that time, over 500 were Presbyterian, about half that number Independents, and the remainder Baptists, Friends, and minor bodies. The meeting-house was the focus of Non-conformist life.³⁵ There they found not only a place of consolation for their souls, but also men and women in equal social situations, especially in the times of hardship, which were to come again in the reign of Queen Anne.

Under Queen Anne, life again worsened for the Non-conformists. During the Sacheverell riots in March 1710, several dissenting chapels in the capital were attacked, sacked and

³⁰ Quoted by Coomer, *English dissent*, 3.

³¹ See for a modern version of the text of the Act F.G. Healy, *Rooted in faith. Three centuries of nonconformity 1662-1962*, London, 1961, 125-144; A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: their rise, decline, and revival*, London, 1889, 389 note 1; J.H. Colligan, *Eighteenth century nonconformity*, London, 1915, 2; C.G. Bolam and J. Goring, 'Cataclysm', in: C.G. Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritanism to modern Unitarianism*, London, 1968, 73-92 (84); Sykes, *The English religious tradition*, 50-1; see also A.F.P. Sell, ed., *The great ejection of 1662: its antecedents, aftermath, and ecumenical significance*, Eugene, OR, 2012.

³² Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 92.

³³ G.M. Trevelyan, *English social history*, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1974, 310.

³⁴ H.F. Russell Smith, *The theory of religious liberty in the reign of Charles II and James II*, (Cambridge Historical Essays 21), Cambridge, 1911, 2.

³⁵ Drysdale, *History*, 531; Cragg, *The church*, 135.

demolished by crowds, shouting “High Church and Sacheverell”.³⁶ Henry Sacheverell advocated in his sermons the high church cause. In 1711, the Act against Occasional Conformity was stipulated: ‘All persons in places of profit and trust, and all the common-council men in corporations, who should be at any meeting for divine Worship in which the Common Prayer was not used ... should upon conviction forfeit their place of trust or profit’.³⁷ The Schism Act of 1714 decreed that no-one was allowed to keep school or to act as a tutor while not conforming to the Church of England.³⁸ Bridgwater was one of those academies where the lessons were suspended. Under King George I, both these acts were suspended and in 1718 repealed.

After the accession to the throne of George I of the House of Hanover dissenters again suffered from Jacobite mobs during the year 1715 in London and in the country. In the country at least thirty Non-conformist places of worship were attacked during June, July and August 1715.³⁹ As a result, the Riot Act was promulgated on August 1st 1715.

In the list of dissenting chapels made by John Evans in 1715-16, a total of 1107 dissenting chapels in England and 43 in Wales were calculated.⁴⁰ Of these, 247 were Baptists. Somerset had 55 dissenting chapels and Wiltshire 20. A modern computation stated that there were in the early eighteenth century some 338120 dissenters, that is 6,21% of the total population of England. Of which 179350 were Presbyterians and 59940 Independents.⁴¹

But things were not so simple. There were complaints about the decline of the dissenting community in the beginning of the 18th century. As early as 1712, the journalist Daniel Defoe considered the interest of the dissenters to have declined. In 1730, the young dissenter Strickland Gough published anonymously his pamphlet *An enquiry into the causes of the decay of the dissenting interest*, in which he argued that the Salters’ Hall Conference had damaged the dissenting interest. The decay can be seen in the numbers. A Presbyterian historian calculated that in 1772 the Presbyterian and Independent congregations numbered together only 702.⁴² But at that time the Methodist movement was already in full flight.

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§7: Independent preacher in Bruton in Somerset

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³⁶ J. Stevenson, *Popular disturbances in England 1700-1870*, London, 1979, 56; see on the riots G. Holmes, ‘The Sacheverell riots: the crowd and the church in early eighteenth-century London’, *Past and Present*, 72 (1976) 55-85.

³⁷ Quoted by Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 93.

³⁸ Healy, *Rooted in faith*, 93.

³⁹ Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 20.

⁴⁰ H.S. Skeats, *A History of the free churches of England from a.d. 1688 - a.d. 1851*, London, 1868, 280.

⁴¹ Quoted by A.P.F. Sell, ‘Introduction’, in: A.P.F. Sell, and others, *Protestant nonconformist texts: the eighteenth century*, Aldershot, 2006, 3; the figures also in C. Haydon, ‘Religious minorities in England’, in: H.T. Dickinson, ed., *A companion to eighteenth-century Britain*, Oxford, 2002, 241-51 (242 table 1).

⁴² C.S. Carter, *The English church in the eighteenth century*, London, 1910, 117; (D. Defoe), *Wise as serpents: being an enquiry into the present circumstances of the dissenters*, London, 1712, 17; J. Goring, ‘The break-up of the old dissent’, in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 175-218 (175); see for the Salters’ Hall Conference Chapter 2 § 2 below; Drysdale, *History*, 532.

In 1715, we find Morgan acting as an Independent preacher at Bruton in Somerset. For how long we do not know.⁴³ Bruton is located in the south-eastern part of Somerset twelve miles south west of Frome. It was a small market town with a long tradition. The population reached the number of 1631 persons in the year 1801.⁴⁴ The only source for Morgan's stay in Bruton is the list of Presbyterian and Independent chapels made by the Presbyterian minister and historian Dr. John Evans.⁴⁵ Many authors erroneously write 'Burton' in stead of Bruton, and one of Morgan's biographers even called it 'Boston'.⁴⁶

From Bruton, Morgan sought ordination as a minister in Presbyterian surroundings. By this means he looked for promotion in his position. The former librarian of the Dr. Williams Library in London provides a succinct description of the usual practice for a man intending to enter the ministry at that time: he was first to be licensed to preach; thereafter he was expected to proceed to ordination in due course or to take up full responsibility for a pastorate.⁴⁷

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§8: Differences between Presbyterians and Independents

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"Presbyterian" has meant many things in the English religious tradition. It has been described by the Presbyterian historian Alexander Hutton Drysdale as follows: if Puritanism was the feeling of which Protestantism was the argument, we may add that Presbyterianism was its organized expression. It is the system of church government by elders, or presbyters, in which the parity of the preaching pastors is taken for granted, and the church government in the hands of a council of elders, and an organic union of different churches by a synod.

In general, it can be said that Presbyterians were more conservative in their politics, and more moderate in their theology than the Independents.⁴⁸ There was a difference in the view of the ministerial status: 'With Independency, a minister pre-supposes a local church first; whereas

⁴³ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 74-5, seems to know that he started in 1715 in Bruton; McLachlan, 'Bridgewater', 95 stipulates 1716.

⁴⁴ *British History Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

⁴⁵ Th.S. James, *The history of the litigation and legislation respecting Presbyterian chapels and charities in England and Ireland between 1816 and 1849*, London, 1867, 643-696: 'List of the Presbyterian and Independent chapels ... with the name of the ministers ... between the years 1717 and 1729, prepared by Dr. John Evans', (693); A. Gordon, sub voce 'Bowden, John', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 6, London, 1886, 40.

⁴⁶ L. Stephen, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 39, London, 1894, 35-6 (36), J.H. Colligan, *The Arian movement in England*, Manchester, 1913, 137; McLachlan, 'Bridgewater', 95; Hohlwein, *Religion*, 1135; E.C. Mossner, sub voce 'Morgan', in: *The encyclopedia of philosophy*, Volume 5, New York, 1967, 394-5 (394); P. Vernière, *Lumières ou clair-obscur*, Paris, 1987, 150; J.M. Vienne, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*, Volume 3/1: *Les oeuvres philosophiques: philosophie occidentale*, Paris, 1992, 1359; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 117; Price, 'Introduction', vi; Busche, *Lexikon*, 470; A.G. Debus, *Chemistry and medical debate van Helmont to Boerhaave*, Canton, 2001, 178; A.P.F. Sell, '"The gospel its own witness". Deism, Thomas Paine and Andrew Fuller', in: R. Glenn Wooden and others, eds., *You will be my witness: a festschrift in honor of the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites*, Macon, GA, 2003, 188-229 (203); Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208.

⁴⁷ R. Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 113-174 (152 note 1).

⁴⁸ Coomer, *Dissent*, 8; Drysdale, *History*, 5-7; Colligan, *Nonconformity*, 8.

in Presbyterianism, the ministry is pre-supposed prior to a church'.⁴⁹ There was also a difference in church membership and its organization. The Independents placed all power and control in the church meeting, while the Presbyterian congregation did not hold such a thing as a church meeting, but concentrated all authority in the presbytery.⁵⁰ Finally there was a difference in spiritual ambience:

A casual attender at worship in an Independent meeting-house would probably notice little difference between Independents and Presbyterians, but he could not be long associated with the former without finding that he was in a different atmosphere. For this was a "gathered church". The congregation was not assembled because they were members of a community ... but because they were individuals convincedly Christian and the subjects of a definite religious experience.⁵¹

Morgan's transition from an Independent community to Presbyterianism is an indication of his religious development towards a more moderate view of the Christian message.

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§9: Presbyterian ordination in Frome in Somerset

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On Thursday September 6th 1716 Morgan was ordained in nearby Frome in the eastern part of Somerset by the Presbyterian minister John Bowden.⁵² Frome, thirteen miles south of Bath, was in the early 18th century an important centre of the wool trade with a population of about ten thousand people. The published edition of the proceedings of Morgan's ordination is the first fully documented and dated source of his public life. It all happened in Rook Lane Chapel in Frome, built by James Pope in 1707, and now beautifully restored.⁵³ John Bowden was for a long time active in Frome, had many hearers, and was according to a memorial tablet - restored in 1862 - 'a learned and serious man, an eloquent preacher, and a considerable poet'.⁵⁴ The preacher on the occasion, Nicholas Billingsley, was a Presbyterian

⁴⁹ Drysdale, *History*, 449; the same opinion one finds in the general literature about the dissenters: Coomer, *Dissent*, 10; R. Thomas, 'Parties in Nonconformity', in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 93-112 (94); M.R. Watts, *The dissenters from the reformation to the French revolution*, reprint, Oxford, 2002, 317.

⁵⁰ Drysdale, *History*, 527 note 2.

⁵¹ Coomer, *Dissent*, 16.

⁵² *A sermon preach'd at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Morgan, at Frome, in the County of Somerset, on Thursday, Sept. 6th, 1716. By Nicholas Billingsley. With Mr. Morgan's confession of faith; the questions and his answers on that occasion; and the exhortation to him at the close. By the Reverend Mr. John Bowden. Publish'd at the request of the ministers present at the assembly. With a preface by the Reverend Mr. Henry Chandler*, London, printed for John Clark, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside, 1717. (Merriman), (Memoir), 10, Williams, *A biographical dictionary*, 342, Price, 'Introduction', vi, viii, and Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" ', 106, mistakenly note 1717 as the year of ordination.

⁵³ According to Chr. Stell, 'Rook Lane Chapel, Frome', *The Chapels Society Newsletter*, no.9, December 1993, 114-5, Rook Lane Chapel 'long stood a shabby and disgracefully vandalized monument'; Photographs of Rook Lane Chapel before the restoration in D. Davie, *A gathered church. The literature of the English dissenting interest, 1700-1930*, (The Clark lectures 1976), London and Henley, 1978, illustrations 4a and 6; photographs after the restoration on the website of *English Heritage*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

⁵⁴ Davie, *A gathered church*, illustration 1.

minister at Ashwick in the Eastern part of Somerset between 1699 and 1729.⁵⁵ He preached about 2 Corinthians 5:1-2:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness; nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

After answering ten questions Thomas Morgan delivered a strong Trinitarian confession. Henry Chandler, who wrote the preface to the published edition of the ordination, was an Independent minister at Bath.⁵⁶

The London printer John Clark had much success with this edition. A second edition – corrected – appeared in 1717 and a third edition was announced in 1719 and in 1720 under the title *The conduct of ministers ... in a sermon preached at Frome ... at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Morgan. By the Rev. Mr. N. Billingsley*.⁵⁷

Morgan sought this ordination because he was chosen to become a dissenting minister at Marlborough in Wiltshire, where he administered the sacrament for the first time on November 4th 1716, according to the indication of the local historian James Waylen.⁵⁸ He was ordained in Frome, but he would never act as a minister there, as some scholars maintain.⁵⁹

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§10: Dissenting Minister in Marlborough in Wiltshire

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Wiltshire lies east of Somerset in the south of England. It is almost entirely an agricultural and pastoral county. It was the traditional land of flocks of sheep and the wool industry. Here also the rural setting is clear in the many observations which Thomas Davis, the estate manager of Longleat House, near Warminster in Western Wiltshire, made in the agricultural survey of this county and which were published by his son Thomas Davis in 1811: ‘The principal

⁵⁵ His grave can still be found in the graveyard near the Church of St. James in Ashwick, a village seven miles East of Wells, *English Heritage*, retrieved 29.12.2017.

⁵⁶ Price, ‘Introduction’, v; and Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 149, note incorrectly that Chandler preached at the occasion.

⁵⁷ The third edition was announced by the printer in M. Tomkins, *The case of mr. Martin Tomkins*, London, 1719, 136; (J. Hallett), *The unity of God not inconsistent with the divinity of Christ*, London, 1720, 56. It was indicated as ‘lately published’ in N. Billingsley, *Rational and Christian principles the best rules of conduct*, London, 1721, 127.

⁵⁸ J. Waylen, *A history, military and municipal, of the town (otherwise called city) of Marlborough*, London, 1854, 484.

⁵⁹ Among them J.M. Robertson, *A history of freethought ancient and modern to the period of the French revolution*, 4th edition, Volume 2, London, 1936, 743; A.G. Grayling and others, eds., *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, Oxford, 2006, sub voce ‘Morgan, Thomas’; Young, *Dictionary*, 641; Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, 665.

productions of the county ... are corn, chiefly wheat and barley; cheese and butter; fat calves; fat cattle and sheep; fat pigs'.⁶⁰

The town of Marlborough lies in the Upper Kennet valley in Eastern Wiltshire on the major route between London and Bath, the old Bath route. The name of Marlborough is already mentioned in the Domesday Book. Marlborough Grammar School was founded in 1550 and the town suffered a great fire on April 28th 1653. It had pretty good markets for corn and cheese.⁶¹ It was a busy town with much traffic. Marlborough was a borough town of great coaching importance in former days. The diarist Samuel Pepys stayed the night at the White Hart in Marlborough at June 15th 1668, characterizing it as a pretty fair town for a street or two, and noting in his diary that five different coaches came that day from Bath alone. Marlborough had many shopkeepers and the journalist Daniel Defoe wrote about Marlborough: 'This is an antient town and, at present, has a pretty good shop-keeping trade, but not much of the manufacturing part'.⁶² In the year 1676, the recorded population was 3200 among which about 250 dissenters. The dissenting community of Marlborough was formed when the Vicar William Hughes was ejected in 1662. He afterwards started a large school. This community built a new Presbyterian Meeting House in 1706. Marlborough was then the residence of many very opulent and respectable Presbyterians. The names of other ministers are known, such as John Worth and Edward Morris who deserted in 1713.⁶³

In Marlborough Morgan married Mary, the fourth daughter of the grocer and brewer Nathaniel Merriman and his wife Mary Hunt. Merriman was one of the principal supporters of the dissenting interest in Marlborough. Morgan and his wife had three children, one son and two daughters. The son was named after his grandfather, Nathaniel, and settled later in Jamaica. This Nathaniel married a planter's widow, with whom he had an only son, named Thomas after his grandfather, and who was educated in England. Thomas Morgan was very active during his years in Marlborough. We know that he preached in 1720 an orthodox funeral sermon on the Bible text 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Corinthians 15:54) for Michael Foster, a respected attorney at Marlborough and father of Sir Michael Foster, one of the judges of the court of King's Bench.⁶⁴

Morgan also wrote many texts in the pamphlet war that surrounded the dissenter's conference in London known as the Salters' Hall Conference about sufficiency or insufficiency of the

⁶⁰ A.G. Bradley, *Wiltshire* (Cambridge County Geographies), Cambridge, 1909, 4; G.D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire woollen industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, 2nd edition, Abingdon, 1965; Th. Davis, *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire*, London, 1811, x.

⁶¹ Davis, *General view*, 244.

⁶² Bradley, *Wiltshire*, 143; R. Latham, ed., *The shorter Pepys*, Berkeley, 1985, 926; (D. Defoe), *A tour thro' the whole island of Great-Britain*, volume 2, London, 1725, 51.

⁶³ Waylen, *A history*, 302-3, 484; R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, London, 1962, 61 note 1, 86; J.W. Gale, *Marlborough Congregational church aforetime known as the independent chapel*, Marlborough, 1957, 10; Merriman, (Memoir), 10.

⁶⁴ Merriman, (Memoir), 10; Waylen, *A history*, 484, 509; J. Hunter, *Familiae minorum gentium*, ed. J.W. Clay, volume 3, London, 1895, MS.494, 1114-1117 (1115); I. Jones, *The descendants of Thomas Merriman de Wyttneye*, s.l.s.a., 43-4; M.Dodson, *The life of Sir Michael Foster, Knt*, London, 1811, 1 note a, with part of the sermon; the deceased Michael Foster had contributed the sum of £15 to the construction of the chapel in 1706, according to Waylen, *A history*, 484.

Scriptures and specifically about subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁵ The first seven pamphlets written by Morgan were all printed by James Roberts, at the Oxford Arms in Warwick Lane in London. Roberts was one of the most important booksellers in the first half of the 18th century.⁶⁶ Afterwards, Morgan worked with other London printers, such as John Peele, John Noon, John Morley, and others. From 1726 till 1730, he worked together with the printers John Osborn and Thomas Longman at the Ship in Paternoster-Row. Osborn and Longman published lists of the books, which were printed by and available for sale from them, in which various titles by Thomas Morgan appear. A similar list exists by the printer John Noon.⁶⁷

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§11: Dismissal from the ministry

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At some point in time, Morgan was dismissed from his ministry in Marlborough for heresy. There has been much discussion about the date of his dismissal. Some date the dismissal in 1720.⁶⁸ Others think it happened soon after 1720.⁶⁹ Still others opt for the year 1726.⁷⁰ From the fact that he lived in Marlborough up till 1727 it has been deducted that he was dismissed in 1726 or 1727.⁷¹ In my view, Morgan was dismissed from the ministry towards the end of 1724, as we can learn from the autobiography of William Whiston. There, Whiston writes:

⁶⁵ All reprinted in Th. Morgan, *A collection of tracts relating to the right of private judgment, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the terms of church communion, upon Christian principles: occasion'd by the late Trinitarian controversy. Now revised and published altogether*, London, 1726, and dated 'Marlborough, May 18, 1720', Nov. 16, 1721', 'March 14, 1722', 'May 1722', 'May 13, 1724', see p.254, 322, 350, 439, 488. See further Chapter 2.

⁶⁶ On Roberts see K.T. Winkler, *Handwerk und Markt: Druckerhandwerk, Vertriebswesen und Tagesschrifttum in London 1695-1750*, Stuttgart, 1993, 407-23; 384: 'der in den Jahren 1714 bis 1740 über das grösste Geschäftsvolumen verfügte'. On Roberts and other booksellers see M. Treadwell, 'London trade publishers 1675-1750', *The Library*, 6th series, Volume 4 (1982) 99-141. The Oxford Arms still existed in 1875, photographed by A. & J. Bool, and preserved in the collection of the *Royal Academy of Arts*, but the building was demolished in 1878 (retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁶⁷ Winkler, *Handwerk*, 424-32; N.N., *Books printed for, and sold by J. Osborn and T. Longman, at the Ship in Pater-Noster Row*, s.l.s.a., 10; see on Longman A. Briggs, *A history of Longmans and their books 1724-1990, longevity in publishing*, London, 2008; N.N., *Books printed for John Noon, at the White-Hart near Mercer's-Chapel, Cheapside*, s.l.s.a., number lix.

⁶⁸ Mossner, *The encyclopedia*, 394; B. Cottret, *Le Christ des Lumières. Jésus de Newton à Voltaire 1660-1780*, Paris, 1990, 111.

⁶⁹ Williams, *A biographical dictionary*, 342, Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208; Reventlow, 'English deism', 867; Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 148.

⁷⁰ D. Patrick, 'Two English forerunners of the Tübingen School: Thomas Morgan and John Toland', *Theological Review*, 14 (1877) 562-601 (564); E. Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des Europäischen Denkens*, Volume 1, Gütersloh, 1949, 331; J.C. Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in antiquity*, (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 251), Tübingen, 2010, 293.

⁷¹ Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32: 'Morgan's steadfast Arianism cost him his congregation in either 1726 or 1727'.

As I went to Bath and Bristol, in the year 1724, I passed through Marlborough, and there met with one Mr. Morgan, who was then a dissenting minister there; but soon left off that employment, and, so far as appeared, because he was become one of us that are called Arians.⁷²

The last time Morgan's name appears in the registers of the dissenting community in Marlborough happened in 1724.⁷³ He was not dismissed from the Presbyterian ministry by order of his superior as is contended.⁷⁴ In 1725, his successor, the Presbyterian Samuel Billingsley, who had also studied in Bridgwater, and was a nephew of the already named Nicholas Billingsley, was ordained by John Bowden.⁷⁵

At the end of the 18th century, Cornelius Winter was minister in Marlborough from 1778 till 1788 and he reorganized the church of Marlborough on Congregational principles.⁷⁶

Apparently, Morgan did not leave Marlborough after his dismissal from the ministry, but stayed for a while under the protection of his family. He lived in Marlborough at least until the end of March 1727, as is clear from his published pamphlets. Probably, he was financially supported by his father-in-law, because in his last will, dated December 7th 1741, Nathaniel Merriman discharged his son in law Doctor Morgan all the money he owed him.⁷⁷

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§12: Arianism among the Presbyterians

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⁷² W. Whiston, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Mr. William Whiston*, 2nd edition, London, 1753, 271; Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, 665, erroneously writes that he was dismissed from his living at Frome.

⁷³ Waylen, *A history*, 484; the archivist of Wiltshire Council, Steven Hobbs FSA, wrote to me on November 18th 2017: 'Unfortunately the records seen by Waylen have not survived and we have no material on the congregation in Marlborough in the 18th century'.

⁷⁴ A. Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism: German biblical interpretation and the Jews*, (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20), Leiden, 2009, 29: 'Thomas Morgan's dangerous theological views caused his superior to dismiss him from the Presbyterian ministry'. It is the local Presbytery, and not some kind of (Lutheran) Superintendent, who decides about the ministry.

⁷⁵ J. Bowden, *A sermon preach'd at the ordination of Mr. Samuel Billingsley at Marlborough in Wiltshire*, London, 1725; James, *The history*, 682; Joseph Dodson was dissenting minister in Marlborough around the year 1732; and a certain Mr. Graham came in 1746.

⁷⁶ Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism*, 150; see on Winter W. Jay, *Memoirs of the life and character of the late Rev. Cornelius Winter*, New York, 1811; Waylen, *A history*, 486-93. Therefore, Marlborough was not incorporated in the book of the Unitarian minister and mayor of Bath, Jerom Murch, *A history of the Presbyterian and general Baptist churches in the west of England*, London, 1835, when he described the Wiltshire churches. This community existed until the late twentieth century, when it merged with the local Methodist church. The founder of the Methodist movement John Wesley preached in Marlborough on June 10th 1745 and on June 22nd 1747, but only in 1811 was a Methodist chapel certified in Marlborough at Oxford Street by George Pocock, one of Wesley's friends.

⁷⁷ Th. Morgan, *A letter to mr. Thomas Chubb, occasioned by his two letters to a friend in vindication of human nature*, London, 1727, 36: dated 'Marlborough, March 9, 1726-7'; 'Last will and testament' of Nathaniel Merriman, dated December 7th 1741; 'This will was proved at London' February 28th, 1742-3 (National Archive: Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; PROB 11/724/199) (retrieved 13.12.2017).

The reason for Morgan's dismissal is mostly sought in his Arianism, which in the 18th century came close to non-trinitarianism and was seen as heretical. There is much discussion about this trend to Arianism among the Presbyterians of the 18th century. Arianism has been called an archetypal heresy, and we have been told of Presbyterianism's insidious tendency to Arianism.⁷⁸

Otherwise it has been stated that the trend among the Presbyterians was not so much towards Arianism as to Arminianism. Among other things, Arminianism asked for the unimpaired freedom of the will of human beings. But it is also admitted that many Presbyterians may in fact have been Arians.⁷⁹

According to Whiston, the heresy for which Morgan was dismissed was Arianism and most modern authors agree.⁸⁰ But we may quote Morgan himself in a letter to Sir Richard Blackmore in 1722: 'I would not have you conclude, that I am here declaring for Arianism; but I am willing to put my self in the place of an Arian for once, to try the force of your argument'.⁸¹ Whatever he said about it, it was sufficient for his dismissal. Afterwards, Arianism became for some orthodox critics the highway to Deism, or at least next door to Deism.⁸² These critics could have named the case of Thomas Morgan as an example of their feelings.

It cannot be claimed that Morgan was dismissed from Marlborough for Deism, as some authors do.⁸³ Deistic ideas developed only much later in his life. But there was another interesting fact that possibly led to his dismissal.

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§13: A complaint made in the House of Lords against Thomas Morgan

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Since the expiring of the Licensing Act in 1696, every Englishman could print or publish whatever he wanted. But he could be called to account for it on a charge of libel or sedition.⁸⁴ Such a complaint was made against Morgan in the House of Lords at the end of November 1724. In the session of Monday, November 23rd of the said House,

complaint was made to the House of a printed news paper, entituled "*The British Journal*, Saturday, November 21st, 1724". And several passages, contained in the said paper, being

⁷⁸ Colligan, *The Arian movement*; M.F. Wiles, *An archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries*, Oxford, 1996, 62-164: 'The rise and fall of British Arianism', especially 134-56.

⁷⁹ Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 172; Goring, 'The break-up of the old dissent', 179.

⁸⁰ Among them Hirsch, *Geschichte*, 331; Hohlwein, *Religion*, 1135; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 117; J. Rohls, *Philosophie und Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Tübingen, 2002, 370; Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32.

⁸¹ Th. Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore; occasioned by his book, entituled, modern Arians unmask'd*, London, 1722, 33.

⁸² H. Mattison, *A Scriptural defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, or a check to modern Arianism*, New York, 1846, 81; R. Reeve, *Arianism next door to Deism*, London, 1802.

⁸³ Among them Robertson, *A history of freethought*, 743; Chopard, 'Genève et les Anglais', 195; Grayling and others, eds., *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas'; Young, *Dictionary*, 641.

⁸⁴ Trevelyan, *English social history*, 277.

read: it is resolved, that the said news paper, is a scandalous libel, highly reflecting upon the Christian religion.

A committee was appointed to inquire into the matter. A week later, on Monday, November 30th, the President of this committee, Francis North, 2nd baron Guilford, reported to the House. He told the House that they had sent for the printers Thomas Warner and Samuel Aris of Creed-Lane and the proprietor and bookseller Thomas Woodward of Fleetstreet. The last-named admitted

that he received the letter complained of, out of the country, by the post, that he did not know whose hand-writing it was; but owned, that he had received other letters of the same hand-writing, and had sent answers acknowledging the receipt of such letters; which he directed "To Mr. Thomas Morgan, at Marlborough", whom he believes the person who sent him that letter.

Therefore, the House ordered that the said Thomas Morgan 'do forthwith attend this House, in order to be examined, touching of the matter of the said complaint'. On Monday, December 7th, the House 'received an affidavit made by Richard Hunt of Marlborough, post-master, signifying he had duly served the said Morgan with the said order'.⁸⁵

The *British Journal* was an English weekly newspaper that appeared from September 1722 till January 1728, and afterwards as the *British Journal or the Censor*, and at last as the *British Journal or the Traveller* till March 1731. It was printed by Thomas Warner.⁸⁶ I have not been able to locate the said number of this paper and the article or letter referred to in the complaint. The documents of the House do not note that Morgan ever appeared to be examined. But the case - 'highly reflecting upon the Christian religion' - was probably sufficient for the Presbytery to dismiss Morgan from the Marlborough congregation. We may conclude also that he was active as a writer in newspapers such as the *British Journal*.

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§14: Study of medicine

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In those years – but unfortunately, we do not know exactly when - Morgan managed to study medicine, because in 1725 he published his *Philosophical principles of medicine*, dated Marlborough, May 10th 1725, which he dedicated to Sir Hans Sloane, President of the Royal College of Physicians. This dedication shows that Morgan was looking for promotion in life: 'The author with great modesty desires, that what he offers may be taken in part as payment for favours already receiv'd, and at the same be look'd upon as a valuable consideration for those that are yet behind'.⁸⁷

What were these favours already received? We do not know. Peter Nisbett, one of Morgan's opponents in the 1720s, wrote already in 1723 about him: 'a man of sense and sincerity, and (as I am told) a little piece of a physician too'.⁸⁸ From 1724, Morgan called himself a doctor

⁸⁵ *Journals of the House of Lords*, Volume 22: 1722-1726, 352, 360-361, 365, November 23rd, 30th, December 7th 1724 (*British History Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁸⁶ See on Warner and his business Winkler, *Handwerk*, 432-447 (446).

⁸⁷ Th. Morgan, *Philosophical principles of medicine*, London, 1725, iii.

⁸⁸ P. Nisbett, *Comprehension, more properly than enthusiasm, in distress, proved by Mr. Thomas Morgan, a dissenting teacher*, London, 1723, 15; Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" ', 106, erroneously makes him a physician only from 1730 onwards.

of medicine.⁸⁹ We know with some probability that he gained this title at the University of Glasgow because he is mentioned as such in the registers of Marischal College at the University of Aberdeen in 1738. On June 26th 1738, Thomas Morgan, M.D. of Glasgow, presented together with John Allen, M.D. of Aberdeen, medical practitioner in Bridgwater in Somerset, and with Andrew Hooke, M.D. of Glasgow, testimonial in Aberdeen at the ceremony of the graduation as doctor of medicine of John Cunningham of Falmouth in Cornwall.⁹⁰ We may assume that Morgan met Allen during his study in Bridgwater. In the circle of his wife's family, the Merriman family, there were younger members who also studied medicine in Scotland, especially in Edinburgh, such as Samuel Merriman, grandson of the grocer Nathaniel Merriman.⁹¹ Two great-grandsons of Nathaniel also studied medicine: John Merriman and Samuel Merriman, one of the busiest of the London obstetricians in the late 18th century. This Samuel Merriman was the author of the memoir of Dr. Thomas Morgan in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1832.⁹²

The tradition of dissenters within the medical profession already started much earlier. This development has been sketched since the 17th century. As they had no admission to Cambridge and Oxford, medical students among the dissenters looked to Scotland. After 1750, a growing number of Englishmen made their way to Scotland to study medicine. So in the 18th century especially Scottish M.D.'s flooded the provincial and London practices.⁹³ The book *Philosophical principles of medicine* was already delayed, as Morgan wrote, by 'my other affairs, and my state of health', which is an indication that he had studied medicine long before. In this edition of the *Philosophical principles of medicine*, we find a long dedicatory poem by Samuel Bowden, physician in Frome, and dated October 10th 1724. This Samuel Bowden was probably a brother of the Reverend John Bowden. The poem was pretty popular because a revised edition was published separately in 1726, and the style is typically panegyric for the time:

⁸⁹ The title page of Th. Morgan, *A second postscript to enthusiasm in distress*, London, 1724, has the abbreviation M.D. after the name Morgan. Many authors believe that he used the M.D. only from 1726, among them Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 149; Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 208; Reventlow, 'English deism', 867.

⁹⁰ P.J. Anderson, ed., *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis, Selections from the records of the Marischal College and University 1593-1860*, volume 2: Officers, graduates and alumni, Aberdeen, 1898, 113; see for the details J. van den Berg, 'Where and when did Thomas Morgan acquire his medical doctorate?', *Notes and Queries*, 60 (2013) 556-8; Emma Yan, the duty archivist at Glasgow University, wrote to me on December, 6th, 2017: 'I am afraid we were unable to find any record of Thomas Morgan as a medical student at this University. ... it is still possible that he took classes here and paid a fee directly to the professor, but left no written record behind'.

⁹¹ G. Goodwin, sub voce 'Merriman, Samuel', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 37, Oxford, 2004, 915.

⁹² According to Frank Forster, quoted by N.N., 'Section of medical history in the British medical association', *Medical History*, 4 (1960) 81; D. Brunton, sub voce 'Merriman, Samuel', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 37, Oxford, 2004, 915-16; N.N., 'Samuel Merriman', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, new series 39 (1853) 207-09 (209).

⁹³ W. Birken, 'The dissenting tradition in English medicine of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Medical History*, 39 (1995) 197-218; J.F. Kett, 'Provincial medical practice in England 1730-1815', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 19 (1964) 17-29 (24); Th.M. Brown, 'From mechanism to vitalism in eighteenth-century English physiology', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 7 (1974) 179-216 (215).

For this shall future ages sound your fame,
 And distant climates echo with your name;
 Your work it self will its admirers raise,
 And men that breathe by you, shall breathe your praise.⁹⁴

It appeared also in the collected poems of Samuel Bowden, published in 1754.⁹⁵ Morgan signed in 1726 together with John Middleton, physician at Bath, and Robert Chauncy M.D., a testimonial to John Stirling, the Principal of Glasgow University, on behalf of Bowden.⁹⁶

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§15: Visits to London

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From time to time Morgan visited London. Some scholars have suggested that Voltaire during his stay in England met Morgan in 1726, but there is no proof to sustain that suggestion.⁹⁷ The Scottish historian Robert Wodrow refers in 1727 to a casual meeting of Morgan at a London bookseller's shop with the preacher William Smith, son of Samuel Smith in Belfast. The text is outspoken:

Mr.Morgan once dissenting minister at Marlburou, turned Socinian and Doctor of medicin, and hearing them name him, asked if he was the knouen Mr.Morgan once of Marlbro? And finding it was, invited him to a glass of wine; the conversation turned on the Non-subscribers in Ireland. Mr.Morgan asked the other how things were going, Mr.Smith said the heats were great as to subscribing. "What hinders them", said Morgan: "Have they real difficulty as to the doctrine they once subscribed?" "No", said the other, "they do not declare that, but keep themselves in the generall against humane composures, and imposition, and confessions." Mr.Morgan said, "That will never do their business! They ought to do as I do; deny three to be one, and one to be three, and they will come to some account; But they will never do good as long as they wrap themselves in the clouds, and keep in these generals." This shoacked Mr.Smith.⁹⁸

It was clearly a shock for the Reverend Smith. Morgan was already a long way from his Trinitarian confession in Frome.

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§16: Medical practitioner in Bristol

⁹⁴ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, xxxvii, xxxix-xlvi; J.M. Scott, sub voce 'Bowden, Samuel', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 6, London, 1886, 41; Ch. Rosenberg, 'Samuel Bowden of Frome, Somersetshire', *Notes and Queries*, 173 (1937) 344-5 (345); see about Bowden's poetry: H.N. Fairchild, *Religious trends in English poetry*, New York, 1942, 55-8; S. Bowden, *A poem on the new method of treating physick. Inscribed to Dr. Morgan on his Philosophical Principles of Medicine*, London, 1726, 11.

⁹⁵ S. Bowden, *Poems on various subjects*, Bath, 1754, 379-84.

⁹⁶ University of Glasgow MS Gen 207 item 112 (retrieved 13.12.2017).

⁹⁷ See for the details J. van den Berg, 'Did Voltaire meet the deist Thomas Morgan (d.1743) during his stay in England in 1726?', *Notes and Queries*, 57 (2010) 108-09.

⁹⁸ R. Wodrow, *Analecta: or, materials for a history of remarkable providences; mostly related to Scotch ministers and Christians*, Volume 3, Edinburgh, 1843, 467.

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From Marlborough, Morgan left for Bristol sometime before September 1727.⁹⁹ Bristol is situated between Somerset and Gloucestershire in South-Western England and had county status since 1373. When Thomas Morgan came to live in Bristol in the summer of 1727 he encountered a busy city. By 1735, its population was calculated at 33000. It was the second city in the realm after London. The 18th century was Bristol's golden age. Bristol was a harbour city, which became notorious in the 18th century for its slave trade.¹⁰⁰

It has been said by William Whiston that Morgan worked in Bristol as a medical practitioner among the Quakers. After his dismissal from Marlborough '... he soon fell upon the study of physic. ... When he was going to practice physick at Bristol, among the rich Quakers there, he wrote a pamphlet for such assistance of good men, as much as might recommend himself to them'.¹⁰¹ There have been many practitioners in Bristol. A medical historian calculated for the first decade of the 18th century one practitioner to every 163 people in the City of Bristol. It is not clear whether Morgan worked with success as a practitioner. Another medical historian commented: 'The rank-and-file of medical practitioners throughout the country was not of high type. Anyone could set himself up as a general practitioner and there was no control whatever over medical practice'.¹⁰² It seems a little bit odd that he worked among Quakers only. In those years, 1727-1728, Morgan entered into a polemic about the theology of the Quaker Robert Barclay with the deist and prolific author Thomas Chubb, living in Salisbury in southern Wiltshire, but there is no indication that they ever met each other.¹⁰³ Morgan may have met Quakers in Marlborough, who certified their Meeting House in High Street in Marlborough in 1727. A Quaker meeting already existed in Marlborough from the 17th century.¹⁰⁴ For a long time, it was also claimed that Morgan became a Quaker, a label, which has been used until our time.¹⁰⁵ But Morgan was not a Quaker himself.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Th. Morgan, *A farther vindication of Mr. Barclay's scheme, in reply to Mr. Chubb's remarks*, London, 1727, 36: dated 'Bristol, September 16, 1727'.

¹⁰⁰ P.T. Marcy, 'Eighteenth century views of Bristol and Bristolians', in: P. McGrath, ed., *Bristol in the eighteenth century*, Newton Abbot, 1972, 11-40 (17); W. Minchinton, 'The port of Bristol in the eighteenth century', in: McGrath, ed., *Bristol*, 127-160 (128); C.M. MacInnes, 'Bristol and the slave trade', in: McGrath, ed., *Bristol*, 161-184.

¹⁰¹ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 271.

¹⁰² M.E. Fissell, *Patients, power and the poor in eighteenth-century Bristol*, reprint, Cambridge, 2002, 204; J.D. Comrie, 'English medicine in the eighteenth century', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 28 (1935) 1603-1610 (1605).

¹⁰³ See Chapter 2 § 12 below.

¹⁰⁴ K. S. Taylor, 'Chalk, cheese, and cloth: the settling of Quaker communities in seventeenth-century Wiltshire', *Quaker Studies*, 10 (2006) 160-84 (177).

¹⁰⁵ So for example W.G. Kümmel, *The New Testament, the history of the investigation of its problems*, 2nd impression, London, 1978, 56; see for his relationship with the Quakers: J. van den Berg, 'Was the Deist Thomas Morgan (d.1743) a medical practitioner among the Quakers in Bristol? Some observations about the history of a Quaker label', *Quaker History*, 100 number 2 (2011) 36-41.

¹⁰⁶ J. Smith, *Bibliotheca anti-Quakeriana; or a catalogue of books adverse to the society of friends, alphabetically arranged*, reprint of the London 1873 edition, New York, 1968, 112; see Chapter 2 § 12 below.

We do not know how long he stayed in Bristol, but he stayed there at least until July 1730, as appears from the second edition of the *Philosophical principles of medicine*, dated Bristol, July 25th 1730. After that date, there is a five-year period about which we are unhappily ignorant about his doings and his whereabouts. Some scholars have suggested that Thomas Morgan was the translator of *A philosophical dissertation upon death*, written by the Piedmontese nobleman Alberto Radicati di Passerano, published in October 1732. But that is the result of a confusion with another person of the name Morgan.¹⁰⁷ The biographer of David Hume noted the suggestion that Hume during his stay in Bristol in 1734 became acquainted with Morgan, but there is doubt about this information.¹⁰⁸ In the article about the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay in the 1735 edition of the translation of Pierre Bayle's *General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, Thomas Morgan was still called a physician of Bristol.¹⁰⁹ Morgan kept studying medicine during these years as is clear from his publications. In 1735 he published *The mechanical practice of physick*, dated Saddler's Hall, March 5th 1734-5, which he dedicated to Richard Mead, physician to King George II.

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§17: Last years in London

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Apparently, Morgan was living in London at least from the beginning of 1735. Saddler's Hall was on the Northern part of Cheapside, between Foster Lane and Gutter Lane.¹¹⁰ Cheapside, in the heart of the old city, where he lived, was a marketplace and a very busy street. The poet John Gay sang in 1716 of the broad pavement of Cheapside:

Who would of *Watling-street* the dangers share,
When the broad pavement of *Cheap-side* is near?

Charles Dickens jr. wrote in 1879: 'Cheapside remains now what it was five centuries ago, the greatest thoroughfare in the city of London'. It was also the place in history of bloody violence and many riots.¹¹¹ When Thomas Morgan came to live in London, he encountered a

¹⁰⁷ Young, *Dictionary*, 642; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 69, 340 n.50; Mossner, *The encyclopedia*, 394, suggested even that Morgan was the author of the *philosophical dissertation*; see J. van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan and Alberto Radicati di Passerano, a non-existing relationship', *Notes and Queries*, 55 (2008) 326-328.

¹⁰⁸ E.C. Mossner, *The life of David Hume*, Edinburgh, 1954, 89: 'Many years later Dr. Josiah Tucker, then Dean of Gloucester and rector of St Stephen's in Bristol, told Lord Hailes that Hume, while at Bristol, had become acquainted with Thomas Morgan, the Whiggish and deistical writer; but his lordship, for some reason, remained dubious'.

¹⁰⁹ P. Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical, ... a new and accurate translation*, Volume 2, London, 1735, 654-661 (661).

¹¹⁰ H.B. Wheatly, *London past and present. A dictionary of its history, associations, and traditions*, Volume 3, reprint of the London 1891 edition, Detroit, 1968, 197; Saddler's Hall was destroyed by fire in 1821.

¹¹¹ See about its meaning in early modern London V. Harding, 'Cheapside: commerce and commemoration,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008) 77-96; C. Brant and S.E. Whyman, eds., *Walking the streets of eighteenth-century London: John Gay's Trivia (1716)*, Oxford, 2007, 184; Ch. Dickens jr., *Dickens's dictionary of London, an unconventional handbook*, London, 1879, sub voce Cheapside; D. Piper, *The companion guide to London*, 5th edition, London, 1974, 357.

busy metropolis of more than half a million inhabitants, one in six Englishmen living there.¹¹² In 1732 London had an enormous quantity of 5099 streets, lanes and squares, and 95969 houses.¹¹³ Sir Robert Walpole was at the height of his power, moving in 1735 to 10 Downing Street, since then the customary residence of the Prime Minister. He lived there till his resignation in February 1742. In the years that Morgan lived in the city, London was in turmoil. The year 1736 was a year of considerable popular disturbance. In the summer there were anti-Irish riots in the city, because of the low wages of the many Irish labourers who came to the city.¹¹⁴ Queen Caroline had died in 1737. In 1738, construction started on the building of Westminster Bridge, the second bridge across the Thames. The winter of 1739-1740 was known for its cold with a great frost on the Thames.¹¹⁵ London was a metropolis with many negative aspects: drunkenness, violence and disorder. Drunkenness was widespread. The sale of spirits rose high in the days that Morgan lived in the city. We may recall a famous dictum of Trevelyan: 'Drunkenness was the acknowledged national vice of Englishmen of all classes'. Both men and women participated in the drinking. There were more than seven thousand establishments in which distilled spirits were sold. In 1736, the Gin Act was passed, but many riots in the city followed in the next year, which led to the unmaking of the Act.¹¹⁶ Crime was everywhere. No-one was safe in the city. It was a place full of beggars. At the end of the century, Matthew Martin estimated there were more than fifteen thousand beggars in the streets of London, mostly women and children. It was also a place full of prostitution. The philanthropist Jonas Hanway, founder of the Magdalene Hospital, noted in 1760 that there were more than 3000 common prostitutes in the two cities of London and Westminster.¹¹⁷ There were some five functioning general hospitals. Lunatics were everywhere on the streets, but also in quarantine. Squalid slums brought infectious diseases. Infant mortality was high, three in four children died before their fifth birthday. Around 1730, the death-rate had exceeded the birth-rate. The state of health of many was

¹¹² R. Gray, *A history of London*, London, 1978, 201.

¹¹³ F. Braudel, *Civilization and capitalism, 15th - 18th century: the structure of every day life*, reprint Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992, 548.

¹¹⁴ G. Rudé, 'The London "mob" of the eighteenth century', *The Historical Journal*, 2 (1959) 1-18 (1); Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 61.

¹¹⁵ J. Richardson, *The annals of London. A year-by-year record of a thousand years of history*, London, 2000, 192-4.

¹¹⁶ R.B. Shoemaker, *The London mob: violence and disorder in eighteenth century England*, London, 2004, 7; G.F.E. Rudé, *Hanoverian London 1714-1808*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971, 91; Trevelyan, *English social history*, 329; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, 'Gin and gender in early eighteenth-century London', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 24 (2000) 85-105; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, 'Informers and their social networks in eighteenth-century London', *Social Science History*, 25 (2001) 563-87 (565); P. Clark, ' "The mother gin" controversy in the early eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 38 (1988) 63-84 (68); Stevenson, *Popular disturbances*, 60-1; G. Rudé, 'Mother Gin and the London riots of 1736', in: G. Rudé, *Paris and London in the eighteenth century*, London, 1970, 201-21; J. Warner and F.J. Ivis, ' "Damn you, you informing bitch", vox populi and the unmaking of the gin act of 1736', *Journal of Social History*, 33 (1999) 299-330.

¹¹⁷ P. Linebaugh, *The London hanged. Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century*, London, 2003; T. Hitchcock, 'Begging on the streets of eighteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005) 478-98 (481); R. Trumbach, *Sex and the gender revolution*, volume 1: *Heterosexuality and the third gender in Enlightenment London*, Chicago, 1998, 112.

abominable.¹¹⁸ It was not a nice city for the poor. The question has been asked: 'Eighteenth-century London, urban paradise or fallen city?'¹¹⁹ In any case, it was no paradise. Social contacts could be encountered on the streets and everywhere. Already in the time of Queen Anne there were nearly 450 coffee houses and in 1739 this figure rose to 551 and it was stated: 'Coffee-houses were one of the most characteristic social institutions of eighteenth-century London'.¹²⁰ They were the place to be, to read and to discuss the topics of the day. Morgan had many social contacts. The novelist Thomas Amory called him in 1755 'my friend, the late excellent Dr. Morgan'.¹²¹ He was in contact with orthodox theologians such as the well-known apologist and Non-conformist divine Nathaniel Lardner. He was interested in the topic of early Christianity as is demonstrated by their correspondence in May-June 1735 about St Luke's Gospel.¹²² In the year 1737, William Warburton, another famous apologist, but at the time living at Brant Broughton near Newark in Nottinghamshire, met Morgan in London, as stated in a letter to the clergyman and historian Thomas Birch on August 17th 1737: 'I have some knowledge of the author (=Morgan). An afternoon's conversation when I was last in town, gave me the top and bottom of him ... I parted from him with the most contemptible opinion both of his candour and his sense'.¹²³ The dislike appeared to be mutual, as we will see.

We have evidence that Morgan practiced as a medical practitioner in London.¹²⁴ The German preacher and traveller Georg Wilhelm Alberti, writing letters about the religious situation in Britain, wrote in 1752 – nine years after Morgan's death - denigrating words, implicating his bad performance as a practitioner, and therefore looking for the company of the deists.¹²⁵ But

¹¹⁸ S.C. Lawrence, *Charitable knowledge. Hospital pupils and practitioners in eighteenth-century London*, Cambridge, 1996, 39; J. Andrews and A. Scull, *Customers and patrons of the mad-trade The management of lunacy in eighteenth century London*, Berkeley, 2003; Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 5-6; Trevelyan, *English social history*, 356; R. Porter, 'Cleaning up the great wen: public health in eighteenth-century London', *Medical History Supplements*, 11 (1991) 61-75.

¹¹⁹ A.J. Weitzmann, 'Eighteenth-century London, urban paradise or fallen city?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975) 469-80.

¹²⁰ Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 77; M. Ellis, 'Coffee-house libraries in mid-eighteenth-century London', *The Library*, 10 (2009) 3-40 (3).

¹²¹ (Amory), *Memoirs*, 513.

¹²² Published in *Memoirs of the life and writings of the late reverend Nathaniel Lardner, D.D.*, London, 1769, 57-65; and also by A. Kippis, *The life of Dr. Nathaniel Lardner*, Volume 1, s.l.s.a (=1788), 132-39. Morgan's name appears in the list of subscribers of a book by the Presbyterian George Benson, *The history of the first planting the Christian religion*, Volume 1, London, 1735, v.

¹²³ J. Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century consisting of authentic memoirs and original letters of eminent persons*, volume 2, London, 1817, 70; see for the relation between Warburton and Morgan, J. van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton: a conflict the other way round', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991) 82-85.

¹²⁴ S. Merriman, 'Anecdotes of Daniel Turner, M.D.', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (1845) 145-7 (147).

¹²⁵ G.W. Alberti, *Briefe betreffend den allerneuesten Zustand der Religion und der Wissenschaften in Gross-Britannien*, volume 2, Hanover, 1752, 421-22: 'Thomas Morgan konnte mit seiner wenigen Arzeneywissenschaft nicht viel verdienen, begab sich daher in die Gesellschaft der Deisten und schrieb gegen die Religion'.

Morgan had more enemies at home, such as the poet and clergyman Thomas Newcomb, Chaplain to the Dukes of Richmond, who sometime between 1737 and 1740 wrote this nice satirical poem about the author of *The moral philosopher*:

From other quacks if you receive a pill,
It's kind, and does but half the patient kill;
M-rg-n's prescriptions have much more to do,
Which murder both the soul and body too.
Whate'er he dictates, works by mystic ways,
Like maggots, first corrupts, and then destroys;
It cuts down all it meets, both branch and root,
The sick and sound, and kills and damns to-boot.
If then you prize salvation, shun his quill,
Or if you value life, avoid his pill;
Whose diff'rent ways in various pow'rs excel,
These send you to the grave, and those to hell.
How sure is death where he his art employs,
Since those his physic spares, his pen destroys?
Satan must weep to view his triumphs end,
When *M-rg-n* dies, his best and surest friend;
Who chuses in dull blasphemy to deal,
Rather than starve each day, and want a meal.¹²⁶

Another enemy was his medical colleague Daniel Turner.¹²⁷ He described Morgan as 'a blustering gentleman' and 'this teaching philomath', who came to the city with 'new phrases minted in a country town, and brought lately to us in London'.¹²⁸ Turner's anecdotes describe a consultation in London in which he and Morgan disagreed about the application of medicines.

But it seems that most of Morgan's time was devoted to the composition of *The moral philosopher*, the work that would make him famous. *The moral philosopher* was published anonymously and printed for the author in London in February 1737. Morgan, who had written his first pamphlets as a Protestant dissenter, but later under his own name, probably did not think it wise to publish this book under his name. In Britain, his authorship was only publicly known in 1741, after the publication of the apology of the Non-conformist minister at the Old Jewry, Samuel Chandler, son of the already named Henry Chandler.¹²⁹ As to the reception of *The moral philosopher*, in total more than twenty-five books and pamphlets written against it in the English language are known.¹³⁰ Morgan himself answered the critics

¹²⁶ Th. Newcomb, *A miscellaneous collection of original poems*, London, 1740, 280-1; cf also (Th. Newcomb), *A supplement to one thousand seventeen hundred thirty-eight: not written by mr. Pope*, London, 1738, 7: 'quacks flourish – R-ck and M-rg-n kill', references to Richard Rock and Thomas Morgan.

¹²⁷ On Turner see Ph.K. Wilson, *Surgery, skin, and syphilis, Daniel Turner's London 1667-1741*, (Clio Medica 54), Amsterdam, 1999.

¹²⁸ Quoted by Merriman, 'Anecdotes', 147.

¹²⁹ S. Chandler, *A vindication of the history of the Old Testament, in answer to the misrepresentations and calumnies of T. Morgan, M.D., and Moral Philosopher*, London, 1741.

¹³⁰ N.N, *British Museum: General Catalogue of Printed Books*, Volume 164, London, 1963, 376-78.

John Leland and John Chapman in Volume 2 of *The moral philosopher*, and again John Leland as well as Moses Lowman in Volume 3 of *The moral philosopher*.¹³¹ Furthermore, he answered the Presbyterian critic Joseph Hallett already in July 1737. In 1741, he wrote a reaction to Samuel Chandler.¹³² In his last years, he published his works with the printer Thomas Cox at The Lamb under the Royal Exchange.

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§18: His death

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From at least 1740, Morgan lived in Union-Court, Broad Street.¹³³ Morgan died in Broad Street on January 14th 1743, according to *The Gentleman's Magazine* with 'a true Christian resignation'.¹³⁴ We do know his age at the time of his death: 71 years. Probably he died a poor man, because he left a widow in narrow circumstances.¹³⁵ His death was announced even in the *Bibliothèque Britannique* and in *The Scots Magazine*.¹³⁶ Warburton wrote ironically to Birch on January 18th 1743: 'I live in peace, now the redoubtable dr. Morgan is dead'.¹³⁷ After his death, there was much gossip about his life. Alberti – who was no friend of Morgan – wrote that he heard talk from former neighbours in Cheapside of Morgan's reckless and scandalous life.¹³⁸ The great-grandson of grocer Nathaniel Merriman, the obstetrician Samuel Merriman, referred in 1832 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* to the close of Morgan's life: 'indulgence in drink became his great failing ... he shortened his life by intemperance'.¹³⁹ Was it true? The two sources are independent of each other and the family tradition may be right. We may illustrate this rumour with an illustration from *The moral philosopher*. On a certain point Philalethes asks 'Pray, hand me a large glass of wine, with a little water in it'. Theophanes answers: 'You drink as if you were converting yourself. Will you have another glass?'.¹⁴⁰

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¹³¹ See Chapter 5.

¹³² (Th. Morgan), *A defence of the moral Philosopher; against a pamphlet, intituled, "The immorality of the Moral Philosopher"*, 1737; Th. Morgan, *A vindication of the Moral Philosopher; against the false accusations, assaults, and personal abuses, of S. Chandler*, London, 1741.

¹³³ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, vii: dated 'Union Court, Broad Street, March 18, 1740'; Morgan, *A vindication of the Moral Philosopher*, 70: dated 'Union-Court, Broad Street, May 25, 1741'.

¹³⁴ N.N., 'A list of deaths for the year 1743', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 13 (1743) 51.

¹³⁵ Merriman, (Memoir), 11.

¹³⁶ *Bibliothèque Britannique, ou histoire des ouvrages des savans de la Grande-Bretagne*, 20/2 (1743) 233: 'Le fameux dr. Morgan ... mourut ici le 14. de Janvier dernier. On lui a l'obligation d'avoir donné lieu à de bons ouvrages par un mauvais livre: qu'il lui plut d'intutiler: *The Moral Philosopher*'; *The Scots Magazine*, 5 (1743) 50.

¹³⁷ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 129.

¹³⁸ Alberti, *Briefe*, volume 2, 449: 'ein ruchloses, liederliches und ärgerliches Leben'; nearly the same opinion in J.C.C. Löwe, *Dogmatische und moralische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten mit den Deisten*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1752, 91.

¹³⁹ Merriman, (Memoir), 11.

¹⁴⁰ (Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, 138.

§19: Summary

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Thomas Morgan lived from 1671/72 till 1743. About the first period of his life little is known. Looking for archival sources about Morgan in British national, county, and local archives has not yielded many results. Genealogical sources with respect to his family are meagre.

Summing up, we see that there is a clear development in his life from a poor lad in a farmer's house near Bridgwater to a student at the local dissenting academy, from Independent preacher in Bruton to Presbyterian minister in Marlborough, and from medical practitioner in Bristol to deist in London.

Morgan's output numbers more than 3500 printed pages in pamphlets and books in the areas of theological disputes, medicine and Deism. As far as we know from the sources, he starts out with a classical orthodox confession of faith during his Presbyterian ordination, after which he rapidly joins the Arian front during his stay in Marlborough, actively participating in the pamphlet war around Salters' Hall on the Non-subscriber's side. In this period, Morgan still appears firmly to adhere to the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Confessional particularities, however, begin to lose ground. Reason is becoming for him an important element in every discussion. He is - in his own words - 'at the same time defending both Scripture and Reason'.¹⁴¹ In those years, he is certainly not a deist, and firmly denies being one. His preferred battlefield at that time is the conflict on Arianism and the struggle against Enthusiasm. In the meantime, he studies medicine, gaining a doctorate in medicine at Glasgow University in 1724. After the break with the dissenting community of Marlborough he seems a bit lost. With the financial support of his father in law he turns fully to medicine, following the theories of Newton. From 1725, he is an active medical writer, practicing in Bristol from 1727 onwards. In 1735, he shows up in London, practicing medicine. Then, in 1737, he publishes his most important book: *The moral philosopher*. The break with the opinions of his youth is enormous. Scripture itself, and especially the Old Testament, is the aim of his fierce criticism. He now calls himself a "Christian Deist". *The moral philosopher* provokes more than twenty-five published reactions, mostly negative, both about its content and its style. Morgan takes up his pen to write a rebuttal against five antagonists: Chandler, Chapman, Hallett, Leland and Lowman. He was not a man who sought peace in the church, but was always active on the religious battle-ground. He develops a style of writing, which is sometimes very cynical. He seeks recognition among the dissenters, but he only receives it for his medical works. No evidence that Morgan had any links with freemasonry, which flourished in Britain in the years 1720-1740, can be found.¹⁴²

After his death, there was much gossip about his life and morals. He was listed among the freethinkers and canonized as a deist. He is called a modern Marcion, a pioneer of Biblical criticism, and a forerunner of the Tübingen School. His books can be found in many libraries and booksellers' catalogues in the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. In Unitarian circles, he received some interest. Manchester College in York noted various loans by Unitarian students of works by Morgan in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴³ Morgan seems to be forgotten in the second half of the 18th century and ever since. In the study of Deism, he hardly receives any attention. For many scholars he belonged to the less prominent deists and was the least known of them all.

¹⁴¹ Th. Morgan, *A defence of natural and revealed religion*, London, 1728, 21.

¹⁴² Cf. R. Berman, *The foundations of modern freemasonry*, Eastbourne, 2012.

¹⁴³ See Appendix § 4.

Chapter Two: Morgan's writings before the publication of *The moral philosopher*

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§1: Introduction

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This chapter will discuss Morgan's writings before the publication of his major work, *The moral philosopher* of 1737. In more or less chronological order these writings revolve around Morgan's contribution to the pamphlet war related to the Salters' Hall Conference (1719), the debate with Thomas Chubb, and his medical works. It is important to realize that a development takes place in Morgan's thinking and publishing throughout those years. His literary output focuses on a variety of topics. The catalogue of his published works and pamphlets has in general some twenty-five numbers.¹ In some cases there is doubt about their authorship. Most works from the Salters' Hall period are written as reaction to texts by other people, and deal with Arianism and Enthusiasm. Morgan defends the Arian position and accuses most of his antagonists of Enthusiasm. At first, he defends an orthodox vision on Scripture, which over time gives way to the primacy of reason. After his dismissal from Marlborough, he enters into debate with the deist Thomas Chubb. In the meantime, he publishes his first medical work. It is amazing to see his growing production in various fields in a relatively short period of time.

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§2: The pamphlet war around the Salters' Hall Conference during the years 1719-1724

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The first group of pamphlets by Morgan all deal with the Salters' Hall Conference in February 1719. This was a (non-)subscription controversy among the dissenters, about adherence to the Trinity dogma.

The General Body of London Dissenting Ministers, composed of Presbyterian, Independents and Baptists, was convened in Salters' Hall in London by the Committee of Three Denominations to discuss the question: Must ministers subscribe to the confession, or is the Bible sufficient? Salters' Hall appeared to be a watershed between liberal and creed-bounded dissent. A split between the two occurred at Salters' Hall.² Arian influences had been discerned before among the dissenters. But with the appearance in 1712 of *The Scripture doctrine of the Trinity* by the Rector of St. James's, Piccadilly, Samuel Clarke, things moved in a rapid maelstrom. Clarke collected 1251 texts of the New Testament relating to the Trinity. He outlined fifty-five propositions about the Trinity. According to Thomas Pfizenmaier, he was not a heretic, although he was commonly acknowledged as such.³ The dissenters read the book eagerly.⁴ In the Exeter dissenting academy, Clarke's book was openly discussed by the students. In 1718, discussion started among the members of Exeter assembly about the eternity of the Son of God. The Exeter body sought advice from the four lecturers at Salters' Hall and from other ministers in London. But they sent a message to put the question before some ministers from the West of England. These seven ministers stated

¹ N.N., *British Museum*, 375-78.

² A. Gordon, *Addresses biographical and historical*, London, 1922, 123-156: 'The story of Salters' Hall', 124; Colligan, *The Arian movement*, 1913; Wiles, *An archetypal heresy*, 62-164: 'The rise and fall of British Arianism', especially 134-56.

³ Th.C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian doctrine of dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): context, sources, and controversy*, (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 75), Leiden, 1997, 4-9, 220.

⁴ Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', in: Bolam and others, *The English Presbyterians*, 149-50.

that denial of the true and proper divinity of Christ was to be regarded as a disqualifying error. As a result, in March 1719, two Exeter Presbyterian ministers, James Peirce and Joseph Hallett, were dismissed, because they did not want to subscribe.⁵

In the meantime, in London, the threefold body of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists came together to discuss the matter at the end of February 1719 and later on in March. A manifest entitled *Advices for peace*, written by the politician and apologist John Shute Barrington, was discussed. In this document, Barrington asked to secure accusations of heresy not based on gossip, and to secure adherence to the Scriptures as an attestation of orthodoxy.⁶ Thomas Bradbury, the famous Independent minister of New Street, Fetter Lane, wrote a strong Trinitarian preamble to the *Advices*. But the majority of those present in Salters' Hall voted against it. With 57 votes to 53, the principle of Scripture sufficiency gained the day. Afterwards, the meetings split in disorder, the most rigorous participants following Bradbury. But the division was not along denominational lines. Salters' Hall was not a split between Independents and Presbyterians. It is described as the most critical event, which has ever occurred in the history of Non-conformity, in the sense that it revealed the thoroughly Protestant attitude of the non-subscribers.⁷ In the end, it turned out to be about the liberties of English dissent.⁸ Afterwards, many pamphlets appeared about the discussions at Salters' Hall and their consequences.

Thomas Morgan was not present at Salters' Hall, as one author seems to suggest, but he participated in the pamphlet war arising from it.⁹ He refers to the Salters' Hall debate various times in his publications and he shows himself much interested in the case.¹⁰ A number of his opponents were subscribers. Morgan clearly took the side of the Non-subscribers and the Arian side, as we shall see below.

⁵ A. Brockett, *Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875*, Manchester, 1962, 74-95: 'Disruption, 1716-20', 82; Gordon, *Addresses*, 134; see for the details D.L. Wykes, sub voce, 'Peirce, James', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 43, London, 2004, 449-52.

⁶ Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 159.

⁷ Gordon, *Addresses*, 143, 147; Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 163-4; Colligan, *Eighteenth century nonconformity*, 23-33: 'The Salters' Hall controversy', 23, 33.

⁸ Gordon, *Addresses*, 153: 'The rift at Salters' Hall will be for ever memorable; for then and there the future of the liberties of English Dissent was at high cost secured'; see further for the Salters' Hall conference F.J. Powicke, 'The Salters' Hall controversy', *Congregational Historical Society Transactions*, 7 (1916) 110-124; R. Thomas, 'The non-subscription controversy amongst dissenters in 1719: the Salters' Hall debate', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 4 (1953) 162-86; Ch.S. Sealy, *Church authority and non-subscription controversies in early eighteenth century Presbyterianism*, Ph.D. thesis Glasgow, 2010, 18-65: 'English controversies: Exeter and Salters' Hall'.

⁹ Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32: 'His (i.e. Morgan's) participation in the 1719 dissenting debates at Salters' Hall'; also J.R. Wigelsworth, *Deism in Enlightenment England: theology, politics, and Newtonian public science*, Manchester, 2009, 133; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 75, curiously places the Salters' Hall controversy in 1717.

¹⁰ (Th. Morgan), *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm consider'd, in some short remarks on the doctrine of the blessed trinity stated and defended. In a letter to Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith and Mr. Reynolds*, London, 1719, 26; Th. Morgan, *The grounds and principles of Christian communion consider'd*, London, s.a., 4, 37.

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§3: The four London Presbyterian subscribing ministers

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Morgan's first pamphlet was entitled: *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm consider'd, in some short remarks on the doctrine of the blessed Trinity stated and defended. In a letter to Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith and Mr. Reynolds*, and was published in 1719 by 'a Protestant dissenter'. It was a reaction to a publication in the same year by these four named London Presbyterian ministers: *The doctrine of the blessed Trinity stated and defended*. William Tong was an influential Presbyterian minister at Salters' Hall Court in Cannon Street, and manager of the Presbyterian Fund in London. This was the wealthiest congregation among the London dissenters. Tong maintained the orthodox view on the Trinity, being one of the leaders of the subscribing party at Salters' Hall. Benjamin Robinson was a Presbyterian minister at Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Street, and a prominent advocate of subscription. Jeremiah Smith was a minister at Silver Street Presbyterian Chapel, London. Thomas Reynolds was a Presbyterian minister at Little Eastcheap, London, and also a subscriber.¹¹ Morgan shows himself to be somewhat disappointed by their book, criticizing the authors as follows: 'I think it will be the more necessary here to distinguish between your opinion, or sense of Scripture, and Scripture itself'. In this pamphlet he expresses his orthodox view about Scripture: 'Scripture it self is supposed to be the infallible Word of God, which cannot possibly be false'. The judgment of fallible men was something other, however. Things above reason must be brought down to our understandings and capacities.¹² Clearly, Morgan was no ardent defender of the Trinity. He attacks the four leading members of the subscribing party, accusing them, among other things, of Enthusiasm and Tritheism. Enthusiasm was a favourite label at the time to hurl at one's opponents. Morgan likes to imply ridicule, accusing them of Tritheism: 'For who would not be orthodox at so cheap a rate, as making the words three and one seems to chime so as to belong in some sense or other to the same thing?'.¹³ None of these four divines reacted in public to Morgan's pamphlet. But another subscriber did.

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§4: The Independent minister of New Street, Fetter Lane, Thomas Bradbury

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Thomas Bradbury was an embittered subscribing partisan. The journalist Daniel Defoe described him nicely as a dealer in many words. Bradbury gained fame as a highly political preacher, who had many hearers. He played an important role in the discussions at Salters' Hall. In 1720, he published *The necessity of contending for revealed religion*, in which he twice referred negatively to Morgan's pamphlet.¹⁴

¹¹ A. Gordon, sub voce 'Tong, William', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 57, London, 1899, 30; A. Gordon, sub voce 'Robinson, Benjamin', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 49, London, 1897, 4; Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 164.

¹² (Morgan), *The nature and consequences*, 4-5, 39, 19.

¹³ (Morgan), *The nature and consequences*, 26.

¹⁴ Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', 167 note 2; (D. Defoe), *A friendly epistle by way of reproof from one of the people called Quakers, to Thomas Bradbury, a dealer in many words*, London, 1715; this very popular pamphlet reached six imprints in 1715; Th. Bradbury, *The necessity of contending for revealed religion*, London, 1720, xii, 13.

When a second edition of Morgan's pamphlet appeared in that same year, 1720, it had an addition entitled *A postscript occasion'd by Mr. Bradbury's discourse, intitl'd, The necessity of contending for reveal'd religion*. Morgan did not like Bradbury's style: 'I have never seen more conceit and vanity, uncharitableness and ill-nature, put together'... 'He sets out upon the strength of his own infallibility'. On page after page Morgan heaps ridicule upon his opponent.

Morgan accepts the idea of revelation. 'Revelation is the light that renders things visible'. He declares: 'That the Christian doctrines are in themselves, and laying outside the testimony of Scripture, irrational, absurd, and ridiculous, is the only speculative principle of deism and infidelity'.¹⁵ That is the first time he refers to Deism. Deism and infidelity are part of the negative and critical view of Morgan on Deism in those years. Later on, his views will change completely.

Morgan attacked Bradbury again in *The absurdity of opposing faith to reason: or, a defence of Christianity against the power of enthusiasm. In answer to Mr. Bradbury's sermon on the fifth of November, intitl'd, the nature of faith. Address'd to the five ministers concern'd with him in carrying on the lecture at Pinnars-Hall*, published in 1722. He ridicules Bradbury for 'having thought fit in his Christian wisdom, openly, and in the face of the world, to renounce all pretensions to reason'.¹⁶ Reason is part and parcel of the conduct of Biblical figures such as Noah and Abraham. Noah acted upon this eternal and unchangeable principle of reason, 'that God cannot lye', and so he built an ark upon 'the principle of self-preservation, which I hope is a principle of reason'.¹⁷

So did Abraham in his obedience in the offering of his son. He knew that what God had promised he was also able to perform: 'He knew that God could have rais'd up his son'. Morgan concludes: 'the religion of these patriarchs ... was ever a rational religion'.¹⁸ We see here a clear development in Morgan's thinking from Scriptural orthodoxy to the primacy of reason.

Understandably, Bradbury did not like Morgan at all. In 1723 he wrote about Morgan: 'This man I have no design of taking any notice of'. He described this last pamphlet of Morgan's some years later, in 1726, with the following words: 'Such a rant of profaneness, ill manners, and impudence runs thro' a pamphlet called a Defence of Christianity against the power of enthusiasm, by Mr. Thomas Morgan of Marlborough', calling Morgan afterwards an 'ignorant writer'. Even in 1743 after Morgan's death, he remembered Morgan as a lampoonist.¹⁹ We do not know whether these two vehement characters ever met.

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§5: The Presbyterian minister of Wilton, Samuel Fancourt

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In the meantime, the Presbyterian minister of Wilton (three miles west of Salisbury), Samuel Fancourt, wrote against Morgan's first pamphlet *An essay concerning certainty and infallibility, or, certain reflections upon a pamphlet, stiled, The nature and consequences of*

¹⁵ (Morgan), *The nature and consequences*, 2nd edition, London, 1720, 38, 51.

¹⁶ Th. Morgan, *The absurdity of opposing faith to reason*, London, 1722, 1.

¹⁷ Morgan, *The absurdity*, 20.

¹⁸ Morgan, *The absurdity*, 23-24.

¹⁹ Th. Bradbury, *Twenty-eight sermons ... preach'd at Pinnars-Hall*, London, 1723, xiii; Th. Bradbury, *The charge of God to Gideon. In three sermons*, London, 1727, Preface, and 74; Th. Bradbury, *Six sermons on Hebr. vi 12*, London, 1743, iv.

enthusiasm considered, dated December 17th 1719. Fancourt was a pupil of three of the four London ministers and defended them against the far-fetched objections and bitterness of Morgan.²⁰ Later on, Fancourt acquired fame as the initiator of a circulating library in Salisbury.²¹ He probably knew the author of *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm considered*. He reproaches the author: 'The very title of your book is wrote with a pen dipt in poison'. Morgan's comparison of the four London ministers with a sect of enthusiasts he thinks to be a nasty affront. Fancourt quotes many phrases from *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm considered*, to reprimand them afterwards. In this he is a staunch defender of the four London ministers. They look for certainty, yes, but they cannot be accused of being infallible. Fancourt observes that this is a black indictment.²²

Morgan answered anonymously with *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm, defended; against the reflections of the reverend Mr. Samuel Fancourt ... In a second letter to Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith and Mr. Reynolds* (1720). It is in fact not a second letter, but a lengthy reaction to Fancourt's pamphlet, in which he ridicules the relationship of Fancourt with the London ministers. In it he defends the freedom to defend himself against men who 'make new fundamental articles of faith, and declare any thing as necessary to salvation and church communion, that Christ has not made so'.²³ But Fancourt did not give up. He responded with *Enthusiasm retorted, or: remarks on Mr. Morgan's second letter to the four London ministers*, dated April 4th 1722. Obviously, Fancourt did know publicly who the author of the letters was. On page after page he discusses Morgan's second letter in a long-winded manner. In this pamphlet, he discusses circumstantially the doctrine of the Trinity, quoting the works of Clarke and Waterland. He was disappointed by Morgan: 'I cannot but grief to see the pen of a minister thus prostituted to scandal and calumny'. He did not like Morgan either:

Mr. Morgan's conduct in this affair appears to me such a palpable contradiction to his pompous profession about the sincerity of his enquiries, and his infinite value for truth, that I find it difficult, without commencing an enthusiast, to believe the truth and sincerity of his profession.²⁴

Morgan had the last word in 1723 with *A defence of the two letters ..., against Mr. Fancourt's Enthusiasm retorted*. A remarkable example of Morgan's mocking style is the first phrase of this pamphlet: 'The reverend mr. Samuel Fancourt, after three years silence in the controversy betwixt him and me relating to the four London ministers, has now at length, I suppose,

²⁰ S. Fancourt, *An essay concerning certainty and infallibility, or, certain reflections upon a pamphlet, stiled, The nature and consequences of enthusiasm considered*, London, 1720, iii.

²¹ See on Fancourt K.A. Manley, 'The road to Camelot: lotteries, the circle of learning, and the "circular library" of Samuel Fancourt', *The Library*, 8 (2008) 398-422; M. Little, *Samuel Fancourt 1687-1768, pioneer librarian*, Trowbridge, 1984.

²² Fancourt, *An essay*, iv, 4, 15.

²³ (Th. Morgan), *The nature and consequences of enthusiasm defended; against the reflections of the reverend mr. Samuel Fancourt*, London, 1720, 33.

²⁴ S. Fancourt, *Enthusiasm retorted, or: remarks on Mr. Morgan's second letter to the four London ministers*, London, 1722, 29, 39.

convinced the world, that while he said nothing, he did not spare for thinking'.²⁵ A nice example of the way in which Morgan showed his cynicism. He reproaches Fancourt for defending his brethren without arguments. All these four pamphlets excel in aridity and diffuseness and prolixity.

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§6: The minister of the Scottish church, John Cumming

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Morgan also took up his pen to write against John Cumming, who in the final stage of his life was a minister of the Scottish church in London.²⁶ This text was entitled *The grounds and principles of Christian communion consider'd. In a letter to the Reverend Mr. John Cumming M.A., occasion'd by his dissertation concerning the authority of Scripture-consequences*.²⁷ Cumming belonged to the subscribing party and in 1724 preached the funeral service for Benjamin Robinson, one of the four above-mentioned London ministers. Cumming had written about the differences of the London ministers around the Salters' Hall Conference. In this pamphlet, Morgan exhibits some characteristic views about his changing position concerning Scripture. Scripture is in many cases subject to different interpretations and therefore we depend on our own understanding and judgment. That is exactly what the more conservative dissenters wanted to avoid by imposing a subscription on the confession. Moreover, Morgan appears to move gradually away from orthodox views by asserting that 'The Scripture is a complete system of natural as well as reveal'd religion'. There are two different classes or kinds of truth contained in Scripture. 'I must here distinguish betwixt principles of reason and principles of revelation'. The first principle of natural religion is that man is an intelligent agent under the moral government of God, as the supreme independent first cause of all things.²⁸ Here Morgan clearly accepts the difference between revelation and natural religion, accepting reason as the decisive preference. Later on, he will continue along those lines, diminishing the value of divine revelation.

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§7: The Independent minister of Warminster, Joseph Pyke

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After a relative silence during the year 1721, Morgan again became very active as a pamphleteer in 1722. At least five pamphlets went to the press. The first was *A refutation of the false principles assumed and apply'd by the Reverend Mr. Joseph Pyke, ..., to which is added: Some short remarks on Sir Richard Blackmores's just prejudices against the Arian hypothesis. With a postscript concerning the real agreement between the Athanasians and the Socinians in the Trinitarian controversy*, dated November 16th 1721. It is a pamphlet with a very confusing title and contents.²⁹ Pyke was 'one of the most vehement and prolific writers

²⁵ Th. Morgan, *A defence of the two letters ... against Mr. Fancourt's enthusiasm retorted*, London, 1723, 3.

²⁶ E. Jacobs, *A funeral sermon occasioned by the death of the late reverend John Cumming, D.D., minister of the Scots church, in London. Who departed this life Sept. 7, 1729*, London, 1729.

²⁷ London, s.a., dated May 18th 1720.

²⁸ Morgan, *The grounds and principles*, 23-4, 65-6, 7-9.

²⁹ Joseph Pyke had studied at Bridgwater Academy and had been a minister in Blakeney, Gloucestershire, since 1715, and was from 1720 till 1726 minister at the Common Close in Warminster in Western Wiltshire, see A. Gordon, *Freedom after ejection: a review (1660-1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational nonconformity in England and Wales*, Manchester, 1917, 333; *Dissenting Academies Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

against Arianism'.³⁰ Pyke had written *An impartial view of the difficulties that affect the Trinitarian, or clog the Arian, scheme*, dated June 29th 1721. Morgan accuses him of writing 'a thick cloud of unintelligible terms', contrary to reason, and being a 'monotritheist'. One of the false principles was according to Morgan that Pyke was of the view that Jesus of Nazareth was not a human person: 'Man in general, but not man in particular'. In this refutation, Morgan hammers on the same question about Scripture: 'The question therefore is this, whether any thing ought to be made necessary to salvation and Christian communion, that the Holy Ghost in Scripture had not clearly, expressly, and definitively declared as such'.³¹ In the postscript he defines the difference between Athanasians and Socinians as follows: 'The one affirm, and the other deny the supreme deity or godhead of our lord Jesus Christ'. But the Socinians never denied 'the personal union of the supreme God with the man Jesus Christ'. According to Morgan, they agree on this union.³²

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§8: Two other pamphlets by Morgan

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Another pamphlet was written by Morgan under the pseudonym Philanthropus Oxoniensis in 1722 against the Master of Magdalene College, in Cambridge, Daniel Waterland: *A letter to the reverend Dr. Waterland occasion'd by his late writings in defence of the Athanasian hypothesis*. Waterland was known for his succesful defence of Trinitarian orthodoxy.³³ He had published in 1719 a voluminous *Vindication of Christ's divinity* against the Rector of Rossington, John Jackson.³⁴ For reasons of caution Morgan chose a pseudonym, which he later relinquished in the publication of this pamphlet in the *Collection of tracts* in 1726. He complains about the confusion resulting from Waterland's use of terms such as hypostasis, substance and unity.³⁵ Morgan took a more Arian stand in his criticism of Waterland's Athanasian orthodoxy: 'Your hypothesis is really a contradiction'.³⁶ Waterland did not react to this pamphlet by Morgan.³⁷

In the same year, Morgan published a pamphlet under the title: *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore occasioned by his book intituled Modern Arians unmasked*.³⁸ He had already written about Blackmore a year before.³⁹ He now again accuses him of offering 'no good

³⁰ A. Rosenberg, *Sir Richard Blackmore: a poet and physician of the augustan age*, Lincoln, NE, 1953, 128.

³¹ Th. Morgan, *A refutation of the false principles assumed and apply'd by the Reverend Mr. Joseph Pyke*, London, 1722, 4, 7, 11, 24, 34.

³² Morgan, *A refutation*, postscript (37-45) 42, 45.

³³ R.T. Holtby, *Daniel Waterland 1683-1740: a study in eighteenth-century orthodoxy*, Carlisle, 1966, preface, 27: 'Waterland's reputation as the principal champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy ... was recognised by friend and foe alike'.

³⁴ Holtby, *Daniel Waterland*, 21-22.

³⁵ (Th. Morgan), *A letter to the reverend Dr. Waterland occasion'd by his late writings in defence of the Athanasian hypothesis*, London, 1722, 3.

³⁶ (Morgan), *A letter*, 11.

³⁷ Holtby, *Daniel Waterland*, does not mention this pamphlet of Morgan.

³⁸ dated Marlborough, March 14th 1722.

³⁹ See § 7.

argument or reason at all'.⁴⁰ Morgan's unorthodox position was very clear. In this letter to Sir Richard Blackmore, some time physician in ordinary to King William III and to Queen Anne, he stated: 'For my own Part, I am fully and clearly perswaded, that the *Athanasian Scheme* relating to the *Trinity* and *Incarnation* is unscriptural and self-contradictory'.⁴¹ But he could also state that he was not 'declaring for Arianism'.⁴² Together with the letter to Waterland this indicates that Morgan was fast moving away from his Trinitarian confession in Frome to a more heterodox vision on the Trinity. With these pamphlets ends Morgan's contribution to the Salters' Hall pamphlet war.

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§9: Against the power of Enthusiasm

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The word "Enthusiasm" occurs with regularity in the titles and the contents of these tracts of Morgan. His object is clearly to defend Christianity against the power of Enthusiasm. According to Morgan, Enthusiasm is the belief in mysterious or unintelligible propositions. He complains how far reason and common sense may be lost in the wilds of Enthusiasm. Furthermore, he states that no force of reasoning can prevail against the weight and strength of Enthusiasm. 'When a man is well settled in his enthusiasm, and sufficiently heated with a mysterious fire, he may work himself up to a strong perswasion, not only without, and beyond, but even contrary to all rational evidence whatever'.⁴³ Morgan is by no means the only one who wrote against Enthusiasm at the time.⁴⁴ More than a hundred and twenty English books and pamphlets with the words *enthusiasm* or *enthusiast(s)* in the title appeared in the 18th century alone. In the previous century, during the Civil War Era, enthusiastic activity appears to have been at its height.⁴⁵ It is difficult to give a clear definition of Enthusiasm. According to Heyd the denotation of the term was very broad in the 17th century. The term had a variety of meanings. It could refer to a specific group within the broad spectrum of the Radical Reformation, such as the Anabaptists. But in general, the label was rather loosely used. Enthusiasm was seen as dangerous because it challenged the central mediating symbols and institutions of Christianity. Enthusiasm meant anarchy, disorder and licentiousness. Another author, the twentieth-century historian J.G.A. Pocock, was more convinced that Enthusiasm denoted the fury of the millennial sects.⁴⁶ In the 18th century,

⁴⁰ Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore*, 4.

⁴¹ Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore*, 62.

⁴² Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore*, 33; see above Chapter 1 § 12.

⁴³ (Morgan), *The nature and consequences*, 16; Morgan, *The absurdity*, 3; (Morgan), *The nature and consequences*, 14-15.

⁴⁴ See M. Heyd, *"Be sober and reasonable": The critique of enthusiasm in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries*, (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 63), Leiden, 1995, who however does not mention Morgan; L. Laborie, *Enlightening enthusiasm: prophecy and religious experience in early eighteenth-century England*, Manchester, 2015, 149.

⁴⁵ There are abundant examples of this enthusiastic activity, culminating in the activist group of the Fifth Monarchy men in the years from 1651, see K. Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic, studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth century England*, Harmondsworth, 1973, 156-71 (169-71).

⁴⁶ Heyd, *"Be sober and reasonable"*, 5, 6, 16, 22, 22-23, 40, 41; J.G.A. Pocock, 'Enthusiasm: the antiself of Enlightenment', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 60 (1997) 7-28 (10).

Enthusiasm was still suspect and viewed as the equal of religious fanaticism.⁴⁷ In his famous *Letter concerning enthusiasm*, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1708), ridiculed the enthusiasts, stating: ‘Good humour is not only the best security against enthusiasm, but the best foundation of piety and true religion’. Shaftesbury pleaded for a tolerant attitude towards Enthusiasm because it was in his eyes a medical phenomenon.⁴⁸ Nor did John Wesley like the word, as may be inferred from his sermon on *The nature of enthusiasm* (1750, and reprinted as a pamphlet in 1755, 1778 and 1789), in which he was ‘steering a course between sound and spurious enthusiasm’.⁴⁹ Later, he had to fight against the extravagancies of some fanatical Methodists such as George Bell and Thomas Maxfield. In December 1761, Wesley wrote to his brother Charles: ‘We are always in danger of enthusiasm, but I think no more than any time these twenty years’.⁵⁰ In the 19th century, Enthusiasm would become a more positive term. In the Oxford movement, Enthusiasm was the keynote of evangelical Christianity. It acquired a decidedly favourable sense, denoting a contrast to lukewarmness or indifference.⁵¹ So the battle against Enthusiasm, which Morgan took upon himself, was a typical eighteenth-century phenomenon. Morgan used the term to denote his less rational opponents.

§10: Master John Hildrop of Marlborough and Peter Nisbett of Bristol

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Morgan started another series of pamphlets on the theme of Enthusiasm in 1722: *Enthusiasm in distress: or, an examination of the reflections upon reason, in a letter to Phileleuterus Britannicus*, dated May 15th 1722. *Phileleuterus Britannicus* is a pseudonym for the religious writer John Hildrop.⁵² Hildrop was from 1703 Master of the Royal Free Grammar School at Marlborough. In 1722, Hildrop published anonymously his *Reflections upon reason*, a satire on freethinking. Morgan criticizes the author: ‘You, Sir, in this very book, have as much mistaken and perverted the right use of reason, both in name as thing, as any pretty gentleman, or minute philosopher in the world’. He states that Christianity is highly reasonable. He here also mentions that the deist who submits himself to the obligations of natural religion, makes a fair step, and a great advance towards Christianity.⁵³ This last phrase

⁴⁷ Ch.J. Abbey, ‘Enthusiasm’ in: Abbey and Overton, *The English church*, 226-78 (226); J.H. Overton and F. Relton, *The English church from the accession of George I to the end of the eighteenth century (1714-1800)*, London, 1924, 47.

⁴⁸ See Heyd, *“Be sober and reasonable”*, 211-40: ‘Shaftesbury and the limits of toleration concerning enthusiasm’; (A.A. Cooper, 3rd earl of Shaftesbury), *A letter concerning enthusiasm*, London, 1708, 35; Heyd, *“Be sober and reasonable”*, 218, 278.

⁴⁹ H. Boyles, *Romanticism and Methodism: the problem of religious enthusiasm*, Abingdon, 2017, 11.

⁵⁰ S.C. Carpenter, *Eighteenth century church and people*, London, 1959, 198; quoted by C.N. Impeta, *De leer der heiliging en volmaking bij Wesley en Fletcher*, Leiden, 1913, 267-275: *De strijd met de enthousiasten*, 267.

⁵¹ G. Faber, *Oxford apostles: a character study of the Oxford movement*, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1954, 83; P.B. Nockles, *The Oxford movement in context: Anglican high churchmanship 1760-1857*, reprint, Cambridge, 1997, 196.

⁵² J.M. Rigg, sub voce ‘Hildrop, John’, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 27, Oxford, 2004, 97.

⁵³ Th. Morgan, *Enthusiasm in distress*, London, 1722, 8, 14, 16-7.

is a prudent indication that at this time Morgan is moving to the deist's position, but not accepting it whole-heartedly.⁵⁴

An answer to Morgan's pamphlet came from the hand of Peter Nisbett, dated Bristol, Jan. 28th 1722-3: *Comprehension, more properly than enthusiasm, in distress, proved by Mr. Thomas Morgan, a dissenting teacher. And farther explained, in a familiar letter to himself*, published in 1723.⁵⁵ He did not like Morgan very much: 'You can manage either side of a question, and banter your reader in a belief of what you scarce believe a word of yourself'.⁵⁶ Morgan reacted with *A postscript to enthusiasm in distress, occasion'd by a pamphlet, intitled, comprehension more properly than enthusiasm in distress, said to be written by one mr. Peter Nisbet*, published in 1723, in which he doubts whether there exists any such person called Nisbett.⁵⁷

Morgan asks him whether Scripture 'is not the only rule, and a sufficient rule of christian faith and practice?'.⁵⁸ Nisbett reacted with *Comprehension confusion. Mr. Nisbett's second letter to Mr. Morgan*, published in 1724. He quoted Fancourt's *Enthusiasm retorted* on the title page and in the rest of this pamphlet. The style of *Comprehension confusion* is the same as the first pamphlet of Nisbett: 'Your whole performance being only a demonstration what a bad cause you had undertaken'. At the end, the confusion is complete, when he sums up: 'Disputing with you was like hunting a Pole-cat, where a man was sure to get nothing but dirt and stink'.⁵⁹ Morgan had the last word in 1724 with *A second postscript to enthusiasm in distress*, dated Marlborough, May 13th 1724. Morgan was not amused with some insinuations from the side of Peter Nisbett. So he wrote in the *Postscript*: 'There is one very unfair and unchristian insinuation, that Mr. Nisbett has made up and down in his book, as if I had intended artfully to favour the cause of deism'.⁶⁰ There for the first time we hear that Thomas Morgan is suspected of adhering to Deism himself. This phrase in the *Postscript* indicates that at this time Morgan did not consider himself a deist.

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§11: *A collection of tracts ... now revised and published altogether*

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All these pamphlets published by Morgan in the years between 1719 and 1724 are reprinted in his *Collection of tracts*, published in 1726 (488 pages).⁶¹ In the extensive Preface to this collection he expresses a more critical view on some Christian doctrines than in his previous writings. 'No doctrines can be reasonable received, as coming from God ... that are either absurd, inconsistent and contradictory in themselves, or hurtful and mischievous in their ...

⁵⁴ Contra J. Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion. The age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750*, London, 1976, 201: 'Morgan's attack on the *Reflexions upon Reason* defended the deists' position'.

⁵⁵ We have no information about this Peter Nisbett.

⁵⁶ (Nisbett), *Comprehension*, 5.

⁵⁷ Th. Morgan, *A postscript to enthusiasm in distress*, London, 1723, 4.

⁵⁸ Morgan, *A postscript*, 7.

⁵⁹ P. Nisbett, *Comprehension confusion. Mr. Nisbett's second letter to Mr. Morgan*, London, 1724, 3, 60.

⁶⁰ Morgan, *A postscript*, 19.

⁶¹ Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 148, curiously calls it 'a compilation of Morgan's writings from the years 1717 to 1724'. Morgan started publishing only in 1719.

consequences'. Miracles he tentatively regards may offer a sufficient evidence and a criterion of a revelation of God.⁶² But generally speaking, his view of the Bible during the beginning of these years is orthodox, although with time the primacy of reason is taking over. We saw in these pamphlets by Morgan a growing interest in reason as a principle for interpreting the Scriptures. In these pamphlets, his theological vision makes a straight move from the 'Athanasian Scheme' to Arianism, though he did not declare himself an Arian.⁶³

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§12: The debate between Thomas Morgan and Thomas Chubb during the years 1727-1730

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From March 1727 onwards, Morgan became involved in a new debate, which concerned the theology of Robert Barclay.⁶⁴ It started with his *Letter to Mr. Thomas Chubb, occasioned by his two letters to a friend in vindication of human nature, humbly offer'd to the consideration of the people call'd Quakers*, dated March 9th 1727. Thomas Chubb, a Glover's apprentice at Salisbury, who in 1705 became a tallow-chandler's assistant, was a prolific author who wrote more than fifty tracts. From 1715 till 1717, he lived in London, but afterwards he returned to Salisbury and later was called the Sage of Salisbury.⁶⁵ Morgan had become interested in the Quakers because it seems he was going to work among them in Bristol as a medical practitioner, so William Whiston tells us: 'When he was going to practice physick at Bristol, among the rich Quakers there, he wrote a pamphlet for such assistance of good men, as much as might recommend himself to them'.⁶⁶

This phrase suggests a mixture of interests. Morgan defended the Quaker Robert Barclay with long quotations from the latter's famous *Apology for the true Christian divinity* (1676)⁶⁷, which has been called one of the most impressive theological writings of the century.⁶⁸ Among other things, it contains that famous Quaker principle of the subordination of the Scriptures to the inward light in the heart of the individual: the saving and spiritual light wherewith every man is enlightened.⁶⁹ Morgan reacted to Chubb's pamphlet because he discovered some mistakes in Chubb's reasoning. He even finds a plain instance of partiality and unfair dealing. Coming to the point, he says:

I cannot be at all satisfy'd from what you have offered, that Barclay, upon his principles, must give up the natural agency of man, and making him a patient only, or a mere passive

⁶² Morgan, *A collection*, xiv, xi.

⁶³ Morgan, *A letter to Sir Richard Blackmore*, 33.

⁶⁴ Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 33, says that 'the controversy between Chubb and Morgan began in 1723', but that is in my view not correct; there is no mention of Chubb in Morgan's pamphlets before 1727.

⁶⁵ C. Probyn, sub voce 'Chubb, Thomas', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 11, Oxford, 2004, 566-8 (567); T.L. Bushell, *The sage of Salisbury: Thomas Chubb 1679-1747*, London, 1968.

⁶⁶ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 271; cf before in Chapter 1 § 16.

⁶⁷ Published in 1676 in Latin and translated in English in 1678.

⁶⁸ L. Stephen, sub voce 'Barclay, Robert', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 3, London, 1885, 169.

⁶⁹ See on this topic L. Eeg-Olafsson, *The conception of the inner light in Robert Barclay's theology*, (Studia Theologica Lundensia 5), Lund, 1954.

recipient, without any active power at all with respect to moral good and evil, right and wrong.

According to Morgan, Chubb has misunderstood Barclay on three points, with respect to the consequence of the Fall, the law of grace and the nature of divine aid. In order to prove his point Morgan quotes extensively from Barclay's *Apology*. Barclay, according to Morgan, did not give up the natural agency of man. Barclay asserted both free will, and grace, in such a manner as to render them perfectly consistent with, and reconcilable to each other. Morgan reproaches Chubb for not expressing or representing the true meaning of the author. Morgan at this time has a high opinion of revelation as he says: 'Tis plainly one great and principal design of the Christian revelation, to excite and encourage us to constant prayer, and a religious trust in and dependence upon God'.⁷⁰

Chubb reacted with a brief reply in *Three tracts*, of which the third was directed to Morgan: *Some remarks on Dr. Morgan's tract*, published in London in 1727, in which he tried to deny the charges made against him.

The discussion continued when Morgan, who in the meantime was living in Bristol, published *A farther vindication of Mr. Barclay's scheme, in reply to Mr. Chubb's remarks*, dated September 16th 1727. In this pamphlet, he continues to assert that Chubb has in fact greatly mistaken and misrepresented both Mr. Barclay and himself. That Morgan was no Quaker himself is clear from this phrase from *A farther vindication*: 'I shall only add, that if Mr. Chubb had writ against anything particular to Mr. Barclay and the Quakers, I should have left that people to have defended their own particularities, upon their own principles'.

That Morgan had no deist feelings at this time either is apparent from another phrase in his controversy with Chubb: 'I cannot persuade myself, that Christianity is nothing but natural deism, set in a wrong light'.⁷¹ To maintain that both Morgan and Chubb were deists in those days would require Morgan to anticipate a position, which the latter only acknowledges ten years later in *The moral philosopher*.⁷² I think it is important to be aware that Deism becomes part of Morgan's thinking in a later period than his controversy with Chubb.

Chubb reacted again with *Scripture evidence consider'd, in a view of the controversy betwixt the author and Mr. Barclay's defenders, viz. Mr. Beaven and Dr. Morgan* (London, 1728). He criticizes Morgan as follows: 'What end Dr. Morgan had in view in his engaging in this controversy, I do not pretend to judge of; but this I say, that as he has used me ill, without any provocation, so he has injured the Christian religion, under a shew of defending it'.⁷³

Finally, Morgan wrote to Chubb *A defence of natural and revealed religion, occasioned by Mr. Chubb's Scripture Evidence considered, in a view of the controversy betwixt himself and Mr. Barclay's defenders*, dated May 20th 1728.⁷⁴ In this publication, Scripture is present again in an interesting observation when Morgan declares: 'I have been at the same time defending

⁷⁰ Morgan, *A letter to mr. Thomas Chubb*, 3, 8-10, 15-20, 25, 30.

⁷¹ Morgan, *A farther vindication*, 6, 36, 35.

⁷² Contra Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 40, 42.

⁷³ Th. Chubb, *Scripture evidence consider'd*, London, 1728, 9.

⁷⁴ It is curious that Wigelsworth does not refer to this ultimate answer of Morgan.

both Scripture and Reason'.⁷⁵ For Morgan, the debate ended here. But for Chubb the debate continued as is clear from two pamphlets, which were printed in 1730.⁷⁶ Morgan never again entered into discussion with him. There is no indication whatsoever that they ever met. Between 1728 and 1737, Morgan did not publish any more theological pamphlets. In all probability he was more concerned with his medical work during this period.

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§13: *Philosophical principles of medicine and its impact*

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In 1725, Morgan published his *Philosophical principles of medicine*, nearly 500 pages, in three parts with in total 61 propositions, and dedicated to Sir Hans Sloane, President of the Royal College of Physicians. The three parts were about

the general laws of gravity and their effect upon animal bodys, the more particular laws which obtain in the motion and secretion of the vital fluids, applied to the principal diseases and irregularitys of the animal machine, ... the primary and chief intentions of medicine in the cure of diseases, problematically propos'd, and mechanically resolv'd.⁷⁷

In 1730 a second edition, with large additions, in more than 520 pages, would come from the press. This work testifies to Morgan's new interest in medical matters. In this connection he liked to refer to Newtonian philosophy and Newtonian principles, quoting Newton's *Principia*.⁷⁸ That Morgan was interested in Newton's ideas is also evident from his subscription to the work of the physician Henry Pemberton, entitled *A View of Isaac Newton's philosophy* (1728). Newton is present in Morgan's discussion with Bryan Robinson, Professor of Physic at Trinity College in Dublin. In his *Physico-Theology*, Morgan calls Newton that great philosopher.⁷⁹ Wigelsworth noted in this respect: 'No one could have mistaken Newton's influence'.⁸⁰

Morgan's book is full of mathematics and mathematical formulas and figures. It is astonishing that Morgan, alongside his theological pamphleteering, had the time to study Newton and medical books. He mentions in the *Philosophical principles* the physician and secretary to the

⁷⁵ Th. Morgan, *A defence of natural and revealed religion*, London, 1728, 21.

⁷⁶ The debate did not stop in 1727 as Wigelsworth suggests, 'The disputed root', 29, 42. Chubb's pamphlets were reprinted in *A collection of tracts on various subjects*, published in London, 1730. Therein we find two other tracts written by Chubb as answer to Morgan's *Defence of natural and revealed religion*: treatise xxvii: *Reflections on natural liberty; Wherein the case of liberty, and necessity, when considered, as a proper foundation for virtue and religion, for rewards and punishments, is examined. Occasioned by Dr. Morgan's tract, entitled, A defence of natural and revealed religion.* Treatise xxxiii: *Reflections on virtue and vice. Wherein is shewn, what kind of virtue is, in reason, rewardable; and what kind of vice is, in reason, punishable. Occasioned by Dr. Morgan's tract, entitled, A defence of natural and revealed religion*, Th. Chubb, *A collection of tracts, on various subjects*, London, 1730, 371-82, 448-53.

⁷⁷ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, title page.

⁷⁸ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, 33, 95; Th. Morgan, *Philosophical principles of medicine*, 2nd edition, London, 1730, li, 32, 89, 91.

⁷⁹ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, xxxv, 32, 31; H. Pemberton, *A view of Isaac Newton's philosophy*, London, 1728, 'a list of ... the subscriber's names'; Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 298.

⁸⁰ Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 149.

Royal Society, James Jurin. He also quotes with approval from the *Tentamina medico-physica* by the physician James Keill, and does so even more in the second edition.⁸¹

Morgan's view on medicine is strictly materialistic. Man, like the animal body, is a pure machine. This phrase has its origin in the work of Keill.⁸² David Shuttleton has called Morgan a medico-mechanist.⁸³ Morgan belonged to the rational school of the iatromathematicians who believed that all the functions of the body were motivated by physics.⁸⁴

The famous Archibald Pitcairn, was 'the forgotten father of mathematical medicine'.⁸⁵ This concept, also called iatromechanism, reached its pinnacle of fame in the 1720s and 1730s. Afterwards, Vitalism gained the day. According to the vitalists, the body came to be seen as a living organism fully endowed with the life principle, rather than as an automaton-like machine.⁸⁶

The *Philosophical principles of medicine* was a great success. During Morgan's lifetime, it was quoted more or less favourably by many other medical writers in Britain.⁸⁷ The physician Andrew Hooke, whom we have already met, thought the *Philosophical principles* 'a book that can never be too much studied by the young physician'. Charles Perry called it an excellent

⁸¹ Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, 2nd edition, 112-3, 252: 'the learned Dr. Jurin'; 119, 183, 192, 243; on Keill and his *Tentamina* see F.M. Valadez and C.D O'Malley, 'James Keill of Northampton, physician, anatomist and physiologist', *Medical History*, 15 (1971) 317-35 (331).

⁸² D.E. Shuttleton, 'Methodism and dr. George Cheyne's "More enlightening principles" ', in: R. Porter, ed., *Medicine in the Enlightenment*, (Clio Medica 28), Amsterdam, 1995, 316-35 (318); Morgan, *Philosophical principles*, 2nd edition, vii; cf J.W. Yolton, *Thinking matter, materialism in eighteenth-century Britain*, Minneapolis, 1983, 33; J. Keill, *An account of animal secretion, the quantity of human blood in the humane body, and the muscular motion*, London, 1708, vi; on Keill see further A. Guerrini, 'James Keill, George Cheyne, and Newtonian physiology, 1690-1740', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 18 (1985) 247-66.

⁸³ D.E. Shuttleton, ' "Pamela's library": Samuel Richardson and dr. Cheyne's "Universal cure" ', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 23 (1999) 59-79 (61).

⁸⁴ G.S. Rousseau, *Enlightenment crossings: pre- and post-modern discourses, medical, scientific*, Manchester, 1991, 124 note 20; H.C. Jamieson, 'Catechism in medical history', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 48 (1943) 539.

⁸⁵ Recently the 300-year legacy of iatromathematics has been remembered by H. Ashrafian, 'Mathematics in medicine: the 300-year legacy of iatromathematics', *The Lancet*, vol 382, issue 9907, p.1780, 30 November 2013.

⁸⁶ Brown, 'From mechanism to vitalism'; H. Ishizuka, 'The elasticity of the animal fibre: movement and life in enlightenment medicine', *History of Science*, 44 (2006) 435-68 (435-6).

⁸⁷ N.N., *Febrifugum magnum, morbigugum magnum: or, the grand febrifuge improved*, London, 1726, 96, 110, 158, 172, 182; W. Ratty, *A treatise of the urinary passages*, London, 1726, 25; J. Cook, *An anatomical and mechanical essay on the whole animal oeconomy*, Volume 2, London, 1730, 52; J. Cam, *A dissertation on the pox*, London, 1731, 38; B. Langrish, *A new essay on muscular motion*, London, 1733, 64; Th. Johnson, *Questiones philosophicae in iusti systematis ordinem dispositae*, Cambridge, 1735, 33, 79; D. Turner, *A discourse concerning fevers*, London, 1739, 131, 167; Ch. Perry, *A treatise of diseases in general*, volume 1, London, 1741, v, xi-xii, xiv, xvi, xxiii; Volume 2, London, 1741, 230.

book.⁸⁸ Even the influential New England minister, Cotton Mather, referred to him favourably:

How much would the art of medicine be improved, if our physicians more generally had the mathematical skill of a Dr Mead or a Dr Morgan, and would go his way to work, mathematically, and by the laws of matter and motion, to find out the cause and cure of diseases.⁸⁹

A review in Latin appeared in Leipzig in Germany published in the *Acta Eruditorum* of February 1728.⁹⁰

The book was still read after Morgan's death. It was praised by David Stephenson in 1744.⁹¹ Morgan gained international fame when the famous Swiss physician, Albrecht von Haller, dedicated a paragraph to Morgan in his *Bibliotheca anatomica*, published in 1777.⁹² This medical work by Morgan had a vast distribution. The book is found in many eighteenth-century libraries and booksellers' catalogues in Britain and abroad.⁹³

Afterwards, the book seems to have been forgotten. Sometimes, a quotation from it can be found in a nineteenth-century medical dissertation.⁹⁴ In 1953, a famous 20th century British physician called this title by Morgan an interesting, but neglected book.⁹⁵ Interest in iatromathematics has brought Morgan back into the limelight again. Most recently, Morgan's book has been called, by the Italian mathematician Antonio Fasano, a cornerstone in the process by which medicine gradually adopted a rigorous scientific attitude.⁹⁶ Morgan deserves the attention of a professional medical historian.

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⁸⁸ In Chapter 1 § 14; A. Hooke, *An essay on physic*, London, 1734, 41; Ch. Perry, *An enquiry into the nature and principles of the spaw waters*, London, 1734, 50.

⁸⁹ Quoted by O.T. Beall and R.H. Shryock, *Cotton Mather, first significant figure in American medicine*, Baltimore, 1954, 154.

⁹⁰ N.N., *Acta Eruditorum*, mensis februarii 1728, 53-63; It is mentioned also by N. Regnault, *Philosophical conversations: or, a new system of physics, by way of dialogue*, translated into English ... by Thomas Dale, Volume 2, London, 1731, 161, 164.

⁹¹ D. Stephenson, *Medicine made to agree with the institutions of nature*, London, 1744, iv.

⁹² A. von Haller, *Hermanni Boerhaave viri summi, suique praeceptoris methodus studii medici*, Volume 1, Amsterdam, 1751, 433; A. von Haller, *A dissertation on the motion of the blood*, London, 1757, 17; A. von Haller, *Anfangsgruende der Physiologie des menschlichen Koerpers*, Volume 1, Berlin, 1759, 870; A. von Haller, *Bibliotheca anatomica*, Volume 2, Lugduni Batavorum, 1777, 170-1.

⁹³ See Appendix § 1.

⁹⁴ H.M. Mensert, *Dissertatio medica inauguralis de diabete*, thesis Leiden, Amsterdam, 1841, 63 note.

⁹⁵ H. Cohen, 'The evolution of the concept of disease', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 48 (1955) 155-60 (159).

⁹⁶ Ashrafian, 'Mathematics'; A. Fasano and others, 'Blood coagulation: a puzzle for biologists, a maze for mathematicians', in: D. Ambrosi and others, eds., *Modeling of physiological flows*, Milan, 2012, 41-76 (43 note 4); on Morgan's book see further Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 148-50.

§14: *The mechanical practice of physick*

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In 1735, Morgan published *The mechanical practice of physick, in which the specifick method is examin'd and exploded; and the Bellinian hypothesis of animal secretion and muscular motion, consider'd and refuted. With some occasional remarks and scholia on dr. Lobb's treatise on the small pox, dr. Robinson on the Animal Oeconomy, and professor Boerhaave's Account of the animal spirits and muscular motion*. It was dedicated to Richard Mead, physician to King George II. It contained sixteen propositions in more than 380 pages. Newton is again present in this work.⁹⁷ Morgan complains in this work about 'the obscurity and uncertainty everywhere to be met with in the practice of physick'.⁹⁸ But physics is as consistent and rational a profession and practice as any other.

In this work, he refers to many more medical authorities. In the preface, he refers negatively to the mystic and physician Paracelsus, his disciple Joan Baptista van Helmont, and 'the great modern corrupter both of the theory and practice of physick' Lorenzo Bellini. He refers various times negatively to Bellini.⁹⁹ 'Bellini himself knew nothing of the true laws of motions, and had no regard at all of the chymistry of nature'.¹⁰⁰ More positively, he calls the neuro-anatomist Thomas Willis 'a perfect master of the corpuscularian philosophy as apply'd to physick'. His recommendation to oblige all physicians to talk English to their patients, and not to amuse them with technical words and terms of art is a modern insight. He is critical of various physicians such as Nicholas Culpeper and William Salmon, who 'used their best endeavours, to make every fool a physician, and every physician a fool'.¹⁰¹ Culpeper was famous as a doctor to the London poor and for his so-called *Culpeper's Herbal*, which was reprinted many times.¹⁰²

Morgan refers positively to the famous Leiden physician, Herman Boerhaave.¹⁰³ He talks very negatively about the *Treatise of the small pox* by Theophilus Lobb.¹⁰⁴ He refers many times favourably to other physicians.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Th. Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, London, 1735, 59, 64, 70-1.

⁹⁸ Morgan, *The mechanical practice*, vii.

⁹⁹ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 35, 139, 146, 148-9, 156-7, 253, 256, 342; on Bellini see W.B. Fye, 'Lorenzo Bellini', *Clinical Cardiology*, 20 (1997) 181-2.

¹⁰⁰ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 139.

¹⁰¹ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, ix, xiii-xv, 4.

¹⁰² R. Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind: a medical history of humanity from antiquity to the present*, London, 1999, 210.

¹⁰³ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, title page, 135, 201, 149: 'so great a man as professor Boerhaave'; Boerhaave is already present in the second edition of the *Philosophical principles of medicine*, 200.

¹⁰⁴ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 199-200, 203-4.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Sydenham, the father of English medicine, and his famous Laudanum, the tincture of opium, Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 163, 166, 182, 193, 257. He quotes 'so great a mathematician as Dr. Jurin, in his dissertation *De motu aquarum fluentium*'. Further the London physician Dr. Cam of Bow Church Yard. He quotes 'that great man, and truly learned physician' John Freind, Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 78, 218, 243; on Freind see J.S. Rowlinson, 'John Freind, physician, chemist, Jacobite and friend of Voltaire's', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 61 (2007) 109-27.

Furthermore, he refers negatively to ‘a very odd and surprizing book’: *Animal oeconomy* by Bryan Robinson, physician in Dublin.¹⁰⁶ Robinson was not amused. In a letter to George Cheyne, Robinson wrote on July 12th 1735: ‘I could have wish’d Dr. Morgan had considered my *Animal oeconomy* with a little more temper as well as care’.¹⁰⁷ This letter resulted in an answer from Morgan. On July 5th 1738, Morgan dated his last medical publication: *A letter to Dr. Cheyne occasioned by Dr. Robinson’s letter to him in defence of his treatise of the animal oeconomy against Dr. Morgan’s objections in his mechanical practice*.¹⁰⁸ Morgan asked for mediation between himself and Robinson by the vegetarian George Cheyne, who was the author of the popular *Essay of health and long life* (1724) and *The English malady* (1734), and one of the best known physicians in Britain.¹⁰⁹ It is not known whether they knew each other personally. By looking for important people in the medical world of his day, such as Sir Hans Sloane, Richard Mead and George Cheyne, to whom he might dedicate his publications, he tried to further his position. Morgan indicated some restrictions in this letter: ‘Though we scarce agree in any thing else, yet we both agree in this, that you are a very proper and competent judge of the matter in debate’. The question between Robinson and Morgan was: Who has and who has not understood Isaac Newton. ‘Whether he or I have most mistaken Sir Isaac Newton, I must appeal to you, Sir’.¹¹⁰ In the letter he shows again his abundant mathematical knowledge by using mathematical formulas. As far as I can ascertain, Cheyne never reacted.

It may be said that Morgan was well versed in medical literature. He openly showed his cynical criticism of many a colleague in the medical field. But *The mechanical practice of physick* had less success than its predecessor. I found fewer quotations for this book than from the *Philosophical principles of medicine*. It was quoted by the apothecary John King. Thomas Knight, Member of the Royal College of Physicians, also mentioned Morgan. It is referred to in the anonymous *A dissertation on sea-water*, published around 1755.¹¹¹ The Philosophical

¹⁰⁶ Morgan, *The mechanical practice of physick*, 9, 66-7.

¹⁰⁷ B. Robinson, *A treatise of the animal oeconomy*, volume 2, 3rd edition, London, 1738, 55; see T.P.C. Kirkpatrick, *History of the medical teaching in Trinity College Dublin and of the School of Physic in Ireland*, Dublin, 1912, 110.

¹⁰⁸ See on the discussion A.M. Roos, ‘Irish Newtonian physicians and their arguments: the case of Bryan Robinson’, in: E. Boran and M. Feingold, eds., *Reading Newton in early modern Europe*, (Scientific and Learned Cultures and their Institutions, 19), Leiden, 2017, 116-143 (139-142): ‘Robinson’s detractors: Dr. Thomas Morgan’.

¹⁰⁹ A. Guerrini, sub voce ‘Cheyne, George’, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 11, Oxford, 2004, 373; on Cheyne see H. Viets, ‘George Cheyne, 1673-1743’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 23 (1949) 435-52, and A. Guerrini, *Obesity and depression in the Enlightenment. The life and times of George Cheyne*, Norman, 2000.

¹¹⁰ Th. Morgan, *A letter to Dr. Cheyne occasioned by Dr. Robinson’s letter to him in defence of his treatise of the animal oeconomy against Dr. Morgan’s objections in his mechanical practice*, London, 1738, 3, 5.

¹¹¹ J. King, *An essay on hot and cold bathing*, London, 1737, 53, 127; Th. Knight, *Reflections upon catholicons, or universal medicines*, London, 1749, 134; N.N., *A dissertation on sea-water*, London, s.a., 12.

Society of Edinburgh dealt with this work by Morgan in its medical essays.¹¹² Probably the turn to Vitalism was already in full flight. As we have already seen, Morgan's medical works had a vast distribution. His name also founds its way with the progress of time into some medical histories.¹¹³ But he was subsequently forgotten. Most medical histories do not name him. Only recently can commentaries about his medical works again be found in modern books and articles about medical history, in which his work is characterized by Anita Guerrini as 'a rather unorthodox variety of Newtonian medicine'.¹¹⁴

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§15: Doubtful attributions

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In the controversy around Salters' Hall, another pamphlet, entitled *The friendly interposer: or, the true Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, stated*, (London, 1719), has been attributed to Morgan, but I do not endorse this view.¹¹⁵ The title page of this pamphlet is signed: *By a Physician*. On page 24 it is signed: *Philaethes*. So the reason for the identification seems clear. Philaethes is the pseudonym, which Morgan employs in his principal work *The moral philosopher, in a dialogue between Philaethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew*. But things are not so simple. Philaethes is used as a pseudonym by numerous authors in the eighteenth century. A look in library catalogues shows a bewildering use of this pseudonym.¹¹⁶ The combination is interesting. Was Morgan not also a physician? There are, however, a number of reasons to doubt the identification. First of all, Morgan was no physician at the time of the publication of this pamphlet. His medical interests only became public from the publication of his *Philosophical principles of medicine* in 1725. Secondly, there is the question of the London printer of this pamphlet: Richard Ford, at the

¹¹² N.N., *Medical essays and observations*, Volume 4, 2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1738, 469, 471, 478, 497, 510, 518; also in later published volumes; various parts of these essays have been translated into French and into German.

¹¹³ Such as K. Sprengel, *Histoire de la médecine depuis son origine jusqu'au dix-neuvième siècle, traduit de l'allemand par A.J.L. Jourdan*, Volume 5, Paris, 1815, 175-6; R.H. Rohatzsch, *Compendiöse Geschichte der Medizin*, Volume 1, Pforzheim, 1839, 370; E. Bouchut, *Histoire de la médecine et des doctrines médicales*, Volume 2, Paris, 1873, 217; J.H. Baas, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Medizin*, Stuttgart, 1876, 405.

¹¹⁴ M. Neuburger, 'An historical survey of the concept of nature from a medical viewpoint', *Isis*, 35 (1944) 16-28 (27 note 28); G.S. Rousseau, 'Science and the discovery of the imagination in enlightened England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3 (1969) 108-35 (123-4); A. Guerrini, 'Newtonianism, medicine and religion', in: O.P. Grell and A. Cunningham, eds., *Religio Medici, medicine and religion in seventeenth century England*, Aldershot, 1996, 293-312 (305-6); A. Lord, ' "The great Arcana of the deity": menstruation and menstrual disorders in eighteenth century British medical thought', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 73 (1999) 38-63 (47); Guerrini, *Obesity*, 153-4; L. Dacome, 'Living with the chair: private excreta, collective health and medical authority in the eighteenth century', *History of Science*, 39 (2001) 467-500 (473); Debus, *Chemistry*, 178-9; A.M. Roos, *The salt of the earth: natural philosophy, medicine and chymistry in England, 1650-1750*, (History of Science and Medicine Library 3), Leiden, 2007, 144 note 156; H. Ishizuka, ' "Fibre body", the concept of fibre in eighteenth-century medicine: c.1700-40', *Medical History*, 56 (2012) 562-84 (571-2).

¹¹⁵ Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 141 notes 112 and 114, 217; Wigelsworth, 'The disputed root', 32 note 18; Wigelsworth, 'A sheep', 278 note 44; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 172 note 10, 201.

¹¹⁶ A look in *The National Union Catalog pre-1956 Imprints*, Volume 455, London, 1976, 251-256, sub voce 'Philaethes' is sufficient.

Angel in the Poultry. All the pamphlets Morgan wrote in the period 1719 till 1722 were printed in London, by James Roberts in Warwick Lane. He later engages with other printers, but never with Richard Ford. In the third place, the use of Greek fonts in the text and the notes of this pamphlet are atypical for Morgan.¹¹⁷ He never uses Greek fonts in those years. Fourthly, in his first pamphlet Morgan uses *a Protestant Dissenter* as a pseudonym. Finally, all the pamphlets written by Morgan in the Trinitarian controversy are collected in Morgan's *A collection of tracts. The friendly interposer* is not included in this collection. So there is no cogent reason to assume that Morgan wrote this pamphlet.¹¹⁸

The British Museum: General Catalogue of Printed Books attributes to Morgan: *Christianity revived, and Judaism subverted. Occasion'd by Mr. Chubb's late tracts, concerning Scripture inspiration, the resurrection of Christ; and the case of Abraham, in being commanded of God to offer up his Son. In a letter from a gentleman in the country to his friend in London*, London, 1734, printed for J. Roberts.¹¹⁹ It is dated June 27th 1734 and signed: *P.B.* An eighteenth-century hand on the title page of the copy in the British Library has ascribed it to Thomas Morgan, M.D. I myself long and until recently believed this attribution.¹²⁰ The content of this booklet has much in common with the negative views Morgan has on Judaism and on the Old Testament. But that makes the identification too easy. Searching for a reasonable interpretation of these initials *P.B.*, I have so far not found anything useful. Furthermore, Morgan lived in Bristol in 1734 and was not 'a gentleman in the country'. So I prefer not to acknowledge the authorship of this book as Morgan's.

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§16: Summary

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Between 1719 and 1724, Morgan was an ardent polemic – writing more than 480 pages – taking up his pen against more than ten opponents in the pamphlet war around the Salters' Hall Conference. His pamphlets testify to the development in Morgan's thinking away from Scriptural orthodoxy to the primacy of reason. His dislike of Enthusiasm is in line with the general religious opinion in the eighteenth century. He has moved away from his Trinitarian confession in Frome to a more Arian vision on the Trinity. After the break with the dissenting community of Marlborough he enters into discussion with the deist Thomas Chubb. It is important to realize that at this moment Morgan did not exhibit any deistic feelings. Most of his energy between 1725 and 1735 goes to the study of medicine. He is successful in publishing medical books – together, more than 900 pages - which had a ready national and international sale. He belonged to a medical school, the iatromathematicians, which lost the battle against Vitalism and therefore Morgan's medical work was rapidly forgotten in the second part of the eighteenth century. Only recently a fresh assessment of his medical studies has led to a new interest in his medical achievements.

¹¹⁷ N.N., *The friendly Interposer*, London, 1719, 12,14-15,17,21-22.

¹¹⁸ See for other arguments J. van den Berg, 'Is Thomas Morgan Philalethes?', *Notes and Queries*, 58 (2011) 400-1; J.R. Wigelsworth, ' "God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being": Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan on miracles and providence', in: Hudson and others, eds., *Atheism and Deism revalued*: 157-172 (166-7 note 33) has in the meantime revoked his opinion.

¹¹⁹ N.N., *British Museum*, 375; nowadays the website of *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (retrieved 13.12.2017) gives: 'sometimes attributed to Thomas Morgan'.

¹²⁰ van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton', 85; J. van den Berg, 'English Deism and Germany: the Thomas Morgan controversy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 59 (2008) 48-61 (49).

Chapter Three: *The moral philosopher*

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§1: Introduction

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After the publication of his medical studies, Morgan devoted time to putting his religious views on paper more extensively. His chief work, *The moral philosopher*, was published anonymously and printed for the author in London in February 1737. Morgan did not think it wise to publish this book under his own name. As he informs his readers: ‘Whatever fate these papers may meet with in the world, one thing is pretty sure, that the silversmiths will be all in an uproar for Diana’.¹

But only a few months later Morgan’s authorship was widely known by the reviewers and critics on the continent.² The famous Independent minister, Philip Doddridge, already knew in June 1737 that Morgan was the author of *The moral philosopher*, writing full of abhorrence about it in a letter to his friend, Samuel Clark.³ As it turned out, Doddridge set the tone for a mostly negative reception of the book, as we will see later in Chapter Four. Indeed, *The moral philosopher* has received many bewildering and sometime conflicting comments during the last three centuries. Some comments are about the style of the book, others about its contents. ‘This writer has originality and controversial vigour; but he is rash and extravagant beyond example’, one author said.⁴ Another defined it as an ill-written book.⁵ But one also finds praise for its vigorous language and criticism of the style that savoured of self-assurance.⁶ We encounter similar comments up till today. In our time, *The moral philosopher* has been referred to as Morgan’s ‘most interesting, sustained and provocative theological treatise’. But elsewhere it is called a diffuse and haphazard work.⁷ All these observations offer little encouragement to read *The moral philosopher*. Probably this is one of the reasons why Morgan is the least known of all the deists.

¹ (Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, preface xi. It is a warning to possible reactions of religious authorities on his work with reference to Acts 19 verses 28 and 34, in which there is talk of the uproar of the silversmiths against the Apostle Paul.

² *Bibliothèque Britannique, ou histoire des ouvrages des savans de la Grande-Bretagne*, 9/1 (1737) 216: ‘Mr.Morgan, docteur en médecine, qu’on dit l’auteur de *Moral Philosopher*’; *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l’Europe*, 18 (1737) 488: ‘On ne doute point que Mr.Morgan ne soit l’auteur du *Philosophe Moral*’.

³ G.F. Nuttall, ed., *Calendar of the correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-1751)*, (Historical Manuscript Commission Joint Publications 26), London, 1979, 84: June 12th 1737: ‘I have just read Morgan’s detestable, inconsistent, immoral & insolent Book’.

⁴ Cairns, *Unbelief*, 94.

⁵ Overton, ‘The Deists’, in: Abbey and Overton, *The English church*, 89; the same phrase in German by F.C. Schlosser, *Geschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und des neunzehnten bis zum Sturz des französischen Kaiserreichs*, volume 1, Heidelberg, 1836, 406: ‘seinem schlecht geschriebenen Buche’.

⁶ Colligan, *Eighteenth century nonconformity*, 2.

⁷ R.A. Rosengarten, *Henry Fielding and the narration of providence*, New York, 2000, 48; Paget, *Jews*, 293.

At any rate, since the 1930s, it has been *bon ton* to conclude that Morgan did not contribute much that was new to the deist debates.⁸ As I hope to show this judgment should be revised. What is more to the point is the observation that little is said by Morgan, which had not been insinuated by one of his predecessors, ‘but, the point to be marked is that it *was* now said, not merely insinuated’.⁹

The moral philosopher is a dialogue between a deist supporter of Paul and a Judaizing supporter of Peter, in which Paul continues the teaching of Jesus.¹⁰ The principal point is that the self-styled Christian deist Thomas Morgan, makes a sharp distinction between the two Testaments. St. Paul is his hero, the man who in his view liberated the Christian message from its Jewish roots. This anti-Judaic strain would, as we will see, in Morgan’s case, end in pure anti-Semitic pronouncements. It has been asserted that in *The moral philosopher* for the first time in modern history, the Old and New Testament, Judaism and Christianity, were sharply separated.¹¹ In the history of the disparagement of the Old Testament Morgan’s work can be formulated as the ‘nearest significant approach to Christian rejection of the Old Testament since Marcion’.¹²

Though as far as we know there was no concrete occasion for Morgan to start writing *The moral philosopher*, it is clear that he very much wanted to show the public his opinions about Christianity. This public consisted of his former co-religionists within the Presbyterian and Independent circles. It was especially from those circles - as we shall see - that he would receive harsh criticisms on his *Moral philosopher*. Morgan reacted to these criticisms in Volumes two and three of *The moral philosopher*, which were to appear in 1739 and 1740 respectively.

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§2: Why should it have the title *The moral philosopher*?

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The leading title of Morgan’s publication runs *The moral philosopher, in a dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew*. As was common at the time, there follows an extensive subtitle which highlights important issues in the book:

In which the grounds and reasons of religion in general, and particularly of Christianity, as distinguish’d from the religion of nature; the different methods of conveying and

⁸ A.L. Leroy, *La critique et la religion chez David Hume*, Paris (1931), 171; Orr, *English deism*, 144; E.C. Mossner, *Bishop Butler and the age of reason. A study in the history of thought*, New York, 1936, 140; Stromberg, *Religious liberalism*, 54; Cragg, *Reason and authority*, 68; P. Gay, *Deism, an anthology*, Princeton, 1968, 140.

⁹ Overton, ‘The Deists’, 90.

¹⁰ L. Salvatorelli, ‘From Locke to Reitzenstein: the historical investigation of the origins of Christianity’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 22 (1929) 263-369 (265).

¹¹ Schmidt, *Religion*, 63: ‘In dieser Schrift wurden erstmalig in der Neuzeit Judentum und Christentum, AT und NT scharf voneinander geschieden und Tendenzen sichtbar, die bei Schleiermacher und Harnack wiederauf lebten’. The same observation is made by Gerdmar, *Roots*, 32: ‘Morgan was probably the first to take such a radical stand against the Old Testament in England’, and 31: ‘Central theme ... is the contrast between Judaism and Christianity’.

¹² D.L. Baker, *Two Testaments, one Bible. A study of some modern solutions to the theological problem of the relationship between the Old and the New Testament*, Leicester, 1976, 56, formulated this phrase with regard to Schleiermacher, but the same can be said of Thomas Morgan as well.

proposing moral truths to the mind, and the necessary marks or criteria on which they must all equally depend; the nature of positive laws, rites and ceremonies, and how far they are capable of proof as of standing perpetual obligation; with many other matters of the utmost consequence in religion, are fairly considered, and debated, and the arguments on both sides impartially represented.

These eighteenth-century subtitles have a length which seem to mix up a lot of things. But the main thing in this case is clear. What makes Christianity so special in comparison with the religion of nature? What are the criteria to discern the difference between the two? A part of this subtitle: *the grounds and reasons of religion*, reminds us of the title of another famous deist work: *A discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion*, by Anthony Collins in 1724 (reissued in 1737 and 1741).¹³

Reason will be an important factor as is clear from the rest of the title page of *The moral philosopher*, which also lists a quotation from the Book of Job, 32 Verse 8, where Elihu says: 'There is reason in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding'. It is a telling quotation, indicating the importance Morgan wishes to give to human reason. One may wonder why he wished to incorporate the term 'moral philosophy' in the title of what would become his principal work, as its contents have nothing to do with moral philosophy as a branch of ethics or ethical philosophy as we know it from the countless moral philosophies which have been published since times immemorial. With some exceptions in the many books about the history of moral philosophy Morgan's name will therefore not be found.¹⁴ Nevertheless, there is a reason for this title because, in good deist vein, Morgan held that the Bible did not explain our ideas of God and the good, but that our ideas of God and the good dominated the explanation of the Bible.¹⁵ In other words, one needed to be a moral philosopher to interpret the Scriptures.

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§3: A dialogue between Philalethes a Christian Deist, and Theophanes a Christian Jew

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The main body of *The moral philosopher* consists of a dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew.¹⁶ It is the result of conversations held by

a society, or club of gentlemen in the country, who met once a fortnight at a gentleman's house in a pleasant retired village, with a design to enter impartially into the consideration of the grounds and principles of religion in general, and particularly of Christianity as a revelation distinct of the religion of nature. These debates and conferences were continued regularly for almost two years.¹⁷

¹³ O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 244; Collins was a justice of the peace and later a deputy-lieutenant at Great Baddow in Essex.

¹⁴ Exceptions are Bourke, *History of ethics*, Volume 1, 210; J. Rohls, *Geschichte der Ethik*, 2nd edition, Tübingen, 1999, 361; J.B. Schneewind, *Essays on the history of moral philosophy*, Oxford, 2010, 229, 233.

¹⁵ See G. Gawlick, 'Vorwort des Herausgebers', in: Lechler, *Geschichte*, xx-xxi. 'Der Titel drückte sein Programm aus: Morgan war wie seine Vorgänger davon überzeugt, dass sich nicht unsere Ideen von Gott und dem Guten nach der Bibel, sondern die Auslegung der Bibel nach unseren Ideen von Gott und dem guten richten muss'.

¹⁶ *The moral philosopher* has an undated preface of twelve pages, the main body starts on page 13 and consists of nearly 440 pages, and an index of nine pages.

¹⁷ *The moral philosopher*, preface vii-viii.

This genre of the dialogue was very popular in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One need only think of the famous dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, by George Berkeley (1713). There are more than five hundred eighteenth-century English titles on religion and philosophy containing the form of a dialogue or dialogues.¹⁸ The dialogue has the advantage of enlivening the topic of conversation, but in the case of Morgan the dialogue has the tendency to continue too long. As we will see, after the first volume he gave up the literary instrument of the dialogue. Fictitious though these dialogues may be, Morgan, who was a staunch controversialist, would in reality certainly have participated in many discussions about these topics in this way. Without doubt, it is Philalethes, the lover of truth, who serves as Morgan's spokesman.¹⁹

Philalethes speaks much more in this dialogue than Theophanes, which may be an indication of Morgan's egocentricity and self-assurance. A peculiar element in the book is the fiction of the circumstantial sermon which Philalethes preaches on Ephesians 1:7 (pp. 119 - 208), a sermon with a pause on page 138. The dialogical character of the book disappears on these pages. In addition to Philalethes and Theophanes other people appear on the stage but they do not participate in the conversation.²⁰

From time to time, we hear of certain interruptions in the dialogue. Thus, Philalethes says at one point: 'The bell, I hear, rings to dinner ... We will dine and refresh ourselves a little' (p.118). Later he asks for 'a large glass of wine, with a little water in it' (p.138). And much later he says: 'It grows late, and we may better resume the discourse in the morning' (p.246). In the preface Morgan refers to 'Judaizing Christians' and 'Christian Judaizers', a theme that will be one of the objects of his book.²¹ In the main part of the book he uses the terms 'Christian Jews' or 'Jewish Christians'.²² These are not ethnical terms but refer to those people in the church who found Christianity upon Judaism.²³ In the second volume of *The moral philosopher* he uses the terms 'Circumcised Christians', 'Nazarene Jews', 'Nazarenes', and 'Messiah-men', but then he refers normally to the historical situation of the New Testament.²⁴

With the title 'A dialogue between Philalethes a Christian Deist, and Theophanes a Christian Jew', the main body of the book begins on page 13. This contrast between a Christian Deist

¹⁸ See *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* sub voce, retrieved 13.12.2017; Morgan is not mentioned in M. Prince, *Philosophical dialogue in the British enlightenment: theology, aesthetics and the novel*, (Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought 31), Cambridge, 1996; Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" ', 107-11: 'the rhetorical strategy of *The Moral Philosopher*'.

¹⁹ Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" ', 108.

²⁰ *The moral philosopher*, 246, 449: the symbolic names 'Rabbi Ben Aron', 'Agricola, a country farmer' and 'Eusebius, the priest of our parish'.

²¹ *The moral philosopher*, preface v-vi; see about this terminology of Morgan H. Lemke, *Judenchristentum – zwischen Ausgrenzung und Integration. Zur Geschichte eines exegetischen Begriffes*, (Hamburger Theologische Studien 25), Münster, 2001, 161-66.

²² *The moral philosopher*, 71, 76, 185, 189, 199, 328-9, 362, 364-5, 378.

²³ *The moral philosopher*, 185; Lemke, *Judenchristentum*, 161: 'Nicht die Herkunft, sondern ein bestimmtes, "jüdisches" Verständniss vom Christentum ist ausschlaggebend'.

²⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, xxxii, 6, 31, 55-6, 78, 87, 91, 226, 250, second part 25.

and a Christian Jew is the central theme of the book. By this contrast Morgan wishes to indicate his aim to distinguish between Christian Deism and a Christianity which is malformed by Jewish elements. This contrast repeats itself throughout the book.

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§4: “The liberty to represent things in my own way”

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As it is for so many deists, liberty is a highly important notion for Morgan. Thus, he starts his *Moral philosopher* by asserting that he wishes to be free to write what he wants. Already in the preface he refers to liberty six times, culminating in his assertion on the last page: ‘I have taken the liberty to represent things in my own way’.²⁵ Further on he refers various times to liberty of conscience as part of true religion.²⁶ Now liberty to pronounce one’s opinions was for deists a chief concept. It was Anthony Collins who coined the term ‘free-thinking’ in his *Discourse of free-thinking, occasion’d by the rise and growth of a sect call’d free-thinkers* (1713).²⁷ The *Discourse* was reprinted many times. Collins proposed that we have the right to think freely.²⁸ Among the free-thinkers in early ages he mentions besides Greek and Latin authors such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Horace and Virgil, also the Jewish prophets and King Solomon. In England he lists as free-thinkers Bacon, Hobbes and Archbishop John Tillotson.²⁹ The *Discourse* was attacked severely for its inconsistencies and errors by the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Richard Bentley, in his *Remarks upon a late discourse of free-thinking*, which was reprinted eight times until 1743. Generally, the opinion was held that Bentley defeated Collins.³⁰

Morgan, who probably knew of the controversy, was much more prudent. In any case, he avoids the use of the term free-thinking, with some exceptions, for example when he refers to the Apostle Paul as ‘the great free-thinker of his age, the bold and brave defender of reason against authority’.³¹

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§5: Christian Deism

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Interestingly, from 1737 onwards, he calls himself a Christian Deist. He does so both in the title and the contents of *The moral philosopher*.³² ‘I am a Christian, and at the same time a Deist or, if you please, this is my Christian Deism’. Likewise he declares: ‘I take, as you

²⁵ *The moral philosopher*, preface iv-v, xi.

²⁶ *The moral philosopher*, 120, 302, 310, 313, 359, 387.

²⁷ Collins also published *A philosophical inquiry concerning human liberty*, 1717; O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 244; U. Horstmann, *Die Geschichte der Gedankenfreiheit in England am Beispiel von Anthony Collins: a discourse of free-thinking*, (Monographien zur Philosophischen Forschung 197), Königstein, 1980.

²⁸ (A. Collins), *A discourse of free-thinking*, London, 1713, passim.

²⁹ (Collins), *Discourse*, 98-139; he calls many more on p.139.

³⁰ O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 79.

³¹ *The moral philosopher*, 71, 449. *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 48, 272. The term ‘freethinking’ returns in the preface to the second volume of *The moral philosopher*, iii; and ‘freethinkers’ in his last book, *A brief examination*, 1.

³² *The moral philosopher*, title page, 13, 165, 392.

know, Christianity to be that scheme or system of Deism, natural religion, or moral truth and righteousness, which was at first preached and propagated in the world, by Jesus Christ and his apostles'.³³ What did Morgan mean with the label "Christian Deist"? As noted above, this label is of great importance to him. When he uses the term Deism in general in 1737, he defines it as the religion of nature. Elsewhere he defines it as the religion of God and nature.³⁴ We remember the observations by the Jesuit John Constable who criticized Morgan and wrote in 1739: 'A Christian Deist is indeed neither Christian nor Deist'.³⁵ The term 'Christian Deism' has been the subject of much speculation. Christian Deism has been called the most contradictory and confusing variant of Deism.³⁶ Some have stated that English Deism was a cautious Christian Deism, largely restricted in influence to the upper classes. Others accept the idea that a number of influential seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers claimed for themselves the title of Christian deist, because they accepted both the Christian religion based on revelation and a deistic religion based on natural religion.³⁷ But I cannot find anyone among the so-called deists who named himself a Christian deist, with the exception of Thomas Morgan.³⁸ One scholar calls all English deists without exception "Christian Deists". But then the term "Christian Deist" loses its specific flavor.³⁹ Thomas Woolston and Thomas Chubb have been labelled Christian deists but they themselves abstain from employing the term or applying it to themselves.⁴⁰ Many authors state that Matthew Tindal called himself a Christian deist.⁴¹ This opinion has rightly been criticized.⁴²

³³ *The moral philosopher*, 394, 412; similar phrases on 96-7, 439.

³⁴ *The moral philosopher*, 17, 434.

³⁵ (Constable), *Deism and Christianity*, 242; cf Introduction § 7.

³⁶ Barnett, *The enlightenment*, 70.

³⁷ W. Walker, *A history of the Christian church*, reprint, New York, 1985, 584; E.V. McKnight, *Jesus Christ in history and Scripture. A poetic and sectarian perspective*, Macon, GA, 1999, 96.

³⁸ Contra J. Waligore, 'Christian deism in eighteenth century England', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 75 (2014) 205-22.

³⁹ H.J. Hillerbrand, 'The decline and fall of the true Christian church: the view of the English deists', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 60 (2008), 97-110; H.J. Hillerbrand, *A new history of Christianity*, Nashville, TN, 2012, 219.

⁴⁰ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, index; Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, 124, 665.

⁴¹ B.A. Atkinson, *Christianity not older than the first gospel-promise*, London, 1730, 5, 10; Leland, *A view*, 2nd edition, Volume 1, 213; W. Van Mildert, 'Review of the author's life and writings' in: *The works of the rev. Daniel Waterland d.d.*, Volume 1 Part 1, Oxford, 1823, 156; Stephen, *History of English thought*, Volume 1, 129; Overton, 'The deists', 94-5; W.A. Spooner, *Bishop Butler, his life and writings*, London, 1901, 138; S. Cheetham, *A history of the Christian church since the reformation*, London, 1907, 177; J.M. McCabe, *A biographical dictionary of modern rationalists*, London, 1920, 800; W. Stoker, *De christelijke godsdienst in de filosofie van de Verlichting*, (Philosophia Religionum 19), Assen, 1980, 2; G. Gawlick, 'Reimarus und der englische Deismus', in: K. Gründer ed., *Religionskritik und Religiosität in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung 11), Heidelberg, 1989, 43-54 (52); Krolzik, *Evangelisches Lexikon*, 409; J.E. Force, 'Biblical interpretation, Newton, and English deism', in: R.H. Popkin and A. Vanderjagt, eds., *Scepticism and irreligion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 37), Leiden, 1993, 282-305 (282 note 2); J.M. Byrne, *Religion and the enlightenment from Descartes to Kant*, Louisville, 1997, 111; R.E. Olson,

Tindal, who was a Fellow of All Souls College, Cambridge and Doctor of Law, only refers to Samuel Clarke when he says in connection with Clarke's *Discourse of the unchangeable obligation of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*: 'These true Christian deists, as, I think, the Dr. ought to call them'.⁴³ He refers to those deists who according to Clarke also accepted the Christian revelation. He did not use the term for himself.

The orthodox theologian Daniel Waterland, writing against 'infidelity' in 1732, spoke also of Christian deists, formulating his observation in a negative way as follows: 'These men we call Deists ... Some would have us add the epithet of Christian to it, and to style them Christian Deists: a phrase which it will be hard to make sense of ... There may be Pagan Deists and Jewish Deists, and Mahometan Deists, and Christian Deists; ... to call them Christian Deists is a great abuse of language'.⁴⁴ For Waterland it is contradictory to combine the two terms. Deism is in his opinion only 'the folly of man, set up in opposition to the wisdom of heaven'.⁴⁵ So he defended the absoluteness of Christianity against infidelity.

But this does not mean that one cannot find people in eighteenth-century England who called themselves Christian deist. Thus, for example, the Deputy-Lieutenant of the Tower in London Lieutenant-General Adam Williamson did call himself seriously a Christian deist in a note in his prayer-book.⁴⁶ There may have been more people who did so, but it is remarkable that none of the other so-called deists defined himself as such.

Morgan may have found the term "Christian Deist" through authors like Tindal and Waterland, but he used it for his own purpose. I think that he was quite serious when he linked Deism and the message of Christ in the Gospel. His Christian Deism is nothing other than the moral preaching of Jesus Christ in the Gospel, be it without all the elements he declares to be Jewish. Therefore he can refer to the adversaries of these Christian deists as the Christian Jews, or Jewish Christians, they who found Christianity upon Judaism.⁴⁷ This implies his criticism of the Old Testament.⁴⁸ He is proud in to use the label deist as a positive qualification. In this respect he differs from all other so-called deists.

The story of Christian theology. Twenty centuries of tradition & reform, Downers Grove, IL, 1999, 529; C. Brown, 'Enlightenment period', in: St.E. Porter, ed., *Dictionary of biblical criticism and interpretation*, New York, 2007, 92-101 (94); A.C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: an introduction*, Grand Rapids, 2009, 137.

⁴² Lator, *Matthew Tindal*, 148: 'Tindal did not say that he is a Christian deist, nor did he frame any scheme of Christian deism'; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 12, doubts about Tindal: 'It is less certain that he claimed to be a "Christian Deist" '.

⁴³ (M. Tindal), *Christianity as old as the creation*, London, 1730, 333; compare also 336-7; (an other edition, London, 1730, 368, compare also 371 and 373).

⁴⁴ D. Waterland, *Christianity vindicated against infidelity*, London, 1732, 62-3.

⁴⁵ Waterland, *Christianity vindicated*, 76.

⁴⁶ J.Ch. Fox, ed., *The official diary of lieutenant-general Adam Williamson, deputy-lieutenant of the Tower of London 1722-1747*, (Camden Third Series, 22) London, 1912, 5-19: 'introduction', 15: 'On the end of the fly leaf (of his prayerbook) he writes: "I desire it may be known that the author of the foregoing remarks and corrections is a Christian Deist" '.

⁴⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 185.

⁴⁸ See below § 9.

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§6: The criterion of religion: The fitness of things

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In the preface to *The moral philosopher*, Morgan refers to ‘the moral truth, reason, and fitness of things’ as the only true foundation of religion.⁴⁹ This ‘fitness of things’ – and all its derivatives, for that matter – is an important phrase, which he uses more than fifty times. One finds it already in his earlier works, in more places in *The moral philosopher*, in its other volumes, and in later works, such as the *Physico-Theology*.⁵⁰ The fitness of things is a typical eighteenth-century phrase, originating from the philosophy of Samuel Clarke.⁵¹ Morgan confirms this origin in his reply to John Chapman in Volume 2 of *The moral philosopher*.⁵² He highly appreciated Clarke and called him ‘the excellent and truly learned Dr. Samuel Clarke’.⁵³ But Morgan did not derive his Deism from Clarke.⁵⁴ Clarke gives no definition of this fitness.

The Baptist minister, John Gill, wrote ironically a nice description of the concept in 1738:

Nothing is more frequently talked of in this enlightened age, this age of politeness, reason and good sense, than *the nature and fitness of things*; or, *the reason and nature of things*; phrases which to many, at least, that use them, are unmeaning and unintelligible sounds; and serve only as a retreat, when they have been fairly beaten out of an argument by the superior force and evidence of divine revelation.⁵⁵

Indeed, one finds the term throughout the 18th century. We encounter it among orthodox theologians, such as John Conybeare, and among deists like Thomas Chubb. An anonymous author wrote at the end of the century: ‘Some talk and write, as though the whole system of

⁴⁹ *The moral philosopher*, preface v.

⁵⁰ Morgan, *The grounds and principles*, 92; Morgan, *A letter to mr. Thomas Chubb*, 35-6; Morgan, *A defence of natural and revealed religion*, 20, 36; *The moral philosopher*, 84, 86, 90, 96, 147, 201, 205, 271, 393, 417, 419; (Morgan), *A defence of the moral philosopher*, 39; *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, v, vii, ix, xi, xiii, xxiii, Part one, 3, 20-1, 30, 40, 44, 46, 48-9, 53, 110, 143, Part two, 28-9, 69, 72; (Th. Morgan), *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, London, 1740, iii, 137, 144, 161; Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 78, 80, 106, 121-2, 138, 147, 162, 217, 326; Morgan, *A vindication*, 5, 66-7; (A society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination*, iii, lxxxi, 18, 48.

⁵¹ S. Clarke, *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, London, 1705, 3, 118, 236, 250; see J.E. LeRossignol, *The ethical philosophy of Samuel Clarke*, Leipzig, 1892, 39-48: ‘The fitness of things’; A.R. Humphreys, ‘The eternal fitness of things: an aspect of eighteenth century thought’, *Modern Language Review*, 42 (1947) 188-198.

⁵² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, Part two, 28: ‘I can assure you, that I meant the same thing by it that Dr. Clarke does’.

⁵³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 137.

⁵⁴ Contra Ch.G. Shaw, sub voce ‘The Enlightenment’, in: J. Hastings and J.A. Selbie, eds., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Volume 5, London, 1912, 310-6 (315).

⁵⁵ J. Gill, *The moral nature and fitness of things considered. Occasioned by some passages in the Reverend Mr. Samuel Chandler’s sermon, lately preached to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners*, London, 1738, 3.

morals was based on the fitness of things. Yet what they mean by things and by fitness, is not so easy to determine'.⁵⁶

There is no simple definition of the term. The most probable meaning of 'the fitness of things' is something like initiating a phrase with 'it is suitable' or 'it is appropriate'. But the vagueness remains.

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§7: The criterion of revelation: Miracles no proof of revelation

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This brings us to the question of the value of revelation. According to Morgan, there is no such thing as divine faith upon human testimony. There is only one criterion of divine truth, or of any doctrine, as coming from God, and that is 'the moral truth, reason or fitness of the thing itself'. This concept, as we already saw, permeates nearly all the Morgan's publications. He further argues that there have always been two kinds of religion in the world:

the first is the religion of nature, which consisting in the eternal, immutable rules and principles of moral truth, righteousness or reason ...

But besides this, there is another sort or species of religion, which has been commonly call'd positive, instituted, or revealed religion ... the political religion, or the religion of the hierarchy.⁵⁷

Every positive religion has to be scrutinized by the above mentioned criterion. There follows a discussion about the value of miracles as proof of revelation, in which Morgan clearly states that there can be no connection between the power of working miracles, and the truth of doctrines taught by these miracle workers: 'Miracles alone consider'd can prove nothing at all'. Miracles can never be a proof of revelation because by that way we are exposing ourselves to all the enthusiasms and impostures in the world.⁵⁸ For this viewpoint, which made of Morgan a more radical thinker, he was attacked by the Scottish Anglican theologian George Turnbull in *A philosophical enquiry concerning the connexion between the miracles and doctrines of Jesus Christ*. Turnbull retorts that it must be absurd to say that miracles or works can never be a proof of doctrines. He thinks that miracles are samples of sufficient knowledge to instruct certain truths.⁵⁹

There is a clear development in Morgan's thinking about miracles. In 1726, he thought miracles possible and perhaps a sufficient evidence of revelation.⁶⁰ But as we saw before, there is a development in his thinking.⁶¹ Eleven years later, in 1737, he states that the events ascribed by the Hebrew historians to miracles had other more natural and proximate causes:

⁵⁶ N.N., 'An enquiry concerning the origin of moral obligation', *The Theological Magazine*, 1 (1796) 371-7 (375).

⁵⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 84, 86, 94.

⁵⁸ *The moral philosopher*, 98-9.

⁵⁹ G. Turnbull, *A philosophical enquiry concerning the connexion between the miracles and doctrines of Jesus Christ*, 3rd edition, London, 1739, appendix 89-98 (95); on Turnbull see J.M.G. Paris, *The philosophy of George Turnbull*, Ph.D. thesis, Otago, Dunedin, 2013.

⁶⁰ Morgan, *A collection*, x-xi: 'Perhaps it may be said, that miracles, the clear irrefutable testimony of miracles, is a sufficient evidence and criterion of a revelation from God'.

⁶¹ See Chapter 2.

‘Miracles can prove nothing’.⁶² In 1739, he argues that it is highly improbable that God should work miracles, or interpose by an immediate divine power, outside the way of natural agency.⁶³ In Israel, everything was a miracle, for they were such a stupid people. He discusses the miracles of Moses in the desert in the same vein.⁶⁴ In the second volume of *The moral philosopher*, he tells his antagonist John Chapman that ‘we cannot safely depend on miracles for the certain truth of doctrines, or infallibility of persons, any farther than the nature, and reason, and moral fitness of the doctrines themselves will go’.⁶⁵

He refers in this context to John Locke: ‘I take Mr Locke’s definition of a miracle to be the best that has hitherto been given’.⁶⁶ We remember Locke’s definition of a miracle in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*: ‘A miracle then I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine’.⁶⁷ But though Morgan praises Locke, he does not accept the reality of miracles. Afterwards, in the *Physico-Theology*, he praises Locke again, although he differs from him on certain points.⁶⁸ Morgan esteems Locke by quoting him three or four times in relation to miracles and innate ideas.⁶⁹ This may seem fairly few, but he in general quotes only a few people.⁷⁰

Morgan would return to the subject of miracles in the third volume of *The moral philosopher*. Like Spinoza, Toland and other radical thinkers he looks for a natural explanation of miracles. The plagues in Egypt are the common calamities of Egypt, arising from natural causes. About the miracles performed by the prophets, he writes sharply: ‘The miracles said to have been wrought by those prophets, were private facts, done in a corner, and before none but friends, and staunch believers, who would be sure not to lessen the miracle, if they did not invent the story’. Similarly the miracles of the prophet Elisa are also romance and fiction.⁷¹

As far as the New Testament is concerned, the picture is a little bit different. Morgan has his doubts about the virgin birth: ‘I cannot pretend to say, that this supernatural fact was not true,

⁶² (Morgan), *A defence of the moral philosopher*, 39.

⁶³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 32; nearly the same phrase in Volume 3, 169.

⁶⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 39, 65-7.

⁶⁵ *The moral philosopher*, volume 2, second part, 13.

⁶⁶ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 30; see on Locke J.J. Macintosh, ‘Locke and Boyle on miracles and God’s existence’, in: M. Hunter, ed., *Robert Boyle reconsidered*, reprint, Cambridge, 2003, 193-214 (203): Locke on miracles.

⁶⁷ I.T. Ramsey, ed., *John Locke, The reasonableness of Christianity with a discourse of miracles*, Stanford, 1958, 79.

⁶⁸ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 73-4, 169.

⁶⁹ S.G. Hefelbower, *The relation of John Locke to English deism*, Chicago, 1918, 169: ‘The references that Morgan makes to Locke show that he knew him and esteemed him highly, but they do not prove that he is dependent on Locke in any matter of importance’.

⁷⁰ Hefelbower, *The relation*, 167: ‘Morgan ... makes little use of what others have said’; this is confirmed by Jackson-McCabe, ‘“Jewish Christianity”’, 106, who finds ‘no clear indications – explicit or implicit – of dependence on Toland’; on the quotations made by Morgan see Appendix § 5.

⁷¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 41, 310.

or that the thing is impossible; but ... the evidence for it was not so clear'.⁷² He has his doubts about the gift of tongues at Pentecost.⁷³ He refers in a neutral way to the miracles and mighty works of Christ and the Apostles, without criticizing them.⁷⁴

In the third volume of *The moral philosopher*, we encounter more criticism: 'As for Christ himself, we have nothing at all written by him, but must depend intirely on the credit of his disciples, who were very apt to mistake him'. With respect to the healings by Peter and Paul in the Book of Acts, he says: 'These, perhaps, are some of the strongest instances of enthusiasm, and the power of imagination, that ever were known'.⁷⁵ Because all this material Morgan's work has been called a forceful restatement of the deists' arguments against miracles.⁷⁶ Morgan restates many arguments against miracles without mentioning any sources. But it cannot be denied that he stands in a tradition which became manifest in the course of the 17th century.⁷⁷ There are a number of well-known predecessors on this topic. Some make only insinuations or tentative indications.⁷⁸ Others - like Spinoza - are quite open and clear on the subject. With the passing of time, we see a radicalization on the subject.

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§8: Morgan's views on miracles in contemporary context

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In what sense does Morgan diverge from contemporary views on miracles and more particularly from other deists' views? Starting in the 17th century Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* (1653) did not question the miracles of Scripture, but 'seeing ... miracles now cease, we have no sign left, whereby to acknowledge the pretended revelations, or inspirations of any private man'.⁷⁹ Morgan knew the *Leviathan*, referring to Hobbes various times.⁸⁰ Now we also know that Morgan defended himself against Peter Nisbett's reproach of being an adept of Hobbes: 'But you here very unlucky refer me to Hobbs's *Leviathan*, as a book which you presume I must have by me'.⁸¹

Among the other predecessors, it is without a doubt Spinoza who stands out. Well known is the famous Chapter Six 'On miracles' of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, published anonymously in Latin in 1670. Spinoza's central observation is that no event can occur to contravene nature, which preserves an eternal and fixed order. That means that the word miracle can be understood only with respect to men's beliefs and means simply an event

⁷² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 197.

⁷³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 230; Volume 3, 326.

⁷⁴ According to Burns, *The great debate*, 71, Morgan 'seems quite genuine in his insistence that the miracles of Jesus were indeed performed'.

⁷⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 133, 201.

⁷⁶ J.A. Herrick, *The radical rhetoric of the English deists. The discourse of skepticism, 1680-1750*, Columbia, 1997, 20.

⁷⁷ See Burns, *The great debate*.

⁷⁸ Overton, 'The Deists', 90.

⁷⁹ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1985, 414.

⁸⁰ Morgan, *A collection*, 51, 303.

⁸¹ Morgan, *A collection*, 481.

whose natural cause we – or at any rate the writer or narrator of the miracle – cannot explain by comparison with any other normal event.

This has consequences for the so-called miracles in the Scriptures. These can mean nothing other than natural events, which surpass or are believed to surpass human understanding. There is no possibility of gaining knowledge of God through miracles. But we should not be worried: If we find some things in Scripture for which we can assign no cause and which seem to have happened beyond – indeed contrary to – nature's order, this should not perplex us. We need have no hesitation in believing that what truly happened, happened naturally. We may conclude with absolute assurance that everything related in Scripture as having truly happened came to pass necessarily according to the laws of nature as everything does. Whatever is contrary to nature is contrary to reason, and whatever is contrary to reason is absurd, and should therefore be rejected.⁸²

Undoubtedly, one here encounters the material that has been used by all who came after Spinoza, consciously, or unconsciously. Spinoza has been called a proto-deist. It has been said that some of Morgan's sayings sound just like paraphrases of Spinoza.⁸³ Ephraim Chambers, the Editor of *The History of the Works of the Learned*, already thought that Morgan 'gathered all the principles of his work, from Hobbes, Spinoza, Toland, Tindal, and other such worthies'.⁸⁴ John Chapman sees in *The moral philosopher* 'little more than a fresh retail of the old Manichees and Marcionites, of Spinoza, Toland, and *Oracles of reason*'.⁸⁵ William Warburton also refers to the influence of the philosophy of Spinoza. Writing for the 1744 edition comments on the text of the *Dunciad* by Alexander Pope, he says about Morgan: 'A writer against religion, distinguished no otherwise from the rabble of his tribe than the pompousness of his title; for, having stolen his morality from Tindal and his philosophy from Spinoza, he calls himself, by the courtesy of England, a *Moral philosopher*'.⁸⁶ This phrase was an adaptation of the text he had published already in the fourth volume of his *Divine legation of Moses*.⁸⁷

Now Spinoza is mentioned only once by Morgan, in *A postscript to the nature and consequences of enthusiasm* of 1720.⁸⁸ Morgan is not mentioned in the bibliography of Spinoza's influence in England. Spinoza's influence among English deists has been sought,

⁸² B. de Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, translated by Samuel Shirley, Leiden, 1989, 125, 127, 130, 133-4.

⁸³ W.I. Boucher, *Spinoza. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century discussions*, Volume 4, Bristol, 1999, 158; J. Guttmann, *Kant und das Judentum*, Leipzig, 1908, 61 note 3: 'gerade wie eine Paraphrase Spinozas'.

⁸⁴ *The History of the Works of the Learned*, 2 (1737) 13-38 (24).

⁸⁵ J. Chapman, *Eusebius*, Volume 2, London, 1741, iv.

⁸⁶ J. Sutherland, ed., *The Twickenham edition of the poems of Alexander Pope*, Volume 5: *The Dunciad*, 3rd edition, London, 1963, 322.

⁸⁷ W. Warburton, *The collected works of William Warburton*, Volume 4, reprint of the 1811 edition, London/New York, 2005, 15; see for the details J. van den Berg, '“Morgan and Mandeville could prate no more”, Pope's *Dunciad* II 414', *Notes and Queries*, 57 (2010) 78-9.

⁸⁸ (Th. Morgan), *A postscript to the nature and consequences of enthusiasm consider'd etc., occasion'd by Mr. Bradbury's discourse*, London, 1720, 12: 'the opinions of Machiavel, Hobbs, or Spinoza'.

but no trace of influence of Spinoza on Morgan has been found.⁸⁹ But Morgan's view on miracles in his later works undoubtedly breathe the atmosphere of Spinoza's arguments. We can safely assume that somewhere between 1726 and 1737 he had become acquainted with the work of Spinoza. Translations in English of the *Tractatus* had appeared in London in 1689 and 1728. He may have been familiar with these translations, although he does not refer to them.

Among the deists one finds different opinions about miracles. As to Morgan's countrymen, Charles Blount was one of the first followers of Spinoza. In 1683, he anonymously wrote a tract entitled *Miracles, no violation of the laws of nature*, which in fact is a translation of the sixth chapter of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.⁹⁰ In the 'Premonition to the candid reader' we learn that one finds in Scripture 'many memorable things related as miracles, which yet notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable order of nature'.⁹¹ Later, Blount states in *The oracles of reason*, published posthumously, that God seldom alters the course of nature. But mostly it is an error in the manner of reading Scripture.⁹² All in all, this means that Blount was definitely moving away from the orthodox view of miracles.

John Toland is the most discussed of the English deists.⁹³ He defines in *Christianity not mysterious* a miracle as 'some action exceeding all humane power, and which the laws of nature cannot perform by their ordinary operations'. Miracles are produced according to the laws of nature, though above the ordinary way in a supernatural manner. According to Toland a miracle is contrary to reason.⁹⁴ Later, he offers a more rational way of criticizing the Pentateuch. Thus, he relates in the *Tetradymus* that third of the miracles in the Pentateuch are not really miracles. The only example of this kind of criticism he gives is the 'Hodegus; or, pillar of cloud and fire, that guided the Israelites in the wilderness, not miraculous: but a thing equally practis'd by other nations'.⁹⁵

Anthony Collins, an acquaintance and friend of Toland, argues in his *Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion*: 'miracles can never render a foundation valid, which is itself invalid; can never make a false inference true'. He promised a treatise on

⁸⁹ W.I. Boucher, *Spinoza in English: a bibliography from the seventeenth century to the present*, reprint, Bristol 2002; Colie, 'Spinoza and the early English deists'; Colie, 'Spinoza in England, 1665-1730'; see Stephen, *History*, volume 1, 33: 'Few of the deists, it is probable, read his works'.

⁹⁰ Boucher, *Spinoza in English*, 7 nr.33.

⁹¹ (Ch. Blount), *Miracles, no violation of the laws of nature*, London, 1683, premonition.

⁹² Ch. Blount, 'A letter to my worthy friend mr. Gildon', in: *The oracles of reason*, London, 1693, 12, 8.

⁹³ G. Carabelli, *Tolandiana: materiali bibliografici per lo studio dell' opera e della fortuna di John Toland (1670-1722)*, Florence, 1975.

⁹⁴ J. Toland, *Christianity not mysterious*, 2nd edition, London, 1696, 144, 150, 146; Lechler, *Geschichte*, 193 note 1, calls him 'ein rationaler Supranaturalist'.

⁹⁵ J. Toland, *Tetradymus*, London, 1720, 5, 1-60; cf St.H. Daniel, *John Toland: his methods, manners, and mind*, Montreal, 1984, 125.

miracles, but it never materialised.⁹⁶ Significantly, Collins made no statements about the truth or falsity of the miracles of the New Testament.⁹⁷

Another friend of Collins, Matthew Tindal, made proposals for a second volume of *Christianity as old as the creation*, in which at least five chapters were planned to discuss miracles, but it never went to the press.⁹⁸

The most radical scholar with respect to the miracles of Jesus was Thomas Woolston. He lost his fellowship of Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge early in the 1720s after a series of conflicts. He started in *The Moderator between an infidel and an apostate* to allegorize the miracles. This allegorizing method had serious consequences. The miracles of Jesus in the Gospels were never performed.⁹⁹ He also maintained that no good proof existed for the resurrection of Christ. In six discourses on the miracles of our Saviour he explained himself a bit more:

The literal history of many of the miracles of Jesus, as recorded by the evangelists, does imply absurdities, improbabilities, and incredibilities, consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.¹⁰⁰

With the help of the allegorizing method of the Fathers of the Church, using many Greek and Latin quotations of the Fathers, such as Origen, Hilary, Augustine, Cyril, Ambrose, Jerome and Theophylact, Woolston abandons the faith in the historicity of the miracles in the Gospels, repeating his view that the story of many of Jesus' miracles is literally absurd, improbable, and incredible. Referring to the resurrection of Jesus, he states that Christ's resurrection is a complication of absurdities, incoherences, and contradictions. He repeats this theme again and again.¹⁰¹ Woolston, who was a mystic rather than a deist, is the only English freethinker at that time who was put into prison for his published convictions. He was remanded to King's Bench Prison in Southwark in 1729, guilty of blasphemy, where he waited five months for his sentence.¹⁰²

Morgan, who was much more on his guard since he had been ordered to attend the House of Lords in November 1724, does not quote any of these earlier deists with respect to miracles. All of them had died before the publication of *The moral philosopher*. He was not known to them as a deist. It might well be that he wanted to avoid further complications, but he stands in the same tradition of diminishing the significance of Biblical miracles as proof of divine

⁹⁶ (Collins), *A discourse*, 31-2; O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 164, on base of the communication in Th. Woolston, *A discourse on the miracles of our Saviour*, 2nd edition, London, 1727, 69.

⁹⁷ O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 177.

⁹⁸ Lalor, *Matthew Tindal*, 163-4; D. Berman and St. Lalor, 'The suppression of Christianity as old as the creation, vol. II', *Notes and Queries*, 31 (1984) 3-6.

⁹⁹ Th. Woolston, *The moderator between an infidel and an apostate*, 3rd edition, London, 1729, 53.

¹⁰⁰ Woolston, *A discourse*, 4.

¹⁰¹ Woolston, *A discourse*, 22, 57, 65-6.

¹⁰² W.H. Trapnell, sub voce 'Woolston, Thomas', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 60, Oxford, 2004, 284-6; W.H. Trapnell, *Thomas Woolston: madman and deist*, Bristol, 1994, 69-71.

revelation. We may prudently conclude that he was influenced to some extent by the tradition of critical views of Hobbes and Collins, with whose works he was familiar.

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§9: Morgan's view on the Old Testament

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In the context of his search for 'true Christian Deism', Morgan raises the question 'whether the Christian revelation is contained in the books of the Old Testament?'.¹⁰³ This will appear to be a central concept in his thinking: the difference between the two Testaments. How can it be that the Jewish book still has a function in the Christian revelation? The Old Testament has been 'a stumbling block ... since the days of Marcion and still is'.¹⁰⁴ Morgan takes a prominent place in the history of this disparagement of the Old Testament. Theophanes tries to answer the question by explaining the Christian value of the Old Testament not in an explicit and literal sense, but as obscure and under types and shadows. Philalethes retorts in a mode of ridicule:

Literal Judaism then, it seems, was figurative Christianity, and literal Christianity is mystical Judaism; the letter of the law was the type of the gospel, and the letter of the gospel is the spirit of the law; the law was the gospel under a cloud; and the gospel the law unveil'd and farther illuminated; Moses was the shadow of Christ, and Christ is the substance of Moses; ... it must, as I imagine, be a little puzzling to vulgar understandings.¹⁰⁵

This text does presuppose Morgan's knowledge of the discussion about the prophecies in the 1720s.¹⁰⁶ It reminds us clearly of a text in Collins' *Grounds and reasons*: 'Christianity is the allegorical sense of the Old Testament, and is not improperly call'd mystical Judaism'. Collins' *Grounds and reasons* was a reaction to William Whiston's *Essay towards restoring the true text of the Old Testament* (1722), in which Whiston tried to prove that the Jews corrupted the text of the Old Testament. But in contrast to Morgan, Collins accepts - at least in name - the Old Testament: 'Christianity is founded on Judaism, or the New Testament on the Old', and 'The Old Testament is the Canon of Christians'.¹⁰⁷ Phrases like these Morgan would never utter in *The moral philosopher*. But Collins criticized the Christian interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The typological interpretation of prophecy was not defensible. It meant the unreliability of Scripture. So he had a different aim in assessing the Old Testament.

¹⁰³ *The moral philosopher*, 19; Gerdmar, *Roots*, 37: 'The Old Testament has no relevance to Morgan's own theology'.

¹⁰⁴ J.S. Preus, *From shadow to promise. Old Testament interpretation from Augustine to the young Luther*, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *The moral philosopher*, 19; Herrick, *The radical rhetoric*, 58, and R.D.Lund, *Ridicule, religion and the politics of wit in Augustan England*, Farnham, 2012, 123, quoted this whole section as an example of rhetorical ridicule.

¹⁰⁶ O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 155-199: 'the attack on the prophecies'; St. Snobelen, 'The argument over prophecy: an eighteenth-century debate between William Whiston and Anthony Collins', *Lumen*, 15 (1996) 195-213.

¹⁰⁷ (A. Collins), *A discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion*, London, 1724, 92, 4, 13; reissue London, 1741, 82.

One of the famous instances of Biblical criticism employed by deists and others was the Old Testament story about Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac (Gen.22). It comes as no surprise that Morgan is among those who firmly criticize the story. In his *Absurdity of opposing faith to reason* he is still convinced that Abraham in this case proceeded upon the highest and best understanding.¹⁰⁸ But fifteen years later he wonders what proof Moses could give that Abraham had any such revelation or command from God. Perhaps Moses misunderstood the case when writing the story. But to refer it to the will of God was absolutely incredible.¹⁰⁹ Referring to the same story two years later in the second volume of *The moral philosopher*, he writes: 'That God himself should command this to try what Abraham would do in such a case, as if God did not know as well without it, is the most absurd and ridiculous supposition in the world'.¹¹⁰ Abraham's faith was an irrational enthusiastic persuasion. In 1741, Morgan supposes that the whole story is nothing more than 'a fictitious account of things, drawn up by some ignorant enthusiastic bigots in after-ages, without any original truth or foundation at all'.¹¹¹ Morgan's battle against Enthusiasm, which began in the pamphlet war around Salters' Hall against the Presbyterian ministers¹¹², is now directed at the Biblical patriarchs as well. This may be taken as another sign of his development towards a more rational and deistical viewpoint.

As noted above, the story of Abraham's sacrifice was also a popular topic for other deists. Thomas Chubb, in his *The case of Abraham re-examined*, criticizes the underlying image of God in this story. 'God gave the command to Abraham with an intent to recall it, and thereby to shew to Abraham and to all his posterity the unfitness of all human sacrifices'.¹¹³ Chubb said earlier that 'the thing commanded, was in itself morally unfit'.¹¹⁴

Other deists, like Toland, had resolved the question by quoting from Hebrews, Chapter 11:17-19, about the unconditional intellectualist faith of Abraham.¹¹⁵ Tindal did not say more about it than 'the Jews cou'd not think it absolutely unlawful for a father than to sacrifice an innocent child'.¹¹⁶ God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son did not make Collins happy either.¹¹⁷ All this demonstrates Morgan's radicalism in relation to other deists. He

¹⁰⁸ Morgan, *The absurdity*, 23.

¹⁰⁹ *The moral philosopher*, 133-4.

¹¹⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 128-9.

¹¹¹ Morgan, *A vindication*, 18.

¹¹² See Chapter 2 §2-3.

¹¹³ Th. Chubb, *A supplement to the vindication of God's moral character ... to which is added, the case of Abraham with regard to his offering up of Isaac in sacrifice, re-examined*, London, 1727, 47.

¹¹⁴ Th. Chubb, *A supplement to the previous question with regard to religion ... in which God's moral character is more fully vindicated*, London, 1725, 18.

¹¹⁵ Toland, *Christianity not mysterious*, 131; cf R.E. Sullivan, *John Toland and the deist controversy: a study in adaptations*, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, 64, 126, about the intellectualist idea of faith.

¹¹⁶ (Tindal), *Christianity*, 97; on p.240 Tindal says: 'there are several mistakes crept into the Old Testament, where there 's scarce a chapter, which gives any historical account of matter'.

¹¹⁷ (Collins), *A discourse*, 31-2.

brought with his observations the deistical interpretation of Genesis 22 to its logical conclusion.¹¹⁸

One of Morgan's major criticisms of the Old Testament is concerned with Moses. The law of Moses is 'an intolerable yoke of darkness and bondage, tyranny and vassalage, wrath and misery'.¹¹⁹ In that context, Morgan criticizes how the Jews were

encouraged and directed by Moses himself to extend their conquests as far as they could, and to destroy by fire and sword, any or every nation or people that resisted them, and that would not submit to become their subjects and tributaries, upon demand: The inhabitants of Canaan were to be utterly destroy'd root and branch without mercy, not sparing or leaving alive man, woman or child.¹²⁰

Morgan is especially critical about the Levites and the priests in ancient Israel as the men responsible for the misery of the ordinary people. The Levites had a special position in Israel. Although they were servants in the temple, they had greater rights and immunities than any prince or magistrate. In this context, he refers to the instance of the drunken Levite and his concubine in the Book of Judges. He exclaims that this whole transaction was 'a scene of wickedness, injustice, and priestcraft'.

Priestcraft: with this derogatory word Morgan, like so many deists, expresses his hatred towards all kinds of situations 'where any body or set of men have an interest separate from, and inconsistent with the interests of the state or society'. He uses this word some eight times in *The moral philosopher* where it always has a negative connotation. The power of priestcraft works upon ignorance and fear. Later on, he compares priestcraft with modern church tyranny. The priesthood was developed by Joseph in Egypt.¹²¹ Moses established his government on the very same plan.¹²² He did it with a vast revenue for his own tribe and family.¹²³ The two brothers Moses and Aaron were mere worldly politicians who looked after the interests of their own tribe and family.¹²⁴ Afterwards, Philalethes relates extensively about the relation king-prophet in the books of the Old Testament. He gives several instances in which the prophets brought about their own predictions by accomplishing in a natural way what they had resolved upon before. Samuel versus Saul, Eliah versus Ahab, Elisha versus

¹¹⁸ Gawlick, 'Abraham's sacrifice', 577-600.

¹¹⁹ *The moral philosopher*, 29.

¹²⁰ *The moral philosopher*, 28; this text is quoted by O. Ilany, 'From divine commandment to political act: the eighteenth-century polemic on the extermination of the Canaanites', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73 (2012) 437-61 (442) as an example of deist criticism of the extermination commandment.

¹²¹ *The moral philosopher*, 140-2, 237, 431, 239-42.

¹²² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 22.

¹²³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 135.

¹²⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 110; see for the view of the deists about Moses G. Gawlick, 'Zwischen Religionsphilosophie und Religionskritik: Was die Deisten über Moses dachten', in: W. Schmidt-Biggemann and others, eds., *Kritische Religionsphilosophie: eine Gedenkschrift für Friedrich Niewöhner*, Berlin/New York, 2010, 237-54, about Morgan especially 243-46.

Hazael, and many others. By these wrong politics in religion this nation has been an example and warning to all other nations.¹²⁵

Theophanes concludes that Christianity upon such a foot – based on the message of the Old Testament- would be but slightly grounded. Philalethes thinks it doubtful whether Moses and the prophets understood Christianity and foresaw the Gospel. At the end, Philalethes says: ‘I do not intend ... to oppose revelation to reason, or to set up the religion of nature in opposition to Christianity as such’.¹²⁶ He returns to the central theme of the book that there is no room for the Old Testament as part of the canon. After the rejection of the Jewish canon, Philalethes states: ‘I am a Christian upon the foot of the New Testament’.¹²⁷ But that does not imply that the books of the New Testament need no critical scrutiny. Thus he thinks the Apocalypse is full of the Jewish gospel. Even Theophanes admits that ‘the people of Israel at first, and their remains afterwards, called Jews, were a most untoward, grossly ignorant, amazingly superstitious, and desperately wicked generation of men’.¹²⁸

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§10: From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism

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With these kind of phrases in mind one easily understands why Morgan has acquired a particular place in the history of anti-Semitism.¹²⁹ However, most deists were not anti-Semites as such; they were anti-Judaic, which means against the Jewish religion.¹³⁰ Most of Morgan’s predecessors spoke in the same way. Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, wrote in his *Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times*, published in 1711: ‘The Jews were naturally a very cloudy people’. We already find the same text in his *Letter concerning enthusiasm*, published in 1708.¹³¹ Another predecessor, Collins, wrote in *The discourse of freethinking* with respect to the historian Josephus: ‘I have often wish’d he had had a better subject, than such an illiterate, barbarous, and ridiculous people’.¹³² But according to Frank Manuel, Collins ‘betrayed no particular animus against the Jews’.¹³³ Matthew Tindal claimed the following: ‘The Jews, as they were most superstitious, so were they most cruel’.¹³⁴ According to Diego Lucci, Tindal’s *Christianity* ‘did not present any contemptuous judgment

¹²⁵ *The moral philosopher*, 282-4, 288-329.

¹²⁶ *The moral philosopher*, 346-7.

¹²⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 359.

¹²⁸ *The moral philosopher*, 265; cf Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism*, 37: ‘In Morgan, the Jews of the past and present melt together in one’.

¹²⁹ Poliakov, *The history of anti-Semitism*, Volume 3, 65; Julius, *Trials*, 389 : ‘Morgan’s account on the Jews is hostile in the extreme’; Glassman, *Protean prejudice*, 19: ‘The most rabid Jew hater of the group’.

¹³⁰ D. Lucci, ‘Judaism and the Jews in deists’ attacks on revealed religion’, *Hebraic Political Studies*, 3 (2008) 177-214, calls only Morgan and Annet ‘anti-Judaic deist thinkers’.

¹³¹ A.A. Cooper, 3rd earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times*, edited by J.M. Robertson, Volume 1, Indianapolis, 1964, 22; (Shaftesbury), *A letter*, 46.

¹³² (Collins), *A discourse of freethinking*, xxxvi.

¹³³ Fr.E. Manuel, *The broken staff: Judaism through Christian eyes*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 186.

¹³⁴ (Tindal), *Christianity*, 134.

about the Jews'.¹³⁵ Most deists had some kind of anti-Jewish feelings, like most people in England had at the time.

Apart from anti-Christian sentiments, the age of Enlightenment in England was also full of anti-Jewish sentiments, as demonstrated by the countless comedies, melodramas and satires that were produced in the 18th century in England. Famous persons who are involved in the discussions about the superstitions of the Jewish religion and those execrable Jews can be found in authors like Joseph Addison, Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift.¹³⁶ Not only in literature but also in practice did these anti-Jewish feelings have consequences. In 1732 a mob attacked several London Jews living around Broad Street following an accusation of murder.¹³⁷ The Jewish population in England was estimated in 1730 to have been about 6000 persons.¹³⁸

With the notable exception of John Toland, most English deists have a place in the history of anti-Judaism.¹³⁹ Toland was much more positive towards Judaism and published anonymously in 1714 his *Reasons for naturalizing the Jews in great Britain and Ireland, on the same foot with all other nations. Containing also a defence of the Jews against all vulgar prejudices in all countries*. The book is dedicated to the Archbishops and Bishops of the established church, asking them to be 'their friends and protectors in the British Parliament'. He refers to the same rights already established for the Protestant dissenters. He praises the working power of the Jews as sheperds, builders and husbandmen in Old Testament times. 'What they suffer'd from the hands of the heathens, may be learnt from the books of the Old Testament'.¹⁴⁰ The book is an impressive tract for tolerance. Clearly, in this respect English Deism is once again not unified.

The moral philosopher on the contrary has been called one of the most emblematic examples of Enlightenment anti-Semitism, and Morgan 'an anti-judaic deist thinker'. More specifically it was named a partly secularized instance of the medieval *Adversus Judaeos* genre.¹⁴¹ We can say that the anti-Jewish elements of *The moral philosopher* rapidly developed into anti-Semitic statements. This will be more clear in the second and third volume of *The moral philosopher*.

¹³⁵ Lucci, 'Judaism', 204.

¹³⁶ H.R.S. van der Veen, *Jewish characters in eighteenth-century English fiction and drama*, reprint of the 1935 edition, New York, 1973, 99-106; see also T.M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: tradition and change in a liberal society*, reprint, Chicago, 1999, 86-117: 'Anti-Jewish sentiment – religious and secular'.

¹³⁷ A.M. Hyamson, *A history of the Jews in England*, London, 1908, 263; C. Roth, *A history of the Jews in England*, 3rd edition, Oxford, 1978, 204.

¹³⁸ R.D. Barnett, 'Anglo-Jewry in the eighteenth century', in: V.D. Lipman, ed., *Three centuries of Anglo-Jewish history*, London, 1961, 45-68 (60).

¹³⁹ S. Ettinger, 'Jews and Judaism as seen by the English deists of the 18th century', *Zion*, 29 (1964) 182-207 (in Hebrew); Poliakov, *The history*, Volume 3: from Voltaire to Wagner, 59-69: 'The English deists'; Lucci, 'Judaism'.

¹⁴⁰ (J. Toland), *Reasons for naturalizing the Jews in great Britain and Ireland, ... containing also a defence of the Jews against all vulgar prejudices in all countries*, London, 1714, Dedication, 22; M. Wiener, 'John Toland and Judaism', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 16 (1941) 215-42 (219): 'John Toland stands out in the history of the Enlightenment by reason of his unique attitude toward Judaism'; Poliakov, *The history*, Volume 3, 61-3.

¹⁴¹ D. Lucci, *Scripture and deism: the biblical criticism of the eighteenth-century British deists*, (Studies in Early Modern European Culture 3), Bern, 2008, 195; Lucci, 'Judaism', 204-10; Julius, *Trials*, 389.

Philaletthes thought highly of the Apostle Paul. According to Morgan the Apostle had very great problems with the Jews and their traditions. 'The law of Moses was originally a mere piece of carnal, worldly policy'. The theme of the difference between the two Testaments continues in his reasoning: 'St. Paul preached a new doctrine, contrary to Moses and the prophets'.¹⁴² For Morgan, a standing controversy exists between St. Paul and the teachers of circumcision. How this matter stood in St. Paul's time one can see in various chapters in the Book of Acts. He gives a prolific paraphrase of what is written in these chapters.¹⁴³ But in the eyes of Morgan, St. Paul was not content with the Jerusalem decree and it was clearly his opinion that all the converts to Christianity, whether Jews or gentiles, ought to be exempted from any obligation to Jewish law. He concludes, as we saw before, that 'St. Paul was the great free-thinker of his age, the bold and brave defender of reason against authority'.¹⁴⁴ Although Morgan never made anti-Semitic statements about contemporary English Jews, his anti-Jewish point of departure led to anti-Semitic phrases.¹⁴⁵ There is a difficulty in the definitions of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism (against the Jews as a race) seems to be a prolongation of anti-Judaism (against the Jewish religion).¹⁴⁶ Morgan, who started as an anti-Judaist, ends up as a person who uttered vigorous anti-Semitic phrases. In Volumes two and three he repeats the same observations as in *The moral philosopher*, but with a sharper tone. He states about the Jews that 'they had understandings, but little superior to the beasts; they were always a grossly ignorant and superstitious people'. He says: 'This people from first to last could scarce ever be said to be civilized at all. They were not endued with any common sense'.¹⁴⁷ A phrase which he repeats again and again is the remark that the God of Israel was a local tutelar God, diminishing in this way the status of the Old Testament notion of God.¹⁴⁸ Proceeding to New Testament times he maintains that when Christianity came to be preached, Judaism was the greatest obstacle to it.¹⁴⁹ This whole section is full of anti-Semitic observations. About the election of Israel as the chosen people he says:

The Hebrew historians every where discover a visible and strong prejudice and prepossession in favour of their nation, whom they continually represent as God's peculiar and most beloved people, his chosen, his inheritance, portion, and delight. But that these

¹⁴² *The moral philosopher*, 40-1.

¹⁴³ *The moral philosopher*, 54, 55-80.

¹⁴⁴ *The moral philosopher*, 71; see Kl. Scholder, 'Paulus und die Aufklärung', *Rondom het Woord*, 13 (1971) 121-31 (125): 'Paulus ist für Thomas Morgan wie für viele andere englische und deutsche Aufklärer gerade als Gegner der Judenchristen der Repräsentant eines reinen und freien Christentums der Vernunft und der Sittlichkeit'.

¹⁴⁵ J. Katz, *From prejudice to destruction: anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, 31.

¹⁴⁶ Cf H. Jansen, *Christelijke theologie na Auschwitz: deel 2: Nieuwtestamentische wortels van het antisemitisme: band 1*, 's Gravenhage, 1985, 21-51: 'Ambivalentie in betekenis en gebruik van de termen "antisemitisme" en "anti-judaïsme" '; Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism*, 6-8.

¹⁴⁷ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 38, 27.

¹⁴⁸ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 62; the same at Volume 2, 118; (A Society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination*, passim.

¹⁴⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 60.

high pretensions were all owing to their pride, vanity, and superstition, is sufficiently prov'd from their own history which they give us themselves.¹⁵⁰

Morgan refers many times to the bias of the Biblical historians. In general they were most prejudiced and superstitious. They accommodated themselves too much to the mob and rabble. In their language and style, they accommodated themselves to the superstitions of the common people.¹⁵¹ The same observation returns in Volume three. The Biblical author had a constant appetite for accommodation to the ignorance of the common people: 'They continually accommodate themselves, in all their writings, to the ignorance, superstition, and gross apprehensions of the vulgar'.¹⁵² At the end of his life, he made vigorous anti-Semitic statements like this: 'It would have been a greater mercy to this miserable people, to have been all drowned together in the Red sea'.¹⁵³ His anti-Judaism turned into anti-Semitism. As has been said before, Morgan's opinions were no exception in the 18th century, but of all the so-called deists he was the most radical in his time.¹⁵⁴ There is in general an 'ambiguous attitude of the Enlightenment toward the Jews'.¹⁵⁵ Morgan's position was more radically anti-Jewish, entailing radical criticism against the Old Testament and its people.

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§11: Christianity: A revival of the religion of nature

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Given his views on the Old Testament and the Jews, what then is Morgan's particular view of Christianity? Clearly his view of Christianity developed from an orthodox confession of faith during his ordination in Frome in 1716 to a more radical and deistical vision of revelation in the 1730s. For Morgan the 'Christian revelation ... is a revival of the religion of nature, or a complete system and transcript of moral truth and righteousness'.¹⁵⁶ A phrase which reminds us of the subtitle of Tindal's *Christianity as old as the creation, or, the gospel, a republication of the religion of nature*. This book has been called by the Irish divine Philip Skelton 'The Bible of all deistical readers', and Tindal himself 'The apostle of Deism', phrases that since then have gained popular status.¹⁵⁷

On the basis of this comparison 'republication // revival of the religion of nature' it may be said that Tindal must have exerted some kind of influence on Morgan. This influence has since long been stated by many. William Warburton wrote on August 17th 1737 to Thomas Birch about *The moral philosopher*: 'It is composed principally of scraps ill put together from "Christianity as old as the creation", larded with some of the most stupid fancies of his

¹⁵⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 28.

¹⁵¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 29, 64.

¹⁵² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 41-2.

¹⁵³ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 67.

¹⁵⁴ Cf Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism*, 36: 'Morgan's prejudice against the Jews is an essentialist and racist one'.

¹⁵⁵ Lucci, 'Judaism and the Jews', 214.

¹⁵⁶ *The moral philosopher*, 412; see above in § 7 for Morgan's view on the religion of nature.

¹⁵⁷ Skelton, *Deism revealed*, Volume 2, 265.

own'.¹⁵⁸ Since then, Tindal is mentioned everywhere in the literature about Morgan. John Leland and many others note that Morgan treads in the footsteps of Tindal.¹⁵⁹ On the basis of the comparison between 'republication' and 'revival' one may prudently conclude that in this aspect Morgan stands in the line of Tindal. But he does not quote Tindal and they do not otherwise have much in common. There is only one place in which Tindal's book is mentioned in *The moral philosopher*, where Morgan is quoting Leland's answer to Tindal.¹⁶⁰ Remarkably, it is the other way round: Tindal quotes Morgan's *Collection of tracts* once.¹⁶¹

For Morgan 'Religion is purely an internal thing, and consists ultimately in moral truth and righteousness, considered as an inward character, temper, disposition or habit in the mind'. He compares moral philosophy with the religion of nature and refers to Solomon and the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus. This moral philosopher can say a prayer to 'the all-wise and all-powerful creator, governor, and dirigent of the whole, ... : O thou eternal reason, father of light, and immense fountain of all truth and goodness ...'. This seems to be the most rational way of addressing God.¹⁶² This prayer has been classified as a proof of the piety of the English deists.¹⁶³ But this piety is the religion of nature. A man can hear the clearly intelligible voice of his maker. Any other method for information in matters of faith and religion will be nothing other than confusion and distraction. Such is the piety of a Christian deist.

Morgan sums up: 'By Christianity, I mean that complete system of moral truth and righteousness, justice and charity, which, as the best transcript of the religion of nature, was preach'd to the world by Christ and the apostles'. 'Christianity ... restores the eternal, immutable rule of moral rectitude, or the religion of God and nature'.¹⁶⁴ So the Christian religion has indeed become for Morgan a moral philosophy in which not the Scriptures, but human philosophy has become the standard measure.

¹⁵⁸ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 70.

¹⁵⁹ J. Leland, *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*, Volume 2, London, 1740, 128 note; E.A. Sayous, *Les déistes anglais et le christianisme principalement depuis Toland jusqu'à Chubb*, Paris, 1882, 159; Overton, 'The Deists', 89; F. Vigouroux, *Les livres saintes et la critique rationaliste. Histoire et réfutation des objections des incrédules contre les saintes écritures*, Volume I/2, 3rd edition, Paris, 1890, 139; W.R. Sorley, 'Berkeley and contemporary philosophy', in: A.W. Ward, ed., *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Volume 9, Cambridge, 1920, 279-304 (294); C. Constantin, sub voce 'Rationalisme', in: *Dictionnaire de la théologie catholique*, Volume 13/2, Paris, 1937, 1688-1778 (1743); H.E. Allison, *Lessing and the enlightenment*, Ann Arbor, 1966, 16; Lucci, *Scripture*, 16; Lucci, 'Judaism and the Jews', 204; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 76; D. Lucci, 'An eighteenth-century skeptical attack on rational theology and positive religion: "Christianity not founded on argument" by Henri Dodwell the younger', *Intellectual History Review*, 22 (2012) 1-26 (7); more or less the same by E. Troeltsch, sub voce 'Deismus', in: *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edition, Volume 4, Leipzig, 1898, 532-559 (544-5).

¹⁶⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 180.

¹⁶¹ (M. Tindal), *A second address to the inhabitants of the two great cities London and Westminster*, London, 1730, 63: 'the judicious Dr. Morgan'.

¹⁶² *The moral philosopher*, 416, 418, 428.

¹⁶³ J. Waligore, 'The piety of the English deists: the personal relationship with an active God', *Intellectual History Review*, 22 (2012) 181-97 (190).

¹⁶⁴ *The moral philosopher*, 430, 439; similar phrases on 96-7 and 412.

He cannot believe, however, everything that was afterwards reported concerning this great prophet Jesus. His disciples and followers interpolated, added, and altered several passages in the original books, and they ascribed several miracles to him, in which there could have been only an exertion of power without wisdom or goodness.¹⁶⁵ Morgan does not give any indication of details about these interpolations and additions, nor does he report to which miracles he refers. When discussing the second and the third volumes of *The moral philosopher*, we will see more details about these additions.

Morgan's view on the primitive Christians in the ancient church, who maintained the liberty of conscience against the Catholic church and were branded as 'Gnosticks, because they pretended to be wiser than the Church, and claimed a Right of judging for themselves' is still interesting.¹⁶⁶

For Morgan there is one central issue: 'He that feareth God and worketh righteousness shall be accepted of him, whether he has lived under the gospel or not: and on the other hand, God in the day of accounts will certainly reject all the workers of iniquity, whatever faith they may have had in Christ'.¹⁶⁷ Christianity loses its absoluteness. There is for Morgan no contradiction in being a Christian and a deist. In this respect, God is for him the common father of mankind and the wise and righteous governor of the world. The Anselmian doctrine of satisfaction has no place in Morgan's theology. In the 16th century, Fausto Paolo Sozzini and his followers did reject the propitiatory view of atonement. The Enlightenment in general broke with the belief in the propitiatory passion of Christ. It has been said by Kühler that deism is a continuation of Socinianism.¹⁶⁸ Morgan refers various times to Socinians and Socinianism in his discussion with Cumming and Chapman in a neutral way.¹⁶⁹

The righteousness of Christ cannot be placed to our account. Christ was not punished for our sins, and we are not rewarded for his righteousness. The doctrine of imputed righteousness and merit is based upon some metaphorical expressions of St. Paul.

The books of the New Testament, therefore, ought to be read critically, with an allowance for persons, circumstances, and the situation of things at that time, and not taken in gross, as if everything contain'd in them, had been at first infallibly inspired by God, and no corruptions could have ever since happen'd to them.¹⁷⁰

In this phrase, we recognize a harbinger of the historical critical method, of which we will find more specimens below when we turn to Volumes two and three of *The moral philosopher*.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ *The moral philosopher*, 439-40.

¹⁶⁶ *The moral philosopher*, 381.

¹⁶⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 144-7.

¹⁶⁸ J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Jesus Christ in world history*, (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 149), Frankfurt am Main, 2009, 170-1; J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Het redelijke geloof in Jezus Christus, een studie over de wijsbegeerte van de Verlichting*, Wageningen, 1971, 91-96 (93-4); W.J. Kühler, *Het Socianisme in Nederland*, (reprint of the edition Leiden 1912), Leeuwarden, 1980, 273.

¹⁶⁹ Morgan, *The grounds and principles*, 37, 70, 73-8; *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 47.

¹⁷⁰ *The moral philosopher*, 442.

¹⁷¹ Chapter 5.

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§12: Summary

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It has been stated that Morgan's uncompromising rejection of the Old Testament as part of the Christian Bible is his particular contribution to the deistic debate and as such it represents a landmark in English religious history. It has been observed that his work marks the high point of the deist onslaught on the Old Testament.¹⁷² Because of this rejection, he has for long been called by many a modern Marcion.¹⁷³ Morgan has often been compared with the second-century Marcion of Sinope, who is known for his radical stand against the Jewish Old Testament. The latter's influence was so great as to establish Marcionite churches in the entire Roman empire. A Marcionite church existed in the East at least until the tenth century.¹⁷⁴ Morgan himself never refers to Marcion. He simply calls himself 'a Christian upon the foot of the New Testament', leaving no room at all for the Jewish part of the Scriptures. This is all the more remarkable since in England the cultural influence of the Old Testament was impressive.¹⁷⁵

In this way, Morgan was a harbinger of the disparagement of the Old Testament in modern theology. This disparagement of the Old Testament returns in the concepts of later German theologians, such as Semler, Schleiermacher, Harnack, Hirsch, and Slenczka.¹⁷⁶ It has been correctly said that Morgan 'heralds themes and makes analyses that would recur in Enlightenment theology and exegesis throughout the two centuries that followed'.¹⁷⁷ Morgan argues that revelation and miracles as contained in the Scriptures are not to be believed at face value, but have to be scrutinized for their moral truth and reason. His view on miracles doubtless breathe the spirit of Spinoza, but whether he was directly influenced by Spinoza remains an issue.¹⁷⁸ Morgan adopts a Christian Deism, 'purified' from Jewish

¹⁷² H. Graf Reventlow, *The authority of the Bible and the rise of the modern world*, London, 1985, 398, 396; J.W. Rogerson, *Old Testament criticism in the nineteenth century: England and Germany*, London, 1985, 153.

¹⁷³ Lechler, *Geschichte*, 387; W. Gass, *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Theologie überhaupt*, Volume 3, Berlin, 1862, 355; L. Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche*, Jena, 1869, 545; J. Coppens, *De geschiedkundige ontwikkelingsgang van de Oudtestamentische exegese vanaf de Renaissance tot en met de Aufklärung*, Antwerpen, 1943, 16; A.J. Heschel, *The prophets*, New York & Evanston, 1962, 372; Gawlick, 'Abraham's sacrifice', 592; M.R. Schlimm, 'Defending the Old Testament's worth: John Wesley's reaction to the rebirth of Marcionism', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 42 (2007) 28-51 (35); and many others.

¹⁷⁴ M.G. Morony, *Iraq after the muslim conquest*, Princeton, 1984, 402; M. Frenchkowski, 'Marcion in Arabischen Quellen', in: G. May and K. Greschat, eds., *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung*, Berlin, 2002, 39-63 (46-9, 62).

¹⁷⁵ W.B. Selbie, 'The influence of the Old Testament on Puritanism', in: E.R. Bevan & Ch. Singer, eds., *The legacy of Israel*, reprint, Oxford, 1969, 407-431; A. Meier, *Die alttestamentliche Namengebung in England*, (Kölner Anglistische Arbeiten 22), reprint of the Bochum 1934 edition, New York, 1966; H. Schöffler, *Abendland und Altes Testament*, (Kölner Anglistische Arbeiten 30), reprint of the Bochum 1937 edition, New York, 1966.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 8.

¹⁷⁷ Gerdmar, *Roots*, 35.

¹⁷⁸ The fact that Spinoza is mentioned by Morgan only once, and that in his pre-deistic phase, does raise doubts about the extent to which Morgan was influenced by Spinoza.

elements, in which he from time to time crosses the bounds of virulent anti-Semitism. His type of anti-Judaism we find more often in the time in which he lived. Moral criticism by Morgan on the Old Testament message is abundant, but the New Testament has been spared, although there are indications of maltreatment of the texts and assertions and they need to be read critically. In many aspects, Morgan is more radical in his moral criticism of the Bible than his deist predecessors.

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Chapter Four: Contemporary reactions to *The moral philosopher*

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§1: Introduction

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Morgan's *Moral philosopher* occasioned a flood of responses, most of them quite critical. In this chapter, we shall look at the many contemporary reactions to *The moral philosopher* on a more or less chronological basis. We shall discuss the reactions arising from different religious denominations in England, giving particular attention to the important rebuttals of Leland and Chapman. Next, we will devote attention to the reactions to the second and third volumes of *The moral philosopher*. I hope to have traced most of these reactions.¹

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§2: Warburton's opinion about *The moral philosopher*

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The influential Anglican churchman, William Warburton, advised against any public reaction to *The moral philosopher*. On August 17th 1737, he wrote from Newark-upon-Trent to his friend the Reverend Thomas Birch in London:

There is a book called "The moral philosopher", lately published. Is it looked into? I should hope not, merely for the sake of taste, the sense and learning of the present age; for nothing could give me a worse idea of them than that book's being in any esteem as a composition of a man of letters ... I hope nobody will be so indiscreet as to take notice publicly of this book, though it be only in the fag end of an objection. It is that indiscreet conduct in our defenders of religion, that conveys so many worthless books from hand to hand.²

Warburton's hopes about the defenders of religion were not to be fulfilled. A deluge of answers was published over the next years. I counted more than twenty-five published responses in English to *The moral philosopher*. That is too great a number to say that Morgan never obtained much notice.³ On the contrary, we can agree with those who stated that *The moral philosopher* was widely read in an educated milieu. Morgan displayed in full measure the deist flair for reaching an extensive audience.⁴ This audience was spread all over Britain and abroad.⁵ As to his native country, Presbyterians, Independents, Anglicans and Jesuits, joined hands in defending revealed religion against *The moral philosopher*. One finds discussions about the work in private journals, letters, sermons, and in published reactions in journals and books. Some had more impact than others. But certainly not all were as worthless as Warburton stipulated.

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§3: The first reactions to *The moral philosopher* in 1737

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¹ By using *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* and *Google's Advanced Book Search*, retrieved December 26th, 2017.

² Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 69-70.

³ Contra Stephen, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 39, 35.

⁴ Stromberg, *Religious liberalism*, 79 note 2; Herrick, *The radical rhetoric*, 148; Cragg, *Reason*, 68.

⁵ In Chapter 7 we will discuss the reactions abroad.

During the first year after its publication in February 1737, Morgan's *Moral philosopher* received many and mostly negative reactions. Probably the rapid impact of the book made many orthodox believers react quickly. *The moral philosopher* was the talk of the town. The poet John Byrom relates in his private journal, at the end of March 1737, how a certain deist Mr. Reynolds told him to read *The moral philosopher*.⁶ We also remember the satirical poem of Thomas Newcomb about Morgan.⁷

According to a historian of Non-conformity, Morgan was the deist who gave the dissenters the greatest annoyance, precisely because he had been one of them.⁸ Among the dissenters the Presbyterians were the first to react in public. The first reaction appeared anonymously in June 1737 entitled: *The immorality of the moral philosopher*, written by the Presbyterian minister of Exeter Joseph Hallett.⁹ Hallett was very critical about the author and sent his flaming arrows like this: 'He has broken through all the values of truth, decency, and good manners. ... The book is a most tedious, immethodical, enthusiastic jumble of infidel cant, false history, misrepresentation, vain repetition and impertinence'.¹⁰ A nice summing-up of Morgan's 'immorality'. The author of *The moral philosopher* observed no regular method in his book and he has greatly misrepresented innumerable things both in the Old and the New Testament. Hallett makes a impressive list of such falsifications.

Benjamin Andrewes Atkinson, Presbyterian minister of London, published in August 1737 *The decay of practical religion lamented ... in four discourses preach'd ... with an appendix, containing a few remarks on a book lately published, entitled, The moral philosopher*.¹¹

Atkinson thinks 'it is plain enough our philosopher hath struck out the Old Testament from his Canon; and ... he hath endeavoured to explain away a very considerable part of the New'.¹² The Biblical criticism of the deists was felt by the orthodox clergy as the real danger of Deism as such. The Independents also reacted. Philip Doddridge, who as we saw already knew in June 1737 that Morgan was the author of *The moral philosopher*, called him in a letter to his Independent colleague Samuel Clark, dated July 20th 1737, a very scandalous writer, referring also to the savageness of his temper.¹³

As far as the Anglicans are concerned, Ephraim Chambers made his negative opinion about the book known in a long review, published in *The History of the Works of the Learned* with many quotations.¹⁴ In July 1737, the prolific pamphleteer Elisha Smith edited anonymously the second edition of his book, *The cure of deism*, to which was annexed an appendix, in

⁶ R. Parkinson, ed., *The private journal and literary remains of John Byrom*, Volume 2 Part 1, (Publications of the Chetham Society 40), Manchester, 1856, 99.

⁷ Quoted above in Chapter 1 § 17.

⁸ Colligan, *Eighteenth century nonconformity*, 21.

⁹ Date of preface May 11th 1737.

¹⁰ (J. Hallett), *The immorality of the Moral Philosopher*, London, 1737, 4.

¹¹ Dedicated to John Thompson, Lord Mayor of the city of London, and dated Bridgewatersquare, July 19th 1737.

¹² B.A. Atkinson, *The decay of practical religion lamented*, London, 1737, 114.

¹³ J. Doddridge Humphreys, ed., *The correspondence and diary of Philip Doddridge*, Volume 3, London, 1830, 257-8.

¹⁴ *The History of the Works of the Learned*, 1737, ii, 13-38, already quoted in Chapter 3 § 8.

answer to a book entitled *The moral philosopher*. As Smith put it: ‘You believe too much, mr. Philalethes, for an orthodox deist, and too little for a sound Christian’.¹⁵ As we saw earlier, the combination of Christianity and Deism was not en vogue among traditional believers. In September 1737, another Anglican, Thomas Burnett, published *The Scripture doctrine of the redemption of the world by Christ, intelligibly explained to the capacity of mean people, which may serve as an answer to a book, entitled, The moral philosopher*.¹⁶ Burnett clearly sensed that the orthodox doctrine of the redemption by Christ was at stake, though he did not enter into discussion with Morgan in this book. Reactions came also from the circles of the universities. On Sunday, October 23rd 1737, Francis Webber, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, preached a sermon against *The moral philosopher* before the University, in which he referred various times negatively to the book.¹⁷ Finally, the book was noticed in the circles of the Archbishop in Lambeth Palace. The Rector of Lambeth, John Denne, made negative annotations about *The moral philosopher* in the publication of a sermon preached in Lambeth Chapel on January 15th 1738 at the consecration of the new Bishop of Bangor, Thomas Herring.¹⁸ Morgan was also attacked in magazines. A certain ‘Poplicola’ (which means ‘friend of the people’) launched in October 1737 an attack on *The moral philosopher* in the *Grub Street Journal*, published by the bookseller John Wilford.¹⁹ An anonymous author in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* of February 1738 wrote about

the infamous, immoral author of a most blasphemous book, falsely, and impudently entitled, *The moral philosopher*, a wretch, (whoever he is) of whom I cannot speak with temper, and patience, and on whom I cannot think without a just horror and indignation; wherein, I hope, Sir, I am not without your concurrence, and that of all good Christians.²⁰

Some theologians considered the possibility of answering Morgan but in the end decided against doing so. On October 30th 1737 Doddridge wrote to Clark: ‘I am told Dr. Latham of Lindern (sic!) is preparing materials for an answer to Morgan’.²¹ Ebenezer Latham, who conducted an academy in Findern, never published the said answer. Another author who

¹⁵ (Smith), *The cure of deism*, 2nd edition, Volume 2, 41; Smith was lecturer of Wisbeech and later rector in the Isle of Ely.

¹⁶ Dated 15 August 1737; Burnett was rector of West Kington in Gloucestershire.

¹⁷ F. Webber, *The Jewish dispensation consider’d and vindicated, with a view to the objections of unbelievers, and particularly of a late author called The Moral Philosopher. A sermon preach’d before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary’s, on Sunday, 23^d October 1737*, Oxford, 1738, 25, 31-3, 36; a second edition appeared in 1751.

¹⁸ J. Denne, *A sermon preach’d in Lambeth chapel, on Sunday, January 15, 1737, at the consecration of the right reverend father in God, Thomas lord bishop of Bangor*, London, 1737 (i.e. 1738), 10 note.

¹⁹ J.Th. Hillhouse, *The Grub-Street Journal*, reissue of the Boston 1928 edition, New York, 1967, 344; on Wilford see Winkler, *Handwerk*, 452-62.

²⁰ N.N., ‘To the author of the enquiry into the meaning of the demoniacks in the New Testament’, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 8 (1738) 69-72 (72).

²¹ Doddridge Humphreys, ed., *The correspondence*, Volume 3, 279.

contemplated answering *The moral philosopher* was John Conybeare, Bishop of Bristol from 1750, but the plan was never carried out either.²²

All in all, there were more than ten reactions in the year of its first publication. The interest in *The moral philosopher* was so great that a second, emendated edition of *The moral philosopher* appeared in February 1738, again printed for the author. In the next years many more reactions were to follow, as we will see below. The tendency of all the reactions so far was negative. Morgan's opinions about the Old Testament, about the redemption by Christ, and his style, immorality and misrepresentations were firmly rejected.

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§4: William Warburton's *Divine legation of Moses* is not an answer to Morgan

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An old tradition has it that Warburton's *The divine legation of Moses demonstrated, on the principles of a religious deist, from the omission of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments in the Jewish dispensation*, published in early 1738, was written by him as a reaction to *The moral philosopher*.²³ Until recently, this thesis had its adherents.²⁴ However, it appears that *The divine legation of Moses* was planned many years before Morgan's publication came from the press and has nothing to do with it. A substantial part of it already existed by the end of 1735, which is evident from Warburton's statement in an appendix to his *The alliance between church and state*, a book which appeared in January 1736. There he writes: 'The substance of the preceeding discourse being no other than a single chapter of a treatise which I have now by me ... It is entitled *The divine legation of Moses*.'²⁵ Warburton had started working on *The divine legation of Moses* seven years before, as he confided to his friend, the antiquary William Stukeley, under great injunction of secrecy.²⁶ So one can conclude that Warburton's *Divine legation of Moses* never was intended as an answer to *The moral philosopher*. Warburton did not even want to respond to Morgan, as we saw above in §2.

²² A. Chalmers, sub voce 'Conybeare', *The General Biographical Dictionary*, new edition, Volume 10, London, 1813, 182-189 (186).

²³ Lechler, 388.

²⁴ Altmann in his commentary on Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, 204; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 118; J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian. The memory of Egypt in Western monotheism*, Cambridge, Mass, 1998, 239 note 1; A.W. Wainwright, sub voce 'Morgan, Thomas', in: J.H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical interpretation*, Volume 2, Nashville, 1999, 163; Graf Reventlow, 'Freidenkertum', 232; D. Cyranka, *Lessing im Reinkarnationsdiskurs, eine Untersuchung zu Kontext und Wirkung von G.E. Lessings Texten zur Seelenwanderung*, (Kirche, Konfession, Religion 49), Göttingen, 2005, 281; U. Lehner, ed., *Martin Knutzen, Philosophischer Beweis von der christlichen Religion*, (Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit 1), Nordhausen, 2005, 12 note 5; Beutel, *Die Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, 321; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 84; Tr. Rendtorff, ed., *Ernst Troeltsch, Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Band 6, Teilband 2: Das historische in Kants Religionsphilosophie*, Berlin/New York, 2014, 1001 note 457; A. Graczyk, *Die Hieroglyphe im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, (Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäische Aufklärung 51), Berlin/New York, 2015, 51. In the meantime Reventlow, 'English deism', 873 note 153, and D. Cyranka, '“Warum nicht?” Lessings Äusserungen zur Seelenwanderung' in: H.E. Friedrich, and others, eds., *Literatur und Theologie im 18. Jahrhundert, Konfrontationen – Kontroversen – Konkurrenzen*, (Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäische Aufklärung 41), Berlin/New York, 2011, 122-38 (132 note 8), have corrected their opinion.

²⁵ W. Warburton, *The alliance between church and state*, London, 1736, 156.

²⁶ W.C. Lukis, ed., *The family memoirs of the rev. William Stukeley*, (Surtees Society 73), London, 1882, 127.

In *The moral philosopher* Morgan mentions the absence of the doctrine of immortality as an argument against the Old Testament.²⁷ In the literature about Morgan this has always been taken for granted as the reason why Warburton wrote the *Divine legation*.²⁸ But in these years 1737-38 there was no such thing as a battle about the doctrine of immortality between the two men.²⁹ Only later, in the dedication to the Jews, in Book Four of the *Divine legation*, published in May 1741, one encounters for the first time *The moral philosopher*. But there Warburton again makes it clear that he does not want to participate in the project of the freethinkers. In Book Six he refers only once rather mockingly to Morgan: 'Who hereafter will talk of ... Morgan?'.³⁰ Interestingly, the conflict was the other way round: it was Morgan who reacted to the *Divine legation*.³¹ In 1742, Morgan wrote a reaction to Warburton in *A brief examination of the Rev. Mr Warburton's Divine legation of Moses ... by a society of gentlemen*, in which he repeats time and again that 'Moses had nothing to do with a future state'.³²

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§5: The Presbyterian minister of Eustace Row in Dublin, John Leland

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A serious and long-winded opponent to Morgan appeared in the person of the Presbyterian minister of Eustace Row in Dublin, John Leland. Leland was, according to his biographers, the foremost theological writer among eighteenth-century Irish dissenters.³³ He was one of the fiercest opponents of the deists, writing not only against Morgan, but also against Matthew Tindal and Henry Dodwell junior. He has been called the indefatigable opponent of a whole generation of deists.³⁴ As an apologist, he was a vehement fighter against what he called 'the enemies of the holy religion'.

Leland has become famous because of his *View of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England during the last and the present century*, published in two volumes, in London in 1754-6, a classical work, reprinted many times, and responsible for the 'canonical' list of the English deists. Many of the English deists received their status as such by being listed in Leland's work. Although he was not the first to enumerate such a list – the Irish divine Philip Skelton was the first to do so³⁵ – Leland has always been credited for it. Until

²⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 26-7.

²⁸ To name only one, Reventlow, *Authority*, 396.

²⁹ Contra D. Klein, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768): das theologische Werk*, (Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 145), Tübingen, 2009, 127 note 149: 'Streit um die Unsterblichkeitslehre zwischen Thomas Morgan und William Warburton'.

³⁰ W. Warburton, *The collected works of William Warburton*, reprint of the 1811 edition, London/New York, 2005, Volume 4, 15, Volume 6, 43.

³¹ See for the details Van den Berg, 'Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton', 82-5.

³² (A Society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 39, 41.

³³ V. Nuovo and M.A. Stewart, sub voce 'Leland, John', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 33, Oxford, 2004, 301-3 (302).

³⁴ A. Dulles, *A history of apologetics*, San Francisco, 2005, 182; W. Edgar and K.Sc. Oliphint, eds., *Christian apologetics past and present*, Volume 2, Wheaton, 2011, 302.

³⁵ Skelton, *Deism revealed*, 2nd edition, 2 volumes, title page; cf Introduction § 6.

this day he has been referred to as one of the most valuable apologists. In a way he is co-responsible for the conviction that the English deists formed a movement. According to him 'that which properly characterizes these deists is, that they reject all revealed religion'.³⁶ They disagree about the notions of natural religion. Leland already had a long experience in this fight when he announced, in November 1738, the first part of *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted. With a particular vindication of the characters of Moses, and the prophets, our saviour Jesus Christ, and his apostles, against the unjust aspersions and false reasonings of a book, entitled, The moral philosopher*. A second edition appeared in 1739 and a second volume in June 1740. Together, these volumes contain more than 900 pages. Morgan received among all the so-called English deists the most verbose attention from Leland, though, interestingly, the latter was unfamiliar with the name of the author of *The moral philosopher* at the time of the publication of *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*.

Just as Morgan quoted a text from Job on the title page of *The moral philosopher*, so Leland quoted Job 33:13-4: 'Why dost thou strife against God? For he giveth not account of any of his matters; For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not' on the title page of *The divine authority*. A telling quotation on the same matter, but the opposite of Morgan's. Unsurprisingly, Leland is very critical of *The moral philosopher*: 'There are many things in his book, that look like a wilful perversion and misrepresentation of facts, as well as arguments'. This apologetic zeal leads him to a frontal attack on Morgan. Morgan openly and avowedly rejects the Old Testament. But he clearly rejects Christianity also: 'All his pretended regard for Christianity, and the religion of Jesus, is only the better to carry on his design of subverting it'. Leland appears to have thought of not answering Morgan at all, as proposed by Warburton: 'Perhaps to have taken no notice of him at all would have been a greater mortification to this writer, than the best answer that could be published against him'. But Leland decided otherwise.³⁷

The result is the first volume of his *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted* which contains sixteen chapters of which the second to the seventh are dedicated to the defence of the law of Moses, the eighth to the eleventh to the prophets, and the rest to the defence of the New Testament. In the book, Leland quotes entire pages of *The moral philosopher*. He examines the value that Morgan gives to revelation and his criteria for the truth of such a revelation.

He criticizes the strange representation Morgan makes of the law of Moses and his objections to the Old Testament. For Leland, there is nothing absurd in the Mosaic constitution. Miracles are no poetic embellishments, but real facts. He places all the orthodox arguments on the table: the moral precepts are all pure and excellent; they offer beauty and harmony, instead of absurdity. He defends the authority of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul with respect to the divine origin of the law of Moses and the internal constitution of the Mosaic law against Morgan's criticism: this law required inward purity of heart and affections. Leland devotes much time to Morgan's claim that the law of Moses encouraged human sacrifices: such sacrifices were forbidden in the law. Similarly, he discusses Morgan's account of the origin of the priesthood.

Leland criticizes Morgan's 'bitter invectives against the Jews, and the strange representation he makes of that people'. He objects that, on the contrary, the Jews exceeded all other nations in wisdom and religion. He also criticizes the strange, inconsistent representation, which Morgan gives of the character and conduct of the prophets, defending the clear and

³⁶ Leland, *A view*, Volume 1, 3.

³⁷ Leland, *The divine authority*, v, vi, xii.

circumstantial predictions of the prophets. Samuel and David were excellent persons, Leland maintained. Elijah and Elisha and the other prophets were not the great disturbers of the country, as Morgan would have them. Leland emphatically denies that ‘the whole nation of the Jews from the time of Moses to Ezra were Sadducees or deistical materialists’. He complains about ‘the malice and disingenuity’ of the author. As to the conduct and character of Jesus Christ, Leland contends that Morgan is insinuating that he brought his own death upon himself. In publishing the Gospel the apostles were all under the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost. Leland defends the harmony between St. Paul and the other Apostles, denying that there was any difference between them. He refers to Morgan’s critical view about the Apocalypse as a Jewish gospel.³⁸ The last chapter of Leland’s rebuttal is devoted to Leland’s orthodox defence of the doctrine of the redemption by Christ. In the end the conclusion is that in *The moral philosopher* there are many things that are little better than downright misrepresentation and abuse.³⁹ In general, one can say that Leland scrutinizes Morgan’s text entirely from an orthodox point of view. Clearly, Leland wrote his apology with all the orthodox energy he had in an attempt to diminish the influence of *The moral philosopher*. For him personally this book turned out to be a great success. He received for this publication the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen in 1739. Doddridge remembered it ‘among the best books our age has produced’.⁴⁰

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§6: The Anglican divine, John Chapman

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A second voluminous book against Morgan’s *Moral philosopher* was written by John Chapman, an Anglican divine and classical scholar, Fellow of King’s College in Cambridge, and chaplain to Archbishop John Potter. The book entitled *Eusebius, or the true Christian’s defense against a late book entitul’d The moral philosopher*, is dedicated to the Archbishop - it was by encouragement of the Archbishop that he had started this work. Chapman had already written against Anthony Collins.⁴¹ The preface is dated November 26th 1738; it was published in Cambridge in 1739.⁴² A second volume appeared in 1741. Chapman was much interested in Thomas Morgan’s works. In 1785, the year after his death, his library was sold at an auction by Leigh and Sotheby. It contained nearly all Morgan’s books.⁴³ Since Warburton’s observations, Chapman’s work has always been seen as an attempt to gain ecclesiastical preferment for the author. Warburton wrote to Doddridge on February 12th 1739: ‘Pray how do you like Chapman’s book against the moral philosopher? He writes by order of the A B C’, that means by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁴ Doddridge was

³⁸ Cf Chapter 3 § 9.

³⁹ Leland, *The divine authority*, 43, 200, 217, 329, 346, 491.

⁴⁰ Nuttall, *Calendar*, 100. The book has been reprinted in 1837. A German edition appeared in 1756 and a Dutch edition in 1776.

⁴¹ (J. Chapman), *The objections of a late anonymous writer, against the book of Daniel, consid’red in a letter to a friend*, Cambridge, 1728.

⁴² A German edition appeared in 1759.

⁴³ (Leigh and Sotheby), *A catalogue of the entire and valuable library of the late rev. John Chapman*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1785), 15 nrs. 521-3.

⁴⁴ Doddridge Humphreys, ed., *The correspondence*, Volume 3, 352.

more positive. Two weeks later, on February 27th 1739, he wrote to Clark: 'I have read Chapman against Morgan with a great deal of pleasure'.⁴⁵ But not everyone was as content with the book as Doddridge. In a letter to Warburton dated September 4th 1739, another Anglican, Conyers Middleton, the principal librarian of Cambridge University, styled it a stupid book against Morgan.⁴⁶ The evaluation of the book has even in our time resulted in conflicting opinions. One scholar has called it an important contribution to the orthodox cause, whereas another calls Chapman a third-rate opponent. Another harsh judgment about Chapman was formulated as follows: 'His incautious extremism received a swift and, for the most part, richly deserved rebuttal from Morgan, entitled *Letter to Eusebius*'.⁴⁷ Chapman's aim was to examine distinctly the whole system of *The moral philosopher*, and 'to obviate every artful suggestion of his against the evidence to any divine revelation from miracles or prophecy'. He wants to defend the prophets against the many injurious reflections and calumnies. He hopes it 'will be an useful preservative against the most dangerous positions of the Christian-Deist'.⁴⁸ In the introduction, Chapman criticises the author, whose identity he did not know at the time, for his 'quibbles, witticisms, parallels, and vulgar rants against divines'. He states that Morgan presents the world with a mere farce instead of a real dispute.⁴⁹ He criticizes the definition of Christianity by *The moral philosopher* as loose, irregular, and arbitrary.⁵⁰ He attacks Morgan on a principal front 'shewing that the moral truth, reason, and fitness of things is no certain mark, nor proper criterion of any doctrine as coming of God'. Moreover, he defends the great use of miracles and prophecy. He refers to Morgan's predecessors in Christian deism, the Blounts, Tindals, Shaftesburys, Woolstons etc. He proceeds to defend the certainty of revelation. He gives evidence of the divine authority in Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Chapman reproaches *The moral philosopher*: 'You undermine the foundations of all historical faith, as well as evangelical, and of all Christianity too, by such an intemperate zeal against the Jewish'.⁵¹ Morgan had stated that no Jew would convert to Christianity. Trying to contradict this opinion, Chapman quotes an impressive list of Jewish converts to Christianity.⁵² Explaining the difference between Christianity and Deism, Chapman states: 'It (deism) is a mere shadow instead of the substance of Christianity, that you offer to us'. Resuming he declares that 'the Christian system is distinguish'd from the religion of nature' by revelation, by doctrine, by covenant, by the Holy Trinity, by grace, and by the doctrine of the future

⁴⁵ Doddridge Humphreys, ed., *The correspondence*, Volume 4, London, 1830, 535.

⁴⁶ C. Middleton, *The miscellaneous works*, Volume 2, London, 1752, 480.

⁴⁷ Herrick, *The radical rhetoric*, 20; Stephen, *History of English thought*, Volume 1, 169; Burns, *The great debate*, 103.

⁴⁸ J. Chapman, *Eusebius, or the true Christian's defense against a late book entitul'd The Moral Philosopher*, Cambridge, 1739, The preface.

⁴⁹ Chapman, *Eusebius*, 2.

⁵⁰ Chapman, *Eusebius*, The contents.

⁵¹ Chapman, *Eusebius*, 7, 70, 369.

⁵² Chapman, *Eusebius*, 530-48; among this list we find well-known names such as those of Paulus of Burgos, Levita, and Tremellius.

resurrection of the body. We shall see ‘how much Christianity will remain to us, when we have thrown out the religion of nature’.⁵³

Just like Leland, Chapman quotes entire pages of *The moral philosopher*. Throughout the book he shows abundant knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, quoting many authorities. It is ironic that at that time Chapman did not know that Morgan was the author because he refers to ‘having such an ally on my side as Dr. Morgan’, quoting from Morgan’s *Tracts*, and thereby proving that Morgan was not known as a deist in the 1720s.⁵⁴

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§7: Reactions which appeared after the publication of the second volume of *The moral philosopher*

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After the publication of the second volume of Morgan’s *The moral philosopher* in 1739 the flow of reactions continued.⁵⁵ The Anglicans took the lead in 1739. The Archdeacon of Wiltshire, Henry Stebbing, compared *The moral philosopher* with the work of Thomas Chubb and with Tindal’s *Christianity as old as the creation*, in his charge to the clergy at the Easter visitation of 1739. ‘What is this but the very scheme advanced by the author of *Christianity as old as the creation*, and since espoused by the *moral philosopher*?’.⁵⁶ Like other authors, Stebbing heaped the deists together. Master John Hildrop, whom Morgan contended with in 1722, referred in 1739 ironically to ‘the inimitable writings of Hobbes, Blunt, Toland, Tindal, Collins, Gordon, and that prince of Paralogicians, the Moral Philosopher’.⁵⁷ It is clear that, whatever he may have understood by a paralogician, the characterization was negative. On June 3rd 1739, John Cradock, Fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge, later Bishop of Kilmore and Archbishop of Dublin, preached a sermon in St. Mary’s Church, Cambridge, ‘in which are occasionally considered the Moral Philosopher’s doctrines’.⁵⁸ Still in June 1739, an anonymous author called Scoto-Britannicus published *A letter to Philalethes* against the second volume of the *Moral philosopher*.⁵⁹

Warburton continued to hold Morgan in contempt. From Brant Broughton, he wrote to Philipp Doddridge on August 13th 1739: ‘As for that fellow Morgan, he is, I think, below my notice, any farther than to shew my great contempt of him occasionally. Besides, I ought to leave him to those who are paid for writing against him’.⁶⁰ There were probably many writers

⁵³ Chapman, *Eusebius*, 425, 427-8, 432.

⁵⁴ Chapman, *Eusebius*, 289.

⁵⁵ We deal here with the reactions to Volumes two and three because the starting points in these volumes do not alter principally, with the exception of the nascent historical criticism, see Chapter 5 § 7-8.

⁵⁶ (H. Stebbing), *A charge delivered to the clergy of the archdeaconry of Wilts, at the Easter visitation in the year 1739, containing observations on Mr. Chubb’s True Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*, London, 1739, 20.

⁵⁷ (J. Hildrop), *An essay for the better regulation and improvement of free-thinking*, London, 1739, 30. A paralogician is someone who reasons falsely and speciously.

⁵⁸ J. Cradock, *The insufficiency of the principal objections whether of Jews or Greeks to Christianity*, Cambridge, 1739, title page.

⁵⁹ This pamphlet, which I have not been able to see, is mentioned in the monthly catalogues of *The London Magazine* for June, 1739, 312 nr.34.

⁶⁰ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 817.

who took this seriously. An anonymous pamphlet was published in September 1739, entitled: *Truth triumphant, or a summary view of the late controversy, occasioned by a book, intitl'd The moral philosopher*. The author 'heard, that this book, ... was in high esteem among a certain set of men, called moralists, alias deists'. This author seems well informed about the life of Morgan, because he notes: 'The Dissenters expelled you from their society at Marlborough ... the Quakers would not receive you at Bristol'.⁶¹

From the Roman Catholic side, the controversial writer and Jesuit John Constable entered the debate. After an education at the English College in St. Omer in France, he returned to England about 1726 to work in Staffordshire. In *Deism and Christianity fairly consider'd ... to which is added ... two letters to a friend upon a book intitl'd The moral philosopher*, published in December 1739, he wrote that *The moral philosopher* was much valued by the deists. He criticizes Morgan for his many strange misrepresentations of the history of the Old Testament. All in all, he thinks the book is a 'jumbled, inconsistent, and impious piece'.⁶² Constable is, as far as I know, the only English Roman Catholic who attacked Morgan publicly.

In the next year the flow did not stop. The Rector of Buckland in Hertfordshire, Thomas Morell, known as librettist of various oratorios by George Frideric Handel, preached on January 9th 1740, in Kew Chapel, referring to the 'im-moral philosopher'.⁶³

The dissenters were also active in defending the orthodox truth. In 1740, Joseph Hallett produced a reprint of *The immorality* together with *A rebuke to the moral philosopher*, in which he states: 'The moral philosopher makes no conscience of what he writes. He denies certain facts, and forges history'.⁶⁴ In April 1740, Moses Lowman, Independent minister at Clapham, published in nearly 300 pages a *Dissertation on the civil government of the Hebrews ... vindicated: in particular, from some late, unfair and false representations ... in the moral philosopher*.⁶⁵ He wishes to defend the justice, wisdom and goodness of the Mosaical constitutions. The author speaks in the preface of his age as inclined to unbelief.⁶⁶ After a quotation from *The moral philosopher*, Lowman criticizes it as 'so heavy a charge, drawn up in so insolent terms'. He discusses the chief designs and principal intention of the civil government of the Hebrews, but also the territory, the government of the tribes, and especially the constitution of the tribe of Levi. What follows is the union of the tribes and the congregation of all Israel. In all this Lowman criticizes *The moral philosopher*, discovering 'an instance of enormous ignorance, or something worse in our author, as is not to be excused in any man who shall pretend to write on the subject'. Another great mistake he finds in Morgan's second volume. He criticizes the author extensively on the subject of the tithes and on his explanations about the oracles, concluding that *The moral philosopher* is very unfair.⁶⁷

⁶¹ N.N., *Truth triumphant*, London, 1739, v, 2.

⁶² (Constable), *Deism and Christianity*, 241, 273, 282.

⁶³ Th. Morell, *The surest grounds for hopes of success in war*, London, 1740, 11.

⁶⁴ (J. Hallett), *A rebuke to the moral philosopher*, London, 1740, 14-5.

⁶⁵ The book was dedicated to the barrister and book-collector Sir Richard Ellys.

⁶⁶ M. Lowman, *Dissertation on the civil government of the Hebrews ... vindicated: in particular, from some late, unfair and false representations ... in the Moral Philosopher*, London, 1740, iii.

⁶⁷ Lowman, *Dissertation*, 3, 100, 108, 110-121, 206-210, 277.

In general, Lowman is very accurate and detailed in his criticism of Morgan.⁶⁸ The book was very popular and was quoted positively, for example in the notebooks of the English literary critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁶⁹

John Leland had hoped to stop *The moral philosopher*, but reacting to its second volume, he published in June 1740 a second volume of his own *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted ... being a defence of the first volume of this work, against the exceptions and misrepresentations in the second volume of the moral philosopher*. He criticizes the author by saying that ‘the methods he makes use of are fit only to serve error and imposture’.⁷⁰ Morgan, according to Leland, has not acknowledged any of his mistakes in the first volume. On the contrary, he has made things even worse. For Leland, this controversy was not an agreeable employment. Throughout the book he criticizes Morgan’s style. He repeats his errors over and over again, referring to his heap of loose, rambling reflections, his confused way of talking about revelation, his absurdity and inconsistency, his ambiguities, the extravagance of his suppositions, and the ‘falsehood and extravagance of his computations’. Leland defends the miracles of Moses and states that the law of Moses is reasonable and excellent. He defends the oracle of Urim and Thummim. He ends with the fierce exclamation: ‘Never were the sacred names of truth and reason more prostituted and abused, than they are by this writer’.⁷¹ So Leland did defend the authority of the Old and New Testament. He received much praise for his defence from orthodox believers. Thus, we have seen that in the space of a year ten apologetic reactions appeared against Morgan’s second volume. The tone of all of these was negative. But Morgan was not defeated, nor convinced by the arguments of such apologists. His vehement character led him to make another statement in the third volume of *The moral philosopher*.

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§8: Reactions which appeared after the publication of the third volume of *The moral philosopher*

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After the publication of the third volume of *The moral philosopher*, which came from the press in 1740, the flow of reactions continued. Another university preacher, Richard Brown, Fellow of Trinity College Oxford, referred to *The moral philosopher* in a sermon before the university, at St. Mary’s, on October 12th 1740.⁷² In a letter to Warburton dated January 8th 1741, Conyers Middleton called Morgan a subtle and ingenious, but infamous writer.⁷³ The year 1741 brought more publications. In February 1741, Samuel Chandler, the Non-conformist minister of the Old Jewry in London, published *A vindication of the history of the*

⁶⁸ An appendix appeared in 1741 and a second enlarged edition appeared in 1745. This work by Lowman was twice translated into German: in 1755 and 1756, and a Dutch edition appeared in 1747 and a reissue in 1768.

⁶⁹ K. Coburn and A.J. Harding, eds., *The notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Volume 5, 1827-1834, Princeton, 2002, 406, 410, 415; also in the lectures on politics and religion in 1795, see L. Patton and P. Mann, eds., *S.T. Coleridge, Lectures, 1795, on politics and religion*, (The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1), Princeton, 1971, 122.

⁷⁰ J. Leland, *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*, Volume 2, London, 1740, iv.

⁷¹ Leland, *The divine authority*, Volume 2, vii, ix, 30, 56, 124, 214, 368.

⁷² R. Brown, *The case of Naaman considered*, Oxford, 1741, 27 note 1.

⁷³ Middleton, *The miscellaneous works*, Volume 2, 484; see on the so-called deism of Middleton, van den Berg, ‘Should Conyers Middleton’.

Old Testament, in answer to the misrepresentations and calumnies of T. Morgan, M.D., and moral philosopher. Chandler was educated for some time at Bridgwater academy, just like Morgan, but at another period. He worked for some time as a bookseller in London. He wrote not only against Morgan, but also against Collins. Though many knew the identity of *The moral philosopher*, Chandler was the first to publish his real name in this book. He criticized Morgan as follows: 'No one can read this author, without perceiving in every page of him almost, a very deep prejudice against the Old Testament history, and all the characters there in recorded'. He made a comparison between Morgan's early confession of faith and his later opinions. Morgan wished to prove in his three volumes marks and appearances of fraud, artifice and deception in the Jewish and Christian writings.⁷⁴ Otherwise, Chandler's book is for the most part dedicated to the defense of the character and personality of Abraham. From the Anglican side, Samuel Squire wrote pamphlets on various subjects and published, under the pseudonym Theophanes Cantabrigiensis in March 1741, *The ancient history of the Hebrews vindicated, or, remarks on part the third volume of the moral philosopher*.⁷⁵ With reference to Squire's publication, Warburton wrote on April 22nd 1741 to Doddridge: 'All I have seen of Morgan is in that pamphlet; and for my part I am amazed that any one should think it worth while to answer the most senseless and abandoned scribbler that ever came from Bedlam or the Mint'.⁷⁶

A second volume of Chapman's *Eusebius* containing another 500 pages appeared in early 1741. There he observed in *The moral philosopher* 'little more than a fresh retail of the old Manichees and Marcionites, of Spinoza, Toland, and Oracles of Reason'. Chapman probably mentions Mani and Marcion here because of their disparagement of the Old Testament. After a preface of 32 pages, he devotes some six chapters defending the New Testament and the doctrine of redemption by Christ. He defended these topics from many gross misrepresentations, loose fallacious accounts and groundless objections.⁷⁷ Warburton wrote in April 1741 to Thomas Birch about this book with a certain disdain: 'The mighty splendor of the great *Eusebius*, which I find has got the start of him. Is this second dose more palatable than the first? Or is it as rough in taste, and potent in operation, as the other?'.⁷⁸

Ebenezer Hewlett, who lived at the New Pales in Sun Street, outside Bishopsgate, London, wrote in 1741 *A vindication of the Bible, ... being some remarks on many willful errors of the moral philosopher*. In another pamphlet published in the same year Hewlett stated: 'I had once a good conceit of the deists, as being honest and well-meaning men, but I find now, that Mr. Morgan and Mr. Chubb have dipped too deep in the bag of deceit'.⁷⁹

Not only theologians, but also physicians battled against their fellow physician Morgan. The physician Nicholas Robinson wrote, besides many medical works, also *The Christian*

⁷⁴ Chandler, *A vindication*, iii, xxiv-xxvi, 3.

⁷⁵ Squire was Bishop of St. David's from 1761; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 175 note 60, ascribes it erroneously to Chapman; see about Squire R. Browning, 'Samuel Squire, pamphleteering churchman', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 5 (1978-9) 12-20.

⁷⁶ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 825.

⁷⁷ J. Chapman, *Eusebius*, Volume 2, London, 1741, iv, 1, 261, 349; a German edition of this second volume appeared in 1761.

⁷⁸ Nichols, *Illustrations*, Volume 2, 124.

⁷⁹ E. Hewlett, *Miracles real evidence of a divine revelation*, London, 1741, 24.

philosopher, published in 1741.⁸⁰ He reproaches *The moral philosopher* that ‘he, from the reason of things and from the rectitude of their nature, labours, with all his might, to invalidate the doctrines of revelation’.⁸¹

But afterwards the reactions diminished and the storm abated. In 1742, the Presbyterian minister of Kaye Street Chapel in Liverpool, John Brekell, criticized *The moral philosopher* in a pamphlet entitled *The Christian warfare*: ‘One of the many blunders of a modern author, who stiles himself, for-sooth, the *moral philosopher* to pretend that St. Peter was in a different way of thinking from St. Paul’.⁸²

Thus, we have counted more than twenty-five published reactions during Morgan’s lifetime, not counting the many reactions in contemporary correspondence. There are probably more to be found, but this is sufficient to show the range of voices in this controversy.

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§9: Summary

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It can be concluded that much contemporary attention was given to *The moral philosopher* in England. The text most received negative criticism from apologetic sides of all denominations: Presbyterians, Independents, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. They came from all parts of Britain and Ireland. They comprised local clergy and university teachers. The most prolific were Leland, Chapman and Lowman. The others wrote pamphlets, articles in journals, letters and occasional commentaries. All these criticisms focused on Morgan’s negative view of the Old Testament and the Jews, the negation of the doctrine of the redemption by Christ, the difference between Peter and Paul, his negation of inspiration, and his dislike of miracles and revelation in general. For all these apologists Morgan situates himself outside the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy. These criticisms were also aimed at his style and his self-complacency. All this made Morgan’s ideas known among a greater public. The most important and most verbose critic is without doubt the Presbyterian John Leland. Not one of those critics found anything positive in Morgan’s reasoning.

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⁸⁰ Dated ‘from my house in the Royal College of Physicians’, December 6th 1740.

⁸¹ N. Robinson, *The Christian Philosopher*, London, 1741, xi.

⁸² J. Brekell, *The Christian warfare*, London, 1742, 33 note.

Chapter Five: Morgan's answers to his critics

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§1: Reactions against five opponents

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Morgan reacted very quickly to the first attacks on his *Moral philosopher*. Already in July 1737, he published anonymously a pamphlet of forty pages entitled *A defence of the moral philosopher; against a pamphlet, intituled, "The immorality of the moral philosopher"*, which was directed against Hallett. This work contained a much more harsh critique of the Old Testament than the first part of *The moral philosopher*. This was even observed abroad: the great book might have been entitled 'the philosopher in a good humor', the little one 'the philosopher in a bad temper'.¹

The two works by Leland and Chapman did nothing to abate Morgan's energy. On the contrary, they led him to produce a second volume of *The moral philosopher*. It is amazing to see how fast he worked in those days. In a few months time he wrote an answer. In March 1739, *The moral philosopher, being a farther vindication of moral truth and reason* appeared in London, again under the pseudonym Philalethes. The preface was dated February 10th 1739.²

This second volume no longer uses the form of a dialogue. In fact, it is not a continuation of Volume one, but a refutation of the work of these two critics of the first volume. In Morgan's view, Chapman writes with 'much more candour and caution' than Leland, whom he sometimes calls Sophronius.³ Besides the nascent historical critical observations⁴, new points in comparison with the first volume are not mentioned, but the tone has become sharper and the criticism of the Old Testament is more detailed.

In August 1740, the third volume of *The moral philosopher, superstition and tyranny inconsistent with theocracy* appeared in London, again under the pseudonym Philalethes. Again, the speed with which Morgan wrote an answer in just a few months is amazing.⁵ This volume was directed against the second volume of Leland's *Divine authority*, as well as against Lowman's *Dissertation on the civil government of the Hebrews*. The book has the same tenor as Volume two and repeats it in many respects. Many observations from Volume three have already been mentioned before. At the end of Volume three, Morgan ironically thanks Moses Lowman 'that he has done me the honour to take a particular notice of me, as the author of the *moral philosopher* ... he has attack'd me very warmly'.⁶ He realized only too well that negative comments in books and pamphlets about his *Moral philosopher* were the best propaganda for his book. Morgan was a man with a flair for publicity.

¹ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 10/1 (1737) 14: 'Le gros livre pourroit être titulé: le philosophe en belle humeur, & la brochure, le philosophe en colère'.

² It has a preface of thirty pages and an introduction of ten pages. The main body consists of two parts. The first part of 263 pages, divided in ten sections, is against Leland, *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*. The second part with 80 pages paginated separately is directed against Chapman, *Eusebius*.

³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, xxvi; Volume 2, second part, 11.

⁴ See below § 7; Gerdmar, *Roots*, 32 note 12, misses this historical point, when he concentrates on the first volume alone.

⁵ It has a preface of ten pages and a main body of 357 pages, consisting of a large introduction and six chapters, and an index of ten pages.

⁶ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 325, 340.

In 1741, he published under his own name a pamphlet of seventy pages entitled *A vindication of the moral philosopher; against the false accusations, assaults, and personal abuses, of Samuel Chandler*. It is dated May 25th 1741, and is directed against Samuel Chandler.⁷ In it, Morgan refers to false charges which Chandler charged him with in a public place and company. They had also exchanged letters on this subject, letters which ‘are still at my bookseller’s shop, mr. Cox’s, under the Royal Exchange, where many gentlemen have seen them’. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these letters is unknown. In this work, Morgan acknowledges that his opinions have changed in the course of time. ‘After twenty-five years farther examination and study, I have effectually confuted my former self’. An honest observation about the modifications in his opinions during all those years.⁸

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§2: Warburton

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Morgan’s last publication appeared in February 1742 anonymously: *A brief examination of the Rev. Mr Warburton’s Divine legation of Moses ... by a society of gentlemen*, dated September 18th 1741.⁹ He again chose anonymity, probably because his opponent William Warburton was already at that time living in higher circles, being chaplain to the Prince of Wales. Only once in the book does Morgan refer to his alter ego, *The moral philosopher*.¹⁰ The aim of the book was to settle the essential difference and distinction between the true universal religion of God and nature, founded in eternal, immutable reason and the moral fitness of things, and the sacerdotal superstition or false religion.¹¹ The book is full of the same kinds of attacks on the Old Testament that were found in the volumes of *The moral philosopher*. But the tone is even more furious: ‘We the Deists and Free-thinkers of *Great-Britain* ... can see nothing in the *Hebrew* story ... that discovers any extraordinary or supernatural conduct of Providence, under that Dispensation, more than any other’.¹² It is fair to say that Morgan became more and more embittered in his old age. Warburton never reacted to the *Brief examination*, but his biographer supposes that he could not have failed to have been moved by it.¹³ Morgan’s last published work, the *Brief examination*, contains the only place where he himself admits ironically to being part of the group of ‘the deists and freethinkers of *Great-Britain*’, in a bitterly fulminating style.

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§3: The criterion of religion: Reason and common sense

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The Jews – ‘that dark dispensation’ – never believed anything but miracles. Therefore, in the preface to volume two, Morgan gives a clear definition of religion: ‘Religion is a clear,

⁷ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 175 note 60, erroneously observes the *Vindication* as an answer to Samuel Squire.

⁸ Th. Morgan, *A vindication of the moral philosopher*, London, 1741, 3, 12.

⁹ It has a preface of 84 pages and a main body of 175 pages; see for the context of this publication Chapter 4 § 4.

¹⁰ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination* 159.

¹¹ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, iii.

¹² (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 1, 9-10.

¹³ J.S. Watson, *The life of William Warburton, d.d.*, London, 1863, 218; see van den Berg, ‘Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton’.

rational, intelligible thing, most adequate to the natural capacity, reason, and understanding of man ... in short, religion is reason and common sense'. Reason and common sense are characteristic for the religious views of Morgan. He nicely remarks that as the Christian religion is the best in the world, the Christian superstition is the worst. Here again appear often, as in the first volume, the moral truth, reason and fitness of things.¹⁴ We already observed above the development of Morgan's view in the direction of reason above Scripture.¹⁵ Now in this volume he can state: 'Reason itself is a natural revelation from God'.¹⁶ This is a typical Lockean phrase, which once again is proof of Morgan's esteem for Locke.¹⁷

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§4: Criticism on miracles and revelation

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In comparison with Volume 1, it may be said that Morgan criticizes the miracles of Moses more vehemently. Natural causes are the best explanation. About the passage of Israel through the sea he comments:

They were conducted only by night, or in a thick dark fog, with only the confused light of fire and smoak, which kept them always in a cloud. Under such circumstances, so ignorant and stupid a people, and so infinitely fond of prodigies and special favours, might be easily persuaded, that the dry ground which they marched over, was the bottom of the sea, which God had cleared of all the water, rocks, and quick-sands, to make way for them.¹⁸

He repeats in Volume 3 his criticism on miracles with nearly the same phrase which he uses in Volume 2: 'It is highly improbable, and not to be admitted, that God should work miracles, or interpose by an immediate, divine power, out of the way of natural agency'.¹⁹ He returns in Volume 3 to the same type of criticism about the miracles, which we already found in the first volume. The Hebrew historians ascribe the most common and natural events to supernatural causes. All the stories are subject the same limitation: the Hebrew author never regards the literal truth, he relates nothing but miracles.²⁰ Their vision of God and religion is outdated. They generally ascribe things to God, in a sense very different from what we should do now. The text of the Bible is not infallible. The great difference between Leland and Morgan is, as he declares himself, that he cannot believe the infallibility of the Hebrew historians.²¹ A phrase which comes back at the end in the second part against Chapman: 'I do not believe in

¹⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, ix, xxiii-xxiv, 10, 17.

¹⁵ In Chapter 2 § 11.

¹⁶ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 26.

¹⁷ A.C. Fraser, ed., *John Locke, An essay concerning human understanding*, Volume 2, Toronto, 1959, book 4, chapter 19, paragraph 4, 431: 'reason is natural revelation'.

¹⁸ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 66.

¹⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 169; see Volume 2, 32.

²⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 41, 60.

²¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 114, 166.

the infallibility of the biblical historians'.²² These observations return in Volume 3. Morgan starts this volume with the observation that revelation is not infallible. The Hebrew historians were never under the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost. He charges Chandler with maintaining the fundamentally false principle, that the Hebrew history derives from positive divine authority and immediate inspiration, and that those historians were working all along under the unerring guidance and infallible direction of the Holy Ghost.²³

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§5: Moral criticism on the Old Testament

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Morgan has a more negative view of the Biblical patriarchs. These patriarchs looked after their own interests. Moses and Aaron never received a commission and authority from God, as they pretended they had. They had the ambition of forming a kingdom of their own. The two brothers Moses and Aaron were mere worldly politicians, who looked after their own tribe and family. It was more politics than religion. This might be right in human policy, but not in religion.

He refers many times to the Mosaic era, now criticizing almost everything. There were many things under the Mosaic economy which would not be right now, and which could not have been right at any time. Moses was at best an astute politician. In short, the law of Moses was merely temporal or political. At the end of the introduction to Volume 3, Morgan gives a nice example of his vision about the details of Mosaic law. With respect to the law of jealousy in Numbers 5, he observes that 'the Christian woman may thank God, that this revelation has been repeal'd by another revelation'.

Along with this we find a typical moral sneer, which Morgan gives in his commentary upon the alleged father of Samuel. He

might be nearer ally'd to the high priesthood than this writer imagines. The historian let us know, that Samuel's mother could never had a child by her husband ..., till she went up and made the case known, ... to the priests, ... We are also assured that Eli's sons lay with the women who came up ... to the sanctuary.²⁴

Morgan has many negative things to say about the Biblical figure of David. He calls King David the most artful dissembler that ever lived, and a divine hypocrite.²⁵ In this respect, Morgan is sharper and more cynical than Pierre Bayle in his article about King David in his famous *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. To give an example of Bayle's criticism:

The deep respect that we have for this great king and prophet should not prevent us from condemning the flaws that are to be found in his life. Otherwise we should give cause to secular people to reproach us by saying that for an action to be just, it is enough for it to be performed by people whom we venerate. Nothing could be more damaging for

²² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 64.

²³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, iv; Morgan, *A vindication*, 16.

²⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 69, 110, 115, 118, 307-8.

²⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 177, 179: 'his deep and most detestable hypocrisy' with respect to the fate of the messenger of the death of king Saul in 2 Samuel 1; cf already Volume 1, 323.

Christian morals than that.²⁶

Bayle asks many questions about the conduct of David, but he does not use the words that Morgan utters about David. Morgan quoted Bayle only three times, but not in relation to King David.²⁷ He also has a very low opinion of the prophets of Israel. They were disturbers of their country, rebelling against their kings and spiritual politicians. These moral comments on the stories of the Old Testament shows his aversion of the Jewish traditions in full scale.

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§6: Christianity

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Returning to his conclusions, Morgan finally states: ‘My Christianity is the eternal, immutable religion of God and nature’. At last he advises Leland to distinguish well between Judaism and Christianity.²⁸ In the second part against Chapman he states that Jesus Christ was not the Jewish prophetic Messiah. The miracles of Jesus were not wrought with any such design to prove himself to be the Jewish Messiah. For that matter Morgan wrote that no Jew can rationally and consistently embrace Christianity upon the basis of Moses and the prophets. On the contrary, St. Paul was the best and only expositor and interpreter of Jesus Christ.²⁹ About the New Testament he repeats his position from Volume 1 of *The moral philosopher*: Peter and Paul preached two different gospels. Again, he underlines the opposition of the Judaizing party of Peter and John against St. Paul. ‘Christianity ... at first was but a new scheme of Judaism; but after its establishment ..., it degenerated into a grosser and more enormous state of idolatry’.³⁰

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§7: A pioneer of the historical-critical method

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The only, rather new element in Volume 2 of Morgan’s work are his critical observations about the origin of the Biblical books. Morgan appears, as we already saw in Chapter 3, also as a pioneer of the historical-critical method. Many assumptions have been made about the origins of the historical-critical study of the Bible. The most common names in this respect are Richard Simon and Benedict Spinoza, Johann Salomo Semler, and Ferdinand Christian Baur.³¹ But there is also an English line, along persons like Thomas Hobbes about the Pentateuch, Anthony Collins about Daniel, and our friend Thomas Morgan. Morgan was familiar with the work of Hobbes and of Collins.

Morgan knows of the critical observations about the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but only a small part of it. ‘It does not appear that Moses writ

²⁶ S.L. Jenkinson, ed., *Bayle, political writings*, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), Cambridge, 2000, 42.

²⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 2, 214; (A Society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 37-8.

²⁸ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 220, 273.

²⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 33, 15, 37, 45.

³⁰ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, xlv, xxix.

³¹ Kl. Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der historisch-kritischen Theologie*, (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus 10/23), Munich, 1966, 7.

any thing himself but the original book of the law, which was to be kept in the ark'.³² It is clear that although he does not quote him here, Morgan follows the line of the text in Chapter 33 of *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes: 'though Moses did not compile those books entirely, ... he wrote ... the volume of the law, ... which Moses commanded the priests and the Levites to lay in the side of the arke'.³³ But in contrast to Hobbes, Morgan gives a very harsh moral critique of Moses. Moses is responsible for falsehood and imposture, unnatural cruelty and violence, murder, blood and rape.³⁴ In this context, he refers to the commandment to exterminate the Canaanites. The conquest of Canaan was the most bloody, cruel, and outrageous act that had ever been known, and beyond all example till modern times. In this context, he calls the Israelites holy butchers. But not only Moses, also his successors laid hold of the sword. 'This godly method of propagating religion by force of arms, and establishing faith by fire and sword, was the plan of Moses, and pursued by David'.

For Morgan, it is more probable that Samuel played a greater role in the concept of writing the history of Israel. He thinks it is likely that Samuel wrote the whole history of that nation down to his own time. Many parts of the Pentateuch were 'never collected and digested as we have it now, till Samuel's time'. But Samuel was not a holy man. He plotted against and contrived the ruin of Saul and his family.³⁵ The idea of Samuel's authorship of part of the Pentateuch reappeared a century later in the work of the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso.³⁶ Colenso has been called the predestined champion of reform in the study of the Old Testament in England.³⁷ Still in the twentieth century the idea found a defender: 'The Pentateuch, or Torah, was composed, or rather compiled, at the time of Samuel and under his direction'.³⁸ This defender appears to be an outsider of the traditional postexilic date of the Pentateuch by modern Old Testament research.

Many critical insights were proposed by Morgan about the origins of the Biblical books. Some Biblical books were written long after the facts they describe. So 'the two books of Chronicles, and the books of Daniel and Esther were evidently wrote long after the captivity'.³⁹ This we already find in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Chapter 33.⁴⁰ About the Psalms he states that the Book of Psalms is plainly a collection of poems and songs, composed by several hands at great distances of time.

The same happened with the Books of the Prophets. They 'have been revised and altered by after-editors, who took the liberty to add and supply what they thought fit'. He knows of the

³² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 69.

³³ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1985, 418.

³⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 73; see for the view of the deists about Moses Gawlick, 'Zwischen Religionsphilosophie und Religionskritik', about Morgan especially 243-46.

³⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 291, 70, 77, 69, 176.

³⁶ J.W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and the book of Joshua critically examined*, Volume 2, London, 1863, 223-9: 'Was Samuel the Elohist writer of the Pentateuch?'; see on Colenso J.A. Draper, ed., *The eye of the storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the crisis of biblical interpretation*, London, 2003.

³⁷ T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament criticism*, London, 1893, 196.

³⁸ E. Robertson, *The Old Testament problem: a re-investigation*, Manchester, 1950, 59.

³⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 193, 68.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 419-21.

beginning discussions about the exilic parts of Isaiah. The theory of the post-exilic Isaiah: 'There are several passages and whole chapters in Isaiah that must have been writ after the Babylonish captivity, as relating to the state and circumstances of the people at that time'.⁴¹ A view, which as a harbinger of the theory of the Deutero-Isaiah wins weight especially in Germany in the end of the eighteenth century. So the Professor of Oriental Languages in Jena, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, wrote in 1783 that he, when reading the second part of Isaiah, did not see a pre-exilic date for these oracles.⁴² But I did not find any quotation of Morgan's work by Eichhorn in this respect. Morgan produces the same criticism about Daniel. Some of the stories of Daniel are perfectly romantic and contrary to all true history. About the composition of the book of Daniel he states that our present book of Daniel contains historical memoirs and remains of several different persons living at very distant times.⁴³

In Volume 3 Morgan continues with his critical observations about the Biblical books. He observes once again that it cannot be proved, or be made to appear, that Moses ever wrote the historical parts of the Pentateuch. As an example, he interprets the text of Genesis 15, verse 16 ('the Amorites ... were not then in the land, when this promise was made to Abraham') as a forgery, or interpolation from later ages. About the Book of Judges, he writes that it has perplexed and confounded all chronology. He finds so many inconsistencies that he finally utters 'It would require a book ... to consider all the gross and palpable errors and inconsistencies of these antient Hebrew historians, especially in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel'.⁴⁴

He makes an interesting observation about Biblical history, which has to be 'read critically, and interpreted by the same rules of natural and rational probability and credibility as we read all other history'.⁴⁵ There should be no difference between the study of Biblical and Non-Biblical texts. So the 'critica sacra' gives place to the 'critica profana', such as later stated by Semler.⁴⁶ This will be repeated by British scholars a century later including Benjamin Jowett, the Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford, who exclaimed: 'Interpret the Scripture like any other book'.⁴⁷ For this reason, the interpretation of the Bible by the same rules as all other history, Morgan has been named a more original thinker than Tindal, and one possessed of considerably more historical sense.⁴⁸

With respect to the books of the New Testament, he denies the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that 'it is plain to me, that it is not written in that apostle's style

⁴¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 68, 163.

⁴² 'ie öfter ich die Orakel vom 40sten bis 52sten Kapitel Jesaias lese, desto weniger will es mir einleuchten, dass sie vor dem babylonischen Exil abgefasst seyn sollen', quoted by E. Sehmsdorf, *Die Prophetenauslegung bei J.G. Eichhorn*, Göttingen, 1971, 53.

⁴³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 217.

⁴⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 226, 234-6, 248-9.

⁴⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 140.

⁴⁶ H.J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 2nd edition, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969, 93: 'die "Critica sacra" musste der "Critica profana" das Feld räumen'; 107-8.

⁴⁷ B. Jowett, 'On the interpretation of Scripture', in: Fr. Temple and others, *Essays and reviews*, 7th edition, London, 1861, 330-433 (377).

⁴⁸ Harrison, 'Religion', 168; Gerdmar, *Roots*, 29, and 35, has no eye for Morgan's historical reflection.

and language'.⁴⁹ But that is since the discussions in the old church about the authorship of the epistle nothing new.

His observation that natural and revealed religion are essentially and subjectively the very same, and that the only difference lies in the different ways or methods of teaching, conveying, and receiving the same truths, is interesting too. It recalls his observation at the end of *A defence of the moral philosopher* of 1737: 'The religion of nature itself may be lost, and restored again by revelation'.⁵⁰

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§8: A forerunner of the Protestant Tübingen School of Theology

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With all the phrases about the differences between Peter and Paul in mind, we can now understand why Morgan has been called a forerunner of the Protestant Tübingen School of Theology. He has been described as one of those 'forgotten labourers in the vineyard of the *Tübingen* theology', and is called a forerunner of the theory of Ferdinand Christian Baur, the father of the Tübingen critical school, about the two parties in the early church, the Petrine (Judaizing) and Pauline (universalizing) tendencies and their effect on the development of the New Testament.⁵¹ This refers to the publication of Baur's '*Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche*', in which Baur first enunciated his famous thesis of a conflict between Petrine and Pauline parties in the primitive Church.⁵² His basic point is that 'primitive Christianity developed through internal oppositions'. People have sought a Hegelian influence in the theory, but Baur's article was published well before he first read Hegel.⁵³ Probably Baur found the idea already with the theologian Johann Salomo Semler, who has been called a predecessor of the Tübingen School. It has been maintained that Semler indeed already in 1750 defended a view that the early church contained a Pauline and a Petrine party.⁵⁴ In any case, Semler wrote in 1775 clearly about the two parties in the fourth part of the *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*.⁵⁵ We have proof that Semler knew the

⁴⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 100.

⁵⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 148; (Morgan), *A defence*, 39.

⁵¹ Patrick, 'Two English forerunners', 564; O. Pfleiderer, *Lectures on the influence of the apostle Paul on the development of Christianity*, (Hibbert Lectures for 1885), London, 1885, 284-5; Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" in Thomas Morgan's *The Moral Philosopher*', 107.

⁵² Published in 1831 in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*.

⁵³ P.C. Hodgson, *The formation of historical theology. A study of Ferdinand Christian Baur*, New York, 1966, 212, 22.

⁵⁴ W. Geiger, *Spekulation und Kritik, die Geschichtstheologie Ferdinand Christian Baur's*, (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus, 10/28), Munich, 1964, 92: '*Die Unterscheidung eines judaistischen und eines paulinischen Christentums hat er wahrscheinlich bei Semler kennen gelernt*'; P. Gastrow, *Joh. Salomo Semler in seiner Bedeutung für die Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Streites mit G.E. Lessing*, Giessen, 1905, 83; Robertson, *A history of freethought*, Volume 2, 922.

⁵⁵ J.S. Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*, Volume 4, Halle, 1775, preface b 8 recto/verso: '*Es ist aus den ältesten uns noch übrigen Schriften erweislich, dass es lange Zeit eine Partey von Christen gegeben, die zu der Dioces von Palästina gehört, folglich Schriften dieser Apostel, welche unter die Beschneidung eigentlich ihre Dienste verwendeten, angenommen haben; und an diese Christen die zu Jacobi, Petri, Dioces gehörten, hat Paulus seinen Briefe nicht gerichtet; sie hat also auch sie nicht unter ihren*

work of Thomas Morgan via his teacher in Halle, Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten.⁵⁶ It might be possible that Semler picked up the idea of the two parties from *The moral philosopher*. This picture of the development of Christianity undoubtedly goes back to Semler and, behind Semler, to Thomas Morgan.⁵⁷ But we also have to make a reservation. The difference between Morgan and Baur, lies clearly in the fact that, according to Baur after the antithesis between Jewish and Pauline tendencies there follows a synthesis in primitive Christianity.⁵⁸ A synthesis which Morgan denies and which in his view has been only a step towards a deformation of Christianity.

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§9: Summary

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Morgan responded intensively to those critics whose rebuttals were published during his lifetime. It is amazing to see the speed with which he answered voluminous combatants, such as Leland, Chapman and Lowman, but also minor polemicists such as Hallett and Chandler. In those responses Morgan does not alter principally the starting points of *The moral philosopher*, but the tone in general becomes sharper. He repeats his criticism of miracles, his negation of inspiration and infallibility of the Biblical historians, his moral criticism of various Biblical figures and his criticism of the Jewish people. In short, he continues the line of thinking of the first volume. A new point in Volumes 2 and 3 is the increasing historical criticism of the Biblical books as documents. We saw in Volumes 2 and 3 of *The moral philosopher* some specimens of Morgan's Biblical criticism about the Pentateuch, the Prophet Isaiah and post-exilic books in general. Moses wrote only a small part of the Pentateuch, various chapters of Isaiah are post-exilic, many Biblical books were written much later than indicated by themselves. Many Biblical books were also revised by later editors. Therewith, Morgan stands in a tradition which started in England with Thomas Hobbes. Just like Semler, Morgan is called a forerunner of the critical Tübingen School of Ferdinand Christian Baur, but his view on the subsequent development of Christianity was different. The premise about the differences between the Pauline and Petrine church is the same, but the result differs. For Morgan, there was no synthesis between those two, but only a Christianity malformed by Jewish elements.

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Lehrschriften gehabt. Dagegen hat die Partey Christen, welche zu Pauli Dioces gehörten, auch gar wohl gewusst, dass Jacobus, Petrus, Judas, an sie keine Briefe geschickt hatten; sie haben folglich diese Schriften auch nicht unter ihren Gemeinden aufweisen und einführen können. Beide Parteien sind Christen, und haben sich von die Juden abgesondert; aber die Denkungsart der palästinensischer Judenchristen ist noch niedriger, und an mancherley locale Ideen und geringe Bilder gewöhnet, als dass andere Christen, welche nicht unter diesen Einwonern leben, eben diese Lehrart für sich, und zu ihrem nächsten Vorteil annemen konnten. Die Abgeneigtheit der Anhänger Petri von den Schülern Pauli ist aus den ältesten Ueberbleibseln einer Geschichte unleugbar'.

⁵⁶ J.S. Semler, ed., *Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten's Geschichte der Religionspartheyen*, repint of the Halle 1766 edition, Hildesheim, 1966, 76, 96, 100, 146-8, 950; see also D. Lincicum, 'F.C. Baur's place in the study of jewish Christianity', in: F. Stanley Jones, ed., *The rediscovery of Jewish Christianity*, (Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Studies 5), Atlanta, 2012, 137-166 (144).

⁵⁷ J.C. O'Neill, *The Bible's authority: a portrait gallery of thinkers from Lessing to Bultmann*, Edinburgh, 1991, 120-1.

⁵⁸ Hodgson, *The formation*, 207-12.

Chapter Six: Morgan's *Physico-Theology*

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§1: Introduction

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After his major work, Morgan wrote another voluminous book. In April 1741, he published his *Physico-Theology: or, a philosophico-moral disquisition concerning human nature, free agency, moral approvement, and divine providence*, dated March 18th 1740.¹ He had already indicated in 1739 that he was working on this treatise: 'I hope shortly to clear up these matters a little farther in a distinct treatise, concerning providence, moral government and free agency'.²

The biographer Leslie Stephen and many others call *Physico-Theology* the fourth volume of *The moral philosopher*.³ But one may wonder whether they are correct in their assessment of this work.⁴ At any rate, Morgan does not acknowledge it as such, and more importantly, *Physico-Theology* hardly deals with the major topic of *The moral philosopher*, Biblical criticism.⁵ For this reason, I shall discuss it separately.

Morgan's biographer Peter Harrison suggested that with the appearance of this book 'Morgan generated further controversy by casting doubt upon the moral probity of the Old Testament patriarchs', resulting in a conflict with Samuel Chandler'.⁶ But this is a strange remark in light of the fact that Chandler's work was published two months before the publication of the *Physico-Theology*. Moreover, in the *Physico-Theology* Morgan says nothing about the patriarchs. The Preface makes this already clear:

I can expect no thanks or favour from the divines, for explaining and defending the religion of God and nature, while revelation, I mean the Word, has been left out of the account. They will make me, I presume, an atheist, for demonstrating the being, providence, continual presence, and incessant agency and concurrence of the Deity in all the works and ways of nature.⁷

¹ This date may be probably Old Style; it has a preface of four pages, a main body of 353 pages and an index of fifteen pages.

² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 60, in which he refers to God's governing of the world.

³ Stephen, *History of English thought*, Volume 1, 166; also Stephen, *Dictionary*, 36; Hohlwein, *Die Religion*, 1135; S. Ikeda, *David Hume and the eighteenth century British thought*, Tokyo, 1986, 420; O'Neill, *The Bible's authority*, 50 note 4; Schmitt, *Kirchenlexikon*, 118; Busche, *Lexikon*, 470; Sell, ' "The gospel its own witness" ', 203; Hayes, 'Historical criticism of the Old Testament canon', in: Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible Old Testament*, 985-1005 (1003 note 76).

⁴ The same opinion by Gawlick, 'Einleitung', in: (Th. Morgan), *The Moral Philosopher*, 7: 'Wie sie dazu kommen, ist unklar'.

⁵ The *Physico-Theology* has no critique on the morality of the Old Testament, contra J. Rogerson, 'The Old Testament', in: P. Avis, ed., *The history of Christian theology*, Volume 2: *The study and use of the Bible*, Basingstoke/Grand Rapids, 1988, 3-150 (104).

⁶ Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary*, 149.

⁷ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, vi.

Clearly, Morgan does not want to be known as an atheist. His new work, he says, has nothing to do with revelation; it is very critical of it. He stresses that we must judge religion not by revelation, but by reason.

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§2: *Physico-Theology*

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The work has a title which reminds us of William Derham's famous work, entitled *Physico-Theology; or, a demonstration of the being and attributes of God from his works of creation*, being the Boyle's lectures of 1711-2, and published in 1713. This book reached no less than sixteen editions in the 18th century alone.

Derham's *Physico-Theology* deals with theology based on the natural world, reading in nature the miracles of the Creator. The natural world gives proofs of God's existence. Derham also wrote an *Astro-Theology*. Other eighteenth-century botanists and zoologists studied nature looking for proofs of the existence of the Creator. This led to the most spectacular titles of – mostly German Protestant – books like, *Pyro-theology*, *Litho-Theology*, *Bronto-Theology*, *Ichthyo-Theology* and *Testaceo-Theology*.⁸

Morgan uses the same title as Derham. But there the likeness seems to stop. Apart from the first chapters, Morgan's book resembles more a study of moral philosophy. Perhaps that is the reason why Leslie Stephen found it appropriate to call it the fourth volume of *The moral philosopher*. *Physico-Theology* has seven chapters: on matter in general; on the nature of light; on human nature; on power, liberty and free agency; on moral self-regimen; on moral right and wrong; and on divine providence.

The work has been called 'a full-blown system of natural theology based on Newtonian physics'.⁹ Indeed, in the first two chapters one encounters the spirit of Isaac Newton. Morgan declares: 'Sir Isaac Newton, a man of the most elevated and uncommon genius, made several great discoveries'. He also calls him a great philosopher.¹⁰ We have seen before the influence that Newton had on Morgan's medical works.¹¹ But in the theory of light Morgan goes his own way. Motion is caused by light, and all bodies 'are immersed in this universal fluid as the common medium and vehicle of all their actions'.¹²

Apart from Newton, Morgan refers in this book to John Locke, praising him as follows: 'I must own Mr. Locke as my master, and the first guide and director of my understanding'. However, 'I am forced to differ from that great philosopher and master of reason, Mr. Locke, who denies and argues against all innate ideas in general'.¹³ We saw above how Morgan referred to Locke's concept of miracles, without following him.¹⁴

⁸ B. Willey, *The eighteenth-century background*, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1972, 32-46: 'The wisdom of God in the creation'; Jongeneel, *Het redelijk geloof*, 64-7; U. Krolzik, sub voce 'Physikotheologie', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopedie*, Volume 26, Berlin/New York, 1996, 590-6.

⁹ D.C. Hoffman, ' "The creation we behold", Thomas Paine's *The age of reason* and the tradition of physico-theology', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 157 (2014) 281-303 (288).

¹⁰ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 29, 298; Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 119, calls him 'a significant Newtonian theorist'.

¹¹ In Chapter 2 § 13-14.

¹² Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 41-2; on this topic see Wigelsworth, *Deism*, 158-161: "Morgan and the power of light".

¹³ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 73-4.

¹⁴ Chapter 3 § 7; cf Hefelbower, *The relation*, 169.

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§3: Deism and atheism in the *Physico-Theology*

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Morgan did not give up his deist convictions in the *Physico-Theology*. He gives an interesting definition of a deist in contrast with an enthusiast: the true and real characteristic of a deist lies in the rational light and sense of divine presence and power, truth and order, which shine and display themselves through the whole creation.¹⁵ At the end of the book, he refers to 'The Christian and Gospel Deism, which I have espoused, and which I cannot but think most rational'. In the index of the book he calls deism 'a medium between bigotry and atheism'.¹⁶ There is still another remarkable comparison between atheism and deism: an atheist is only a self-inconsistent, enthusiastic deist.¹⁷ He remarks that true philosophy will always be on the side of deism and explode atheism.¹⁸ So one cannot accuse Morgan of atheism.¹⁹ There has for long been discussion about the relationship between atheism and deism.²⁰ This relationship between deism and atheism was already described by the famous French Bishop of Meaux, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet.²¹ This relationship – deism is disguised atheism – has long been stipulated.²² The most ambivalent and comic phrase in this context was formulated by the French conservative politician, Louis Gabriel Ambroise, Vicomte de Bonald, in his *Pensées sur divers sujets*, published in 1817: 'A deist is someone who has not lived long enough to become an atheist', a phrase which has been developed into a popular dictum.²³ Morgan would not have endorsed this view. He was a deist, but a very special one as we will see in the next paragraph.

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§4: God acts by natural laws

¹⁵ Morgan, *Physico-Theology* 158.

¹⁶ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 353, 356.

¹⁷ Morgan, *Physico-Theology* 141.

¹⁸ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 170.

¹⁹ As was done by the bibliographer J.G.Th. Graesse, *Trésor de livres rares et précieux*, Volume 4, Dresden, 1863, 607.

²⁰ Hudson and others, 'Introduction', in: Hudson, *Atheism*, 1-12 (4): 'In much of the historiography it (deism) has been seen as a halfway house between theism and atheism'.

²¹ J.B. Bossuet, *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes*, 6th edition, Volume 1, Paris/Brusselles, 1718, 213: '*la voie ouverte au Déisme, c'est à dire, à un athéisme déguisé*'. I. Rivers, *Reason, grace, and sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England 1660-1780*, Volume 2: *From Shaftesbury to Hume*, Cambridge, 2000, 10: 'There is something to be said for the clergy's repeated assertion that deism is disguised atheism'.

²² Hudson and others, 'Introduction', in: Hudson, *Atheism*, 1-12 (7): 'Many historians assumed that deists were atheists in the making who had not arrived yet'.

²³ L. de Bonald, *Pensées sur divers sujets*, Volume 1, Paris, 1817, 253: '*Un déiste est un homme qui, dans sa courte existence, n'a pas eu le temps de devenir athée*'; there has been much misunderstanding about the origin of this maxim, see J. van den Berg, 'A deist is someone who has not lived long enough to become an atheist', *Notes and Queries*, 60 (2013) 596-7.

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Deism has always been explained as the belief in a Creator who, after his initial work stopped interfering in the course of his creation: the clockmaker who pushed the pendulum only once and never more. This analogy of the watchmaker we find nearly everywhere, but most famously in the *Natural theology or evidences of the existence and the attributes of the deity* of William Paley (1802). But Morgan's deism is not in line with this explanation. At the end of Chapter 1 of the *Physico-Theology* he quotes

the shrewd reasoning of those, who would exclude God out of the world, and dismiss the deity from any farther care or trouble, after they had employed him in a jobb to make the world for them, which might, in all time to come, or to all eternity, preserve and govern itself, ... but when the thing was done, they had no farther occasion for the workman; for if he had not finished his work once for all, so as to be set aside for ever after, it could only prove him an imperfect contriver; and an ill artist, not much better than a common mechanick.²⁴

For Morgan, God is more than that only. He declares that there is an active force or energy continually exerted through the whole universe: the action of some universal, intelligent cause.

According to Morgan, there must be some universal agent or cause of motion. Therefore the material world is governed and directed by reason, wisdom, and active power.

The question remains whether God gave these original powers to bodies, by an original, simple act of will, or whether he still continues to impress and act upon them, by the same force or energy as first? Further on, he concludes the existence of the free agency of the Deity, or first universal cause and incessant mover, and preserver of nature. Any other supposition must terminate in atheism.²⁵ But,

because God acts by general laws, and does not frequently alter the rules and measures he had prescribed to himself, therefore it has been supposed that he does not really act at all in these cases, and he now as much ceases from acting in nature, as he ceases from creating new worlds, or from working miracles.²⁶

He states: 'When we say that God acts by general laws, the meaning surely cannot be, that he does not act at all'.

Morgan says that what we call the laws of nature, as taking place throughout the whole material creation, are nothing other than the rules and principles of eternal, immutable wisdom and reason, upon which the Deity continues to act, and incessantly exerts his active power. God never alters the established course, order and laws of nature, to answer any particular ends or purposes, not foreseen and provided for in the general law and rule of action. God governs the world not by particular and occasional laws, but by general, uniform, and established laws. The reason why He does not miraculously interpose is because this would subvert the whole order of the universe, and destroy all the wisdom of the first plan.²⁷

²⁴ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 25.

²⁵ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 26, 28, 57-9.

²⁶ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 61.

²⁷ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 62, 77, 89, 96.

It is not without reason that one might say that the clearest assertion of the divine presence and activity in the world to be found in any deistic writer is contained in the work of Thomas Morgan.²⁸

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§5: God's preserving and governing the world

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Religion for Morgan consists in the moral truth and rectitude of sentiments, dispositions, and actions. True happiness is the true and only test of religion. Morgan mentions the eternal, immutable laws and conditions of truth, reason and order, originally settled by the deity for the preservation and government of the world, by his continued power and presence, or incessant, active and intelligent energy. He calls this the divinity and theology of innocent nature, before the corrupt, animal appetites and passions usurped the throne of reason.²⁹ About miracles he shows himself to be quite certain: his views are entirely in line with his earlier observations in *The moral philosopher*:

Our divines ... have never been able to define, or ascertain a miracle. If by particular interpositions, or particular providence, they mean any particular, immediate agency of the Deity, suspending, destroying, or setting aside the general laws of nature on particular occasions, I am fully satisfy'd they will never be able to proof any such thing, in any one single instance. But it will not follow from hence, that God does not govern the world in wisdom and righteousness.³⁰

It has been correctly said that 'Morgan's view of God did not allow for miracles'.³¹ Morgan raises the question how God may govern the world, in truth, wisdom and righteousness, without priestly miracles. He admits that the spirit of prayer lies in a constant, firm dependency on the deity. He speaks of God's continued presence, agency, and concurrence in all human affairs. God is the fountain of all truth, order and rectitude. Even 'a profess'd atheist may be a true devotionist, and a lover of God, without knowing or owning it'.³² The *Physico-Theology* seems to be the final word of a Christian deist, believing in the rational religion of God and nature.

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§6: Reactions to the *Physico-Theology*

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In contrast to *The moral philosopher*, the *Physico-Theology* received few reactions. Suggestive is the reaction of Bishop George Berkeley who wrote about the work in a letter from Cloyne to his friend Thomas Prior, founder of the Royal Dublin Society, dated May 19th 1741: 'The Physico Theology you mention of dr. Morgan is not the book I want; but I should

²⁸ So A.R. Winnett, 'Were the deists "deists"?', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 161 (1960) 70-7 (75).

²⁹ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 240, 295.

³⁰ Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 297.

³¹ Wigelsworth, ' "God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being" ', in: Hudson and others, eds., *Atheism and Deism revalued*, 157-172 (171); cf also D. Lucci and J.R. Wigelsworth, ' "God does not arbitrarily, or interpose unnecessarily": providential deism and the denial of miracles in Wollaston, Tindal, Chubb, and Morgan', *Intellectual History Review*, 25 (2015) 167-189.

³² Morgan, *Physico-Theology*, 312, 325.

nevertheless be glad to have it, and therefore desire you to get it'.³³ It is not known what he really thought about its contents.

A long, very critical, unfriendly, and anonymous review appeared in the journal *The History of the Works of the Learned* in September and October 1741: 'Our author has taken care to say very few things in this book, which may not be found in others'.³⁴ Ironically, the reviewer speaks of the 'sagacity of our excellent Physico-theologer'.³⁵ The Editor, Jacob Robinson, wrote:

These articles, on the *Physico-Theology* of Dr. Morgan, were communicated by a correspondent, who chuses, I find, to be concealed, with regard to his name and abode; all I can say of him is, that by the similitude of the MSS. I believe him to be the person who drew up the account of the *Treatise on human nature*, which was printed in the months of November and December 1739.³⁶

In the December 1741 edition a critical article appeared, which Morgan himself received from 'a gentleman from the North'. The Editor wrote: 'We cannot but approve of Dr. Morgan's impartiality, and take pleasure in obliging him, so long as he maintains the character (as we hope he always will) of a genteel and candid disputant'.³⁷ Genteel and candid are not the words that come to mind when we oversee the pamphleteering career of Thomas Morgan. But the interest in this work slowly disappeared, probably because of the confusion about its title.

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§7: Summary

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The *Physico-Theology* is Morgan's last great work. It does not belong to the series of *The moral philosopher*, because it is not acknowledged as such by the author and contains no Biblical criticism as do the three volumes of *The moral philosopher*. It did not receive the interest of the reading public, which was aroused by *The moral philosopher*. In comparison with other published physico-theologies it makes a different impression because of its chapters about moral philosophy in the latter part of the text. In this book, Morgan follows the theories of Newton, with the exception of the theory of light as the 'universal fluid'. Morgan wrote a *Physico-Theology* in which the theme of the rational religion of God and nature is the final word of this Christian deist. It is 'the Christian and Gospel Deism', which keeps out atheism. He believes in 'the Deity, or author of nature, (who) continues to act, and incessantly exerts his active power and energy', without performing miracles. It is the terminal point of his theological development.

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³³ A.C. Fraser, ed., *Life and letters of George Berkeley, D.D., formerly Bishop of Cloyne*, Oxford, 1871, 265.

³⁴ N.N., *The History of the Works of the Learned*, (1741), ii, 203-234 (203); 235-257.

³⁵ N.N., *The History of the Works of the Learned*, (1741), ii, 211.

³⁶ N.N., *The History of the Works of the Learned*, (1741), ii, 257.

³⁷ N.N., *The History of the Works of the Learned*, (1741), ii, 395-413 (395).

Chapter Seven: Reactions after Morgan's death and abroad

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§1: Introduction

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In this chapter, we shall look at the reactions, which arose after Morgan's death in January 1743. These reactions appeared till about ten years after the first publication of *The moral philosopher*. Although Morgan was forgotten in England in the second part of the 18th century, the ideas of Deism continued to be discussed. Afterwards, we shall look at the reactions abroad, especially in Germany, the Netherlands and in the New World. We will see that these reactions endured much longer in the 18th century. Especially in Germany, the impact was impressive.

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§2: Morgan's place in the *Dunciad* of Alexander Pope

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Morgan has been eternalized with a place in the 1743 edition of the *Dunciad* by the poet Alexander Pope. The *Dunciad* is one of the most famous satirical landmarks of the British eighteenth century. For clear reasons of alliteration, Morgan appears together with the philosopher and satirist Bernard Mandeville in Book II, line 414:

Morgan and Mandeville could prate no more.¹

No doubt it was Pope's friend William Warburton who suggested he include Morgan in the list of dunces. So Warburton took his revenge for Morgan's attack on him in the *Brief examination of the Rev. Mr Warburton's Divine legation of Moses ... by a society of gentlemen*, published in February 1742.² But because of his death in January 1743 Morgan did not have the pleasure of knowing about his presence in the *Dunciad*. In 1744, Warburton wrote a commentary on the *Dunciad*, in which he explained his negative feelings about Morgan with a profound hatred.³ Thus it is understandable that later generations saw in Warburton Morgan's greatest adversary. Later editions of the *Dunciad* sometimes contain other commentaries, speaking about Morgan erroneously as a dissenting minister at Bristol.⁴

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§3: Reactions after Morgan's death

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In the year of his death a lot of authors took notice of Morgan. Many Independent ministers reacted negatively. In 1743, Philipp Doddridge spoke of 'that unhappy creature that called himself *the moral philosopher*'.⁵ Doddridge gave much attention to Morgan in his lectures at Northampton academy, which were published after his death by his pupil, Samuel Clark, minister of the Old Meeting in Birmingham, in 1763. Doddridge speaks of Morgan's 'great many false and absurd things relating to the Jewish history'; his entirely false assertion

¹ V. Rumbold, ed., *Alexander Pope. The Dunciad in four books*, Harlow, 1999, 211.

² See for the details van den Berg, ' "Morgan and Mandeville could prate no more" '.

³ See above Chapter 3 § 8 and Chapter 4 § 4.

⁴ R. Carruthers, ed., *The poetical works of Alexander Pope*, Volume 3, London, 1853, 222.

⁵ Ph. Doddridge, *An answer to a late pamphlet, intituled, Christianity not founded on argument*, London, 1743, 45.

about the differences among the Apostles; his objections to the character of the Old Testament saints; the priestcraft, which Morgan finds in the stories of the Old Testament and many other topics.⁶ Samuel Chandler continued in 1743 with *A defence of the prime ministry and character of Joseph, in answer to the misrepresentations and calumnies of the late T. Morgan, M.D., and moral philosopher*. It is a continuation of his *Vindication of the Old Testament*, in which he defended Abraham.⁷ This work is dedicated to the defence of Joseph, exposing ‘the malice that appears throughout the whole of it’. In the eyes of Chandler, Morgan ‘has truly desecrated himself’.⁸ All together, this author wrote more than 640 pages against Morgan.⁹ In 1746, the influential dissenting minister of Liverpool, Henry Winder, criticized Morgan occasionally in the second volume of *A critical and chronological history of the rise, progress, declension, and revival of knowledge*.¹⁰ But also among Anglicans we find negative reactions, though these are not as substantial as those by the Independents. The Vicar of Bledwel in Shropshire, William Worthington, spoke incidentally with respect to Morgan, referring to his unjust aspersions and scandalous invectives.¹¹ In 1744, the theologian Matthew Horbery, Chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, criticized Morgan incidentally in his book written against William Whiston, *An enquiry into the Scripture-doctrine concerning the duration of future punishment*: ‘There is a man indeed who calls himself, or his book, *the Moral Philosopher*, who denies all this’.¹² A year later the Dean and future Bishop of Carlisle, Edmund Law, in his much reprinted work *Considerations on the state of the world with regard to the theory of religion, ..., being the substance of some sermons preach’d before the University of Cambridge*, quoted *The moral philosopher* negatively many times, calling Morgan a profligate and loose modern writer.¹³ The famous Hebrew scholar Benjamin Kennicott quoted *The moral philosopher* once in the second of his *Dissertations*, on the oblation of Cain and Abel, calling him one of the great doctors of infidelity.¹⁴

⁶ Ph. Doddridge, *A course of lectures on the principal subjects in pneumatology, ethics, and divinity*, 2nd edition, London, 1776, 276-7, 312, 330, 335, 337-8, 340, 353-4, 359, 362, 368-9, 536.

⁷ Cf Chapter 4 § 8.

⁸ S. Chandler, *A defence of the prime ministry and character of Joseph*, London, 1743, 599, 556.

⁹ Another Independent minister was John Mason of West Street Chapel in Dorking in Surrey, who quoted *The moral philosopher* various times in his pamphlet *A plain and modest plea for Christianity, or, a sober and rational appeal to infidels*, as a formulator of the deist’s creed, London, 1743, 58, 60.

¹⁰ H. Winder, *A critical and chronological history of the rise, progress, declension, and revival of knowledge*, Volume 2, London, 1746, 26, 70.

¹¹ W. Worthington, *An essay on the scheme and conduct, procedure and extent of man’s redemption*, London, 1743, 106-7.

¹² M. Horbery, *An enquiry into the Scripture-doctrine concerning the duration of future punishment*, London, 1744, 174.

¹³ E. Law, *Considerations on the state of the world with regard to the theory of religion*, Cambridge, 1745, 78, 93-4, 96, 102, 109, 115, (91, 94 note).

¹⁴ B. Kennicott, *Two dissertations*, Oxford, 1747, 204; see on Kennicott, W. McKane, ‘Benjamin Kennicott: an eighteenth-century researcher’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 28 (1977) 445-64.

Thereafter, the sources dried up until the publications of Skelton at the end of the 1740s and Leland in the 1750s with their lists of deists. Skelton says ironically that the '*Moral philosopher* ... made the tour of all opinions relating to religion and physic; and, having found little else than prejudice and nonsense every-where, threw new light in great abundance, on both those branches of knowledge'.¹⁵ Leland concluded that 'there have been few writers who have been more effectually confuted and exposed, than he that was pleased to honour himself with the title of the moral philosopher'. He regarded Morgan as a writer of great vivacity.¹⁶ So there was a long and persistent tradition of criticism in the first ten years after the publication of *The moral philosopher*. Mostly the judgment was negative.¹⁷ Only a few contemporaries dared to defend him publicly. The religious controversialist Peter Annet defended him in 1744 under the pseudonym Mencijs Philalethes in *The history of Joseph consider'd; or, The moral philosopher vindicated against Mr. Samuel Chandler's defence of the prime ministry and character of Joseph*. Another defender was Morgan's friend Thomas Amory in his positive comments in his *Memoirs* published in 1755 on the character of Morgan.¹⁸ 'I know he passes with most people for a father of infidels, and is always mentioned by the faith-men as the vilest of mortals'.¹⁹ Amory refers various times to Christian Deism without declaring himself to be a Christian deist. Only once in the (autobiographical?) *Life of John Bunce* does he call himself a Christian deist.²⁰ We have to wait for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to find positive comments about Morgan. But the works of Thomas Morgan are found in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century libraries and in many catalogues of booksellers in Britain.

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§4: Deism did not fade away after the 1740s

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Many authors have argued that Deism faded away after the 1740s.²¹ But Deism was not dead in the second part of the 18th century. We recognize it in many situations and in many books. In 1776, the Quaker Robert Applegarth wrote *A theological survey of the human understanding. Intended as antidote against modern deism*. Deism was winning ground in England in the second part of the 18th century. Deism was discussed among the London Debating Societies.²² Deism entered the world of fiction. Deists appear in various novels by Henry Fielding such as *The history of the adventures of Joseph Andrews* (Book One Chapter

¹⁵ (Ph. Skelton), *Ophiomaches: or deism revealed*, Volume 2, London, 1749, 365.

¹⁶ Leland, *A view*, 2nd edition, Volume 1, 236, 221.

¹⁷ Reventlow, *The authority*, 407, stated that the already mentioned Moses Lowman wrote in 1748 *A rational ritual of the Hebrew worship* against Morgan, but this book has nothing to do with Morgan.

¹⁸ (Amory), *Memoirs*, 416: 'great goodness and strict morality; 516: 'But was Morgan a Christian, after all what the doctors have writ against him? He was'.

¹⁹ (Amory), *Memoirs* 513.

²⁰ (Amory), *Memoirs*, 9, 61, 267; (Th. Amory), *The life of John Bunce*, Volume 1, London, 1756, 380.

²¹ See for the development in later times J. van den Berg, 'The development of modern Deism', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, forthcoming.

²² M. Thale, 'Deists, papists and Methodists at London Debating Societies, 1749-1799', *History*, 86 (2001) 328-47 (especially 332-5).

17), *The life of Mr. Jonathan Wild, the great* (Book Four Chapter 14), *The history of Tom Jones, a foundling* (Book Four Chapter 4, Book Five Chapter 8), and *Amelia* (Book One Chapter 4), though he himself was no deist.²³ More people openly declared being deists. The novelist Charlotte Lennox, née Ramsay, marking herself as a deist, has a lady appear in her novel *Henrietta*, published in 1758, who openly says – and also in front of her servants – : ‘I am a deist, ... I believe there is an intelligent cause which governs the world by physical rules’.²⁴ Many people referred to the deism of their youth like the Methodist missionary Thomas Coke, who wrote from Leeds on April 14th 1813 in a letter to the politician William Wilberforce about his youth as deist at Oxford.²⁵

On the other hand the number of deists, freethinkers, and infidels was not so great. The devout Anglican Samuel Johnson is reported to have said on April 14th 1775: ‘Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels. I have heard a person, originally a Quaker, but now, I am afraid, a Deist, say, that he did not believe there were, in all England, above two hundred infidels’.²⁶ He referred to his friend the physician Richard Brocklesby. Public opinion maintained that Deism was growing. On March 10th 1779, the politician John Wilkes stated in the House of Commons: ‘Deism, indeed, Sir, sound pure deism has made a rapid progress, not only in this island, but in every part of the continent. It is almost the religion of Europe ... every year adds to the number of disciples of deism’. Wilkes himself was a deist.²⁷ Even in Holland there was awareness of the many deists in England, as was written in 1781 (in the midst of the fourth Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-1784) in the anonymous pamphlet published in Amsterdam *Engelsche tieranny, in vier samenspraaken*.²⁸ At the end of the century, William Hamilton Reid published in London his *Rise and dissolution of the infidel societies in this metropolis*, in which Morgan is mentioned as belonging to ‘the second race of infidels’.²⁹

But by the end of the 18th century, Morgan has been forgotten. In 1790, the anecdotist William Seward called him, as we saw already in the Introduction, the author of a now-forgotten performance against religion.³⁰ In the 19th century, Morgan is mentioned from time to time, sometimes negatively, sometimes positively. The library of the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, William Magee contained a copy of *The moral philosopher*. Magee had written against Morgan in 1801 in his book about the atonement, referring to his absurd idea of the

²³ *Eighteenth-Century Fiction online* (retrieved 13.12.2017); cf R. Paulson, ‘Henry Fielding and the problem of deism’, in: R.D. Lund, ed., *The margins of orthodoxy: heterodox writing and cultural response: 1660-1750*, reprint, Cambridge, 2006, 240-70; M.C. Battestin, ‘Fielding and the deists’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 13 (2000) 67-76.

²⁴ Ch. Lennox, *Henrietta*, 2nd edition, Volume 2, London, 1761, 110.

²⁵ R.I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, eds., *The correspondence of William Wilberforce*, Volume 2, London, 1840, 256.

²⁶ R.W. Chapman, ed., *James Boswell Life of Johnson*, Oxford, 1980, 623.

²⁷ N.N., *The parliamentary register; or, history of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons*, Volume 11, London, 1802, 104; J. Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: the lives of a libertine*, Aldershot, 2006, 135.

²⁸ N.N., *Engelsche Tieranny, in vier samenspraaken*, Amsterdam, 1781, 58: ‘Deïsten, waarvan Engeland vol is’.

²⁹ W.H. Reid, *The rise and dissolution of the infidel societies in this metropolis*, London, 1800, 89.

³⁰ (Seward), ‘Drossiana viii’, 332.

origin of sacrifice.³¹ But the London deist bookseller and publisher on Fleet Street, Richard Carlile, published in 1819 *The Deist; or, moral philosopher. Being an impartial inquiry after moral and theological truths: selected from the writings of the most celebrated authors in ancient and modern times*, a work in which Thomas Morgan is mentioned three times in a letter to Dr. Samuel Chandler, originally published by Peter Annet.³²

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§5: Reactions in the Netherlands

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On the continent, there appeared long and critical reviews of *The moral philosopher* in the *Bibliothèque Britannique, ou Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans de la Grande Bretagne*³³, and short notices in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l'Europe*³⁴, published in the Netherlands in The Hague and Amsterdam, respectively. The book made much noise and gave much to discuss.³⁵ The *Bibliothèque Britannique* gave attention to all the publications of Morgan. Already at the end of 1737, the *Bibliothèque Britannique* knew that Morgan was the author of *The moral philosopher*.³⁶ The book is accused of being chaotic in structure.³⁷ It undermines the concept of revelation to set up a natural religion in place of it.³⁸ Twenty years after Morgan's death, a local preacher in Maassluis near Rotterdam, Johannes Martinus Hoffmann, warned his compatriots in August 1764 against Morgan and other freethinkers.³⁹

In the meantime, some of the publications by Morgan's British adversaries, such as Lowman and Leland, had been translated into Dutch. Lowman's by the printer Daniel van Damme in 1747 and reprinted in 1768.⁴⁰ Leland's by Engelbert Nooteboom, in three parts, in 1776-78.⁴¹

³¹ N.N., *Catalogue of books, the property of the late most reverend William Magee, lord archbishop of Dublin*, Wicklow, 1832, 108; *The works of the most reverend William Magee, D.D., Lord Archbishop of Dublin*, Volume 1, London, 1842, 29, 314-5; Volume 2, London, 1842, 524.

³² R. Carlile, *The deist*, Volume 2, London, 1819, 6-7, 32.

³³ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 8/2 (1737) 430-1; 9/1 (1737) 216; 10/1 (1737) 1-19; 12/2 (1739) 331-54; 13/2 (1739) 261-324; 16/2, (1741) 326-9.

³⁴ *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, 18 (1737) 220; 19 (1737) 230; 22 (1739) 483; 26 (1741) 467; 28 (1742) 478.

³⁵ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 10/1 (1737) 4: 'Et en effet ce livre a fait du bruit dès qu'il a paru, & il continue à faire du bruit. Les Déistes décident le vantent comme un ouvrage excellent: les Chrétiens indécis en parlent comme d'un ouvrage redoutable'.

³⁶ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 10/1 (1737) 14: 'Mr. Morgan, que la voix publique avait nommé le père de cet ouvrage'.

³⁷ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 10/1 (1737) 14: 'qu'il manque de l'ordre ... un chaos à débrouiller'.

³⁸ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 17/1 (1741) 225: 'pour saper la révélation par les fondemens, en tâchant de réduire tout à la religion naturelle'.

³⁹ J.M. Hoffmann, 'Proeve van geschied- en oordeelkundige aanmerkingen over 't ongeloof en de vrygeestery dezer eeuwe', *Maandelyke Uittreksels of Boekzaal der Geleerde Waerelt*, 99 (1764) 157-72, (166): 'In Thomas Morgan vereenigen zich alle de slegte characters zyner medemakkeren in 't ongeloove'.

⁴⁰ M. Lowman, *Verhandeling over de Burgerlijke of volks regeeringe der Israeliten, waar in de waare oogmerken en de aardt hunner regeeringe worden opengelegt, ... in het Nederduitsch overgezet ... door Daniel van Damme*, Leiden, 1747; reissue, Leiden, 1768.

From time to time, one sees some negative observations about Morgan made by Dutch apologetes like the barrister Hendrik Constantyn Cras, and the theologians Jacob van Nuys Klinkenberg, Ysbrand van Hamelsveld, Wilhelmus Antonius van Vloten en Jan Scharp.⁴² The church historian Annaeüs IJpeij gave at the end of the century much critical attention to Morgan.⁴³ But according to the Dutch reformed minister Gerard Cornelis van Balen Blanken, there have not been many deists in the Netherlands.⁴⁴ Much depends on what one defines as Deism. But the reviews and the translations of apologetic literature indicates that the orthodox were worried about the possible influence of English deists.⁴⁵

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§6: Reactions in Germany

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In Germany, much attention has in general been given to the works of the English deists.⁴⁶ Johann Lorenz Schmidt, the translator of the rationalist *Wertheimer Bibel* (1735), also translated Tindal's principal work in 1741.⁴⁷ As far as Morgan is concerned, much disapproving attention was paid to *The moral philosopher*, which I have described extensively in an article published in 2008.⁴⁸ The church historian Michael Lilienthal in Königsberg in East Prussia already had in 1741 the works of Morgan and many of his British opponents in

⁴¹ J. Leland, *Het godlyk gezag van het Oude en Nieuwe testament verdedigt ... tegen de onrechtmatige betichtingen en valsch reedeneeringen van een boek: getiteld zeedenkundigen filozoof, uit het Engelsch vertaald door Engelbert Nooteboom*, Utrecht, 1776-78.

⁴² H.C. Cras, *Verhandeling dat de christelyke zedekunde geen eenen pligt voorschryft ...*, Leiden, 1782, 155; J. van Nuys Klinkenberg, *Onderwys in den godsdienst*, volume 4, Amsterdam, 1782, 260; Volume 7, Amsterdam, 1788, 15, 19, 33-4, 43; Y. van Hamelsveld, *De Bybel verdedigd*, Amsterdam, 1783, passim; W.A. van Vloten, *De Bybel vertaald*, Volume 2, Utrecht/Amsterdam, 1789, 30; J. Scharp, *Godgeleerd-historische verhandeling over de gevoelens ... der hedendaagse zoogenaamde verlichting*, Rotterdam, 1793, 55; see on van Nuys Klinkenberg E.G.E. van der Wall, *Verlicht christendom of verijnd heidendom? Jacob van Nuys Klinkenberg (1744-1817) en de Verlichting*, Leiden, 1994; E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Samenleving onder spanning of de relatie tussen godsdienst en sociale cohesie', in: J.W. Buisman, ed., *Verlichting in Nederland 1650-1850*, Nijmegen, 2013, 129-146; and on Scharp R.A. Bosch, 'Verlichte vriend van duisterlingen: Jan Scharp (1756-1828)', in: Buisman, *Verlichting*, 65-83.

⁴³ A. IJpeij, *Geschiedenis van de kristelijke kerk in de achttiende eeuw*, eerste deel tweede stuk, Utrecht, 1798, 327-342 (327): he calls *The moral philosopher* 'het hoofdmagazijn ... waaruit de nieuwe ongeloovigen hunne wapenen steeds wechhaalen'.

⁴⁴ G.C. van Balen Blanken, 'Redevoering over het godsdienstig gevoel de magtigste stem in den mensch', *De Recensent, ook der Recensenten*, 31-2 (1838) 53-72 (65 note 1): 'Weinige zijn de Deïsten in ons vaderland geweest'.

⁴⁵ See about the question whether there existed deism in the Netherlands R.H. Vermij, 'Tolands eerste brief aan Serena. Een episode uit de geschiedenis van het deïsme in Nederland', *Documentatieblad werkgroep achttiende eeuw*, 21/1 (1989) 13-22 (14).

⁴⁶ Voigt, *Der Englische Deismus*, passim.

⁴⁷ P.S. Spalding, *Seize the book, jail the author: Johann Lorenz Schmidt and censorship in eighteenth-century Germany*, West Lafayette, 1998.

⁴⁸ van den Berg, 'English Deism and Germany', 48-61.

his library.⁴⁹ Throughout Germany, academic theses were defended against the deistical danger. The famous theologian, historian and biographer, Christian Gottlieb Joecher, dedicated in 1745 in Leipzig a thesis to the Morgan controversy entitled *Historiae controversiarum a Thoma Morgano excitatarum*. His negative judgment of Morgan in plain Latin is typical:

*Quis non stupeat haec legens...in nullo unquam libro a christianae civitatis homine conscripto, tot scomnata, tantas calumnias, tot criminationes, tantasque blasphemias in nostrum religionem eiusque venerandos auctores fuisse coniecta?*⁵⁰

Another thesis was written in 1745 in Halle by Christian Ernst von Windheim: *Disputatio de Paulo gentium apostolo contra Thomam Morganum*. Von Windheim was professor of philosophy and oriental languages in Erlangen from 1755.⁵¹

Especially at the University in Halle, attention was given to the English deists. The theologian Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, who was the most important figure in Halle in the transition from Pietism to Rationalism, gave a nearly complete survey of Morgan's work and of his British critics till 1750 in which he is very critical of Morgan.⁵² But also a man such as the poet and dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote many reviews for learned journals and in one of them he referred disapprovingly to Morgan.⁵³ Many more reactions could have been named.

Another aspect of the influence in Germany is contained in the many translations of English apologetical literature in the German language. The books of the apologists Lowman, Chapman and Hallett were translated by Johann Friedrich Esaias Steffens, pastor in Stade near Hamburg, and published in Hamburg in 1755 and in 1759-61, respectively. Johann Heinrich Meyenberg from Uelzen in Lower Saxony translated Lowman's *dissertation* also as *Abhandlung von der bürgerlichen Regimentsverfassung der Hebräer*, published in Celle in Lower Saxony in 1756 with a preface about Jewish theocracy by Lorenz Hagemann, court chaplain in Hanover.⁵⁴ Leland's *Divine authority* was translated by Andreas Gottlob Masch, court chaplain in Neustrelitz (Mecklenburg-Strelitz), and published in Rostock and Wismar in 1756, with a preface of more than twenty pages by Siegmund Baumgarten. Masch speaks of

⁴⁹ M. Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothec, das ist richtiges Verzeichniss, zulängliche Beschreibung, und bescheidene Beurtheilung der dahin gehörigen vornehmsten Schriften welche in M. Michael Lilienthals ... Bücher-Vorrat befindlich sind*, Königsberg, 1741.

⁵⁰ Chr.G. Joecher, *Historiae controversiarum a Thoma Morgano excitatarum*, Lipsiae, 1745, 6-7; (English translation: 'Who is not stupified, to read in any book written by a member of the Christian community, so many scandalous expressions, calumnies, criminations and blasphemies, thrown at our religion and its honourable authors?').

⁵¹ Cl. Wachter, *Die Professoren und Dozenten der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen 1743-1960*, Volume 3, (Erlanger Forschungen 13), Erlangen, 2009, 244.

⁵² (S.J. Baumgarten), *Fünfter Band der Nachrichten einer Hallischen Bibliothek*, Halle, 1750, 330-62 (341): 'dass der Verfasser unter die Gegner gehöre, die eben so frech lügen, als dreiste lästern'.

⁵³ In the *Berlinische Privilegierte Zeitung* 27th November 1751, quoted by K.S. Guthke, ed., *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing Werke*, Volume 3, Munich, 1972, 79: 'man weiss wie verwegen Morgan den Joseph angegriffen hat'.

⁵⁴ M.B. Price and L.M. Price, *The publication of English humaniora in Germany in the eighteenth century*, Berkeley, 1955, 115, 45.

the malicious unbelief of Morgan. It was reprinted in Schwerin in 1786.⁵⁵ Chandler's book was also translated.⁵⁶

Translations of Morgan's work in German, however, do not exist.⁵⁷ In his *Freydencker-Lexicon* the German pastor Johann Anton Trinius in the county of Mansfeld dedicated eighteen pages to Morgan.⁵⁸ So Morgan's ideas were disseminated by his German opponents all over Germany.

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§7: Hermann Samuel Reimarus

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One man especially received attention in this process. The German deist, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, was the greatest systematician of Deism.⁵⁹ He has been mentioned as one of those who used the Biblical criticism of the deists and specifically of Thomas Morgan in his own work.⁶⁰ Already the famous theologian David Friedrich Strauss referred many times to Morgan as a predecessor of Reimarus. Strauss mentions as comparable topics the priest fraud, the extermination of the peoples of Canaan, the criticism of the patriarchs, the Egyptian plagues, the miracles of Moses, and the absence of the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament.⁶¹

⁵⁵ J. Leland, *Abhandlung von den göttlichen Ansehen des Alten und Neuen Testaments, zur Widerlegung der Einwürfe des moralischen Philosophen, aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Andreas Gottlieb Masch*, Rostock und Wismar, 1756, Vorrede des Übersetzers 26-35 (28): 'boshafter Unglaube'; Price and Price, *The publication*, 111.

⁵⁶ According to J.A. Trinius, *Freydencker=Lexicon oder Einleitung in den Schriften der neuern Freygeister*, Leipzig-Bernburg, 1759, 386-7.

⁵⁷ Gerdmar, *Roots of theological anti-Semitism*, 31, overstates his case when he says: 'Halle was also influenced by Thomas Morgan's translated and published writings'.

⁵⁸ Trinius, *Freydencker=Lexicon*, 369-87, in which he also attributes some pamphlets wrongly to Morgan.

⁵⁹ G. Gawlick, 'Der Deismus' (38): 'Reimarus... der grösste Systematiker des Deismus'.

⁶⁰ R. Schettler, *Die Stellung des Philosophen Hermann Samuel Reimarus zur Religion*, Dissertation, Leipzig, 1904, 44; Most outspoken by A.Chr. Lundsteen, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus. Die Anfänge der Leben-Jesu Forschung*, Kopenhagen, 1939, 138: 'An manchen Stellen können wir nicht den Gedanken – ja wir haben sogar die Gewissheit, - eines Plagiaten von englischen deistischen Verfassern bis zur wörtlichen Wiedergabe, vermeiden'; M. Loeser, *Die Kritik des Hermann Samuel Reimarus am Alten Testament. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Rationalismus in Deutschland* (maschinenschriftliche Dissertation), Berlin 1941, 112: 'genau so – oft bis zu in Einzelheiten übereinstimmend ... Man könnte fast Satz für Satz auf Morgan verweisen'; H. Graf Reventlow, 'Das Arsenal der Bibelkritik des Reimarus, insbesondere des Alten Testaments, bei den englischen Deisten', in: W. Walter and others, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694- 1768), ein 'bekannter Unbekannter' der Aufklärung in Hamburg* (Veröffentlichungen der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften), Göttingen, 1973, 44-65 (59 note 12): 'Reimarus benutzte ... Morgan'; J.A. Steiger, 'Zu Gott gegen Gott. Oder: die Kunst, gegen Gott zu glauben. Isaaks Opferung (Gen 22) bei Luther, im Luthertum der Barockzeit, in der Epoche der Aufklärung und im 19. Jahrhundert', in: J.A. Steiger and U. Heinen, eds., *Isaaks Opferung (Gen 22) in den Konfessionen und Medien der frühen Neuzeit*, (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 101), Berlin, 2006, 185-238 (231): 'Reimarus - vergleichbar mit und offenbar im Anschluss an den Deisten Thomas Morgan'.

⁶¹ D.F. Strauss, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus und seine Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, reprint of the Leipzig 1862 edition, Hildesheim, 1991, 42-3, 81, 89, 102, 160.

But especially for Reimarus this use of Morgan cannot be proven beyond doubt. Reimarus usually quotes his English sources, of which I counted more than twenty-five in the *Apologie*.⁶² He quotes people like Spencer and Selden, Whiston and Middleton, but also Toland and Lardner. He is sometimes very specific. So, for example, he quotes John Toland and admits the use of his *Tetradymus*.⁶³ He refers various times to Anthony Collins.⁶⁴ But he refers also to the apologists, such as William Warburton.⁶⁵

But he never refers to Morgan. One has to observe that the first drafts of the *Apologie* were already drawn up in the early 1730s, years before the publication of *The moral philosopher*.⁶⁶ Another question is the possibility that Reimarus may have known the work of Thomas Morgan. There is reason to believe this, if we review the auction catalogue of the library of Reimarus. There we indeed find the three volumes of *The moral philosopher*.⁶⁷ But the simple fact of the presence of some book in a library catalogue does in itself not prove that it was read by or used in the extant work of the owner of the library. Reimarus never quoted Thomas Morgan's work in his *Apologie*. It can only be said that Reimarus had more English deist works in his library than he quoted in his published works.⁶⁸ And that it is surprising that no references can be found to Morgan.⁶⁹ The same may be said for other works of Reimarus. Among references to, for example, the deists Collins, Woolston and Tindal, there are none to Morgan.⁷⁰ It has been argued that Reimarus encountered the works of the English deists including Morgan during his research trip in England in 1720-1721.⁷¹ But as far as Morgan is

⁶² G. Alexander, ed., *Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, Volume 1: 136, 152, 327, 434, 728, 742, 771, 789, 806, 830, 859, 905, 909; volume 2: 271, 281, 315, 377, 385, 387, 528, 569, 658, 667, 685.

⁶³ Alexander, *Reimarus*, Volume 1, 434: 'Der berüchtigte Toland, welche alle andere Gegner der Offenbarung an Belesenheit und Scharfsinnigkeit übertrifft'; 434 note f: 'Ich habe mich derselben mit Nutzen bedient'.

⁶⁴ Alexander, *Reimarus*, Volume 1, 728: 'Die Engländer haben sich durch der Collins genötiget gesehen, die buchstäbliche Weissagungen von Christo beynehe aufzugeben, und bloss eine accomodationem darin zu erkennen'.

⁶⁵ Alexander, *Reimarus*, Volume 1, 771: 'Der berühmte Bischoff Warburton hat in seiner Divine legation of Moses eine wunderbare Meynung zu behaupten gesucht'.

⁶⁶ Alexander, *Reimarus*, Volume 1, 22-3; W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Handschriftenverzeichniss und Bibliographie*, (Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften 37), Göttingen, 1979, 19.

⁶⁷ J.A.G. Schetelig, *Auktionskatalog der Bibliothek von Hermann Samuel Reimarus 1769-1770*, reprint, (Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften), Hamburg, 1978, nrs. I. 927-929.

⁶⁸ So the prudent commentary by G. Gawlick, 'Reimarus und der englische Deismus', in: K. Gründer ed., *Religionskritik und Religiosität in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung 11), Heidelberg, 1989, 43-54 (47).

⁶⁹ Loeser, *Die Kritik*, 112.

⁷⁰ See W. Schmidt-Biggemann, ed., *Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Kleine gelehrte Schriften: Vorstufen zur Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften 79), Göttingen, 1994, 302.

concerned, that is quite impossible because at that time Morgan had not written his deist works.⁷² Another authority emphasized that the frequent stress on English influence in older historiography about Reimarus is both groundless and highly misleading.⁷³ We may conclude with the cautious formulation that many of Reimarus' results were fruit of English Bible criticism, which he radicalized and systematized.⁷⁴ The *Apologie* of Reimarus is indeed more systematically constructed as criticism of the Old and the New Testament, but it was never published during his lifetime. In all these respects, it is a totally different work from *The moral philosopher*.

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§8: France

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In France, there is nearly no response to be found. In contrast to Germany, Morgan had no traceable influence in France. Voltaire, for example, criticized the Old Testament very harshly, but there is no influence of Morgan to be found.⁷⁵ It is with some caution that these English influences have to be studied.⁷⁶ Others maintain that Voltaire was heavily influenced by the deists.⁷⁷ Although Edward Bouverie Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, argued in 1828 that Voltaire derived his critical objections from, among others, Morgan, this is not correct. None of Morgan's deist books are to be found in the catalogue of the library of Voltaire in Ferney, nor in Saint Petersburg. Voltaire never refers to a single work by Thomas Morgan and they probably never met each other. Voltaire depended more on other deists.⁷⁸ The same can be said of Denis Diderot.⁷⁹

⁷¹ A. Schilson, sub voce 'Reimarus', in: H.J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The encyclopedia of Protestantism*, Volume 3, New York/London, 2004, 1602-03.

⁷² See for the details J. van den Berg, 'Did Reimarus use (implicitly) the work of the English deist Thomas Morgan? Some methodological questions', *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009) 243-5.

⁷³ J. Israel, 'The philosophical context of Hermann Samuel Reimarus' radical bible criticism', in: M. Mulsow, ed., *Between philology and radical enlightenment, Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768)*, (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 203), Leiden, 2011, 183-200 (188).

⁷⁴ Schmidt-Biggemann, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Handschriftenverzeichnis*, 14: 'Reimarus übernahm einen Grossteil seiner Ergebnisse aus den englischen Bibelkritik (deren Werke er zum grossen Teil besessen hat), aber er radikalisierte diese kritischen Impulse, indem er sie systematisierte'.

⁷⁵ N. Torrey, *Voltaire and the English deists*, New Haven, 1930; B.E. Schwarzbach, *Voltaire's Old Testament criticism*, (Études de Philosophie et d' Histoire 20), Geneva, 1971; D. Levy, *Voltaire et son exégèse du Pentateuque: critique et polémique*, (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 130), Banbury, 1975.

⁷⁶ Levy, *Voltaire*, 123: 'C'est avec prudence que l'on doit aborder l'étude d'éventuelles influences anglaises sur la pensée exégétiques de Voltaire'.

⁷⁷ A. Sutcliffe, 'The Enlightenment, French revolution, Napoleon', in: A. Lindemann and R.S. Levy, eds., *Antisemitism: a history*, Oxford, 2010, 107-120 (110): 'Voltaire's frequent and highly polemical assaults on Judaism and the Jews were heavily influenced by the British Deists and by the clandestine manuscripts of the French philosophical underground'.

⁷⁸ E.B. Pusey, *An historical enquiry into the probable causes of the rationalist character lately predominant in the theology of Germany*, London, 1828, 126 note 3; *Voltaire's catalogue of his library at Ferney*, ed. by G.R. Havens and N.L. Torrey (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century ix) Geneva, 1959; *Bibliothèque de*

There is evidence that Paul Baron D'Holbach sought more information about Morgan, asking for it in a letter from Paris to his friend John Wilkes, dated 10 December 1767, but the Editor of the letter already observed that no trace of Morgan is to be found in the works of d'Holbach.⁸⁰ There were others in France interested in Morgan, like the Roman Catholic apologetic theologian Nicolas Sylvestre Bergier. Bergier, who quotes Morgan many times, describes him as an English deist who argued against the miracles of Moses.⁸¹ Morgan's name appeared once in the article on *Physiologie* in the supplement of the *Encyclopédie*.⁸² All in all, it is clear that Morgan was more known in Germany than in France.

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§9: Reactions in America

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In New England, *The moral philosopher* was also disseminated early.⁸³ Thus Jeremiah Condry, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Boston, wrote on February 8th 1738 from London to his friend the Reverend John Sparhawk, pastor of the first church in Salem: 'According to you wish I send you Morgans Moral Philosopher'.⁸⁴ He sent also Hallett's pamphlet and Morgan's rejoinder.

James Logan of Philadelphia, friend and counselor of William Penn, wrote on August 16th 1738 to the physician and naturalist John Fothergill: 'I have been told of a late piece call'd (I think) the Moral Philosopher being ye Result of Several conferences on ye Subject of Morals ... Pray buy or direct L. Williams to buy these for me'. A year later he wrote to Fothergill on April 6th 1739 that he 'was misled by the title of the Moral Philosopher and the information of a parson who, having seen it, had read little more in it than the preface or otherwise should not have sent for so vile a Piece. I had seen something of Morgan's before & join with thee in thy Sentiments of him'.⁸⁵

Voltaire: catalogue des livres, ed. by M.P. Alekseev and T.N. Kopreeva, Moscow-Leningrad, 1961; van den Berg, 'Did Voltaire meet the deist Thomas Morgan'; cf Torrey, *Voltaire*, passim.

⁷⁹ Cf H. Sängner, *Juden und Altes Testament bei Diderot*, Wertheim am Main, 1933.

⁸⁰ P. Vernière, 'Deux lettres inédites de D'Holbach à Wilkes', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 28 (1954) 482-6 (486): 'I am told the works of one Morgan have been esteemed in your country, but I don't know the titles'; 486 note: '*Aucune trace de Morgan ne demeure dans l'oeuvre ultérieure de baron*'.

⁸¹ Fr. Laplanche, *La Bible en France entre mythe et critique xvi-xix siècle*, Paris, 1994, 95: 'Il (Bergier) cite expressément Tindal et Morgan'; N.S. Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*, volume 6, Paris, 1780, 18: '*Un déiste Anglois qui s'est élevé de toutes ses forces contre les miracles de Moïse*'.

⁸² N.N., *Supplément à l'Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, volume 4, Amsterdam, 1777, 356: '*jatro-mathématicien, esprit fort d'ailleurs, porta dans le médecine le même esprit d'incrédulité, qui le séduisit par rapport à la religion*'.

⁸³ See for more details J. van den Berg, 'Traces of impact of the work of the English deist Thomas Morgan in early America', *Notes and Queries*, 64 (2017) 499-503.

⁸⁴ Quoted by (Hoyt, A.H.), 'Letters of Cotton Mather ... and others', *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register and Antiquarian Journal*, 24 (1870) 107-23 (115).

⁸⁵ E. Wolf, *The library of James Logan of Philadelphia 1674-1751*, Philadelphia, 1974, 328 nr.1386.

As another sign of early knowledge in America, Morgan is also mentioned in the fourth of the Maryland eclogues of the poet and minister Thomas Cradock, who emigrated to Maryland in 1744, line 34-5:

Now Tindal's system's ev'ry where received,
And Collins, Morgan, Whoolstan all believ'd.⁸⁶

In America, Deism was the religion of the educated class by the middle of the 18th century.⁸⁷ The Quaker Sophia Wigington Hume complained in the middle of the century to her fellow inhabitants of South Carolina about the daily growth of infidelity and Deism.⁸⁸ Various of the founding fathers such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were deists.⁸⁹ In the autobiography of Franklin we find a remembrance of his youth:

But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by turns of several points, as I found them disputed in the different books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some books against Deism fell into my hands; they were said to be the substance of sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the Deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist.⁹⁰

It is a typical description of the way along which many founding fathers were to become deists. Franklin was involved in the Deism trial against the Presbyterian minister Samuel Hemphill in Philadelphia in 1735.⁹¹ Philadelphia was the capital of American Deism. Many members of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia were deists, but we have to remember the observation: 'Deists are difficult to identify because at times they differ from Christians only in emphasis'.⁹² Another made a similar observation when he stated that a satisfactory definition of American Deism in a few sentences is almost as difficult as describing an American.⁹³

⁸⁶ D.C. Skaggs, ed., *The poetic writings of Thomas Cradock (1718-1770)*, East Brunswick, 1983, 167.

⁸⁷ G. Wills, *Head and hearth. American Christianities*, New York, 2007, 153.

⁸⁸ S. Hume, *An exhortation to the inhabitants of the province of South Carolina*, London, 1752, 133.

⁸⁹ Fr. Lambert, *The founding fathers and the place of religion in America*, Princeton, 2003, 159-79: 'Deists enter the religious marketplace'.

⁹⁰ J. Bigelow, ed., *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Philadelphia, 1868, 164; see further on Franklin's deism D. Walden, 'Benjamin Franklin's deism: a phase', *The Historian*, 26 (1964) 350-61; J. Waligore, 'The Christian Deist writings of Benjamin Franklin', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 140 (January 2016) 7-29.

⁹¹ M.A. Christensen, 'Franklin and the Hemphill trial: deism versus Presbyterian orthodoxy', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 10 (1953) 422-40.

⁹² H.F. May, *The Enlightenment in America*, reprint, Oxford, 1978, 197; H.E. Taussig, 'Deism in Philadelphia during the age of Franklin', *Pennsylvania History*, 37 (1970) 217-36 (223).

⁹³ D.A. Jurden, 'A historiography of American deism', *The American Benedictine Review*, 25 (1974) 108-222 (108).

Twelve years after Morgan's death, John Adams, who was to become the second President of the United States, related about his stay in 1755 in Worcester, New England: 'Here I found Morgan's Moral Philosopher, which I was informed had circulated with some freedom in that town, and that the principles of Deism had made considerable progress among persons in that and other towns in the country'. A copy of *The moral philosopher* was found in his library when it was donated to the town of Quincy in the county of Norfolk, in 1823.⁹⁴ At the end of the 18th century, we find another person who, just like Morgan, called himself a Christian deist: John Hargrove, a Swedenborgian, minister of the New Jerusalem Church in Baltimore, who wrote in 1801 *The temple of truth*, in which he said of himself: 'I am a deist it is true, but take notice I am not a mere deist – I am more – I am a Christian deist'.⁹⁵ We have no indication that Hargrove knew the work of Morgan, but his struggle against Deism supposes his probable antipathy against the Christian Deism of Morgan.⁹⁶

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§10: Summary

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The moral philosopher received much critical attention in other countries, especially in Germany, the Netherlands, and also America. In England, the discussions ran until ten years after the first publication of *The moral philosopher*. Afterwards, the fire extinguished. Towards the close of the century, Morgan was forgotten. Only the booksellers of London knew his name.

But on the continent and in America the discussion continued for a longer time. At least five of the apologetic works published in English against Morgan were translated into German, two into Dutch. Many critical comments appeared in journals in the German and French languages. Especially in Germany, the reaction was impressive.

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⁹⁴ C.F. Adams, ed., *The works of John Adams, second president of the United States*, Volume 2, Boston, 1853, 3; see for other deists in Worcester during that time, K.J. Moynihan, *A history of Worcester, 1674-1848*, Charleston, SC, 2007, 59, 66; N.N., *Deeds and other documents relating to the several pieces of land, and to the library presented to the town of Quincy, by president Adams, together with a catalogue of the books*, Cambridge, 1823, 37.

⁹⁵ J. Hargrove, *The temple of truth*, Baltimore, 1801, 36.

⁹⁶ See about Hargrove T.D. Bilharz, *Urban religion and the second Great Awakening: church and society in early national Baltimore*, Cranford, NJ, 1986, 118-119.

Chapter Eight: Morgan as a harbinger of the disparagement of the Old Testament

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§1: Introduction

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Morgan simply calls himself ‘a Christian upon the foot of the New Testament’, leaving no room at all for the Jewish part of the Scriptures. He was a harbinger of the disparagement of the Old Testament of modern theology. His moral criticism on the Old Testament repeats itself in the works of many who came after him. In modern times there have been many doubts about the authority of the Old Testament for the Christian church. One of the fundamental questions in modern theology is ‘whether or not Christianity also needs an Old Testament’.¹ In this chapter, we shall look for the many who followed Morgan’s tracks. Most of these followers did not recognize him as such, but two important German theologians of the 20th century did.

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§2: The disparagement of the Old Testament in modern times

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In Germany, Reimarus was one of the first to criticize the morals of the Old Testament on a large scale. The first volume of the *Apologie* was dedicated to this enterprise.² ‘The books of the Old Testament were not written to reveal a religion’.³ Reimarus knew the work of Morgan, as is clear from the catalogue of his library, but he did not quote him.⁴ In France Voltaire attacked Christianity by discrediting and ridiculing the Old Testament, but he did not show any knowledge of the work of Morgan.⁵

But also professional theologians chose this route. In a more general way the German theologian Semler subordinated the Old Testament in his theological concepts as a particular religion.⁶ In contrast to Voltaire Semler did know the work of Morgan via his teacher

¹ Baker, *Two testaments*, 19. Cf the observation of Fr. Breukelman, ‘Miskottes inspiratie: Tenach en dogmatiek’, in *Bijbelse theologie*, IV/2, Kampen, 1999, 219-229 (223): ‘Het (Oude Testament) bungelt er maar zo’n beetje bij en de neiging om het helemaal af te schaffen is altijd latent aanwezig. Je merkt het voortdurend – bij Schleiermacher, bij Von Harnack, bij Bultmann’.

² Alexander, ed., *Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Apologie*, Volume 1, 183-941.

³ Quoted by U. Groetsch, *Herman Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768): Classicist, hebraist, Enlightenment radical in disguise* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 257), Leiden, 2015, 2.

⁴ See above Chapter 7 § 7.

⁵ Schwarzbach, *Voltaire’s Old Testament criticism*, 19, 46, and Chapter 7 about the Old Testament as “unworthy revelation”; see above Chapter 7 § 8.

⁶ A. Lüder, *Historie und Dogmatik: ein Beitrag zur Genese und Entfaltung von Johann Salomo Semlers Verständnis des Alten Testaments*, (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 233), Berlin 1995, 141: ‘Das Alte Testament als partikularistisches Zeugnis der Gottesbeziehung’; G. Hornig, *Johann Salomo Semler: Studien zu Leben und Werk des Hallenser Aufklärungstheologen* (Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung 2), Tübingen, 1996, 125, 273; M. Schröter, ‘Johann Salomo Semler und das Alte Testament’, in: R. Barth and others, eds., *Christentum und Judentum, Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft in Halle, März 2009*, (Schleiermacher-Archiv 24), Berlin, 2012, 125-140 (138-9): ‘das Alte Testament in weiten Teilen das Zeugnis einer Partikularreligion, ... kann demnach in weiten Teilen nicht mehr als für Katechese, Gottesdienst oder Andacht geeignet betrachtet werden’.

Siegmund Baumgarten in Halle.⁷ At the turn of the following century, Schleiermacher was also putting the Old Testament in a subordinate position.⁸ The Old Testament was strange to him.⁹ The Old Testament did not have the dignity of the New. In 1830, Schleiermacher criticized the dogmatic use of the Old Testament and the misunderstanding of Marcion.¹⁰ For that reason Schleiermacher has also been called a Marcion *redivivus*.¹¹ But there is no direct influence by Morgan to be found in Schleiermacher.

But not only in Germany, also in France and in England one sensed the disparagement of the Old Testament. The famous French Protestant teacher Ferdinand Édouard Buisson, winner of the Noble Prize for Peace in 1927, pleaded in 1868 for the abolition of the Old Testament as a classroom-book.¹²

At the end of the 19th century, Alexander Francis Kirkpatrick, Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge, spoke of ‘a vague sense of uneasiness abroad, a kind of suspicion that the Old Testament is on its way to become a discredited, and therefore disused book’. At the turn of the 20th century, the English church historian Frederick John Foakes Jackson noted in the Hulsean Lectures of 1902-3 a tendency to regard the Old Testament as of little spiritual value.¹³

Between the First and the Second World Wars, many members of the Society for Old Testament Study in England complained about the tendency to regard the Old Testament as

⁷ See above Chapter 5 § 8.

⁸ E.G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the reformation*, London 1955, 66; H.J. Kraus, *Die biblische Theologie, ihre Geschichte und Problematik*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970, 212; H.W. Schütte, ‘Christlicher Glaube und Altes Testament bei Friedrich Schleiermacher’, in: D. Rössler, ed., *Fides et communicatio, Festschrift für Martin Doerne zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen, 1970, 291-310; R. Smend, *Epochen der Bibelkritik; Gesammelte Studien* 3, (Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 109), München, 1991: 128-44: ‘Schleiermachers Kritik am Alten Testament’; M. Stiewe, ‘Das Alte Testament im theologischen Denken Schleiermachers’, in: P. Mommer and W. Thiel, eds., *Altes Testament: Forschung und Wirkung: Festschrift für Henning Graf Reventlow*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, 329-36; P.E. Capetz, ‘Friedrich Schleiermacher on the Old Testament’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 102 (2009) 297-326.

⁹ Kl. Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel: Altes Testament und Judentum in der evangelischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 85), Göttingen, 2002, 31: ‘Dem Alten Testament fremd um Christi willen’.

¹⁰ Quoted by Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel*, 16: ‘Der dogmatischen Adhibition des Alten Testaments verdanken wir doch entsetzlich viel übles in unserer Theologie. Und wenn man den Marcion richtig verstanden und nicht verkezert hätte, so wäre unsere Lehre vom Gott viel reiner geblieben’.

¹¹ D. DeVries, ‘Rethinking the Scripture principle: Friedrich Schleiermacher and the role of the Bible in the church’, in: W.M. Alston jr. and M. Welker, eds., *Reformed theology: identity and ecumenicity*, Volume 1, Grand Rapids, 2003, 294-310 (307).

¹² Quoted by H. Tschumi-Haefliger, ‘Reformatoren Denkmäler in der Schweiz’, *Zwingliana*, 17 (1987) 193-260 (207 and note 73): ‘In einem Vortrag in Dezember 1868 forderte er die Abschaffung des Alten Testaments als Schullesebuch mit der Begründung: “ce livre faussait l’intelligence et la conscience des enfants”.... Für Buisson war das AT “plein de sang et de boue” ‘.

¹³ A.F. Kirkpatrick, ‘The Old Testament in the Christian church’, *The Old and New Testament Student*, 13 (1891) 8-15 (8); F.J. Foakes Jackson, *Christian difficulties in the second and twentieth centuries. A study of Marcion and his relation to modern thought*, (The Hulsean lectures 1902-3), Cambridge/London, 1903, 39.

relatively insignificant in the Christian churches. After the Second World War, Edwin Cyril Blackman encountered many persons who doubted the right of the Old Testament to bear the dignity of Christian Scripture, and felt that it ought not to be found within the same covers as the New Testament in the Christian Bible. Among ordinary people there is a widespread uncertainty with respect to the Old Testament. Many Christians betray a certain sympathy for the ideas of Marcion.¹⁴ Our time will remember the ferocious list at the beginning of Chapter Two of Richard Dawkins' *God delusion*:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.¹⁵

Though not every atheist will make this list his credo, the message is the ultimate attack on the morality of Old Testament religion.

Nearly a century ago, Adolf von Harnack noted certain striking parallelisms between Marcion and the work of Morgan.¹⁶ Harnack is famous for his rejection of the Old Testament in the conclusion of his *Marcion*:

to reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the church rightly rejected; to keep it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the reformation could not yet avoid; but to retain it after the nineteenth century as a canonical document in Protestantism results from a paralysis of religion and the church.¹⁷

In this context he praises the work of Thomas Morgan.¹⁸ So there is a line from Morgan to one of the basic theological issues of the 20th century: the value or non-value of the Old

¹⁴ A.S. Peake, 'Introduction', in: A.S. Peake, ed., *The people and the book*, Oxford, 1925, xi-xx (xii); R.H. Kenneth, 'The contribution of the Old Testament to the religious development of mankind', in: Peake, ed., *The people*, 483-402 (485); W.F. Lofthouse, 'The Old Testament and Christianity', in: H. Wheeler Robinson, ed., *Record and revelation*, Oxford, 1938, 458-480 (459); E.C. Blackman, *Marcion and his influence*, London, 1948, 113; A.G. Hebert, *The authority of the Old Testament*, London, 1947, 43; B.W. Anderson, ed., *The Old Testament and Christian faith, a theological discussion*, Eugene, 1969, 1-7: 'The Old Testament as a Christian problem' (3).

¹⁵ R. Dawkins, *The God delusion*, reprint, New York, 2008, 51.

¹⁶ A. von Harnack, *Marcion. Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, 2nd edition, Leipzig, 1924, 221: 'Am weitestens ist ... Thomas Morgan gegangen und zeigt in die Ergebnissen seiner geschichtlich-philosophischen Spekulation dabei die frappantesten Parallelen zu Marcion, ohne ihm wirklich innerlich nahe zu stehen'.

¹⁷ Harnack, *Marcion*, 217: 'das Alte Testament im 2. Jahrhundert zu verwerfen war ein Fehler, den die grosse Kirche mit Recht abgelehnt hat; es im 16. Jahrhundert beizubehalten, war ein Schicksal dem sich die Reformation noch nicht zu entziehen vermochte; es aber seit dem 19. Jahrhundert als kanonische Urkunde im Protestantismus noch zu konservieren, ist die Folge einer religiösen und kirchlichen Lähmung'.

¹⁸ Harnack, *Marcion*, 221: 'sehr viel richtiges und wertvolles ... Für die Entstehung einer universalen und positiv-kritischen Geschichtsphilosophie ist sie von unermesslichen Bedeutung geworden'.

Testament for the Christian church and theology. Morgan was one of the first in modernity who so openly disparaged the Old Testament. Afterwards, we see this also more or less in the works of Semler, Schleiermacher, Harnack, and a host of German theologians, such as Emanuel Hirsch in the times to follow. In some cases, like that of Rudolf Bultmann, the discussion is very complex and has not ended yet. For Bultmann, the relation between the two testaments was a relationship of contrast. The Old Testament is for the Christian no longer revelation as it is for the Jews. The Old Testament is for the Christian a presupposition of the New Testament.¹⁹

Thus we see that the disparagement of the Old Testament in the Christian church and theology did not start with Morgan and nor did it end with him.

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§3: The view on the Old Testament in German Anti-Semitism

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Another aspect in the history of the disparagement of the Old Testament was the growing anti-Semitic tendency, which arose in the second part of the nineteenth century in Germany. We look here only for the vision on the Old Testament in the anti-Semitic literature, which is overwhelming. It has correctly been stated that ‘Morgan’s description of the Jews is important as a background to the later German development’.²⁰ It is impressive how many people in Germany were involved. We name among others the publicist Wilhelm Marr who founded in 1879 the *Antisemiten-Liga* with his ‘*Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum*’ (1879). He has been called the patriarch of anti-Semitism and the coiner of the term.²¹ The orientalist Paul de Lagarde played a role in this process, arguing for the deportation of the Jews from Germany.²²

This anti-Semitism induced many people in Germany to disparage the value of the Old Testament for church and theology. The assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch, son of the famous Old Testament commentator Franz Delitzsch, observed in 1921 that the Old Testament was *Die grosse Täuschung*, the great deception.²³ Though he was not himself an anti-Semite, he

¹⁹ Baker, *Two testaments*, 155-187: ‘The New Testament is the essential Bible, the Old Testament its non-Christian presupposition’ (157). There exists much literature about Bultmann’s view on the Old Testament: R. Marlé, ‘Bultmann et l’Ancien Testament’, *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, 88 (1956) 473-486; N.J. Young, ‘Bultmann’s view of the Old Testament’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 19 (1966) 269-279; R.F. Surburg, ‘Rudolf Bultmann and the Old Testament: his approach and interpretation’, *The Springfielder*, 30/4 (1967) 3-26; H. Hübner, ‘Rudolf Bultmann und das Alte Testament’, *Kerygma und Dogma*, 30 (1984) 250-272. See for the complex discussion about Bultmann K. de Valerio, *Altes Testament und Judentum im Frühwerk Rudolf Bultmanns*, (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 71), Berlin, 1994, 4-7 about ‘*das Pauschalurteil, Bultmann habe das Alte Testament abgewertet*’; and also Gerdmar, *Roots*, 373-411: ‘Rudolf Bultmann: liberal and anti-Jewish’.

²⁰ Gerdmar, *Roots*, 36.

²¹ P.G.J. Pulzer, *Die Entstehung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland und Österreich 1867-1914*, Gütersloh, 1966, 49; M. Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr; The patriarch of Anti-Semitism*, Oxford, 1987.

²² U. Sieg, *Deutschlands Prophet; Paul de Lagarde und die Ursprünge des modernen Antisemitismus*, Munich 2007. For many others see for example H. Jansen, *Christelijke theologie na Auschwitz*, Volume 1, *Theologische en kerkelijke wortels van het antisemitisme*, 4th edition, ’s Gravenhage, 1982, 191-230.

²³ The complete title sounds *Die grosse Täuschung. Kritische Betrachtungen zu den alttestamentlichen Berichten über den Eindringen Israels in Kanaan, die Gottesoffenbarung von Sinai, und die Wirksamkeit der Propheten* (1921).

declared that the Old Testament has no meaning for the Christian church and family.²⁴ Delitzsch stated that the study of the Old Testament as a theological subject should be abolished.²⁵

In the beginning of the 20th century, Friedrich Karl Emil Andersen, Lutheran pastor in Flensburg, in 1921 one of the founders of the *Bund für deutsche Kirche*, was already recommending the elimination of the Old Testament.²⁶ A fierce battle arose in the German churches in the 1930s about the value of the Old Testament.²⁷ All this gained momentum in Nazi Germany. Alfred Rosenberg, one of Adolf Hitler's mentors, with his *Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (1930), rejected the Old Testament altogether.²⁸ In the heat of the events of 1933 Reinhold Krause, a member of the *Bund*, declared in the *Sportpalast* before an audience of more than 20.000 people in Berlin on November 13th 1933 the abandonment of the Old Testament with its tales of cattle merchants and pimps.²⁹ The Old Testament was in the eyes of the Nazis a danger for the education of the youth.³⁰

The situation in Germany led some Christian theologians such as the Old Testament scholar Johannes Hempel to strange and remarkable expressions about the Old Testament as the most anti-Semitic book of literature in the world, in the sense that it criticizes the Jewish people.

²⁴ Quoted by Kraus, *Die biblische Theologie*, 268: 'Das sog. "Alte Testament" ist für die christliche Kirche und damit auch für die christliche Familie vollkommen entbehrlich'.

²⁵ Kraeling, *The Old Testament*, 161.

²⁶ E. Lamparter, 'Evangelische Kirche und Judentum', (Stuttgart, 1928), reprinted in R.R. Geis and H.J. Kraus, eds., *Versuche des Verstehens: Dokumente jüdisch-christlicher Begegnung aus den Jahren 1918-1922*, (Theologische Bücherei 33), Munich, 1966, 255-302 (286-8); C. Nicolaisen, *Die Auseinandersetzung um das Alte Testament im Kirchenkampf 1933-1945*, Dissertation, Hamburg, 1966, 29-31; S. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, Princeton, 2008, 45.

²⁷ J. Hempel, *Fort mit dem Alten Testament?*, Giessen, 1932; P. Volz, *Der Kampf um das Alte Testament*, Stuttgart, 1932; E. Sellin, *Abschaffung des Alten Testaments?*, Berlin, 1932; G.J.D. Aalders, 'De verwerping van het Oude Testament in heden en verleden i-vi', *De Reformatie*, oktober/november 1934; H.W. Hertzberg, *Der Deutsche und das Alte Testament*, Giessen, 1934; Fr. Traub, 'Die Kirche und das Alte Testament', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, neue Folge 16 (1935) 175-188; R. Abramowski, 'Vom Streit um das Alte Testament', *Theologische Rundschau*, neue Folge 9 (1937) 65-93; H. Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament theology in the twentieth century*, London, 1985, 28-43: 'The ideological fight against the Old Testament and its consequences'; C. Weber, *Altes Testament und völkische Frage: der biblische volksbegriff in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft der nationalsozialistischen Zeit, dargestellt am Beispiel von Johannes Hempel*, (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 28), Tübingen, 2000, 50-60: 'Der Streit um das Alte Testament'; B.M. Levinson, 'Reading the Bible in Nazi Germany; Gerhard von Rad's attempt to retain the Old Testament for the church', *Interpretation*, 62 (2008) 238-254.

²⁸ 'Abgeschafft werden muss ein für allemal das Alte Testament als Religionsbuch', quoted by H.J. Kraus, *Geschichte*, 432.

²⁹ 'Befreiung vom Alten Testament und seiner jüdischen Lohnmoral, von diesen Viehhändler- und Zuhältergeschichten', quoted by H.J. Reese, *Bekenntnis und Bekennen vom 19. Jahrhundert zum Kirchenkampf der nationalsozialistischen Zeit*, (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes 28), Göttingen, 1974, 229.

³⁰ F. Fink, 'Das Alte Testament. Eine Gefahr in unserer Jugenderziehung', *Der Stürmer*, 14 (1936) nr.36; see about Fink Gr.P. Wegner, *Anti-semitism and schooling under the Third Reich*, Abingdon, 2002, 154-166.

After the war he was accused of anti-Semitism.³¹ The famous New Testament scholar Gerhard Kittel tried to rescue the Old Testament from its Jewishness.³² In 1933, he ‘still upheld the Old Testament and opposed those who would divorce it from Christianity’. After the *Sportpalast* incident, he left the *Bund für deutsche Kirche*.³³ Later on, in 1943, he defended the Jewish roots of Christianity.³⁴ One of the leading figures of the German Christians, Emanuel Hirsch, knew the work of Morgan and called him an unjustly forgotten theologian.³⁵ For this church historian of Göttingen the Old Testament was simply the antithesis to Christianity. His position has been characterised as ‘a half-way station on the road from Paul to Marcion’.³⁶ But here we are already in the dangerous neighbourhood of anti-Semitic Nazism. Hirsch has been called a Nazi intellectual. After the Second World War, Hirsch just like Hempel and Kittel was accordingly dismissed from his university position.³⁷ Morgan stood in a line which went from Marcion to Hirsch. The Dutch Roman-Catholic Biblical scholar Antonius Gunneweg has formulated it as follows: we may never forget what this line from Marcion via Morgan, Semler, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Delitzsch and Harnack to Hirsch has brought us.³⁸

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§4: Neo-Marcionism after the Second World War

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There are many complaints about the widespread revival of Marcionism in the modern church.³⁹ ‘Neo-Marcionism continues to plague today’s church’, says an evangelical scholar,

³¹ Quoted by Weber, *Altes Testament*, 301: ‘am stärksten antisemitischen Buch der Weltliteratur’; 190: J.A. Wohlgemuth in a letter to Hempel: ‘Sie sind als Alttestamentler ausgesprochener Antisemit’.

³² A.E. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi-Germany*, Cambridge, Mass. 2006, 66-8: ‘a single tragic figure in the history of Nazi anti-Jewish scholarship’.

³³ Gerdmar, 547; Gerdmar, 417-530, devotes many pages to Kittel.

³⁴ R.P. Ericksen, ‘Theologian in the third reich: the case of Gerhard Kittel’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977) 595-622 (608, 613).

³⁵ Hirsch, *Geschichte*, Volume 1, 331-7 (337): ‘Es sind ... durch Morgan so viele wirkliche Beobachtungen und Einsichten ans Licht gezogen worden, dass man ihn wohl einen mit Unrecht in der Theologie vergessenen Mann heissen darf’.

³⁶ Kraeling, *The Old Testament*, 250; see about Hirsch also Nicolaisen, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 90-6; J. Alwast, ‘Theologie im Dienste der Nationalsozialismus’, in: L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz and C. Nicolaisen, eds., *Theologische Fakultäten im Nationalsozialismus*, (Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte B 18), Göttingen, 1993, 199-222.

³⁷ W.F. Albright, ‘The war in Europe and the future of biblical studies’, in: H.R. Willoughby, ed., *The study of the Bible today and tomorrow*, Chicago, 1947, 162-174 (165); R.P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler. Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch*, New Haven and London 1985, 120-97, Chapter 4: ‘Emanuel Hirsch: Nazi intellectual’; J.A. Zabel, *Nazism and the pastors. A study of the ideas of three deutsche Christen groups*, Missoula 1976, 230.

³⁸ Gunneweg, *Vom Verstehen*, 132: ‘Wohin die Linie Marcion – Morgan – Semler – Hegel – Schleiermacher – Delitzsch – Harnack – Hirsch geführt hat, darf nie wieder in Vergessenheit geraten’.

³⁹ G.E. Wright, *God who acts*, London, 1952, 16; J. Bright, *The authority of the Old Testament*, London, 1967, 69.

and ‘in today’s church rather strong vestiges of Marcionism have survived’.⁴⁰ There are still many people who do not like the so-called Biblical atrocities in the Old Testament. Another evangelical theologian said: ‘Ghosts of Marcion are around even to the present day’.⁴¹ Many people in our churches look with some disdain to the sometimes bloody stories in the Old Testament. Does the Christian church still need the Old Testament? was a question that was asked in the 1970s.⁴² In this respect, Morgan’s view has nowadays gained more support than in his own times. It has been called ‘functional Marcionism’, or ‘implicite Marcionism’.⁴³ It also has political connotations with respect to the modern State of Israel as described by a church historian: ‘The readiness of neo-Marcionite Christians to enter into dialogue with secular anti-Zionists and Muslims and against Zionism is ... no miracle’.⁴⁴ With the decline of the value of the Old Testament in Western Christianity the interest in and the support for the State of Israel has diminished. On the other hand, it has been stated that a general disinterest is responsible for the erosion of the authority of the Old Testament.⁴⁵ In the mean time a new discussion about the value of the Old Testament for the churches has come into being in Germany, since Notger Slenczka, dogmatician of the theological faculty of Humboldt University in Berlin, published in 2013 an article about the church and the Old Testament, in which he makes a case for the Harnack thesis: the abolition of the Old Testament as canonical book of the Christian church.⁴⁶ In the Berlin faculty, in the German evangelical church and on the Internet, this article led in 2015 to a new and fierce struggle about the value of the Old Testament.⁴⁷ The struggle in which Morgan played an important role is not over yet.

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§5: Summary

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⁴⁰ M.R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish roots of the Christian faith*, Grand Rapids, 1989, 109-10.

⁴¹ G. Lüdemann, *The unholy in holy Scripture: the dark side of the Bible*, translated by John Bowden, Louisville, Ke, 1997, 33-75; W.C. Kaiser, *The Christian and the “Old” Testament*, Pasadena, 1998, 270.

⁴² M. Limbeck, ‘Bedarf der Christ des Alten Testaments? Der Ausfall des Alten Testaments im gegenwärtigen Bewusstsein’, *Herder Korrespondenz*, 29 (1975) 77-84; H.D. Preuss, ‘Vom Verlust des Alten Testaments und seine Folgen’, in: J. Track, ed., *Lebendiger Umgang mit Schrift und Bekenntnis*, Stuttgart, 1980, 127-160.

⁴³ D.L. Gard, ‘The church’s Scripture and functional Marcionism’, *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 74 (2010) 209-24 (209) defining it as ‘the unfortunate marginalization of the Old Testament’; Baker, *Two testaments*, 3rd edition, Downers Grove, 2010, 51.

⁴⁴ P.C. Merkley, *Christian attitudes towards the state of Israel*, Montreal, 2001, 112.

⁴⁵ J. Barr, ‘The Old Testament and the new crisis of biblical theology’, *Interpretation*, 25 (1971) 24-40 (24).

⁴⁶ Slenczka, ‘Die Kirche und das Alte Testament’.

⁴⁷ See for example J.H. Tück, ‘Christentum ohne Wurzeln? Warum das Alte Testament nicht aus dem christlichen Kanon herausgenommen werden darf’, *Stimmen der Zeit*, 141 (2016) 43-55; M. Brumlik, ‘Notger Slenczka und Emanuel Hirsch’, *Junge Kirche* 77/1 (2016) 36-8; Fr. Hartenstein, *Die bleibende Bedeutung des Alten Testaments: Studien zur Relevanz des ersten Kanonteils für Theologie und Kirche* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 165), Göttingen, 2017, 55-78: ‘Zur Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für die evangelische Kirche: ein Auseinandersetzung mit den Thesen von Notger Slenczka’; and many others mentioned on the homepage of professor Slenczka at the internet site of Humboldt University (retrieved 14.02.2018).

The Old Testament has been called a stumbling block for Christians since the days of Marcion. Ever since, the Old Testament has been under fire. Sometimes this anti-Judaic fever has resulted in virulent anti-Semitism. In the case of Morgan, one sees a development from anti-Judaism into quasi anti-Semitic pronunciations. Though he was no anti-Semite in the modern sense of the word, he was at least a modern Marcion.

Most of those who followed him in this way had never heard of him. But two important church historians in 20th century Germany, von Harnack and Hirsch, praised him for his anti-Judaic stand. We have been reminded after the *Shoah* of the dangerous consequences of this historical development.

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Conclusions

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Deism is commonly regarded as a major religious expression of the Enlightenment. Much has been written about various aspects of Deism, including questions about the label as such, whether Deism covers a movement, or even whether it is a myth. Since David Hume there has been discussion about the so-called deist movement, and who belonged to it. Thomas Morgan called himself a Christian deist, but he did not belong to any organized group of deists. The literature since Leland brought them together as English deists. But an organized group of deists in England never existed. This notion has been questioned by various authors.

As to the term deist, so much is clear that hardly any so-called deist wanted to be labelled as such since it was seen by many as a defamatory label. Only few used the term in a positive sense. Thomas Morgan was one of them. In contrast to other deists he was proud to call himself a deist. He even went so far as to call himself a “Christian Deist”. What did he mean with this particular label? What did it involve in this case? What are the differences between ‘Christian Deism’ and Deism as such? These are questions which are central to this dissertation. Let us now turn to a few concluding remarks on the basis of the analysis of Morgan’s life and work in the preceding chapters.

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From traditionalism to Christian Deism

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Thomas Morgan was not a Christian deist from the start. What we know about the first stages of his life tells us that he gradually developed into a position, which is commonly labelled as deist. About the first period of his life little is known. On the basis of the few sources available, we have seen that he started out with an orthodox confession of faith when he was ordained a Presbyterian preacher in 1716. Soon, however, he started to participate in discussions about Arianism in which he took the Arian viewpoint, as his contributions to the pamphlet war around Salters’ Hall on the Non-subscriber’s side make sufficiently clear. At the same time, Morgan still showed himself to be a strong adherer to the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

But reason was increasingly becoming an important element in every discussion. At this stage of his life, he was – in his own words – ‘at the same time defending both Scripture and Reason’. He shows a development in his thinking about reason. In 1722, he thought it absurd to oppose faith to reason. In the Scriptures he found a rational religion. In a Lockean sense he felt that Christianity was highly reasonable. Four years later, he disposed of doctrines, which he considered absurd and inconsistent. In 1737, in his major work *The moral philosopher*, he opted for the Clarkeian ‘reason, and fitness of things’ as the only true foundation of religion. Two years later, he vindicated moral truth and reason, defining religion as ‘reason and common sense’ and reason as ‘a natural revelation of God’ in the same Lockean style. In his medical studies he would follow Newtonian principles.

Besides Arianism, Morgan’s favourite battlefield in the early stages of his public career was the struggle against Enthusiasm. He started to defend *Christianity against the power of enthusiasm* (1722) and in many other pamphlets during the 1720s. With the term ‘enthusiasts’ he denoted in general his less rational opponents.

It is important to note that in those years he was certainly not a deist. He himself denied being one of them, and when he was described as such by Peter Nisbett (in 1723) he was not amused. In the conflict which arose with Thomas Chubb in the later 1720s he again did not wish to accept deist convictions.

When, in 1724, Morgan was dismissed from the Marlborough congregation because of his Arianism, he turned to medicine, with the financial support of his father-in-law. In that same year he succeeded in gaining a doctorate in medicine at Glasgow University. From 1725

onwards, he was active as a writer of medical books, while at the same time he practiced medicine, first in Bristol, then in London.

Then, in 1737, Morgan published, anonymously, what would turn out to be his most important work, simply entitled *The moral philosopher*. More than anything else this work shows that by that time he had completely broken with the religious opinions of his youth and adulthood. He now happily called himself a “Christian Deist”. One of the major characteristics of *The moral philosopher* is the author’s fierce criticism of the Bible, and especially of the Old Testament. It is this publication, which put Morgan in the forefront of discussions about Deism and Biblical criticism.

As we saw, *The moral philosopher* called forth an impressive series of published reactions which on the whole were quite negative. His opponents disliked his negative view on the Old Testament and his defamation of the Jews. Nor could they agree with his disavowal of the doctrine of the redemption by Christ, his negation of divine inspiration, his dislike of miracles in general and the alleged dichotomy which he found between Peter and Paul. His style of writing, which at times bordered on the cynical, and his self-complacency did not help his readers to look favourably on the author.

From Morgan’s responses to five of his antagonists – Chandler, Chapman, Hallett, Leland and Lowman –, we can infer that his views did not alter. On the contrary, they were sharpened. Given his combatant spirit, Morgan apparently was not a man who strove for peace in the church. Once having entered the battlefield, he would keep on fighting.

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Morgan as a Christian Deist

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What did Thomas Morgan mean when he called himself a ‘Christian Deist’? What made him different from other deists who did not employ the adjective ‘Christian’? From what we have seen in the previous pages he employed the term ‘Christian Deism’ to indicate the moral truth and righteousness which was preached and propagated by Christ and the Apostles. He wants to present himself as a ‘Christian upon the foot of the New Testament’. That is, central to his religious conviction is the moral message of Christ, but without all the Old Testament elements, which he declares to be ‘Jewish’.

What then distinguishes Morgan’s Christian Deism from deism as such?

In the first place, one could point to his respect for the great prophet Jesus, the preacher of moral truth and righteousness. The message of Jesus is the best transcript of the religion of nature. Therefore, Morgan can state: ‘I take, as you know, Christianity to be that scheme or system of Deism, natural religion, or moral truth and righteousness, which was at first preached and propagated in the world, by Jesus Christ and his apostles’, and further on: ‘I am a Christian and at the same time a Deist or, if you please, this is my Christian Deism’. There is for Morgan no contradiction in being a Christian and being a deist. I think Morgan is quite serious when he calls himself a Christian.

In the second place, he wants to distinguish sharply between the two Testaments. How can it be that the Old Testament still has a function in the Christian revelation? ‘Paul preached a new doctrine, contrary to Moses and the prophets’.

In the third place, his view on the standing controversy between the Apostles Paul and Peter. ‘Paul was the great free-thinker of his age, the bold and brave defender of reason against authority’.

Fourthly, Morgan is more radical than the other deists in his moral criticism of Old Testament stories. Thus, he brought the deistical interpretation of Genesis 22 - about Abraham’s sacrifice of his son Isaac - to its logical conclusion as he describes it as ‘a fictitious account of things, drawn up by some ignorant enthusiastic bigots in after-ages, without any original truth or foundation at all’.

Fifthly, Morgan is proud to use the term deist as a positive qualification. In this respect, he differs from all other so called deists (with the exception of Peter Annet). They did not even accept the term deist for themselves, let alone the term 'Christian Deist'. In this respect, Morgan stands apart and his 'Christian' Deism may be interpreted as a 'perhaps prudential' apologetic point of support of his views. At any rate, he did not consider 'Christian Deism' as an oxymoron, as his contemporaries did and as some modern authors do. The term 'Christian Deism' has been the subject of much speculation.

Furthermore, more than any of the other English deists, he was a harbinger of the historical critical method with his plea to read the Bible 'critically, with an allowance for persons, circumstances, and the situation of things at that time'. Morgan has been praised by many scholars for his sound principles of Biblical criticism, intelligent observations on the authorship and antiquity of Biblical writings, and as a pioneer of modern historical science. *The moral philosopher* contains some interesting specimens of Morgan's Biblical criticism concerning the Pentateuch, the prophet Isaiah and post-exilic books in general. One of the significant dimensions of Deism is its stance towards the Old Testament, resulting in this part of the Bible losing its character as supernatural revelation.

Morgan's negative view on the Old Testament in general has given him the opportunity – especially in Volumes two and three of *The moral philosopher* – to develop critical insights on the process of the origin of the Old Testament books. Insights which later developed into modern historical criticism.

As to the New Testament, with the dichotomy he observes between the Apostle Paul and the teachers of circumcision, Morgan also lays the foundation for a critical study of the New Testament as conceived by Semler in Halle and later by Baur. In this respect, one might view Morgan as a forerunner of the renowned Tübingen School which has had such an impact on modern Biblical criticism.

The anti-Judaic opinions in *The moral philosopher*, which he clung to till the end of his life rather quickly turned into anti-Semitic phrases. But, as I hope to have shown, he is not an anti-Semite in the modern sense of the word.

Among English deists, Morgan takes a special place, not merely because of his 'Christian Deism', but also in that he wished to distance himself from kindred spirits. He hardly referred to them in his works. Some of his texts show him to be familiar with the views of his deist predecessors and contemporaries. Indeed, one can hardly believe that he was unaware of what prominent deists, such as Toland, Tindal, and Collins had advanced in their much-discussed publications. Morgan's views show too many similarities with theirs not to assume that he had a good knowledge of their work. It is highly likely that Morgan proceeded in this way for tactical reasons. He clearly did not want to be associated with those figures. We should not forget that deist contemporaries such as Thomas Woolston and Peter Annet suffered imprisonment for their convictions.

That he was less of a loner than he wished to present himself as is also to be inferred from his views on that particular popular issue among deists, miracles. Remarkably, again, he did not quote any of his fellow deists with respect to this issue. As we saw, Morgan's views with respect to miracles developed throughout the years. Whereas in 1726 he thought miracles to be possible, in 1737 he stated that miracles could prove nothing, only to argue in 1739 that it was highly improbable that God should work miracles. He looked for a natural explanation of Biblical miracles.

In his *Physico-Theology*, which can be seen as the final word of this Christian Deist, he states that he believes in 'the Deity, or author of nature, (who) continues to act, and incessantly exerts his active power and energy', without performing miracles. God acts, preserves and governs the world by natural laws.

To sum up, if one has to characterize the specific position of Morgan as a 'Christian Deist', one should point to his positive view on the moral message of Jesus Christ, his negative view on the Old Testament and everything Jewish, the dichotomy of Peter and Paul, above the 'normal' deist convictions, such as the rejection of revelation, divine inspiration and miracles. Finally, a few words with regard to the ongoing scholarly debate on Deism and particularly on Morgan. This thesis has brought many details of his life to light, which were unknown in the older literature, such as for example his year of birth, his citation for the House of Lords in 1724, the date of his dismissal from the Marlborough congregation, his medical doctorate at Glasgow University and the correction of some wrong attributions by modern authors. Another point is the recognition of a development in his thinking and publishing. From a Presbyterian preacher he became an Arian and a deist. But he was not always a deist; he only became one in the late 1730s. This has not been sufficiently understood by some modern authors. In contrast to what is said in the older literature, we have found many contemporary reactions to *The moral philosopher*. A strange erratum is the ongoing opinion about Warburton's alleged publication against Morgan. Various modern authors have discussed only the first volume of *The moral philosopher* and not the later volumes, and have therefore missed Morgan's historical reflections in these later volumes. One of the main conclusions of this thesis is the particular position of Morgan amidst the so-called English deists. Being one of the last, he has formerly uncorrectly been portrayed as a minor figure in the literature about Deism. Only recently has this image been changed, by authors like Hudson and Wigelsworth. More study of Morgan has led to the conclusion that he is 'a complex and many-sided figure'. This thesis has corroborated this opinion. Most important of all is that Morgan was a harbinger of the disparagement of the Old Testament in modern theology. This concept returns in later theologians like Semler, Schleiermacher, Harnack, Hirsch, and most recently Slenczka. But not only among German liberal theologians, also among ordinary people in the church have 'neo-Marcionite' feelings gained ground.

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Appendices

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§1: The distribution of Morgan's medical works

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Morgan's medical works had a broad distribution.¹ Isaac Newton had a copy of the *Philosophical principles of medicine* in his library.² The antiquary Thomas Baker (1656-1740), Fellow of St John's College Cambridge, had a copy of the first edition of Morgan's *Philosophical principles of medicine*.³ The work was found in the library of the American medical practitioner in Wethersfield in Connecticut, Jonathan Williams (1708-1738), who graduated from Yale.⁴ The American bookseller Samuel Gerrish (c.1680-1741) in Boston had a copy in 1725.⁵ The book was for sale at the booksellers James McEuen in Edinburgh in 1726, Arthur Bettesworth at the Red Lion in Pater-Noster-Row in 1728, Samuel Birt (d.1755) at the Bible and Ball in Ave-mary-lane in 1736, and at Thomas Osborne (d.1744) in Gray's Inn in 1736, the last three all in London.⁶ Both editions were for sale by the bookseller Fletcher Gyles (d.1741) against Gray's Inn in 1738.⁷ Gyles sold another copy in 1739 from the library of Thomas West.⁸ In 1739 Thomas Osborne offered for sale the *Philosophical principles*.⁹ In 1740 Thomas Warren (d.1767) in Birmingham offered another copy for sale.¹⁰ A copy was for sale by William Bathoe (d.1768), bookseller in Church Lane in 1749.¹¹ Thomas Osborne the younger sold in 1752 a copy from the library of Dr. Abraham Hall

¹ I found most of the here mentioned catalogues by *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* and *Google's advanced book search* (retrieved 13.12.2017).

² J. Harrison, *The library of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge, 1978, 196 nr.1118; Newton had more than fifty medical books in his library.

³ F.J.M. Korsten, *A catalogue of the library of Thomas Baker*, Cambridge, 1990, 344.

⁴ N.N., 'Address', in: *Proceedings of the fifty-ninth annual convention of the Connecticut Medical Society*, Hartford, 1851, 25-63 (40-1).

⁵ F. Guerra, *American medical bibliography 1634-1783*, New York, 1962, 63 nr.A-90.

⁶ (J. McEuen), *A catalogue of curious and valuable books*, Edinburgh, 1726, 47 nr.578; (A. Bettesworth), *A catalogue of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1728?); (S. Birt), *A catalogue of books printed for and sold by Samuel Birt, bookseller*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1736?), 21; Th. Osborne, *A new catalogue of a valuable and choice collection of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1736), 120 nr.5054.

⁷ (F. Gyles), *A catalogue of the libraries of the Rev. Mr. Batty, rector of St. John's Clerkenwell, and of a person of quality*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1738), 94 nrs.1579-80.

⁸ (F. Gyles), *A catalogue of the libraries of the reverend mr. Sampson Estwick ... and of Thomas West, M.A., fellow of the college of physicians*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1739), 127 nr.1401.

⁹ (Th. Osborne), *An extensive and curious catalogue of valuable books and manuscripts*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1739), 180 nr.3005; 216 nr.4566.

¹⁰ (Th. Warren), *A catalogue of curious and valuable books*, Birmingham, (1739), 48 nr.212.

¹¹ (W. Bathoe), *A catalogue of the valuable library of the learned James Thompson*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1749?), 22 nr.497.

(d.1752), physician to the Charterhouse.¹² In 1754, he sold two other copies.¹³ The Dublin bookseller William Ross (d.1766) sold in 1755 a copy of the *Philosophical principles of medicine* out of the library of the counselor at law, Samuel Card (d.1755).¹⁴ The bookseller Thomas Payne (bapt.1719-1799) at Castle Street sold a copy in 1757.¹⁵ The *Philosophical principles of medicine* belonged to the library of John Clerk, physician in Edinburgh.¹⁶ Another copy belonged to the library of the Medical Society in Edinburgh in 1770.¹⁷ Harvard College Library possessed a copy in 1790.¹⁸ Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States, had two copies in his library.¹⁹ Another copy is found in the library of the Aberdeen Medical Society in 1796.²⁰ There are many more to be found.

The *Philosophical principles of medicine* and *The mechanical practice of physick* were for sale by the bookseller Thomas Green at Chelmsford in 1739.²¹ The bookseller Thomas Payne had a copy of *The mechanical practice of physick* in 1749.²² Richard Mead, physician to King George II, had the two books in his possession.²³ The bookseller William Cater, opposite Red-Lion Street, had in 1764 two medical books of Morgan for sale.²⁴ The bookseller John Murray (1737-1793) in Fleet Street sold the two books in 1785.²⁵ The bookseller John Hayes in High-Holborn, opposite Dean Street, had the two books for sale in 1791.²⁶ The booksellers S. and

¹² (Th. Osborne), *A catalogue of the library of books, of the late learned Dr. Abraham Hall, physician to the Charter-House*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1752), 240 nr.8857.

¹³ (Th. Osborne and J. Shipton), *A catalogue of the libraries of the late right honourable Henry, lord viscount Colerane ... and many others*, volume 2, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1754), 188, nrs.24556-7.

¹⁴ (W. Ross), *Catalogue of books: being, the library of Samuel Card*, Dublin, 1755, 11 nr.314.

¹⁵ (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a very large collection of good books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1757), 196 nr.5725.

¹⁶ (W. Gibb), *A catalogue of books; being the library of the learned Dr. John Clerk, physician in Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1768, nr.575.

¹⁷ N.N. *A catalogue of the books belonging to the library of the Medical Society in Edinburgh*, (Edinburgh), 1770, 30.

¹⁸ W.H. Bond and H. Amory, *The printed catalogues of Harvard College Library 1723-1790*, (Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts 68), Boston, 1996, C.101.

¹⁹ E. Wolf 2nd and K.J.Hayes, eds., *The library of Benjamin Franklin*, Philadelphia, 2006, 568-9 nr.2368-9.

²⁰ N.N., *An account of the Aberdeen Medical Society*, Aberdeen, 1796, 30 nr.409.

²¹ (Th. Green), *The divines, physicians, lawyers, and gentlemen's library*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1739), 24 nrs.1039-40.

²² (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a curious collection of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1749), 129 nr.3508.

²³ S. Baker, *Catalogus librorum Richard Mead*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1754), 67 nrs.747-8.

²⁴ (W. Cater), *A catalogue of valuable and elegant books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1764), 43 nr.1142; 52 nr.1455.

²⁵ J. Murray, *Murray's catalogue of books, in medicine, surgery, anatomy, natural history*, London, 1785, 36-7 nrs.930-1.

²⁶ (J. Hayes), *Food for book-worms*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1791), 88 nrs.3067-8.

B. Nock offered the two books in their catalogue of ‘cheap medical books’ in January 1846 for two shillings each.²⁷

Thomas Payne sold the *Letter to Dr. Cheyne* in his catalogue of 1761.²⁸ The bookseller Homan Turpin (d.1791) at St. Johns’ Street, had all three medical books by Morgan for sale in 1783.²⁹

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§2: Morgan’s theological publications in eighteenth-century Libraries and Catalogues

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Edmund Burke wrote in 1790: ‘Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world’.³⁰ This part of the phrase is not much quoted, but when we ask the booksellers of London we can say that the works of Thomas Morgan are found in many eighteenth-century libraries and in many catalogues of booksellers in Britain and abroad. All the works of Morgan had a vast distribution. A copy of the *Collection of tracts* was found in the library of the deist, Anthony Collins in Baddow Hall.³¹ The same work was found in the library of Samuel Mather, son of the New England minister Cotton Mather.³² It was announced in the *Bibliothèque Angloise* by the Huguenot Michel de Laroche published in Amsterdam at the end of 1725.³³ Thomas Osborne the younger (bapt.1704-1767) sold a copy of *The moral philosopher* in 1739.³⁴ A copy of the *Physico-Theology* was offered for sale by the bookseller Jeremiah Roe in Derby in 1741.³⁵ A copy of *The moral philosopher* was already in the library of the church historian Michael Lilienthal (1686-1750) in Königsberg in East Prussia.³⁶ The Provost of King’s College Cambridge, Andrew Snape (1675-1742), had a copy of *The moral philosopher* in his library.³⁷ A copy of *The moral philosopher* was noted in the catalogue of the library of the bibliophile Edward Harley (1689-1741), 2nd Earl of Oxford, edited by his literary secretary, the antiquarian William Oldys (1696-1761) and printed by Thomas Osborne.³⁸ The independent minister of Pinners’ Hall in London, Jeremiah Hunt

²⁷ N.N., *The British and Foreign Medical Review*, 21 (January 1846) Appendix 10.

²⁸ (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a large collection of the best books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1761), 131 nr.5294.

²⁹ H. Turpin, *H. Turpin’s new catalogue for 1783*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1783), 148 nrs.3012-4.

³⁰ Burke, *Reflections*, 133.

³¹ O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 37.

³² J.H. Tuttle, ‘The libraries of the Mathers’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 20 (1910) 269-360 (339).

³³ *Bibliothèque Angloise*, 13 (1725) 508-9.

³⁴ (Th. Osborne), *A catalogue of the libraries of ...*, s.l.s.a., (=London, 1739), 99.

³⁵ (J. Roe), *A catalogue of books*, Derby, 1741, 9 nr.101.

³⁶ Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothec*.

³⁷ (W. Thurlbourn), *A catalogue of the remaining part of the library of the reverend dr. Andrew Snape*, (Cambridge, 1743), 40 nr.807.

³⁸ (W. Oldys, ed.), *Catalogus bibliothecae Harleianae*, Volume 4, London, 1744, 701 nr.15686.

(1678-1744), had a copy in his library.³⁹ The booksellers John Whiston (1711-1780), son of William Whiston, and his companion Benjamin White (c.1725-1794), in Fleet Street, had various works by Morgan for sale in 1751.⁴⁰ Thomas Osborne the younger sold in 1752 a copy of *The moral philosopher* out of the library of Abraham Hall, physician to the Charter-House.⁴¹ The bookseller Thomas Payne (bapt.1719-1788) at Castle Street sold a copy of *A brief examination* in 1756.⁴² The politician and book collector Robert Hoblyn (bapt.1710-1756) had a copy of *The moral philosopher* in his library.⁴³ A copy of *The moral philosopher* was sold at the book sale of Thomas Osborne and J.Shipton at the end of 1757.⁴⁴ Payne offered for sale in 1758 three books by Morgan.⁴⁵ William Ross sold in 1758 in Dublin a copy of *The moral philosopher* out of the library of Doctor Thomas Lloyd (d.1758).⁴⁶ Whiston and his companion had a copy for sale in 1758.⁴⁷ The German bibliographer Christian Gottlieb Jöcher (1694-1758) had the three volumes in his library.⁴⁸ The German preacher Johann Anton Trinius (1722-1784) observed in 1759 that the book was rare even in England, but that seems a bit strange with respect to the overwhelming evidence present here.⁴⁹ The booksellers Lockyer John Davis (1717-1791) and Charles Reymers against Gray's Inn tried to sell three copies of *The moral philosopher* and other works of Morgan in 1760.⁵⁰ Four years later they still had two copies in stock.⁵¹ The bookseller Edward Ballard (1707?-1796)

³⁹ N.N., *A catalogue of the entire library of the late learned and reverend Jeremiah Hunt*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1744), 10 nr.178.

⁴⁰ (J. Whiston and B. White), *A catalogue of several libraries*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1751), 127, nrs.4159-61.

⁴¹ (Th. Osborne), *A catalogue of the library of books, of the late learned Dr. Abraham Hall, physician to the Charter-House*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1752), 240 nr.8856.

⁴² (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a very large and valuable collection of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1756), 126 nr.3756.

⁴³ N.N., *Bibliotheca Hoblyniana, sive catalogus librorum*, London, 1769, 74.

⁴⁴ (Th. Osborne), *The first volume ... of a catalogue of the libraries of many eminent persons*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1757), 433.

⁴⁵ (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a very large and curious collection of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1758), 94, 117 and 172.

⁴⁶ (W. Ross), *A catalogue of books. Being the library of Doctor Thomas Lloyd*, s.l.s.a. (=Dublin, 1758), 28 nr.726.

⁴⁷ (J. Whiston), *Bibliotheca curiosa et elegans*, London, 1758, 136.

⁴⁸ *Catalogus bibliothecae d. Christiani Gottlieb Jöcheri academiae lipsiensis ...*, Lipsiae, 1759, 66, nrs.5228-30.

⁴⁹ Trinius, *Freydencker=Lexicon*, 371.

⁵⁰ (L.J. Davis and Ch. Reymers), *A catalogue of several valuable libraries*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1760), 235 nrs.6498-6500; 265 nrs.7631-34.

⁵¹ (L.J. Davis and Ch. Reymers), *A catalogue of about four thousand volumes*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1764), 47, nrs.1627-8.

in Little Britain had a copy for sale in 1761.⁵² Robert Downes (d.1763), Bishop of Rophoe, possessed *The moral philosopher*, as is clear from the auction of his books in January 1764 in Dublin by William Ross.⁵³ John Hutton (d.1764) possessed a copy of *The moral philosopher*, as is clear from the auction of his books in October 1764 in London.⁵⁴ John Whiston had three books by Morgan for sale in his catalogue of 1764.⁵⁵

So it goes on and on. There is too much material to sum it all up. From now on we quote only specific items. The philosopher David Hume probably had a copy of *The moral philosopher* in his library.⁵⁶ The City Library of Bern in Switzerland had copies of many of Morgan's works in 1767.⁵⁷ In the auction catalogue of the library of Hermann Samuel Reimarus we find the three volumes of *The moral philosopher*.⁵⁸ Another copy of *The moral philosopher* was sold at a book sale by the bookseller Cornelis Kribber in company with others in Utrecht in the Netherlands in October 1776.⁵⁹ The *Collection of tracts* was found in the library of the French Jean Baptiste Pâris de Meyzieu (d.1778), *ancien conseiller au parlement, & ancien intendant de l'école royale militaire*.⁶⁰ There was a copy of *The moral philosopher* in the Milanese *Bibliotheca Firmiana* in 1783.⁶¹ In 1787 there was a copy of *The moral philosopher* in the circulating library by the bookseller John Boosey at nr.39, King Street, Cheapside, London.⁶² The booksellers John Shepperson and Thomas Reynolds in Oxford Street had a copy of *The moral philosopher* for sale in 1788.⁶³ Harvard College Library possessed in 1790 nearly all the early pamphlets of Morgan.⁶⁴ The German Protestant theologian Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem (1709-1789) had a copy of *The moral philosopher* according to

⁵² (E. Ballard), *Bibliotheca theologica, a catalogue of a very large collection of scarce and valuable books*, s.l., 1761, 37.

⁵³ (W. Ross), *A catalogue of books, being the entire library of the right reverend father in God, Robert Downes, lord bishop of Rophoe, deced'd*, Dublin, (1764), 20 nr.783.

⁵⁴ (W. Bristow), *A catalogue of the large and curious library of Mr. John Hutton*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1764), 86.

⁵⁵ (J. Whiston), *A catalogue of several libraries of books*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1764), 141 nrs.4510, 4512; 142 nr.4528.

⁵⁶ See for the reconstruction of Hume's library D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton, *The David Hume library*, Edinburgh, 1996, 116 nr.894.

⁵⁷ N.N., *Catalogi librorum typis editorum qui in bibliotheca Bernensi exstant supplementum*, Bern, 1767, 92-3.

⁵⁸ Schetelig, *Auktionskatalog*, nrs. I. 927-929.

⁵⁹ (C. Kribber), *Catalogue ... d'une bibliothèque de littérature*, Volume 1, s.l., 1776, 11.

⁶⁰ (Moutard), *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu M. Pâris de Meyzieu*, Paris, 1779, 8-9.

⁶¹ N.N., *Bibliotheca Firmiana*, Milan, 1783, 28.

⁶² (J. Boosey), *A new catalogue of the circulating library at No.39, King Street, Cheapside*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1787), 132, 183 nrs.6316-8.

⁶³ (J. Shepperson), *A catalogue of a valuable and extensive collection of books*, s.l.(=London), 1788, 123.

⁶⁴ Bond and Amory, *The printed catalogues of Harvard*, C.317-8.

the sales catalogue of his library.⁶⁵ The Reverend John Pitts (d.1793), Rector of Great Bicknell, had a copy of *The moral philosopher*.⁶⁶ The book collector Ralph Willett (1719-1795) in Merly in Dorset had *The moral philosopher*.⁶⁷ A copy was found in the library of the Hamburg pastor Barthold Nicolaus Krohn (1722-1795).⁶⁸ Many London booksellers had a copy for sale during the last part of the 18th century. The booksellers Benjamin and John White at Horace's Head in Fleet Street had a copy of *The moral philosopher* for sale in 1794.⁶⁹ The bookseller Thomas Egerton in Whitehall had a copy for sale in 1796.⁷⁰ The library of the man of letters, Horace Walpole (1717-1797), contained various tracts by Morgan.⁷¹ The bookseller Thomas Payne had a copy for sale in 1798.⁷²

So we see that various editions of Morgan's works were abundantly available during the 18th century. From London to Aberdeen, from Edinburgh to Birmingham, from Dublin to Derby, from Harvard to Wethersfield in Connecticut in New England, everywhere his books were found. In many of the above-mentioned catalogues we also see copies of the books and pamphlets of his antagonists.

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§3: Morgan's theological publications in nineteenth-century Libraries and Catalogues

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The moral philosopher is found in various libraries of the 19th century. For example, the booksellers George Lackington (1777-1844), Robert Allen and Company, sold many titles by Morgan in 1815 in their shop 'The temple of the Muses' on Finsbury Square in London.⁷³ A copy was found in the library of the second President of the United States, John Adams, when it was donated to the town of Quincy in the County of Norfolk, in 1823.⁷⁴ The library of the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, William Magee had a copy.⁷⁵ A copy was sold out of the library of the book collector, Richard Heber (1774-1833) in 1836.⁷⁶ The Dean of Winchester

⁶⁵ Cl.D. Osthöven, ed., *Das Bibliotheksverzeichnis von Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem*, Wuppertal, 2011, 42.

⁶⁶ (B. and J. White), *A catalogue of the library of the rev. John Pitts*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1794), 293.

⁶⁷ (R. Willett), *A catalogue of the books in the library of Ralph Willett, esq, At Merly, in the county of Dorset*, London, 1790, 8.

⁶⁸ B.N. Krohn, *Catalogus bibliothecae ... Bartholdus Nicolaus Krohn*, Hamburg, 1793, 69, nr.673.

⁶⁹ (B. White), *A catalogue of an extensive and valuable collection of books*, s.l.(=London), 1794, 298.

⁷⁰ (Th. Egerton), *A catalogue of an extensive collection of books*, s.l.(=London), 1796, 248.

⁷¹ A.T. Hazen, *A catalogue of Horace Walpole's library*, Volume 1, New Haven and London, 1969, 434 nr.1608/12/4.

⁷² (Th. Payne), *A catalogue of a valuable collection of books*, London, 1798, 199.

⁷³ N.N., *General catalogue of books for the year 1815*, Volume 4, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1815), 737, nrs.23058-61.

⁷⁴ N.N., *Deeds and other documents relating to the several pieces of land, and to the library presented to the town of Quincy, by president Adams, together with a catalogue of the books*, Cambridge, 1823, 37.

⁷⁵ N.N., *Catalogue of books, the property of the late most reverend William Magee*, 108.

⁷⁶ (Sotheby), *Bibliotheca Heberiana. Catalogue of the library of the late Richard Heber, esq.*, Volume 10, s.l. (=London), 1836, 69.

cathedral, Thomas Rennell (1754-1840), had a copy.⁷⁷ He also had many other works by Morgan and his adversaries. The antiquary Francis Douce (1757-1834) left a copy to the Bodleian Library.⁷⁸ Thomas Jolley had a copy of the *Collection of tracts*.⁷⁹ The journalist John Black (1783-1855), the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, had a copy of *The moral philosopher* in 1844.⁸⁰ There was also a copy in the *Bibliotheca Sussexiana*, the library of Prince Augustus Frederick (1773-1843), the sixth son of King George III, and created Duke of Sussex in 1801.⁸¹ In France, Isaac Haffner (1751-1831), Dean of the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Strasburg, had a copy.⁸² In the Netherlands a copy was found in the library of the bibliophile, Johan Meerman (1753-1815), and in the library of the village pastor Bernard Everwijn Christiaan van Niel (1782-1836).⁸³ In Denmark the Lutheran Bishop of Zealand, Friedrich Münter (1761-1830), had a copy.⁸⁴ In America it was present in the library of Salem Athenaeum in 1811.⁸⁵ Harvard had a copy in 1830.⁸⁶ A copy was found in the library of Union Theological Seminary in Prince Edward in Virginia in 1833.⁸⁷ It belonged, as we saw before, to the Loganian library, originally formed by James Logan, and donated by the Logan family, in Philadelphia.⁸⁸ The *Collection of tracts* was in the library of the American antiquarian Society in Worcester.⁸⁹ A copy of *The moral philosopher* was in the San Francisco mercantile library in 1848.⁹⁰ A copy was found in the American Institute Library of

⁷⁷ (J. Leslie), *Catalogue of the library of Thomas Rennell*, s.l., 1840, 12, nr.6316.

⁷⁸ N.N., *Catalogue of the printed books and manuscripts bequeathed by Francis Douce, esq. to the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, 1840, 190.

⁷⁹ S. Leigh Sotheby, *Catalogue of the theological portion of the very extensive singularly curious and valuable library of Thomas Jolley*, London, 1843, 147 nr.1884.

⁸⁰ (S. Leigh Sotheby), *Catalogue of the extensive library of John Black, esq., late editor of the "Morning Chronicle"*, s.l.s.a. (=London, 1844), 110.

⁸¹ (Evans), *Bibliotheca Sussexiana*, volume 1, s.l. (=London), 1844, 218, nr.4770.

⁸² N.N., *Catalogue systématique de la bibliothèque du feu M.Isaac Haffner*, Volume 1, Strasbourg, 1832, 61.

⁸³ N.N., *Bibliotheca Meermanniana; sive Catalogus librorum impressorum*, Lugduni Batavorum e.a., (1824), 80, nr.327; *Catalogus der aanzienlijke verzameling boeken ...*, nagelaten door B.E.C. van Niel, ... predikant te Vaassen, Zwolle, 1837, 54, nr.1271.

⁸⁴ N.N., *Bibliotheca Münteriana*, Hafniae, (1830), 346, nr.4842.

⁸⁵ N.N., *Catalogue of the books belonging to the Salem Athenaeum*, Salem, 1811, 49.

⁸⁶ N.N., *A catalogue of the library of Harvard University*, volume 3, Cambridge, Mass., 1830, 7.

⁸⁷ N.N., *Catalogue of the library belonging to the Union Theological Seminary*, Richmond, 1833, 70.

⁸⁸ N.N., *Catalogue of the books belonging to the Loganian library*, Philadelphia, 1837, 36; Wolf, *The library of James Logan*, 329 nr.1386.

⁸⁹ N.N., *A catalogue of books in the library of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts*, Worcester, 1837, 46.

⁹⁰ N.N., *Catalogue of the San Francisco Mercantile library*, San Francisco, 1848, 81.

the City of New York in 1852.⁹¹ It was part of the collection of Bowdoin College in Brunswick in 1863.⁹²

So we see that Morgan's principal works were widely distributed in the 19th century. In many of the above-mentioned catalogues we also find copies of the books and pamphlets of his antagonists.

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§4: The lending-library of Manchester College in York

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Among the Unitarian dissenters Morgan was not forgotten in the 19th century. The dissenting academy Manchester College in York noted various loans of works by Thomas Morgan by students during the years 1814-41. Among them we find as readers the students William Johnston Bakewell (1794-1861), Unitarian minister from 1828 at Norwich; John Howard Ryland (1803-1872); George Heaviside (1810?-1840); Unitarian minister at Rochdale in Lancashire from 1832 till his death; Henry Higginson (c.1812-1873), Unitarian minister in Melbourne in Australia from 1852 till 1871; John Lampray, minister at Lincoln from 1837 till 1846; John Wellbeloved (d.1819); John Ebenezer Williams (d.1890); Charles William Robberds (d.1898); Mark Rowntree; and Edward Worthington.⁹³

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§5: Quotations made by Morgan in the three volumes of *The moral philosopher*

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Aesop, 1/251;
Atlas historique, 3/295;
 Bacon, 2/219;
 Bayle, 2/214;
 Bennett, 2B/50;
 Bible, passim;
 Calvin, 2B/7;
 Chandler, 2B/74;
 Chapman, 2B;
 Charles II, 2/59;
 Chillingworth, 2B/46;
 Cicero, *De divinatione* 3/108; 3/151;
 Clarke, 1/85-86; 2B/28; 2B/50; *Natural and reveal'd religion* 3/137;
 Confucius, 1/145; 1/167; 1/411; 2/270;
 Euclid, 3/135;
 Grotius, 1/127; 1/158; 2/150;
 Hammond, 1/158;
 Herodotus, 3/320;
 Homer, 1/251;
 Hyde, *De religione veterum Persarum*, 1/349, 2/130, 2/144; 2/211; 2/214; 2B/23; 2B/53; 3/105; 3/320;
 Irenaeus, 3/109;
 Jerome 3/262;
 Josephus, 2/68; 2/168-9; 3/73; 3/247; 3/292;

⁹¹ N.N., *Alphabetical and analytical catalogue of the American Institute Library*, New York, 1852, 97.

⁹² (W.P. Tucker), *Catalogue of the library of Bowdoin College*, Brunswick, 1863, 438.

⁹³ *Dissenting Academies Online*, retrieved 13.12.2017.

Leland, 2A; 3;
 Locke, 2B/30; *Reasonableness of Christianity*, 2B/57; 3/141;
 Lowman 3;
 Luther, 2B/7;
 Mahomet, 1/167; 1/411; 2/195; 3/5; 3/70; 3/111; 3/337-8;
 Manetho, 3/73; 3/79-80;
 Marsham, 3/307;
 Milton, 1/251;
 Mohammed, 2/245; 2/270; 2B/40-2; 2B/44; 2B/58; 2B/61-2;
 Newton, 1/364; 2/245; 2/248; 3/126; 3/228;
 Ovid, 1/251;
 Plato, 1/145; 3/151;
 Plutarch, 3/151;
 Prideaux, *History of the Old and New Testament connected*, 1/49; 3/111; 2B/39; 2B/42;
 Prideaux, *Letter to the deists*, 2/264; 3/111;
 Shakespear, 1/251;
 Shuckford, *Sacred and profane history of the world connected*, 3/76-8; 3/314; 3/318;
 Socrates, 1/145;
 Sophronius, alias Leland, 2B11;
 Spencer, 3/340;
 Stillingfleet, 1/158;
 Tertullian, 1/390;
 Twiss, 1/158;
 Warburton, 2/xxvii; 2B/45; *Divine legation of Moses*, 2B/54;
 Waterland, 2B/49;
 Whiston, 1/371; 1/382; 3/346;
 Zoroaster, 1/145; 1/167; 1/348-9; 1/411; 2/195; 2/212; 2/214; 2/270; 2B/43-4; 2B/52-3; 3/5;
 3/70.
 With the exception of the Bible and his opponents Leland, Chapman, and Lowman, only nine
 books are cited by Morgan by title in *The moral philosopher*.

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The Royal Academy of Arts (www.royalacademy.org.uk)

University of Glasgow (www.gla.ac.uk)

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§3: Printed sources: Thomas Morgan

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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

*

Inleiding:

De Presbyteriaanse predikant en arts Thomas Morgan wordt sedert de verschijning van John Leland's klassieke *View of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England during the last and the present century* (1754-1756) tot de deïsten gerekend.

Deïsme is een moeilijk te definiëren term. Voor een deel is dat problematische karakter te verklaren uit een zekere innerlijke tegenstrijdigheid. Want veelal is deïsme gedefinieerd als de ontkenning van elke vorm van Openbaring, maar anderzijds ging de loochening naar het oordeel van menigeen gepaard met het aanvaarden van de religie van de natuur. In de achttiende eeuw zijn veel pamfletten en boeken verschenen, gericht tegen het deïsme. Gedurende lange tijd nadien is het deïsme misverstaan en genegeerd. De moderne studie van het Engelse deïsme begon met Gotthard Victor Lechler's *Geschichte des englischen Deismus* (1841). Pas sinds de laatste decennia is een opleving in de studie van het deïsme te constateren door moderne auteurs als Wayne Hudson en Jeffrey Robert Wigelsworth. Sommige auteurs als Norman Sykes en S.J. Barnett beschouwen het deïsme evenwel niet als een georganiseerde beweging.

De achttiende-eeuwse theologen Philip Skelton en John Leland hebben 'canonieke' lijsten van Engelse deïsten opgesteld. Maar niet elke als deïst aangeduide persoon was van een dergelijk etiket gecharmeerd. Thomas Morgan is één van de weinigen die zich openlijk als deïst heeft geafficheerd. Hij noemt zich zelfs 'Christian Deist'. Door vele auteurs wordt dit als een oxymoron – een nauwe verbinding tussen twee tegenovergestelde begrippen – gezien. In deze studie wordt gezocht naar de betekenis van de term 'Christian Deist' en de consequenties daarvan voor Morgan's kritische visie op het Oude en Nieuwe Testament, en zijn plaats tussen de overige deïsten in de context van de Verlichting.

Hoofdstuk 1: Leven van Thomas Morgan.

Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743) wordt sinds lang getypeerd als een deïst op grond van zijn meest bekende publicatie: *The moral philosopher, in a dialogue between Philalethes, a Christian Deist, and Theophanes, a Christian Jew* (1737-1740). Hij was afkomstig uit een arme boerenfamilie uit de regio van Bridgwater in Somerset. Hij kreeg de mogelijkheid te studeren aan de Dissenter Academy in Bridgwater. Gedurende een onbepaalde periode was hij actief als Independent predikant in Bruton in Somerset. Van 1716 tot 1724 trad hij op als Presbyteriaans predikant in Marlborough in Wiltshire. Hij studeerde tevens medicijnen en verkreeg in 1724 de titel 'Medical Doctor' aan de Universiteit van Glasgow. Na zijn ontslag in Marlborough in 1724 vanwege Arianisme en een klacht tegen hem, ingediend in het Hogerhuis, trad hij vanaf 1726 op als arts in Bristol en vanaf 1735 in Londen. Daar, in de Britse hoofdstad, toonde hij zich in de laatste fase van zijn leven deïst en noemde zichzelf in 1737 in *The moral philosopher* openlijk 'Christian Deist'. Hij omschrijft 'Christian Deism' als de natuurlijke religie, zedelijke waarheid en rechtvaardigheid, die door Jezus Christus als eerste gepredikt en verkondigd werd.

Hoofdstuk 2: Morgan's geschriften voorafgaande aan *The moral philosopher*.

Morgan was een krachtig pamflettist, die na de Salters' Hall Conference in 1719 over het leerstuk van de Drieëenheid met veel collega's in de clinch lag. Hij bestreed met verve de aanhangers van de orthodoxe leer en verzette zich tegen de binding aan de belijdenis en toonde zich meer en meer een rationalist.

Daarnaast schreef hij tegen elke vorm van 'Enthousiasme', dat hij bij zijn tegenstanders ontdekte. In 1726 publiceerde hij een collectie van zijn tot dusver verschenen traktaten. Tussen 1727 en 1728 bestreed hij, ter verdediging van de Quakers, enkele religieuze

opvattingen over de gevolgen van de zondeval, die hij bij de handschoenmaker Thomas Chubb opmerkte. In de tussentijd nam hij de medische studie op en publiceerde twee uitvoerige boeken op dit terrein: in 1725 *Philosophical principles of medicine* (bijna 500 pagina's) en in 1735 *The mechanical practice of physick* (meer dan 380 pagina's). Vooral het eerstgenoemde werk had succes in Engeland en daar buiten en werd veel geciteerd.

Hoofdstuk 3: *The moral philosopher*.

The moral philosopher uit 1737 is een dialoog tussen *Philaethes, a Christian Deist* en *Theophanes, a Christian Jew*. Het boek maakt een scherpe scheiding tussen Oude en Nieuwe Testament, tussen Jodendom en Christendom, tussen navolgers van de apostel Petrus en navolgers van de apostel Paulus. Kan het Joodse boek nog functioneren in de christelijke boodschap?, is zijn vraag. Morgan is een Christen op de basis van het Nieuwe Testament. Morgan staat daarmee in de lijn van de verwerping van het Oude Testament in een deel van de christelijke theologie, een lijn die loopt van Marcion tot in onze huidige tijd. Er is maar één criterium van ware godsdienst: de morele waarheid, redelijkheid en geschiktheid van de dingen ('the moral truth, reason, and fitness of things'), een criterium dat hij in de theologie van Samuel Clarke gevonden heeft. Wonderen kunnen geen bewijs van openbaring zijn. God grijpt niet in door het doen van wonderen. Morgan's uitingen over de wonderverhalen in het Oude Testament leiden van anti-Joodse tot volop anti-Semitische uitspraken.

De Christelijke openbaring daarentegen is niet anders dan de 'revival' van de natuurlijke godsdienst, een terminologie die doet denken aan Matthew Tindal's 'republication of the religion of nature'. 'Christian Deism' is niets anders dan de morele prediking van Jezus Christus, met weglating van alle Joodse elementen. Voor Morgan is er geen contradictie tussen Christen zijn en deïst zijn. Het Christendom verliest zijn absoluteheid en wordt een morele filosofie en ethiek.

Hoofdstuk 4: Eigentijdse reacties op *The moral philosopher*.

De vele contemporaine reacties op *The moral philosopher* kwamen van meerdere zijden, van Presbyterianen en Independenten, van Anglicanen en Rooms-Katholieken. Meer dan 25 gepubliceerde reacties gedurende zijn leven, maar ook in brieven, dagboeken en preken. Nagenoeg al deze reacties waren negatief. Zij richtten zich tegen Morgan's visie op het Oude Testament, de ontkenning van de traditionele verzoeningsleer en de ontkenning van de wonderen en de inspiratie van de Schrift. De omvangrijkste waren van de hand van John Leland, John Chapman en Moses Lowman, die Morgan op al deze punten bekritiseerden. Alleen Peter Annet en Thomas Amory namen het voor Morgan op. Een vreemd erratum in de literatuur over Morgan is de onjuiste opvatting over *The divine legation of Moses demonstrated, on the principles of a religious deist, from the omission of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments in the Jewish dispensation* (1738) van William Warburton als geschrift tegen Morgan.

Hoofdstuk 5: Morgan's reacties op zijn critici.

Morgan reageerde publiekelijk op vijf tegenstanders, behalve Joseph Hallett en Samuel Chandler, met name op het genoemde drietal in het tweede en derde deel van *The moral philosopher* (1739-1740). De toon is scherper dan in het eerste deel, en tevens is er meer aandacht voor historische kritiek op de Bijbel. Dankzij de tegenstelling tussen Paulus en Petrus is Morgan met recht en reden een voorloper genoemd van de protestantse Tübinger School van Ferdinand Christian Baur, waar de Paulinische, universalistische tendens in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van het Nieuwe Testament wordt gesteld tegenover de Petrinische, judaïstische tendens.

Hoofdstuk 6: *Physico-Theology*

De *Physico-Theology* is niet het vierde deel van de *Moral philosopher*, zoals beweerd door Leslie Stephen. In zijn *Physico-Theology* (1741) stelt Morgan dat God handelt door natuurwetten, zonder in te grijpen met wonderen. Daarmee grijpt Morgan terug op de kritische kijk op wonderen, die bij alle deïsten zichtbaar is. De *Physico-Theology* kreeg beduidend minder aandacht in de pers dan *The moral philosopher*.

Hoofdstuk 7: Reacties na Morgan's dood en in het buitenland

Door zijn dood in Januari 1743 wist Morgan niet dat hij een plaats had gekregen in de jongste editie van de *Dunciad* van Alexander Pope. Veel negatieve aandacht kreeg *The moral philosopher* in Nederland, Duitsland en Amerika. Het deïsme was trouwens niet dood na 1740. Het flakkerde steeds weer op in pamfletten, discussies en roman literatuur, en werd ook steeds weer bestreden.

Hoofdstuk 8: Morgan als voorloper van een stroming die het Oude Testament verwerpt.

Morgan was een voorloper van onder anderen Johann Semler en Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, die het Oude Testament van minder waarde achtten. Twee belangrijke kerkhistorici in het twintigste-eeuwse Duitsland, Adolf von Harnack en Emanuel Hirsch, hebben Morgan daarvoor geprezen. In de jongste tijd is door de visie van Notger Slenczka de strijd rond de canonieke status van het Oude Testament in de christelijke theologie weer opgelaaid.

Conclusies:

Morgan noemde zichzelf vanaf 1737 een Christelijke Deïst. Met dit etiket doelde hij op de morele waarheid en rechtvaardigheid die door Jezus Christus was gepredikt. Hij kan zeggen: 'I am a Christian, and at the same time a Deist or, if you please, this is my Christian Deism' Voor Morgan was er geen tegenstelling tussen Christen en Deïst. Hij maakte een scherp onderscheid tussen de twee Testamenten en tussen de apostel Paulus en Petrus. Paulus preekte een nieuwe leer, het tegenovergestelde van Mozes en de profeten. Met andere deïsten heeft Morgan de afkeer van wonderen en openbaring gemeen, zonder zich veel met hen in te laten. Morgan is ook radicaler in de morele kritiek op het Oude Testament dan overige deïsten. Hij was in het algemeen een voorloper van de historisch-kritische benadering van de Bijbel en in het bijzonder van de protestantse Tübinger School. Tevens moet gezegd worden dat anti-Joodse gevoelens bij de latere Morgan nogal eens bij hem leiden tot anti-Semitische uitspraken.

Al met al was hij een complex en veelzijdig figuur in de achttiende-eeuwse Verlichting. Hij was de eerste en voorlopig de enige die zo publiekelijk de morele navolging van Christus koppelde aan het deïsme. Het Christendom verloor daarbij haar Joodse wortels, en Morgan kreeg de brede falanx van de christelijke orthodoxie in Engeland en daar buiten over zich heen.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Jan van den Berg (The Hague, 1951) received his pre-University education in The Hague (Gymnasium Bèta; diploma 1969). From 1969 till 1977 he studied Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam (principal subject: Old Testament studies), receiving his Master diploma in 1977.

He started his professional career as teacher of Religion at the Secondary School 'Melanchthon' in Rotterdam where he worked from 1977 till 1983.

In 1983 he was sent out by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to teach Old Testament studies at the post-graduate School for Theology of the Methodist University of São Paulo in Brazil. During the following years, up till 1989, he was also Minister of the Dutch Protestant Church in São Paulo.

After his return to Europe he became Minister of the Protestant Church in Oss in the Netherlands from 1990 till 1994. Finally, from 1995 till 2016, he was Minister of the Protestant Church in Brasschaat (Belgium).

In 2011 he was accepted as an external PhD researcher at Leiden University, working on a dissertation on the eighteenth-century Christian Deist Thomas Morgan under the supervision of Prof Ernestine van der Wall and dr Jan Wim Buisman.

He retired in 2016, and is living in Ekeren (Belgium).

