

# The Survival of a Fitting Quotation

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## Introduction

This is the story of a famous quotation and the environments in which it has adapted and survived. To the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the story would seem to begin in the year 1939 when the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published. A contributing author of that text used a quotation to head his chapter. He attributed the quotation to a man named Herbert Spencer, presumably the 19<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher, evolutionist, and sociologist:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”<sup>1</sup>

In this context, the author was trying to challenge “the mental attitudes of many alcoholics when the subject of religion, as a cure, is first brought to their attention.”<sup>2</sup> In later editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1955, 1976, 2002), this author’s chapter was replaced, but the Spencer quotation is preserved in an appendix to encourage people to keep an open mind about the religious or spiritual remedy that *Alcoholics Anonymous* prescribes for its members.

Since 1939, over twenty million copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous* have been printed, and with each copy, another copy of this quotation attributed to Herbert Spencer. The quotation has since been used by a variety of authors. A variation has even appeared in one dictionary of quotations. On the Internet, new variations multiply and mutate. By now, the quotation is famous, and has made the nearly forgotten Herbert Spencer famous in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for saying it.

But Herbert Spencer never wrote or said anything resembling this quotation.

It is derived from a Christian apologetic work by the 18<sup>th</sup> century British theologian William Paley. The variations of wording that have come down through the past two centuries only bear a skeletal resemblance to Paley’s original meaning and form.

In *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794), William Paley wrote:

“The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more especially of men of rank and learning in it, is resolved into a principle which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever, viz. contempt prior to examination.”<sup>3</sup>

In this context, Paley was trying to give reasons why the Christian faith was rejected by the ancient Greeks and Romans. He was trying to boil down the cause of their non-belief to a single principle.

Eighty-five years later, a Canadian named Rev. William H. Poole argued that the Anglo-Saxon race is actually descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel. On the title page of *Anglo-Israel or, The British Nation: The Lost Tribes of Israel* (1879) Poole attributes the following to Dr. Paley:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is, contempt prior to examination.”<sup>4</sup>

Rev. Poole may not have been the author who reconstructed Paley’s words to give us this variation of the quotation, but this is the earliest instance of it I was able to find.

The earliest attribution to Herbert Spencer I found was in 1931 by two British homeopaths. One of the homeopaths uses a variation of the quotation that is identical to the one used in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Misquotations and misattributions like this are fairly common, and actually make up a significant portion of the canon of famous quotations.

For instance, Voltaire never wrote some of his most famous words: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” Voltaire died in 1778, but this quotation dates from 1906. It was written by a biographer, S.G. Tallentyre, in her book *The Friends of Voltaire*. In 1935 she explained in a letter to the New York Times that the words were not Voltaire’s. She was trying to describe Voltaire’s attitude, but did not mean to suggest that Voltaire had used those exact words. She explained that they “are rather a paraphrase of Voltaire’s words in the *Essay on Tolerance* – ‘Think for yourselves and let others enjoy the privilege to do so too.’”<sup>5</sup>

Some misquotations are so-called “improvements” made by authors who like the idea in a quotation, or the kernel of an idea, and so they sharpen up the wording to make it more useful or pithy. This is the case with the Paley quotation. The problem of the misattribution to Herbert Spencer may never be solved. It could be nothing more than a blunder in copying the quotation, or it could be that that whoever did it preferred Spencer’s name to Paley’s.

It is impossible to trace a clear and contiguous lineage for this quotation. However, it is possible to identify recurring themes in the sources which use it. These themes suggest that the sources may have had a common original source, or that they quoted amongst themselves. More broadly speaking, the themes identify "environments" in which the quotation survived.

I have chosen the phrase "alternative knowledge" as the most general of these environments. By alternative knowledge I mean subjects that are outside the mainstream, but are usually being presented as "special knowledge" that challenges the established order. Among these subjects are fringe religion, occultism, and unorthodox healing. I will

treat each of these more specifically in the discussion of each source, and I will draw relationships between them.

Some of the movements may not be considered “alternative” in today’s world. The point is that they were at the time these works were written, and they speak from the point of view of an alternative voice asserting itself. It is not my intention to comment as to the validity or invalidity of any of these movements. My goal is to attempt to trace a lineage and to identify some themes that can be generalized toward that goal.

I have divided this paper into two major sections.

The first will follow the history of the quotation as I have found it attributed to William Paley, beginning with Paley’s original and a brief analysis of its historical context and meaning. By giving an account of my survey of Paley’s complete works, I will prove that Paley never wrote the quotation exactly as we have it. Some author after Paley extracted his words from context, reworded his phrases, and added a phrase to give us the structure of the quotation as it has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The second section will follow the history of the quotation as I have found it attributed to Herbert Spencer. Having proved that Paley is the progenitor of the quotation, I will prove that Spencer never quoted Paley. I will give a detailed account of my own survey of Spencer’s complete works and his “unpublished” letters and articles. I will also attempt to end a rumor that the quotation is from Spencer’s *Principles of Biology*. The remainder of the paper will follow the survival of the quotation to the advent of the Internet, and will discuss some of the effects of its widespread acceptance as the words of Herbert Spencer.

Throughout both sections I will also examine other spurious quotations or outright misquotations encountered along the way as it seems authors who use one misquotation are likely to use others.

Most of the variations and uses of the quotation I highlight in this paper are taken from books. I found most of these books on web pages where the books were reviewed or quoted.

Though I have found most of the sources through Internet research, I do believe that they represent a good sample of the variety of uses of the quotation in literature through time. It may appear that I have intentionally sought unusual sources because so many of them deal in bizarre topics. But these books represent all of the sources I was able to find.

Granted, the Internet permits anyone to publish just about any wild or entertaining idea they want. But the Internet is also loaded with academic material, mainstream religious writing, full text of important historical works, etc. Considering such a quotable quotation as this by names like William Paley and Herbert Spencer, we should expect to see the quotation used in a variety of contexts on the Internet. We do, though most of these contexts take us into some unusual territory. I believe there is a reason for this.

The major thesis of this paper is that the quotation has survived mostly in obscure literature that often presents “alternative knowledge,” that is, ideas that are outside the mainstream and which challenge the established order. These are usually ideas that cannot be proved and in many cases ultimately require faith. Most authors who use the quotation are using it for exactly these reasons. They understand that they are challenging orthodoxy, or just plain asking readers to accept something that will be difficult to believe. The quotation lends itself to this sort of use. It begs for investigation, or examination. So the sources I have found are from exactly the sort of environments in which we should find the quotation lurking. What may appear to be a liability of the Internet turned out to be a key to tracing the lineage. If we had to rely on mainstream literature, this would not have been possible.

If there is a weakness in my evidence it is that I had to rely on a small sample of sources that use the quotation, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, I believe this paper gives a good framework for what further research may reveal about this quotation in coming years. The thematic connections between the available sources are not merely coincidental.

When I began drafting this paper, Paley’s *Evidences of Christianity* was not available in a searchable format online. By the time I printed the final, the portion of *Evidences* that contains the original quotation started appearing in Google search results. Over the next few years the Internet may continue to produce early sources for this quotation which will help build a more definite lineage.

Will the results of this research render this quotation unusable? It is not rightly attributed to either Paley or Spencer. We also have a growing selection of variations to pick from, none of which can be said to be more valid than the next. Even if we could be sure that we had identified the person who had first “improved” upon Paley’s words, could we ethically attribute the quotation to that author without also crediting Paley. An anonymous attribution without some mention of Paley would be equally flawed.

Still, I suspect that this quotation and its attribution to Spencer will find a way to survive what follows.

### William Paley (1743-1805)

William Paley was born in 1743 at Peterborough, England. In 1763 he graduated as Senior Wrangler from Christ’s College, Cambridge. From 1766 to 1776 he was lecturing at Christ’s College on metaphysics, ethics, and the Greek Testament. He would spend the remainder of his life as a clergyman, father, and author of textbooks, earning the position of Archdeacon of Carlisle and an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from Cambridge. He died in 1805. His major works were widely read in England, the United States, and Canada. They would remain part of the curriculum at Cambridge well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

In order to place the quotation in its original context, both historical and philosophical, it will be helpful to give a brief overview of some relevant points in Paley's three major works which make up his system of philosophy.

***The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy (1785)***

Paley defined virtue as “the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.”<sup>7</sup> These were not Paley's own words. Though he did not give their source in *Moral Philosophy*, he borrowed them verbatim from Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle.<sup>8</sup>

By “everlasting” Paley was referring to “everlasting life” – the Christian reward following death. Paley believed that this expectation of a “future state of reward and punishment”<sup>9</sup> had to be the motive for moral conduct.<sup>10</sup>

With man's “everlasting *happiness*” as the ultimate goal of moral conduct, Paley had set up a basic utilitarian ethic. He is credited with paving the way for secular utilitarianism, namely Jeremy Bentham. Leslie Stephen barbed, “Bentham is Paley *minus* a belief in hellfire.”<sup>11</sup>

***Natural Theology, or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature (1802)***

The full title of this book gives a good basic definition of natural theology. The basic argument can be found in early Greek writings and was later absorbed by Christianity. It is the “argument from design” which holds that things in nature are designed to fulfill a specific purpose, and therefore must have a Designer. A famous example is the eye. It is designed for seeing. Its design implies a designer. And that designer must be a benevolent Creator.<sup>12</sup>

Paley may be most famous today for his “watchmaker argument” which opens *Natural Theology*. He uses the analogy of finding a watch in nature:

“...when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive...that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose...that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are...a different size...placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it.”<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, so should we interpret natural phenomenon. As the watch must have a watchmaker with intent, so does nature have a Creator, and we can learn some specific

things about the Creator by studying nature. Paley argued that the specifics of the matter represented the Christian god.

Like other Enlightenment theologians Paley, believed that his religion could withstand scientific scrutiny, in fact that his religion was proved by science.

### *A View of the Evidences of Christianity (1794)*

But natural theology was not a justification for faith, especially for a passionate believer like Paley. Revelation was the real stuff of faith.<sup>14</sup>

In *Evidences of Christianity*, Paley argued that the miracles reported in the New Testament are historically accurate and that they establish the truth of the Christian revelation. I will follow Paley's general argument through *Evidences* up to his use of the "contempt prior to examination" quotation.

In *Part I: On the Direct Historical Evidence of Christianity* he builds a case for two major propositions, in his own words:

I. That there is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

II. That there is *not* satisfactory evidence, that persons professing to be original witnesses of other miracles, in their nature as certain as these are, have ever acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief of those accounts.<sup>15</sup>

In *Part II* he gives various *Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity*.

Finally, the "contempt prior to examination" quotation appears in the context of *Part III: A Brief Consideration of Some Popular Objections*. One of the objections to Christianity he challenges is the "Rejection of Christianity" which he describes:

"We acknowledge that the Christian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce a universal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extensive success, is called the *rejection* of

the Christian history and miracles; and has been thought by some to form a strong objection to the reality of the facts which the history contains.”<sup>16</sup>

Paley proceeds to argue that Christianity was rejected by these ancient peoples due to certain prejudices of their own, rather than due to any shortcoming of the early Christians or Christianity per se.

He divides his argument into two parts, first as concerns the rejection of Christianity by the Jews, and second as concerns the rejection of Christianity by “Heathen nations.” I am including the entire chapter on *Rejection of Christianity* as Appendix A of this paper for those who wish to read Paley’s entire argument.

As for the Jews he tells us that even though many of them were there to witness the miracles, they could not perceive that the miracles proved that Jesus was the messiah because “their understandings [were] governed by strong prejudices.”<sup>17</sup>

Paley tells us that two things informed their prejudice. One was their “expectation of a Messiah of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jesus bespoke him to be.” The other was that they believed that the so-called miracles were actually “supernatural effects” produced by demons.<sup>18</sup>

As for the rejection of Christianity by the Gentiles, the Greeks and Romans, he opens with the quotation:

“The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more especially of men of rank and learning in it, is resolved into a principle which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever, viz. contempt prior to examination. The state of religion amongst the Greeks and Romans, had a natural tendency to induce this disposition. Dionysius Halicarnassensis remarks, that there were six hundred different kinds of religions or sacred rites exercised at Rome. The superior classes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Christianity was included in the number, without inquiry into its separate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretensions?”<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to say that Christianity “had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice” as they were inclined to take an interest in philosophical argument and discussion. “It mixed with no politics. It produced no fine writers. It contained no curious speculations.” It was a system that was foreign and unrelated to anything they were usually preoccupied with. Christianity also had the disadvantage of being connected to Judaism against which they had a strong bias.<sup>20</sup>



He gives several other minor reasons why the Gentiles rejected Christianity, including a prejudice “against any thing that *originates* with the vulgar and illiterate.”<sup>21</sup>

He ends his argument with an assertion that this same “antecedent contempt” which accounts for their rejection of Christianity “accounts also for their *silence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it; they would have given their reasons.”<sup>22</sup> Certain ancient Romans had the opportunity to say more about Christianity, but didn’t. Among these was Tacitus, who dismissed Christianity as a “pernicious superstition.” Tacitus’s failure to say more is “strong proof how little he knew, or concerned himself to know about the matter.”<sup>23</sup>

In his summary observations of Tacitus’s dismissal of Christianity, he concludes:

“That this contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greatest faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greatest faculties of mind, are not the most subject to it. Such men feel themselves seated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets wasting their idle strength upon one another, with the common disdain of the absurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt, than almost any other disposition, to produce hasty and contemptuous, and, by consequence, erroneous judgments, both of persons and opinions.”<sup>24</sup>

He does not say anything about ignorance in connection with the principle, and no where in any of his writings anything about “everlasting ignorance.”

Paley closes by saying he “think[s] it by no means unreasonable to suppose, that the Heathen public, especially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two classes; those who despised Christianity beforehand, and those who received it.”<sup>25</sup> He adds that the “Heathen adversaries of Christianity” also dismissed the miracles in the same way the Jews did, that they were produced by demons.<sup>26</sup>

In 1794 William Paley was defending an orthodoxy that was gradually coming under increasing attack by skeptical philosophers like David Hume. In particular it was Hume’s essay against miracles in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) in which he identified numerous fallacies in the arguments of natural theologians. *Evidences of Christianity* was in large part a response to Hume.<sup>27</sup> Paley’s criticism of the Gentiles is a historical criticism of an orthodoxy that would not receive the “alternative knowledge” of Christianity, but it is also a general commentary on contemporary “men of the greatest faculties of mind.” This may have been a shot at what he perceived as Hume’s personal shortcomings.

In all of the sources reviewed in this paper, the authors who use the misquotation of Paley are generally asserting alternative knowledge. The assertions take the forms of challenging orthodoxy as well as presenting ideas that are outside the mainstream.

## How the Words Changed

So how did this, written in 1794...

“The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more especially of men of rank and learning in it, is resolved into a principle which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever, *viz.* contempt prior to examination.”

...become this by the year 1879...

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is contempt prior to examination.”

One possibility is that Paley paraphrased himself on some other occasion. I have surveyed his complete works, and did not find any variation of the quotation or any other use of the phrase “contempt prior to examination” outside of the chapter on *The Rejection of Christianity in Evidences*.

Part of my survey was done electronically. *Moral Philosophy* and *Natural Theology* are searchable online.<sup>28</sup> Paley was not a prolific author, and so the remainder of the task was easily accomplished. *The Works of William Paley* is compressed into a single 604-page volume.<sup>29</sup> I compared the contents of this volume with the contents of other editions of his complete works and with holdings at the British Library and Library of Congress. I didn't find any stray works of Paley.

One likely place that Paley may have paraphrased himself would be in his many sermons. These sermons are included in the compressed *Works of William Paley*. I compared these collected sermons with other editions of his complete works by other authors. There were no differences. The same sermons have been republished again and again.<sup>30</sup>

Paley's son Edmund authored a biography of his father, *An Account of the Life and Writings of William Paley*. The biography stands as the first volume of Edmund Paley's edition of his father's complete works. It contains many excerpts from William Paley's lecture notes, sermons, and personal letters. There is no mention of the quotation anywhere in his son's book.<sup>31</sup>

William Paley wrote this quotation in one place. The modified form came from the pen of a Paley admirer. I believe the alteration was deliberate and carefully thought out. It was not the result of a poorly memorized quotation and faulty reproduction, as so many misquotations are.

It may be helpful to speculate some of the thinking that may have been behind the transformation. I don't regard this exercise as necessary to my thesis that Paley is the originator of this quotation, but regard it as illustrative of the quotation's development into a form that would survive in secondary sources to modern times.

To begin, we are probably talking about a religious writer who would have taken a special interest in Paley's works. The author liked the point Paley was making in *Evidences*, and wanted to use it in the context of his own work. But in order to generalize Paley's point the writer had to eliminate the specific topic to which Paley was speaking. Thus, the writer was left with the following fragment:

“...a principle which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever, *viz.* contempt prior to examination.”

This fragment needed to be strengthened. It would need to become a complete sentence, and any stylistic awkwardness and erudition would need to go. Thus, the phrase “in my judgment” was omitted, and the Latin abbreviation “*viz.*” was translated to “that is” or “that principle is”:

“There is a principle which will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever – that principle is contempt prior to examination.”

For the sake of clarity, and sharp delivery, the phrase “which will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever” was made less abstract, and a positive rhythm started to take shape.

When a judge “bars evidence,” it is rendered inefficacious. An argument requires proofs, and is rendered inefficacious by sufficient “proofs against.” Thus:

“There is a principle which is a bar against any evidence, and which is proof against any argument – that principle is contempt prior to examination.”

But for this extraction to take on the tone of a moral injunction or proverbial admonition, it needed a little punch. Everlasting life is built into the system of rewards and punishments of the Christian faith. “Everlasting happiness” in a life hereafter was the motive for moral conduct in Paley's *Moral Philosophy*. The phrase “which cannot fail to

keep a man in everlasting ignorance” was added to Paley’s words to warn against everlasting ignorance of something specific, probably something to do with God.

The phrase added cadence, and insured that the quotation would not be misinterpreted as meaning that “contempt prior to examination” is a virtuous way to overcome any argument or any evidence.

“There is a principle which is a bar against any evidence, which is proof against any argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance – that principle is contempt prior to examination.”

This process may have passed through the hands of several authors before it was complete, but something like it happened.

### Attributions to Paley

The following several authors have all used variations of the quotation and attributed it to Paley. I will take them chronologically and give descriptions of their general arguments or the movements they represent. My purpose is to draw out some of the themes and similarities that suggest that these authors may have been quoting from a common original source or from each other. This will sketch a very rough lineage for the quotation as attributed to William Paley.

#### **1879: *Anglo-Israel or, The British Nation: The Lost Tribes of Israel* by Rev. William H. Poole**

On the title page of this book, Rev. Poole juxtaposes two quotations which impart a very similar admonition:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is, contempt prior to examination.’ –Dr. Paley

A greater than Paley has said: - ‘He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly, and a shame unto him.’ -- Proverbs xviii. 13.”<sup>32</sup>

The proverb is easily verified and possibly informed the rewording of Paley’s original. Whereas Paley’s original did not warn against “everlasting ignorance” or any other consequence for “contempt prior to examination,” the proverb does warn against folly and shame. This may have suggested something about how Paley’s words could be restructured to give a more proverbial sounding quotation. Thus, Rev. Poole could be the

author of this famous variation of the quotation, but it's impossible to draw a firm conclusion about this.

Rev. Poole gives no source for the Paley quotation, and does not discuss Paley anywhere in this book. The book is a lecture on the subject of Anglo-Israelism. Ten years later, in 1889, he used the two quotations again on the title page of a revised and much enlarged edition of this book, *Anglo-Israel or The Saxon Race Proved to Be the Lost Tribes of Israel, in Nine Lectures*.<sup>33</sup>

The only difference in Poole's variation of the quotation in 1889 was the omission of a comma. "This principle is, contempt prior to examination," became: "This principle is contempt prior to examination."

Rev. Poole was a Canadian who was a very active proponent of the Anglo-Israel movement. Anglo-Israelism, also called British-Israelism was a religious movement that began in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Its basic belief is a revision of history. In 722 B.C.E. the Assyrians invaded the kingdom of Israel. The ten tribes who ruled the northern kingdom were dispersed, and for the most part lost to the historical record. According to Anglo-Israel, the ten lost tribes migrated to the European continent. The tribe of Ephraim settled in the British Isles.<sup>34</sup>

The corollary of this descent is that people of British descent, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, are the authentic heirs of all of God's promises to the Jews as revealed by the Old Testament prophets.

British-Israelites took a special interest in another movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century called pyramidology. This interest in pyramids is a thematic current which runs through some of the sources that follow. Pyramidology, also known as pyramidism, argued that the Great Pyramid of Giza was a key to biblical prophecy. By measuring the pyramid and studying its geometry, they could decipher the true date of the return of Christ, the return of the Jewish nation to Israel, and other important events in biblical prophecy especially concerning the End Times. The Great Pyramid held all these secrets, and more. Pyramidologists noted that the "pyramid inch" deviated from the British inch by a mere one-thousandth of a British inch. The pyramid inch was derived by dividing the length of one side of the base of the pyramid by British inches. The remainder was then divided into one-thousandths of inches. To them this was evidence that whoever built the pyramid, possibly Noah, later migrated to England and brought this ancient unit of measurement with him.<sup>35</sup>

Rev. Poole acknowledges many well known proponents of both pyramidism and Anglo-Israelism in the opening of his 1879 *Anglo-Israel*. His lectures in the 1889 edition include a chapter which discusses the symbols used in the Great Seal of the United States. The title of the chapter is *The American Ensign and Official Seal, or, The Eagle, The Stars, and the Pyramid, One of the Ancient Banners of Lost Israel Now Found in the Possession of the United States*.

**1894: *Brother of the Third Degree***  
**by William Lincoln Garver**

As an epigraph to the opening of this novel, Garver uses two quotations:

"'There is a principle, proof against all argument, a bar against all progress, and which if persisted in cannot but keep the mind in everlasting ignorance-and that is, contempt prior to examination.' – Paley.

'Accept nothing that is unreasonable; discard nothing as unreasonable without proper examination.' – Buddha."<sup>36</sup>

Garver has obviously modified both of these quotations. The quotation attributed to the Buddha was modified with the phrase “without proper examination” to match the one attributed to Paley. A Google search reveals that Garver may be the only source for that wording of anything the Buddha may have said. Though the Buddha did say things about being reasonable, I was unable to find this exact quotation.

Garver’s book was published in Chicago in 1894, just five years after Rev. Poole’s book was published in Detroit. It is nonetheless possible that Garver was quoting from another source that used yet another variation of the quotation.

*Brother of the Third Degree* is a novel which tells the story of a man who is initiated into a secret occult order. It is the story of his *progress* up the several degrees of the order. It is the story of the development of the human mind beyond the confines of the body through occult disciplines. It was in this milieu of thought that Garver chose to create his own variation of the quotation.

There are some characters and legends that come up in *Brother of the Third Degree* that also occur in Masonic and occult literature. An important Masonic symbol appears on the cover of the book. It is the symbol of the crossed compass and square.

There seem to be two basic versions of the history of Freemasonry. One attempts to trace an authentic history which remains incomplete. The other picks up with a blend of legends where the first leaves off. It is this legendary occult version of Masonic origins which ties in with the developing themes in the quotation’s lineage.

It’s nearly impossible to put together a coherent account of Masonic legend because the stories vary from author to author, and there is much disagreement. George Steinmetz is the author of *Freemasonry: Its Hidden Meaning*. He uses a variation of the quotation and attributes it to Herbert Spencer. We will visit Steinmetz’s use of the quotation in a later section of this paper, but for now, Steinmetz provides a clear version of Masonic legend which ties in nicely with the development of the themes we are investigating:

“We are told that Masonry was originated by King Solomon at the building of his Temple. However, it is a well established fact that Masonry is an ancient esoteric philosophy of life, ancient even in King Solomon’s day.

“This philosophy has been traced back to the ‘Lost Continent of Atlantis.’ The Great Masters, the “Noahs,” of the time, warned of the impending doom of the continent, assembled the ‘worthy and well qualified’ of their followers and migrated to Africa. They took with them the truths of that philosophy and re-established it in their new dwelling place.”

“Regardless of the origin of the modern lodge, or of the name “Freemason,” we can, after freeing the symbolism of modern adaptations, discern in Freemasonry the outline of the teachings of the ancient mysteries of Egypt. ONE SUPREME BEING—IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL—THE THREE FOLD COMPOSITION OF MAN...”<sup>37</sup>

Steinmetz devotes a large portion of his book to explaining the meaning of occult symbols used in Freemasonry and their mystical significance.

Variations of the story say that the Freemasons eventually found their way to Scotland hundreds of years ago where the first Masonic lodge is thought to exist. Some say that the Holy Grail is hidden there.

Comte de Saint Germain is a legendary figure of 18<sup>th</sup> century France who is said to have had a profound influence on Freemasonry, even founding some of its rites and orders. By one account he actually founded Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism (also called Egyptian Freemasonry) in England while assuming the identity of Francis Bacon. His origins were unknown, and he vanished from history in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was said to have been ageless, and some people believe that he is still living. He figures into versions of Masonic legend, and he appears in *Brother of the Third Degree* as a high initiate of the secret order in which the main character is progressing.<sup>38</sup>

At one stage of his progress, one of the high adepts, speaking of the origins of the order, explains that they “left the lost Atlantis for a new home in the land of the Pyramids.”<sup>39</sup>

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a large occult movement across Europe as well as in the United States. Madame Blavatsky founded her Theosophical Society which studied all manner of occult and Oriental mysticism. Blavatsky herself claimed to be a reincarnated citizen of Atlantis, and she wrote about the Atlantean origins of ancient Egypt and the mystical powers of the pyramids. Blavatsky’s writings were required reading for the main character in *Brother of the Third Degree*.

There's little doubt that there was some cross-reading of material from all sorts of fringe religious movements by people who were interested in the occult. Anglo-Israel pyramidology material may have been included in this literary milieu.

**1912: Zion's Watchtower**  
**a periodical publication of Jehovah's Witnesses**

This small pamphlet does not attribute the quotation to Paley. I am including it in this section rather than in the section on Herbert Spencer because it fits nicely into the religious context of the sources that attribute the quotation to Paley.

The variation is a wild rewording and appears in the context of a mail order advertisement for *Pastor Russell's Scripture Studies* in six volumes:

“ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST OBSERVERS  
AND CRITICS ONCE SAID:

There is one thing which constitutes an effectual barrier  
against all progress; which holds out a restraining hand  
against the onward march of all attainment; which damps  
the glow of study and research; which blocks the channel to  
an endless succession of happinesses; and that thing is--

‘CONDEMNATION WITHOUT INVESTIGATION’”<sup>40</sup>

This is a good example of how misquotations can be taken a leap farther away from the original. It puts the leap from Paley's original to Rev. Poole's variation into some perspective. Here the word “progress” is used to replace the word “information.” This could be coincidental, or it may point to a common source.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were founded by a man named Charles T. Russell (1852-1916) who got his religious beginnings as a member of the Second Adventists. Soon he had his own group of followers. He disagreed with some of the Adventist ideas and decided to form his own movement, The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, which later adopted the name, Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>41</sup>

Adventists and Watchtower Society members shared a strong belief in their ability to predict the return of Christ. This was an event which they expect to happen in their own lifetimes. Scripture was their oracle rather than the Great Pyramid as in the case of the pyramidologists and British-Israelites.

Though I found no direct links between British-Israelism and Adventism or the Watchtower Society, the similar interests of these movements could have put their members in touch with some of the same religious reading.



**1950: Lent, Good Friday, and Easter**  
**by Ralph F. Becker**

There are no occult themes in this short pamphlet, but Becker may have found the Paley quotation in Rev. Poole's book or in a book that was quoting Rev. Poole. Becker is taking an extreme Protestant sectarian view of the religious holidays of Lent, Good Friday, and Easter. He argues that these holidays should not be celebrated by Christians because of their Pagan origins. This is in step with the official position of Jehovah's Witnesses on these holidays.

Though he may have not accepted Christian Identity himself, Becker's extreme Protestant leanings in general could have given him some exposure to British-Israel, Christian Identity, Adventist, or Watchtower literature. Here is the quotation in the context of Becker's argument:

“One of the greatest of all abominations to God is false worship. Romanism is the extreme ultra-development of Satanic subtlety in worship. For she [Roman Catholicism] is very Babylon in idolatry under the disguise and name of Christ!

“Christian! How then can you take part in her sins? How can you keep the feasts of paganism and join its unholy corruption to the Wonderful Name of Christ?

“Now, there may be some who read this who will be disposed to utterly condemn what is written in this tract. Let them consider here the words of the great Dr. Paley: “There is a principle which is a bar against all information; which is proof against all argument, which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is ‘CONTEMPT prior to EXAMINATION’.”

“However I am sure that every honest soul will be inclined to search himself and try his ways as he reads on, and if he is guilty of observing paganism will become sorrowful and say to Christ in tears ‘Is it I?’ (Mark 14:19). Only the unsound and unreal resent searching.”<sup>42</sup>

There are several grammatical differences from Rev. Poole's variation, but Becker even attributes the quotation to a *Dr.* Paley, as does Rev. Poole. Furthermore Becker refers to Paley as “the *great* Dr. Paley.” On Rev. Poole's title page Paley's comparative “greatness” is implied by Poole's use of the phrase “A greater than Paley has said:” to introduce the proverb.

It seems unlikely that a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century American would know who this Dr. Paley was. The title of “doctor” was used in deference to William Paley's Doctorate of Divinity by some 19<sup>th</sup> century author, perhaps Rev. Poole who may have even had Paley as required

reading as part of his own education. Paley's textbooks fell out of use later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Becker was merely following suit. He used the same attribution as his source, but probably had no idea who Dr. Paley was. If Rev. Poole was not his source, Becker probably inherited the quotation from a lineage that can be traced to Poole.

**1991: The Highgate Vampire**  
**by Sean Manchester**

Bishop Sean Manchester is a vampirologist and exorcist. In this second edition of his book, he gives his firsthand account of how he exorcized a contagion of vampirism from London's Highgate Cemetery. His introduction opens with the following epigraph:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is contempt prior to examination.” – William Paley<sup>43</sup>

Herbert Spencer is buried at Highgate Cemetery, not far from the grave of his dear friend, Mary Evans (George Eliot). Visiting the graves of these 19<sup>th</sup> century luminaries may have become overshadowed by the tourist interest in Manchester's vampire story.

Sean Manchester is a bishop of the Apostolic Church of the Holy Grail which was founded at Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea, a New Testament character who was a wealthy disciple of Christ. Joseph took Christ's body following the crucifixion and placed him in a tomb. Nothing more is said of Joseph's life after Christ's interment. But legend picks up where the biblical narrative leaves off. Joseph is said to have landed at Glastonbury along with other early Christians. He brought the Holy Grail with him, and his landing marked the arrival of Christianity in Britain as well as the foundation of Bishop Manchester's church.<sup>44</sup> This story plays into Arthurian legend and the quest for the Holy Grail by the Knights of the Round Table.

I tried to contact Sean Manchester to learn of his source for the quotation. I was only able to communicate with a liaison who told me that the Bishop was too busy to reply personally, but that the Bishop wished to relay that the quotation may have come from Paley's *Moral Philosophy*. I wrote back explaining that I had already determined that it wasn't in *Moral Philosophy* or any of Paley's other works, and asked if the Bishop could perhaps recall a secondary source in which he may have found the quotation. I did not receive a second reply.

Sean Manchester's variation and the variation that Rev. Poole used in *Anglo-Israel (1889)* are identical. Combining this legend of the origins of Christianity in the land of the Anglo-Saxons with the legend of Anglo-Israel we might have a fascinating tale of how the ten lost tribes of Israel learned of the Christian revelation. Considering the themes involved and the verbatim quotation, it's reasonable to conclude that if Bishop Manchester did not get the quotation directly from Rev. Poole's book, he received it from

the same lineage of secondary sources. Manchester does not attribute the quotation to Dr. Paley as do Poole and Becker, but deducing that Dr. Paley is William Paley, D.D. requires no more than some basic Internet research skills.

### **Summary of Attributions to Paley**

This concludes my review of authors who attribute the quotation to William Paley. Freemasonry, Anglo-Israelism, Pyramidism, fringe religion, and the occult in general share some overlapping interests. Though we can't be absolutely sure that one author had another as his source, the thematic relationships between these authors' works suggest that this quotation has survived the past two centuries in literature from movements which present alternative knowledge, and that these authors may from time to time been working from common sources.

### Freeing Herbert Spencer

Having proved that William Paley is the progenitor of this quotation, the question remains, "How did this quotation get misattributed to Herbert Spencer?"

An overview of my research on Herbert Spencer will help eliminate the possibility that Spencer himself ever quoted Paley. This interlude is an important discussion of the deductive process in my research, as much as it is a presentation of the preponderance of evidence against Spencer ever having anything to do with this quotation. There is also a rumor that the quotation is from Spencer's *Principles of Biology* that I will eliminate.

I began my research on the assumption that the quotation was probably Spencer's. It was just a matter of finding where he said it. In the space of a year I was satisfied that I had uncovered all but a few remote and unlikely Spencerian sources. At that point the probability that I would find the quotation in Spencer became so small that I decided to try some new Boolean searches on Google. This quickly led me to William Paley.

One of the remarkable things about Herbert Spencer is that he was highly organized and had trustees who took good care of his written material after he died. The work of the researcher is made a lot easier by the availability of these materials, though anyone would be easily daunted by the size and scope of his complete works.

I have access to *The Complete Works of Herbert Spencer* published on CD-ROM by InteLex Corporation in their *Past Masters* series. I compared the contents of the InteLex *Spencer* to listings at the British Public Library, lists of his works by his American publisher D. Appleton & Company, the list given by Spencer's biographer David Duncan, and Spencer's own record of his writings in the pages of his *Autobiography*. The InteLex *Complete Spencer* is as complete Spencer ever compiled. In brief, the contents of the disc are as follows:

*Education: Intellectual, Moral, And Physical* (1860)

*Social Statics (Abridged And Revised),  
Together With The Man Versus The State* (1892)

*A System of Synthetic Philosophy:*

*First Principles (4th edition)* (1898)

*The Principles Of Biology (Revised And Enlarged Edition)* (1898-1899)

*The Principles Of Psychology (3rd edition)* (1880)

*The Principles Of Ethics* (1893)

*The Principles Of Sociology* (1898)

*The Study Of Sociology (9th edition)* (1880)

*The Inadequacy Of "Natural Selection."* (1893-1894)

*Facts And Comments* (1902)

*Various Fragments* (1897)

*Essays: Scientific, Political, And Speculative - 'Library Edition. Containing Seven Essays Not Before Republished And Various Other Additions'.* Three Volumes. (1892)

*Autobiography* (1904)

*Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* by David Duncan (1908)

The disc is fully searchable using Boolean operators. None of the unique word combinations and phrases from the quotation appear anywhere on the disc.

The texts on the disc are among the latest editions of Spencer's works. These late editions include front matter and appendices not found in earlier editions while retaining the earlier material as well. Many of the appendices were first published as articles and letters to popular journals or as pamphlets.

I have compared some of the early editions of his major works with more recent ones, including *Principles of Biology*, *Principles of Psychology*, and *Principles of Sociology*. I also examined *First Principles* and *The Study of Sociology* in their original prepublication serial form. The first edition of *First Principles* (1862) is searchable online on more than one web site. Most of the revisions Spencer made were subtle matters of written style, but substantive omissions in later editions were rare. Substantive additions however were common.

One example of a large omission from a later edition is the entire chapter *The Right to Ignore the State* from *Social Statics* (1851). But this chapter has been republished in

some modern editions, and is also searchable online at The Online Library of Liberty web site (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>) along with several other political essays which were not authorized for republication by Spencer.

There is one major item missing from the IntelLex CD-ROM. That is the eight-volume *Descriptive Sociology* (1873-1881). These volumes are a common omission from most studies of Herbert Spencer. Aside from some brief introductory remarks by Spencer these large volumes are vast tables and charts of ethnographical data that he used as the empirical evidence for his *Principles of Sociology*. I reviewed these books. There is no exposition anywhere in them, and no place for pithy quotation.

Since the quotation does not appear in any of Spencer's major works, the next most likely place for it to exist would be in something Spencer wrote for a periodical but which was never republished. Spencer's close friend, authorized biographer, and trustee, David Duncan, has prepared a thorough list of articles and letters which Spencer wrote to journals, magazines, and newspapers. The list is included in an appendix to Duncan's *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (1908). In it, I count over 100 articles and letters spanning the years 1836 through 1903 which were never republished.

I have exhumed all but 27 of these items. The items I have not reviewed were not available to me in the United States without travel. All of them are available at the British Public Library through their reproduction services. They deal variously with Spencer's earliest writings on architecture, contemporary events, miscellaneous political matters, biological tracts, and correcting false public perceptions of his views.

Many of the remaining articles can be eliminated as candidates which could have contained the quotation based on context alone. One can be eliminated because there is no extant copy of the magazine in which it appeared. Others can be eliminated because Spencer wrote them anonymously. On probabilistic ground alone I find it nearly impossible that Spencer would have quoted Paley in the few obscure items that remain, but there are other reasons to abandon any notion that Spencer would have ever quoted Paley which I will cover shortly. Appendix B of this paper lists of all these remaining articles with descriptions of their content and my contextual reasons for rejecting candidates when I have them.

To check the completeness of David Duncan's list, I searched the indexes of all volumes of several of the periodicals to which Spencer is known to have made contributions, including: *The Zoist*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Popular Science Monthly*, *The Contemporary Review*, and *Nature*. There were a handful of items that were not included in Duncan's list, but they were later included as essays or appendices that were republished, widely read, and are included on the IntelLex CD-ROM. Duncan's list is a rare and wonderful resource. If there are any "lost" works of Spencer, they were probably lost on most contemporaries who would have quoted him.

David Duncan tells us of Spencer's personal correspondence:

“His literary industry was untiring. Not only were his published writings voluminous, but his correspondence was very great. The limit imposed on the writer of this volume has rendered it impossible to reproduce more than a small fraction of his letters.”<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, Spencer's personal correspondence would be a highly unlikely place to find him quoting Paley. It is unlikely that any private letters would have been made public while he was still alive. Any publication of private letters, posthumous or contemporary, probably would have been in autobiographies and biographies of his correspondents. This raises the question of why this quotation as attributed to Spencer cannot be traced even to a good secondary source.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in believing that Spencer would have ever quoted Paley are his admitted and well known lack of reading and his cursory knowledge of major philosophers let alone theologians like Paley. In a letter to Sir Leslie Stephen, dated 2 July 1899, Spencer candidly describes his reading habits and the little he knew of Paley and others:

“When with my uncle, from thirteen to sixteen, my acquirements were limited to Euclid, algebra, trigonometry, mechanics, and the first part of Newton's Principia. To this equipment I never added. During my eight years of engineering life I read next to nothing—even of professional literature. Then as always, I was an impatient reader and read nothing continuously except novels and travels, and of these but little. I am in fact constitutionally idle. I doubt whether during all these years I ever read any serious book for an hour at a stretch. You may judge of my condition with regard to knowledge from the fact that during all my life up to the time *Social Statics* was written, there had been a copy of Locke on my father's shelves which I never read—I am not certain that I ever took it down. And the same holds of all other books of philosophical kinds. I never read any of Bacon's writings, save his essays. I never looked into Hobbes until, when writing the essay on "The Social Organism," I wanted to see the details of his grotesque conception. It was the same with Politics and with Ethics. At the time *Social Statics* was written I knew of Paley nothing more than that he enunciated the doctrine of expediency; and of Bentham I knew only that he was the promulgator of the Greatest Happiness principle. The doctrines of other ethical writers referred to were known by me only through references to them here and there met with. I never then looked into any

of their books; and, moreover, I have never since looked into any of their books. When about twenty-three I happened to get hold of Mill's *Logic*, then recently published, and read with approval his criticism of the Syllogism. When twenty-four I met with a translation of Kant and read the first few pages. Forthwith, rejecting his doctrine of Time and Space, I read no further. My ignorance of ancient philosophical writers was absolute. After *Social Statics* was published (in 1851) I made the acquaintance of Mr. Lewes, and one result was that I read his *Biographical History of Philosophy*.... And, shortly after that (in 1852), a present of Mill's *Logic* having been made to me by George Eliot, I read that through: one result being that I made an attack upon one of his doctrines in the *Westminster*.

“Since those days I have done nothing worth mentioning to fill up the implied deficiencies. Twice or thrice I have taken up Plato's *Dialogues* and have quickly put them down with more or less irritation. And of Aristotle I know even less than of Plato.

“If you ask how there comes such an amount of incorporated fact as is found in *Social Statics*, my reply is that when preparing to write it I read up in those directions in which I expected to find materials for generalisation. I did not trouble myself with the generalisations of others.

“And that indeed indicates my general attitude. All along I have looked at things through my own eyes and not through the eyes of others. I believe that it is in some measure because I have gone direct to Nature, and have escaped the warping influences of traditional beliefs, that I have reached the views I have reached....

“My own course—not intentionally pursued, but spontaneously pursued—may be characterised as little reading and much thinking, and thinking about facts learned at first hand. Perhaps I should add, that my interest all along has been mainly in the science of Life, physical, mental and social. I hold that the study of the science of Life under all its aspects is the true preparation for a teacher of Ethics. And it must be the science of Life as it is conceived now, and not as it was conceived in past times.”<sup>46</sup>

Beatrice Webb, a life-long friend of Spencer, recalls a conversation she had with the biologist and evolutionist Thomas H. Huxley, another close friend of Spencer. She reports that Huxley explained to her:

“Spencer never knew [the theories of his time]. He elaborated his theory [of evolution] from his inner consciousness. He is the most original of thinkers, though he has never invented a new thought. He never reads; merely picks up what will help him to illustrate his theories. He is a great constructor. The form he has given to his gigantic system is entirely original. Not one of the component factors is new, but he has not borrowed them.”<sup>47</sup>

Spencer was plagued by a nervous condition from the age of 35 that would leave him bed ridden for days or weeks. He tells us in several places throughout his *Autobiography* that the attacks would come with mental or physical exertion, characterized by “this feeling in the head which gave warning that something was going wrong.... A disastrous relapse soon followed if I tried to do more.”<sup>48</sup>

“At that time and always afterwards, reading had the same effect as working; no matter what the nature of the reading. During periods of relapse a column of a newspaper would suffice to put my head wrong; and when at my best I could not, after my morning's work, read even a novel for long without suffering. ... Ordinarily my habit was that of taking up a book or periodical for half or three-quarters of an hour in the afternoon. Reading in the evening for that length of that time destroyed part of the rest I ordinarily got. *The implied cutting off from nearly all literature save that which I could utilize, and from a large part of this, was one of the heaviest of my deprivations.*”<sup>49</sup> [emphasis added]

The evidence that the quotation has survived in obscure places makes it even more unlikely that Spencer would have read anything containing it. Moreover, Spencer was an ardent agnostic. He read little theological or religious material.

At long last we can safely abandon the possibility that Herbert Spencer ever had any connection to the quotation that was built around Paley's words. Before considering how the misattribution to Spencer may have happened, there is a rumor that needs to be squashed.



## Rumors

Several weeks after I began my research I discovered a web page devoted to the question of the quotation's origin. The page was created by an A.A. enthusiast on the domain [www.aabibliography.com](http://www.aabibliography.com). I also discovered two Yahoo! Group message boards named *A.A. History Buffs* and *A.A. History Lovers* where there were occasional conversations amongst A.A. members concerning this quotation. Unfortunately, their efforts have created some confusion and rumors about the quotation's origin.

Many A.A. members take a passionate interest in the history of their organization. To some, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is like a bible, and they are curious about Herbert Spencer and the origin of this quotation that appears in their book.

Several of the A.A. enthusiasts state variously that they attempted to read, paid someone to read, or knew of someone who did read all of Spencer's works. The [aabibliography.com](http://www.aabibliography.com) web page also mentions an unsuccessful attempt by the A.A. organization to find the origin of the quotation.

In the A.A. circles online there is a rumor that the quotation is from Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Biology*. But this is absolutely false. There were two editions of *Biology* (Vol. I. – 1864, revised 1898; Vol. II. – 1867, revised 1899). I have perused both. I have also searched the text of the latest edition on the InteLex CD-ROM. The quotation simply never has existed in Spencer's *Biology*.

The researchers who are rumored to have read all of Spencer's works would have collectively uncovered the quotation early on if *Biology* were the source. It is one of the most available of Spencer's works, and one of the most widely studied in his time. Moreover, there are only so many pages in *Biology* that could even feasibly contain the sort of rhetoric we find in that quotation. Both volumes are devoted to a cool exposition and interpretation of biological data.

I don't believe it is necessary to give any more evidence or reason against this rumor. But it may be helpful to offer a theory on how this one got started. There was only one thing I encountered in my research that put the quotation anywhere near *Principles of Biology*.

George Seldes includes a variation of the quotation in his dictionary of quotations *The Great Thoughts* (1960). I believe this rumor was conceived when somebody misread Seldes's *Ibid.* markings. The next full page shows a scanned image of Selde's page in question:

## Herbert Spencer—Oswald Spengler

The Republican form of government is the highest form of government; but because of this it requires the highest type of human nature—a type nowhere at present existing. *Ibid. The Americans.*

The socialist speculation is vitiated by an assumption like that which vitiates the speculations of the “practical” politician. It is assumed that officialism will work as it is intended to work, which it never does.

*Man Versus the State. The Coming Slavery. 1884.*

The machinery of Communism, like existing social machinery, has to be framed out of existing human nature; and the defects of existing human nature will generate in the one the same evils as in the other. The love of power, the selfishness, the injustice, the untruthfulness, which often in comparatively short time bring private organizations to disaster, will inevitably, where their effects accumulate from generation to generation, work evils far greater and less remediable. *Ibid.*

All Socialism involves slavery. *Ibid.*

Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations. *Principles of Biology, 1872.*

Our lives are universally shortened by our ignorance. *Ibid.*

This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called “natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life.” *Ibid.*

There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is a proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is condemnation before investigation.

It can never be pretended that the existing titles to landed property are legitimate. The original deeds were written with the sword, soldiers were the conveyancers, blows were the current coin given in exchange, and for seals, blood. Those who say that “time is a great legaliser” must find satisfactory answers to such questions as—How long does it take for what was originally wrong to become right? At what rate per annum do invalid claims become valid?

## Oswald Spengler

(1880-1936)

*German philosopher, historian*

We have entered upon the age of world wars. It began in the 19th Century and will outlast the present and probably the next. *The Hour of Decision.*

The world economic crisis . . . is not, as the world supposes, the temporary consequence of war, revolution, inflation, and payment of debts. It has been willed. In all essentials it is the product of the deliberate work of the leaders of the proletariat. *Ibid.*

It is from the intellectual “mob”, with the failures from all academic professions, the spiritually unfit and the morally inhibited, at its head, that the gangsters of Liberal and Bolshevist risings are recruited. *Ibid.*

If few can stand a long war without deterioration of soul, none can stand a long peace. *Ibid.*

Let it for once be said outright, though it is a slap in the face for the vulgarity of the age: property is not a vice, but a *gift*, and a gift such as few possess. *Ibid.*

[650]

In the lower left corner of the page, the *Ibid.* markings following the first quotation from *Principles of Biology* are clear, but at the bottom of the page the “condemnation before investigation” quotation appears with little room for an *Ibid.* marking of its own, had it been intended. But Seldes was simply closing his section on Spencer with two quotes for which he had no sources. The second of these no-source quotations appears at the top of the right-hand column on the page.

As I was putting the final touches on this article I was surprised to discover the following discussion between two A.A. members on the usenet group alt.recovery.aa from September 1998. I believe it confirms my suspicions about the genesis of this rumor:

A.A. member #1: “George Seldes attributes it to Spencer, but without source given. It may be from *Principles of Biology*, as the 3 quotes preceding it are from that work. The middle of those 3 is ‘Our lives are universally shortened by our ignorance’, which lends at least some slight weight to that interpretation.”

A.A. member #2: “I rather like the quote listed here as an example: ‘Our lives are universally shortened by our ignorance.’ At least we have a reference to ‘*Principles of Biology*.’ Who’s going to a library to actually verify???”<sup>50</sup>

We don’t have any evidence that Seldes, his contributors, or his editing staff ever verified any of these Spencer quotations. He gives no source for the very last of them (on “landed property”). It is a misquote, or rather a reduction of two lengthy paragraphs from Chapter IX of *Social Statics*.

On page 649 there are other errors. Among them, he incorrectly cites the following quotation’s source as *Social Statics*, but it is actually from *Principles of Ethics*:

“A man’s liberties are none the less aggressed upon because those who coerce him do so in the belief that he will be benefitted[sic].”<sup>51</sup>

There is no reason to believe the attribution to Spencer might be correct simply because the quotation is printed in a dictionary of quotations.

What follows is a history of the quotation as misattributed to Herbert Spencer.

## Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Herbert Spencer is most famous for his phrase “survival of the fittest,” although the phrase is commonly misattributed to Charles Darwin. Spencer used the phrase to mean essentially the same thing as Darwin’s “natural selection.” Spencer’s second most famous quotation is arguably the one that includes the phrase “contempt prior to investigation.”

Because the “contempt prior to investigation” quotation is not Spencer’s, an overview of his life and philosophy might be out of place in this paper, but since the title and the framing of the central thesis borrow from his phrase “survival of the fittest,” it would be good to give some relevant information.

I won’t pretend to do Spencer’s grand and complex system justice in this brief summary. I will merely draw out a few very general points.

Spencer’s first writings on evolution predate Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. His philosophy may be briefly described as a theory of a law of evolution that pervades the universe. Natural selection, or survival of the fittest, was not enough to account for evolution. He identified several physical laws that came into play, and his *Synthetic Philosophy* is an exploration of the effects and direction of these evolutionary laws in biology, psychology, morality, and society.

Politically he was a classical liberal and fierce opponent of socialism. He was a tireless defender of individual rights and a critic of government interference. Metaphysically speaking he was agnostic. His close friend Thomas H. Huxley is credited with coining the term “agnosticism.” Spencer was content to live with an unknowable “Unknown.” The human mind, by nature of the way it knows things, is just not able to know some things.

## Attributions to Spencer

As in the section on Paley, I will take these attributions to Spencer chronologically and give descriptions of their general arguments or the movements they represent. My purpose is to draw out some of the themes that suggest that these authors may have been quoting from a common original source or from each other. This will sketch a very rough lineage for the quotation as attributed to Herbert Spencer.

Here the theme of alternative knowledge continues in unorthodox healing, the religious fringe, and occult mysticism. Alcoholics Anonymous, though once a little known unorthodox movement, has become widely accepted and their book widely published. One of the consequences of this is that the quotation has been widely accepted as Herbert Spencer’s own words. The Internet has also spawned new generations of misquotation.

**1931: *The Homeopathic World* – “Ignorance in High Places”  
article by John Henry Clarke**

John Henry Clarke uses the quotation in the December 1931 issue of *The Homeopathic World: A Popular Journal of Medical, Social, and Sanitary Science*. The article’s title is *Ignorance in High Places*. It is a strong defense and attack on some anti-homeopathic comments of Sir Farquhar Buzzard which were delivered to the students at Guys Hospital earlier that year. Clarke writes:

“Fortunately those who are open-minded and intelligent enough to investigate for themselves in an unbiased manner find that Homoeopathy is based on a law and is essentially scientific, while its results are incomparably superior to those of ordinary medicine. But students have not had the same opportunities of learning to sift truth from chaff, and it is a great pity that at the outset of their careers, they should be presented with false conceptions of the only scientific system of medicine it will be in their power to study, and this by a person of Sir Farquhar Buzzard’s standing and presumed knowledge. To condemn "homoeopathy"...or any other system without a careful and unbiased enquiry is an eminently unscientific procedure.

”(We feel safe in assuming that Homoeopathy has not had this careful and unbiased enquiry from Sir Farquhar Buzzard, as we have never known anyone giving it such enquiry to remain unconvinced of its truth and value. Truth always reveals itself to the mind that really seeks it).

”As Herbert Spencer said, ‘There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance that principle is contempt prior to investigation.’”<sup>52</sup>

Clarke died on 24 November 1931. His article was published posthumously by J. Ellis Barker, his friend who took over editorship of *The Homeopathic World* upon his death. Clarke’s article almost seems to be written around the Spencer quotation, or vice-versa. It is possible that Barker took some editorial liberties with his friend’s article, and added the quotation, perhaps modifying it slightly to fit Clarke’s article, and perhaps falsifying the attribution to Herbert Spencer.

**1931: Miracles of Healing and How They are Done**  
**by J. Ellis Barker**

In the same year Clarke's article appeared, J. Ellis Barker uses the quotation twice in his book *Miracles of Healing and How They are Done*.

First he uses it as an epigraph to his first chapter. A few pages later, he reiterates the quotation in another context:

“If one asks a physician or surgeon for his opinion on homœopathy, and I have done this very frequently, one is usually told without hesitation: ‘Homœopathy is quite worthless, sheer quackery,’ and if, as I have done, one asks upon what knowledge that sweeping condemnation is based, the usual answer is: ‘I do not know anything about homœopathy and I do not want to know anything about it.’ Herbert Spencer caustically wrote:--

‘There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.’”<sup>53</sup>

Barker clearly liked this quotation. For him it seemed to sum up the resistance he felt from the medical establishment to accept homeopathy as a legitimate healing art. Clarke and Barker devoted a lot of writing to attacking the medical establishment and defending homeopathy as superior to orthodox medicine. *Miracles of Healing* follows suit.<sup>54</sup>

It may be helpful to give some examples of the things that put homeopathy at odds with traditional medicine. He discusses some of the general principles of homeopathic cure including a phrase he attributes to Hippocrates, “Similia similibus curantur” (Likes are cured by likes.)<sup>55</sup> This is the etymological basis of the word: homo(*same*)-eopathy.

As opposed to allopathy, or traditional medicine, which treats symptoms in terms of opposites, homeopathy's basic principle was to use concoctions that would produce similar symptoms as the ones produced by the illness being treated. Another basic principle of homeopathy is that of the “infinitely small” dose. Elements or chemicals were diluted in water to give potencies of 1 decillionth of 1 grain or smaller.<sup>56</sup> This practice also contrasted with the allopathic practice of giving large doses of substances.

Whereas traditional medicine was increasingly empirical, homeopathy relied on a practice called “proving” in which the homeopathic practitioner would take a dose himself to test the effectiveness of a treatment. Barker asserts that “testing remedies on healthy observant doctors and medical students is not only infinitely more humane but infinitely more fruitful and scientific than the methods practiced by orthodox medical men.”<sup>57</sup>

He admits that “it is perfectly fair to assume that a very large percentage of the homeopathic cures are due not to the treatment given, but to the magnetic influence and the powerful personality of the homeopathic physician.”<sup>58</sup> This is almost certainly a reference to the “animal magnetism” of Mesmerism (today hypnotism) which certainly paralleled homeopathy as an unorthodox healing art, and even had some occult connections.

A large portion of *Miracles of Healing* is composed of quotations from a multitude of physicians, homeopaths, and other notables. For the source citations he includes a bibliographical index. The index is alphabetical by surname of quoted persons. His source citations adequately include the title and date of publication of his source, followed by the page number in *Miracles of Healing* where he used the quotation. The source citation for the Spencer quotation is as follows:

SPENCER, HERBERT . . . . . Works, 1, 6<sup>59</sup>

The citation is presumably a general reference to Spencer’s complete works, or perhaps more specifically to *Works* published by Williams & Norgate of London in 1902. This collection of Spencer’s works is listed in the British Public Library catalogue which includes this description: “A made-up copy consisting of Synthetic Philosophy, Essays, Social Statics, Study of Sociology, Education, Facts and Comments, and Various Fragments, pamphlets and brochures.”

A librarian at the British Library generously provided me with a detailed list of the exact contents of *Works*. The contents of *Works* at the British Library are duplicated in the *Complete Works of Herbert Spencer* by InteLex on CD-ROM.

Barker’s citation of *Works* is bogus. Most of his bibliographical index is more complete, but there are other vague citations such as the source citation *Writings* for a quotation from Paracelsus. Had he known which of Spencer’s works contained the quotation he would have given the title of the volume, essay, or article. Instead, Barker sent his readers searching through tens of thousands of pages of Spencer’s writings to verify the quotation.

As for Barker’s true secondary source, we can only speculate. But there may be a connection here to some of the authors who quoted Paley. Garver’s *Brother of the Third Degree* as relates to Steinmetz’s *Freemasonry: Its Hidden Meaning* suggests the quotation has also survived in Masonic literature. Homeopathy and Freemasonry do have some connections. The man considered to be the father of homeopathy, Samuel Hahneman (1755-1843) was a member of the Freemasons, and studied the works of Paracelsus (1493-1541), the noted alchemist and radical physician whose work presaged homeopathy. John Henry Clarke was an admirer of both men, and in 1922 wrote a short book which compared their careers.<sup>60</sup>

Although there are some possible connections here, I was not able to establish that either Clarke or Barker were members of Freemasonry or any other occult or religious society. A more general connection is that both homeopathy and Freemasonry constitute “alternative knowledge.” Homeopathy claims to have special knowledge of the true healing arts. Freemasonry has special historical and mystical knowledge. People who are interested in one area of “alternative knowledge” may also have an interest in other areas. Our modern New Age movement is a good example of how mysticism, healing, and various occult practices all weave together. A cross-reading of this sort of material may have been how this quotation managed to arrive in the hands of Clarke or Barker, perhaps through a colleague or through a patient.

**1939: *Alcoholics Anonymous* – “An Artist’s Concept”**

**by William Griffith Wilson, with personal testimonials by Ray Campbell, et al.**

Alcoholics Anonymous was founded by members of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century religious movement known as the Oxford Group Movement. The founder of the Oxford Group, Frank Buchman was a Lutheran minister who had a conversion experience in 1908 which propelled him to start his own revivalist movement. Group members tried to convert others into the Oxford Group fold as a necessary part of their own continuing conversion process.<sup>61</sup> Though their focus was not on drinkers, the Oxford Group welcomed just about anyone who would join, and by one estimate almost 10% of prohibition era Oxford Group members joined to address the sin of drinking.<sup>62</sup>

A few of these reformed drinkers in the Oxford Group wanted to focus their efforts on helping alcoholics. Led by A.A.’s chief founder, Bill Wilson, this small group of men left the ranks of the Oxford Group in 1937 and decided to author a book. The Alcoholics Anonymous movement is said to have taken its name from the title of its own book.<sup>63</sup> The well known twelve step program of A.A. is essentially a paraphrase of Oxford Group principles directed specifically at drinkers. The first part of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is a synthesis of their religious/spiritual program, while the second half is a collection of personal testimonials.

A man named Ray Campbell wrote a personal testimonial in the chapter *An Artist’s Concept*. Here is his epigraph and first paragraph:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which can not fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.

--HERBERT SPENCER’

THE above quotation is descriptive of the mental attitudes of many alcoholics when the subject of religion, as a cure, is first brought to their attention. It is only when a man has tried everything else, when in utter desperation and terrific



need he turns to something bigger than himself, that he gets a glimpse of the way out. It is then that contempt is replaced by hope, and hope by fulfillment.”<sup>64</sup>

Campbell goes on to emphasize that:

“It is important that at present we believe there is only one sure pathway to recovery for any alcoholic.”<sup>65</sup>

It would be difficult to trace any common ground between the Oxford Group or A.A. and any of the occult or religious movements already reviewed in this paper. *Alcoholics Anonymous* was however proposing an unorthodox healing method combined with religion, and so this does constitute an assertion of alternative knowledge. Campbell brought the quotation into A.A. through his own private reading. Everything that can know about Ray Campbell comes from his personal testimonial and from the memoirs of one of the earliest members of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement.<sup>66</sup>

His source may have been something he picked up along his way in his ardent search for an answer to his alcoholism. Campbell says, “...I investigated the alcoholic problem from every angle. Medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis absorbed my interest and supplied me with a great deal of general and specific information.”<sup>67</sup>

Barker’s *Miracle Cures and How They Are Done* was printed just eight years before Campbell authored his story. Barker does not discuss addiction or alcoholism, but considering Campbell’s broad investigation of the alcoholic problem, it’s likely that he found the quotation in a piece of alternative medical literature. Because his variation is identical to Barker’s, there is added evidence that this is the case.

Later in his testimony, Campbell commits what may seem a petty offense in a common misquotation of Henry David Thoreau:

“Most men lead lives of quiet desperation,” but Thoreau’s precise words in *Walden* were: “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

### ***Alcoholics Anonymous continued: 1955, 1976, 2002***

In 1955 the second edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* appeared. Most of the book was unchanged. However, the section of personal testimonials was revised. Campbell’s story was omitted and replaced as were several others. The Herbert Spencer quotation was inserted at the close of an appendix.

*Appendix II: Spiritual Experience*, opens with an explanation and a disclaimer:

“The terms ‘spiritual experience’ and ‘spiritual awakening’ are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to

bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

“Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experience, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous”<sup>68</sup>

The appendix goes on to misquote William James:

“Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”<sup>69</sup>

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James never uses the terms “educational variety” or even “educational” to describe a religious experience. He does however admit “gradual” experiences of conversion.<sup>70</sup>

The appendix closes with the following two paragraphs and the quotation as attributed to Herbert Spencer:

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spiritual side of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which can not fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

--HERBERT SPENCER”<sup>71</sup>

This quotation has been included in every printing of the second edition (1955), the third edition (1976), and the fourth edition (2002) of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. There are now over 20 million copies in print. No other book that has used this quotation either attributed to Paley or Spencer has been so widely read in the past century. Most variations on the quotation are attributed to Herbert Spencer, and many of these are traceable to *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The official A.A. website has some online editions of pamphlets and other official literature. One pamphlet provides topics for discussion in A.A. meetings. Number five in the list of topics is the phrase “Contempt prior to investigation.”<sup>72</sup> The phrase seems to have become part of the vernacular of the A.A. movement, and may be a shibboleth which identifies members as do some of the myriad slogans that come out of the addiction recovery movement. Later in this paper I review a number of variations of the quotation as found on the Internet. Many of these undoubtedly originated from the keyboards of recovery movement members.

**1948: The Hidden Meaning of Freemasonry**  
**by George Steinmetz**

George Steinmetz uses a variation of the quote to call “average Masons” to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the religious principles of Freemasonry and Masonic symbolism:

“The only motive for this book is the fulfillment of the writer's obligations, both moral and Masonic, to assist others to such light as he has been so generously allowed to attain. The reader is asked to approach the subject matter with the words of Herbert Spencer as his guide: ‘There is a principle which is a bar against all information and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is condemnation before investigation.’”<sup>73</sup>

Steinmetz says that other religious creeds did not provide “a satisfying meaning of life; the answer to WHY AM I HERE?” But Freemasonry provided him with an answer that met his “entire satisfaction.”<sup>74</sup> It met his intellectual demands that religious faith “be consistent with such knowledge as I possessed of natural history and material science.”<sup>75</sup>

In his variation, Steinmetz omits the phrase “which is proof against all arguments,” and uses the phrase “condemnation before investigation” rather than “contempt prior to investigation.”

When I reviewed Garver's *Brother of the Third Degree*, I discussed Steinmetz's history of Freemasonry and his explanation of the meaning of occult symbols and their mystical significance. I also discussed the possibility that the quotation may have survived in Masonic literature which could have been Steinmetz's source.

By 1948, there were thousands of copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in print. It is quite possible that Steinmetz's source descends directly from *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

**1957: Your Health and Chiropractic**  
**by Thorp McClusky**

In this book we have another example of alternative knowledge asserting itself in the form of unorthodox healing arts. McClusky writes in a similar style as Barker in *Miracles of Healing*. He attacks the medical establishment for its prejudice and defends chiropractic as an art that can heal all manner of illness. In a chapter entitled *Organized Medicine's Private War Against Chiropractic*, he says:

“The truth is that few medical doctors know anything about chiropractic. Most M.D.’s have not studied it, and it is seldom mentioned except disparagingly in medical journals.

“This medical ignorance of chiropractic was emphasized scathingly in a recent article in *Medical Economics*, which asked the M.D. such questions as these:

“‘Have you or your medical society conducted any conclusive research to determine whether there’s any validity in chiropractic doctrine? If so, what are the specific details? If not, what makes you so positive that there’s nothing to chiropractic? What recent chiropractic textbooks have you read? Do you read the scientific articles in chiropractic journals? No? Then, since you admit your ignorance of progress in chiropractic, why do you come here as an expert on the subject?’

“As the great English philosopher, Herbert Spencer once observed, ‘There is a principle which is a bar against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. This principle is condemnation without investigation.’”<sup>76</sup>

McClusky’s variation is very similar to Steinmetz’s, but he was not quoting Steinmetz.

Both have dropped a phrase, “which is proof against all...,” but McClusky has changed the first phrase...

McClusky: “There is a principle which is a bar against all argument...”

Steinmetz: “There is a principle which is a bar against all information...”

Both include the phrase “which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance.” And both conclude with a very similar phrase:

McClusky: “This principle is condemnation without investigation.”

Steinmetz: “That principle is condemnation before investigation.”

It would be difficult to link chiropractic and Freemasonry or any of the religious movements that have used the quotation. McClusky and Steinmetz may have had the same source, but they also decided to shorten the quotation in very similar ways.

On the final page of this book, McClusky leaves us with another famous quotation that has yet to be verified:

“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.” - Thomas Alva Edison

This quotation attributed to Edison is a favorite of chiropractors, and has been made famous by them. Researchers at the Edison Historical Society and the Palmer Chiropractic College have not found a source. Still the quotation decorates chiropractic offices, and appears on thousands of web pages.<sup>77</sup>

**1960: The Great Quotations**  
**by George Seldes**

I have already reviewed George Seldes’s variation in my section Freeing Herbert Spencer where I used it to disprove a rumor that the quotation is from Spencer’s *Principles of Biology*. Here again is Seldes’s variation:

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is a proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance--that principle is condemnation before investigation."<sup>78</sup>

His source may have been the same source that both McClusky and Steinmetz misquoted. All three have replaced the word “contempt” with “condemnation.” McClusky uses the phrase “condemnation without investigation” and Steinmetz uses the phrase “condemnation before investigation.”

Seldes collected his quotations from years of journalism and reading, as well as inviting contributions from an array contemporary authors, politicians, scientists, etc. This quotation could have come to him from just about anybody by 1960. The quotation had been printed in *Alcoholics Anonymous* for 21 years, and the A.A. movement had gained widespread acceptance.

**1975: The Most Holy Principle, Volume IV: Summary**  
**by Rulon C. Allred**

Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith in 1830 upon the publication of his book *The Book of Mormon*. It tells the story of some ancient Jews who left Jerusalem due to persecution and sailed to North America. After a war which ended in 428 C.E., the prevailing group of Jews became what we know today as the American Indians. And thus we return to the theme of legendary origins of peoples as in Anglo-Israel, the origins of Freemasonry, and the origins of Christianity in Britain with the landing of Joseph of Arimathea.

Although mainstream Mormons have not practiced polygamy since 1890, there have always remained Fundamentalist Mormon sects that have continued the practice which they call “The Most Holy Principle.” Rulon C. Allred was a temporary leader of one polygamous sect up until 1977 when he was murdered by the leader of another sect which wanted to have authority over all the polygamous groups. *The Most Holy Principle* is Allred’s four volume historical defense of Mormon polygamy. The fourth volume is a summary of the first three volumes, and includes another variation of the quotation:<sup>79</sup>

“Rejection of the Book of Mormon is often followed by, ‘It is poison! So I did not read it.’ Those who reject a study of the holy principle of celestial plural marriage are often found making a similar statement. It is unfortunate. With the assumption of such a position, the following familiar phrase is brought to mind: ‘There is a mental attitude which is a bar against all information, which is a bar against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That mental attitude is condemnation before investigation.’ Those who take the same attitude will never know the ‘truth of all things.’”<sup>80</sup>

Allred provides no source citation, and offers no attribution. Though there is no obvious connection between Fundamentalist Mormonism and British-Israelism, there are some common beliefs in the movements. But these connections are remote and may be more a matter of coincidental theology than one movement having a direct influence on the other.<sup>81</sup> Still they may point to some cross-reading of various religious material by Mormons.

In 1937, Rulon Allred opened his own naturopathic medical practice at Salt Lake City. Could he have got the quotation through some homeopathic or naturopathic literature?<sup>82</sup>

Another possible source is through Seldes, or possibly Seldes’s own source, as both men use the phrase “condemnation before investigation.”

**1982: Medical Dark Ages Circa 1984**  
**by Ralph R. Hovnanian**

This text is a manifesto for medical freedom with a focus on “alternative therapies” for cancer as being more effective than usual therapies. It has much the same oppositional spirit as Barker’s *Miracles of Healing*, but with a more radical political style:

“May we all unite into a politically viable effort to remove institutionalized prejudice, with a vigorous Constitutional guarantee of FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN HEALTH.”<sup>83</sup>

The title of a large section of the book is: *Cancer Quotations Collage: Medical Dark Ages Circa 1984; or P.I.G / J.O.B (Prejudice, Ignorance, Greed / Jealousy, Oligarchy, Bureaucracy)*. This *Quotations Collage* is a collection from a multitude of sources. The quotations relate to healing in general, cancer treatments, and to criticism of the medical establishment as a monopolistic culture which has historically disallowed alternative treatments for its own greedy motives.

Hovnanian’s variation appears in some introductory remarks beside a series of other quotations:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, & which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is condemnation without investigation.” – Herbert Spencer

This quotation is very much like Seldes’s variation. The phrase “condemnation without investigation” is the same as McClusky in *Your Health and Chiropractic*. Hovnanian’s source was most likely from the same family of sources as McClusky’s and Seldes’s.

**1992: The Pathology of Trauma**  
**edited by J.K. Mason**

This is a medical school text book, and one that is clearly of value to serious students of pathology and forensic medicine. The editor, J.K. Mason, is currently Professor Emeritus of Forensic Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. The first edition appeared in 1978 with the title *The Pathology of Violent Injury*. The chapters were authored by contributing experts. The quotation does not appear in this first edition.

In 1992 the second edition was published with a new look and new title, *The Pathology of Trauma*. Professor Mason asked the contributing authors to choose epigraphs for the new editions of their chapters.<sup>84</sup>

Many of the authors chose Shakespearean quotations. Dr. C.T. Flynn, former Chief of Medicine at Missouri’s John J. Pershing Veteran’s Administration Medical Center, chose

the Paley misquotation exactly as it appears attributed to Herbert Spencer in *Alcoholics Anonymous* and Barker's *Miracles of Healing*.

Dr. Flynn's chapter is titled *Renal Failure Following Injury and Burning*. The chapter discusses how severe burns and crushing injuries can cause failure of the kidneys and subsequent death.<sup>85</sup>

I wrote to Dr. Flynn who kindly replied that his source for the quotation was the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and that he used it to reflect that had the medical establishment's prejudices against dialysis been followed, nobody would have been saved from death by kidney failure.<sup>86</sup>

### **197? – Present: The Internet – A Misquotery**

The Internet has been an essential tool in researching this quotation's origins and history. It has also contributed to the spreading of the quotation and to new generations of mutations and attributions. The contexts in which we find the quotation continue to fit into the category of alternative knowledge: ghosts, Big Foots, astrology, Atlantis, British-Israelism, pyramids, Twelve-Step spirituality, homeopathy, chiropractic, faith healing, etc.

But it has also extended into sales pitches, essays on a variety of topics, and various arguments on online discussion boards. There are also a growing number of databases of quotations available as online reference works which attribute this quotation to Herbert Spencer. A Google search on the Boolean phrase ("contempt prior to investigation" +Spencer) gets over 4,200 hits. The phrase ("contempt prior to examination" +Paley) gets 7 hits.

There is no way of knowing for sure when the quotation first appeared on the Internet. It was probably first transmitted via email in the early 1970s or in the late 1970s on a usenet newsgroup or a listserv, some of the first discussion groups on networked computers. The first web pages as we know them didn't appear until the early 1990s, and this is surely when the quotation began to replicate and mutate beyond control.

Google keeps a searchable usenet archive. The earliest use of the phrase "contempt prior to investigation" in a usenet discussion is from 1986 on the newsgroup net.sci.

The following examples are a partial survey of some of the variations that have spawned on the Internet. Because these are easily found using Google or another search engine, I am not including source citations. The variety of variations is sure to continue growing.

"Condemnation without investigation is the height of ignorance," is an abbreviated form that has been variously attributed to Albert Einstein, Ernest Hemmingway, Thomas Edison, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.



Some closely related versions are:

"Condemnation without Investigation is the State of Ignorance" - Waldolf Emmersen

"Condemnation without investigation is the height of foolishness." – Benjamin Franklin

"Condemnation before investigation is certain to leave one in a state of everlasting ignorance." – Chaucer

Other relatives without attributions are:

"Condemnation without investigation is the highest form of ignorance."

"Condemnation without investigation is ignorance"

"Condemnation without investigation, will insure ignorance forever."

"Condemnation without investigation is the height of arrogance!"

"Condemnation without investigation is a bar to all knowledge."

"Condemnation before investigation can not fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance."

"Condemnation Before Investigation is the Height of Stupidity!"

"Contempt, without examination, is PREJUDICE"

"Contempt prior to investigation is what enslaves a mind to Ignorance."

"Contempt without investigation is the mark of a closed mind."

"There is no greater ignorance than contempt prior to investigation"

"Contempt prior to examination is a bar against all information, proof against all argument, which cannot fail to keep mankind in everlasting ignorance."

There are also several abbreviated forms that *are* attributed to Herbert Spencer:

"There is no bar to knowledge greater than contempt prior to examination."

“There is one principle that can keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That is contempt prior to investigation.”

"One of mankind's greatest faults is condemnation prior to investigation."

Some people have confused Herbert Spencer, the 19<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher, with Edmund Spenser, the 16<sup>th</sup> century English poet:

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument and cannot help but keep man in everlasting ignorance, which is condemnation without investigation." - Spencer, the English poet.

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, and which cannot fail to keep man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is ‘Condemnation before investigation,’” - Edmond Spencer

Many people write as if they are using their own words:

“The truth of restricted love is opposed and rejected by most religionists today. The principle of contempt prior to examination is a bar against all information and keeps man in ignorance. Truth always involves more than appears on the surface.”

...or quote others as if they were:

"Contempt prior to examination is a far greater bar to knowledge than lack of a formal education." – Ralph Smeed

Some people attribute the quotation to themselves, as does this Washington, D.C. private investigator:

“THERE IS A PRINCIPLE WHICH IS A BAR AGAINST ALL INFORMATION, WHICH IS PROOF AGAINST ALL ARGUMENT. AND, WHICH CANNOT FAIL TO KEEP A MAN IN EVERLASTING IGNORANCE -THAT PRINCIPLE IS ‘CONDEMNATION BEFORE INVESTIGATION’” - Nicholas R. Beltrante, P.I

**2003: *Doubt: A History***

**by Jennifer Michael Hecht**

Jennifer Michael Hecht earned a Ph.D. in the history of science from Columbia University in 1995. Today she is a history professor at Nassau Community College, an author, and a poet. Her book *Doubt: A History* examines the contributions the great doubters have made through history. In the first printing of *Doubt*, she attributes the phrase “Contempt before investigation” to Spencer. But her use of the phrase carries a very different meaning than any other interpretation of the quotation. She uses it to describe Spencer’s “famous approach” to doubting. She is saying that Spencer saw “contempt before investigation” as a good thing:

"Many learned agnosticism from the Social Darwinist and early sociologist Herbert Spencer. Spencer liked Huxley's term[agnosticism]: he was an agnostic and his famous approach was 'Contempt before investigation.' On the matter of God he believed there is nothing to investigate so the question is best ignored."<sup>87</sup>

This would have been Spencer’s position on the matter of God, had “Contempt before investigation” actually been his approach. One early reviewer of *Doubt* remarked:

“She botches Herbert Spencer's ‘contempt before investigation’ idea on page 408. Rather, as a good doubter, he said that was a cardinal sin; he did NOT advocate using ‘contempt before investigation’ as a philosophical tool.”<sup>88</sup>

Interestingly, the reviewer still treats the phrase as if it is known to be Spencer’s.

I wrote to Jennifer Hecht to establish her source for her information on Spencer. She was unable to provide one, but it is important to note that it is only the first printing of *Doubt* that includes the misquotation. The second printing included several corrections, and the omission of the erroneous Spencer quotation was one of them.<sup>89</sup>

Herbert Spencer is not an easy mind to get to know. He lived to witness the marginalization of his life’s work. Secondary sources often misrepresent him, and his original works are so vast that learning about him firsthand is a daunting task. This situation has contributed to the widespread acceptance of this quotation as Spencer’s. The use of the quotation in *Doubt* suggests that this acceptance has even begun to effect serious scholarship.

Hecht’s usage is an interesting example of how an unverifiable quotation can begin to take on new meanings, even to mean exactly the opposite of its original meaning. I hope that this paper has brought it meaning and identified a proper lineage.

## Conclusion

Like most famous quotations, this misquotation has survived because it fit the aims of various authors. It communicated something they wanted to say, and it did it with flair. It bolstered their argument by invoking authoritative names like Paley, Spencer, Einstein, Emerson, and others.

By its nature, it survived mostly in the context of alternative knowledge. It communicated something that didn't need saying in other contexts. For the most part it asked readers to investigate things that were hard to believe, things that challenged orthodoxies, and things that ultimately required faith.

Some 19<sup>th</sup> century author extracted a kernel of meaning from William Paley, and generated a new form that would survive in books on British-Israelism, occult secret societies, Jehovah's Witnesses, extreme Protestant sects, and vampirology crossed with Holy Grail lore. All of the sources surveyed have some things in common that suggest a lineage to a common source.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it survived with a more modern attribution to Herbert Spencer, and here it found many of the same environments: unorthodox healing in homeopathy, a cross between unorthodox healing and religion in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Freemasonry revisited in Steinmetz's *Hidden Meaning*, more alternative healing in McClusky's *Chiropractic*, fringe religion revisited in Allred's *Most Holy Principle*, and still more alternative healing in Hovnavian's *Medical Dark Ages*.

It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that some of the once alternative movements became accepted by the established order. A.A. is the most salient example of this. Indeed the movement has become the orthodoxy of addiction care in the United States. And with its general acceptance, and the mass printing of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the quotation has also survived as the generally accepted wisdom of Herbert Spencer in Seldes's dictionary, Mason's *Pathology*, and Hecht's *Doubt*, books that do not assert alternative knowledge, but aim at valuable scholarship.

On the Internet it found special company and will continue to spawn variation and mutate almost beyond recognition. The Internet will also make ongoing research into the quotation's origins and lineage possible, as hopefully, earlier verifiable sources will continue to be cited on new web pages.

What will be the outcome of this article? Will it spawn a whole new generation of variant forms? Will people stop using the quotation? Will it be removed from future editions of the books and web pages that use it? Will the quotation die? Become extinct in another two hundred years?

George Seldes commented, "a good misquotation (like a bad lie) never grows old."<sup>90</sup>

### Notes for *The Survival of a Fitting Quotation*:

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, William Griffith, et al. *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How More than One Hundred Men Have Recovered From Alcoholism*. Reproduction of the first printing of the first edition. Malo, Washington: Anonymous Press, 1999. Page 380.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. Page 372.

<sup>4</sup> Poole, Rev. William H. *Anglo-Israel or, The British Nation: The Lost Tribes of Israel*. Toronto: Bengough Bro.'s, 1879. Title page.

<sup>5</sup> Seldes, George. *The Great Quotations*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1960. Page 23 – 24.

<sup>6</sup> Paley, William. *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*. Foreword by D.L. LeMahieu. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002. Pages xi –xxix.

<sup>7</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. Page 34.

<sup>8</sup> Clarke, M.L. *Paley: Evidences for the Man*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1974. Page 60.

<sup>9</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. (Evidences of Christianity) Page 330.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, M.L. *Paley: Evidences for the Man*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1974. Page 60.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Pages 59-60.

<sup>13</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. Page 388.

<sup>14</sup> LeMahieu, D.L. *The Mind of William Paley*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. Page 273-274.

- <sup>16</sup> Ibid. Page 371.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. Page 372.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. Pages 372-373.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. Page 373.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. Page 374.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. Page 375.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> LeMahieu, D.L. *The Mind of William Paley*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976. Pages 29 – 54.
- <sup>28</sup> *Moral Philosophy* is available at: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/ToC/0158.php> ; *Natural Theology* is available at: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/p/pd-modeng/pd-modeng-idx?type=HTML&rgn=TEI.2&byte=53049319>
- <sup>29</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850.
- <sup>30</sup> Paley, William. *The Works of William Paley, D.D. with Extracts from His Correspondence and a Life of the Author by Rev. Robert Lynam, A.M. A New Edition with a Portrait, In Five Volumes*. London: William Baynes & Son, 1825. Volume V.
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- <sup>32</sup> Poole, Rev. William H. *Anglo-Israel or, The British Nation: The Lost Tribes of Israel*. Toronto: Bengough Bro.'s, 1879.
- <sup>33</sup> Poole, Rev. William H. *Anglo-Israel or The Saxon Race Proved to Be the Lost Tribes of Israel, in Nine Lectures*. Detroit, Michigan: Winn & Hammond, 1889.
- <sup>34</sup> Barkun, Michael. *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994. Pages 7 – 8.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. Page 13.
- <sup>36</sup> Garver, Will L. *Brother of the Third Degree*. Alhambra, California: Borden Publishing Company, 1964. (first published Chicago: W.L. Garver, 1894.) Page 7.
- <sup>37</sup> Steinmetz, George. *Freemasonry: Its Hidden Meaning*. Richmond, Virginia: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1948, 1976. Page 46.
- <sup>38</sup> Occultopedia: The Occult and Unexplained Encyclopedia.  
[http://www.occultopedia.com/c/count\\_saintgermain.htm](http://www.occultopedia.com/c/count_saintgermain.htm) &  
<http://www.crystalinks.com/germain.html>
- <sup>39</sup> Garver, Will L. *Brother of the Third Degree*. Alhambra, California: Borden Publishing Company, 1964. (first published Chicago: W.L. Garver, 1894.) Page 112.

- <sup>40</sup> Russell, Charles T. *Zion's Watchtower*. VOL. XXXIII; April 15, 1912; No. 8. Brooklyn, New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1912. Page 140.
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<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Jwitness.html>
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- <sup>45</sup> Duncan, David. *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. Two volumes. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1908. Vol.II, page 144.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid. Pages 145-147.
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- <sup>70</sup> James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Mentor, 1903. Page 157.
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<sup>88</sup> Snyder, Stephen. Great content; egregious errors. Amazon.com review of Jennifer Michael Hecht's "Doubt": <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0060097728/002-1758271-5298462?v=glance>

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**Appendix A:**  
*Rejection of Christianity*, a chapter from *Evidences of Christianity* by  
 William Paley

Excerpted from *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* by William Paley, here copied from *The Works of William Paley, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle; containing His Life, Moral and Political Philosophy, Evidences of Christianity, Natural Theology, Tracts, Horae Paulinae, Clergyman's Companion, and Sermons*. Printed verbatim from the original editions. Complete in one volume. New Edition. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1850. Pages 371 – 375.

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A View of the Evidences of Christianity

**Part III. A Brief Consideration of Some Popular Objections.**

**Chapter IV. Rejection of Christianity.**

We acknowledge that the Christian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce a universal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extensive success, is called the *rejection* of the Christian history and miracles; and has been thought by some to form a strong objection to the reality of the facts which the history contains.

The matter of the objection divides itself into two parts; as it relates to the Jews, and as it relates to Heathen nations: because the minds of these two descriptions of men may have been, with respect to Christianity, under the influence of very different causes. The case of the Jews, inasmuch as our Saviour's ministry was originally addressed to them, offers itself first to our consideration.

Now, upon the subject of the truth of the Christian religion; with *us*, there is but one question, *viz.* whether the miracles were actually wrought? From acknowledging the miracles, we pass instantaneously to the acknowledgement of the whole. No doubt lies between the premises and the conclusion. If we believe the works, or any one of them, we believe in Jesus. And this order of reasoning is become so universal and familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwise. Yet it appears to me perfectly certain, that the state of thought, in the mind of a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had a great deal to do to persuade himself that Jesus was the Messiah. This is clearly intimated by various passages of the Gospel history. It appears that, in the apprehension of the writers of the New Testament, the miracles did not irresistibly carry, even those who saw them, to the conclusion intended to be drawn from them; or so compel assent, as to leave no room for suspense, for the exercise of candour, or the effects of prejudice. And to this point, at least, the evangelists may be allowed to be good witnesses; because it is a point, in which exaggeration or disguise would have been the other way. Their accounts, if they could be

suspected of falsehood, would rather have magnified, than diminished, the effects of the miracles.

John vii. 21-31. "Jesus answered, and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.—If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him: do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? *Howbeit we know this man, whence he is, but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than those which this man hath done?*"

This passage is very observable. It exhibits the reasoning of different sorts of persons upon the occasion of a miracle, which persons of all sorts are represented to have acknowledged as real. One sort of men thought, that there was something very extraordinary in all this; but that still Jesus could not be the Christ, because there was a circumstance in his appearance which militated with an opinion concerning Christ, in which they had been brought up, and of the truth of which, it is probable, they had never entertained a particle of doubt, *viz.* that "When Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." Another sort were inclined to believe him to be the Messiah. But even these did not argue as we should; did not consider the miracle as of itself decisive of the question; as what, if once allowed, excluded all farther debate upon the subject; but founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reasoning, "When Christ cometh, will he do *more* miracles than those which this man hath done?"

Another passage in the same evangelist, and observable for the same purpose, is that in which he relates the resurrection of Lazarus: "Jesus," he tells us (xi. 43, 44,) "when he had thus spoken, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth: and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." One might have suspected, that at least all those who stood by the sepulcher, when Lazarus was raised, would have believed in Jesus. Yet the evangelist does not so represent it:—"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him; but *some of them* went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." We cannot suppose that the evangelist meant by this account, to leave his readers to imagine, that any of the spectators doubted about the truth of the miracle. Far from it. Unquestionably he states the miracle to have been fully allowed: yet the persons allowed it, were, according to his representation, capable of retaining hostile sentiments towards Jesus. "Believing in Jesus" was not only to believe that he wrought miracles, but that he was the Messiah. With us there is no difference between these two things: with them, there was the greatest; and the difference is apparent in this transaction. If Saint John has represented the conduct of the Jews upon this occasion truly (and why he should not I cannot tell, for it rather makes against him than for him), it shows clearly the principles upon which their judgment proceeded. Whether he has related the matter truly or not, the

relation itself discovers the writer's own opinion of those principles: and that alone possesses considerable authority. In the next chapter, we have a reflection of the evangelist, entirely suited to this state of the case: "but though he had done so many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him."<sup>1</sup> The evangelist does not mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles; but to their not perceiving, what all now sufficiently perceive, and what they would have perceived, had not their understandings been governed by strong prejudices, the infallible attestation which the works of Jesus bore to the truth of his pretensions.

The ninth chapter of Saint John's Gospel contains a very circumstantial account of the cure of a blind man: a miracle submitted to all the scrutiny and examination which a sceptic could propose. If a modern unbeliever had drawn up the interrogatories, they could hardly have been more critical or searching. The account contains also a very curious conference between the Jewish rulers and the patient, in which the point for our present notice is their resistance of the force of the miracle, and of the conclusion to which it led, after they had failed in discrediting its evidence. "We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." That was the answer which set their minds at rest. And by the help of much prejudice, and great unwillingness to yield, it might do so. In the mind of the poor man restored to sight, which was under no such bias, and felt no such reluctance, the miracle had its natural operation. "Herein," says he, "is a marvelous thing that ye know not from whence he is, yet he hath opened mind eyes. Now we know, that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind if this man were not of God, he could do nothing." We do not find that the Jewish rulers had any other reply to make to this defence, than that which authority is sometimes apt to make to argument, "Dost thou teach us?"

If it shall be inquired, how a turn of thought, so different from what prevails at present, should obtain currency with the ancient Jews; the answer is found in two opinions which are proved to have subsisted in that age and country. The one was, their expectation of a Messiah of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jesus bespoke him to be; the other, their persuasion of the agency of demons in the production of supernatural effects. These opinions are not *supposed* by us for the purpose of argument, but are evidently recognized in Jewish writings, as well as in ours. And it ought moreover to be considered, that in these opinions the Jews of that age had been from their infancy brought up; that they were opinions, the grounds of which they had probably few of them inquired into, and of the truth of which they entertained no doubt. And I think that these two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The first put them upon seeking out some excuse to themselves for not receiving Jesus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the second supplied them with just such an excuse as they wanted. Let Jesus work what miracles he would, still the answer was in readiness, "that he wrought them by the assistance of Beelzebub." And to this answer no reply could be made, but that which our Saviour did make, by showing that the tendency of his mission was so adverse to the views with which this being was, by the objectors themselves, supposed to act, that it could not reasonably be supposed that he would assist in carrying it on. The power displayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewish solution, because the interposition of invisible agents being once admitted, it

is impossible to ascertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumscribed. We of this day may be disposed, possibly, to think such opinions too absurd to have been ever seriously entertained. I am not bound to contend for the credibility of the opinions. They were at least as reasonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been instructed; and those who cannot see enough in the force of this reason, to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not sufficiently consider how such opinions may sometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when once become so, they are, for that reason alone adhered to. In the suspense which these notions, and the prejudices resulting from them, might occasion, the candid and docile and humble minded would probably decide in Christ's favor; the proud and obstinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtless, almost universally against him.

This state of opinion discovers to us also the reason of what some choose to wonder at, why the Jews should reject miracles when they saw them, yet rely so much upon the tradition of them in their own history. It does not appear, that it had ever entered into the minds of those who lived in the time of Moses and the prophets, to ascribe *their* miracles to the supernatural agency of evil beings. The solution was not then invented. The authority of Moses and the prophets being established, and become the foundation of the national polity and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion and the subjects of that polity, should apply to their history a reasoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

II. The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more especially of men of rank and learning in it, is resolved into a principle which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument, or any evidence whatever, *viz.* contempt prior to examination. The state of religion amongst the Greeks and Romans, had a natural tendency to induce this disposition. Dionysius Halicarnassensis remarks, that there were six hundred different kinds of religions or sacred rites exercised at Rome.<sup>ii</sup> The superior classes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Christianity was included in the number, without inquiry into its separate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretensions? It might be either true or false for any thing they knew about it. The religion had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice. I missed with no politics. It produced no find writers. It contained no curious speculations. When it did reach their knowledge, I doubt but that it appeared to them a very strange system,--so unphilosophical,--dealing so little in argument and discussion, in such arguments however and discussions as they were accustomed to entertain. What is said of Jesus Christ, of his nature, office, and ministry, would be, in the highest degree, alien from the conceptions of their theology. The Redeemer and the destined Judge of the human race, a poor young man, executed at Jerusalem with two thieves upon a cross! Still more would the language in which the Christian doctrine was delivered, be dissonant and barbarous to their ears. What knew they of grace, of redemption, of justification, of the blood of Christ shed for the sins of men, of reconciliation, of mediation? Christianity was made up of points they had never thought of; of terms which they had never heard.

It is presented also to the imagination of the learned Heathen under additional disadvantage, by reason of its real, and still more of its nominal, connexion with Judaism. It shared in the obloquy and ridicule with which that people and their religion were

treated by the Greeks and Romans. They regarded Jehovah himself, only as the idol of the Jewish nation, and what was related of him, as of a piece with what was told of the tutelary deities of other countries; nay, the Jews were in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous race; so that whatever reports of a miraculous nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the heathen world as false and frivolous. When they heard of Christianity, they heard of it as a quarrel amongst this people, about some articles of their own superstition. Despising, therefore, as they did, the whole system, it was not probable that they would enter, with any degree of seriousness or attention, into the detail of its disputes, or the merits of either side. How little they knew, and with what carelessness they judged, of these matters, appears, I think, pretty plainly from an example of no less weight than that of Tacitus, who, in a grave and professed discourse upon the history of the Jews, states, that they worshipped the effigy of an ass.<sup>iii</sup> The passage is a proof, how prone the learned men of those times were, and upon how little evidence, to heap together stories which might increase the contempt and odium in which that people was holden. The same foolish charge is also confidently repeated by Plutarch.<sup>iv</sup>

It is observable, that all these considerations are of a nature to operate with the greatest force upon the highest ranks; upon men of education, and that order of the public from which *writers* are principally taken; I may add also, upon the philosophical as well as the libertine character; upon the Antonines or Julian, not less than upon Nero or Domitian; and more particularly, upon that large and polished class of men, who acquiesced in the general persuasion, that all they had to do was to practice the duties of morality, and to worship the deity *more patrio*; a habit of thinking, liberal as it may appear, which shuts the door against every argument for a new religion. The considerations above-mentioned, would acquire also strength from the prejudice which men of rank and learning universally entertain against any thing that *originates* with the vulgar and illiterate; which prejudice is known to be as obstinate as any prejudice whatever.

Yet Christianity was still making its way: and, amidst so many impediments to its progress, so much difficulty in procuring audience and attention, its actual success is more to be wondered at, than that it should not have universally conquered scorn and indifference, fixed the levity of a voluptuous age, or, through a cloud of adverse prejudications, opened for itself a passage to the hearts and understandings of the scholars of the age.

And the cause, which is here assigned for the rejection of Christianity by men of rank and learning among the Heathens, namely, a strong antecedent contempt, accounts also for their *silence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it; they would have given their reasons. Whereas, what men repudiate upon the strength of some prefixed persuasion, or from a settled contempt of the subject, of the persons who propose it, or of the manner in which it is proposed, they do not naturally write books about, or notice much in what they write upon other subjects.

The letters of the Younger Pliny furnish an example of the silence, and let us, in some measure, into the cause of it. From his celebrated correspondence with Trajan, we know that the Christian religion prevailed in a very considerable degree in the province over which he presided; that it had excited his attention; that he had inquired into the matter, just so much as a Roman magistrate might be expected to inquire, *viz.* whether the

religion contained any opinions dangerous to government; but that of its doctrines, its evidence, or its books, he had not taken the trouble to inform himself with any degree of care or correctness. But although Pliny had viewed Christianity in a nearer position than most of his learned countrymen saw it in; yet he had regarded the whole with such negligence and disdain (farther than as it seemed to concern his administration,) that, in more than two hundred and forty letters of his which have come down to us, the subject is never once again mentioned. If, out of this number, the two letters between him and Trajan had been lost; with what confidence would the obscurity of the Christian religion have been argued from Pliny's silence about it, and with how little truth!

The name and character which Tacitus has given to Christianity, "exitiabilis superstitio," (a pernicious superstition,) and by which two words he disposes of the whole question of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a strong proof how little he knew, or concerned himself to know, about the matter. I apprehend that I shall not be contradicted, when I take upon me to assert, that no unbeliever of the present age would apply this epithet to the Christianity of the New Testament, or not allow that it was entirely unmerited. Read the instructions given by a great teacher of the religion, to those very Roman converts of who Tacitus speaks; and given also a very few years before the time of which he is speaking; and which are not, let it be observed, a collection of fine sayings brought together from different parts of a large work, but stand in one entire passage of a public letter, without the intermixture of a single thought which is frivolous or exceptionable:--"Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another: not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer: distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”<sup>v</sup>

Read this and then think of “*exitabilis superstitio!*!”—Or if we be not allowed, in contending with heathen authorities, to produce our books against theirs, we may at least be permitted to confront theirs with one another. Of this “*pernicious superstition,*” what could Pliny find to blame, when he was led, by his office, to institute something like an examination into the conduct and principles of the sect? He discovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves a hymn to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but, not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build the following observations:--

First; That we are well warranted in calling the view under which the learned men of that age beheld Christianity, an obscure and distant view. Had Tacitus known more of Christianity, of its precepts, duties, constitution, or design, however he had discredited the story, he would have respected the principle. He would have described the religion differently, though he had rejected it. It has been satisfactorily shown, that the “*superstition*” of the Christians consisted in worshipping a person unknown to the Roman calendar; and that the “*perniciousness,*” with which they were reproached, was nothing else but their opposition to the established polytheism; and this view of the matter was just such a one as might be expected to occur to a mind, which held the sect in too much contempt to concern itself about the ground and reasons of their conduct.

Secondly; We may from hence remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the most acute judgments, in subjects which they are pleased to despise; and which, of course, they from the first consider as unworthy to be inquired into. Had not Christianity survived to tell its own story, it must have gone down to posterity as a “*pernicious superstition;*” and that upon the credit of Tacitus’s account, much, I doubt not, strengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his sagacity.

Thirdly; That this contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greatest faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greatest faculties of mind, are not the most subject to it. Such men feel themselves seated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets wasting their idle strength upon one another, with the common disdain of the absurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt, than almost any other disposition, to produce hasty and contemptuous, and, by consequence, erroneous judgments, both of persons and opinions.



Fourthly; We need not be surprised at many writers of that age not mentioning Christianity at all; when they who did mention it, appear to have entirely misconceived its nature and character; and in consequence of this misconception, to have regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greatest part of the learned Heathens, the facts of the Christian history could only come by report. The books, probably, they never looked into. The settled habit of their minds was, and long had been, an indiscriminate rejection of all reports of the kind. With these sweeping conclusions, truth hath no chance. It depends upon distinction. If they would not inquire, how should they be convinced? If might be founded in truth, though they, who made no search, might not discover it.

“Men of rank and fortune, of wit and abilities, are often found, even in Christian countries, to be surprisingly ignorant of religion, and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the Heathens. Their thoughts were all fixed upon other things; upon reputation and glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleasure, upon business or learning. They thought, and they had reason to think, that the religion their country was fable and forgery, a heap of inconsistent lies; which inclined them to suppose that other religions were no better. Hence it came to pass, that when the apostles preached the Gospel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the least pains to inform themselves about it. This appears plainly from ancient history.”<sup>vi</sup>

I think it by no means unreasonable to suppose, that the Heathen public, especially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two classes; those who despised Christianity beforehand, and those who received it. In correspondency with which division of character, the writers of that age would also be of two classes; those who were silent about Christianity, and those who were Christians. “A good man, who attended sufficiently to the Christian affairs, would become a Christian; after which his testimony ceased to be Pagan, and became Christian.”<sup>vii</sup>

I must also add, that I think it sufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was resorted to by the Heathen adversaries of Christianity, in like manner as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Justin Martyr alleges this as his reason for arguing from prophecy, rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evasion to Celsus; Jerome to Porphyry; and Lactantius to the Heathen in general. The several passages, which contain these testimonies, will be produced in the next chapter. It being difficult however to ascertain in what degree this notion prevailed, especially amongst the superior ranks of the Heathen communities, another, and I think an adequate, cause has been assigned for their infidelity. It is probable, that in many cases the two causes would operate together.

## Notes for Appendix A

<sup>i</sup> Chap. xii. 37.

<sup>ii</sup> Jortin’s Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 371

<sup>iii</sup> Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 2.

<sup>iv</sup> Sympos. lib. iv. quæst. 5.

<sup>v</sup> Romans xii. 9; xiii. 13.

<sup>vi</sup> Jortin’s Disc. on the Christ. Rel. p. 66. ed. 4<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>vii</sup> Hartley, Obs. p. 119.

## Appendix B: The Remaining Unpublished Articles and Letters of Herbert Spencer

These are the remaining “unpublished” articles and letters of Spencer’s of which I have not yet reviewed from David Duncan’s list in his *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (1908). They are listed here by date. In the leftmost column I give synopses of each article and letter as I was able to glean from Spencer’s *Autobiography* and Duncan’s *Life and Letters*. In that same column, in bold text I give my reasons for rejecting an article as a candidate for containing the quotation when I have them. The small number of articles that remain comprise some of Spencer’s most obscure letters and such a tiny fraction of his entire works, that the probability he ever used the quotation becomes nearly impossible.

Date	Title of article or letter	Periodical	Assessment
1836 January	Crystallization	Bath and West of England Magazine	Spencer tells us in his autobiography that this was a letter "describing the formation of certain curiously-shaped floating crystals which I had observed during the preceding autumn when crystallizing common salt." <sup>1</sup> It appeared in the first edition of the Bath Magazine of which no surviving copy exists. <sup>2</sup> This article was Spencer's first attempt at professional writing at the age of 16 years. <b>It is unlikely that the few local readers of the Bath magazine would have quoted an unknown 16 year old Spencer, or that he would have used the the quotation in such a context. Furthermore, no copy of this first issue of the magazine is known to exist.</b>
1836 March	The Poor Laws	Bath and West of England Magazine	This was a letter to the magazine challenging the author of an article in the first issue which dealt with the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. In this letter Spencer warned against the social ramifications of too-easily available public assistance. <sup>3</sup> <b>Once again it is unlikely that a 16 year old unknown Spencer would have been quoted.</b>
1841 July	A New Form of Viaduct	Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal	This was an article which contained Spencer's design for an economical bridge. <sup>4</sup> <b>Unlikely that he would have found a place for the quotation in presenting a bridge design.</b>
1841 September	The Transverse Strain of Beams	Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal	Another article with some of Spencer's civil engineering inventions. <sup>5</sup> <b>Another architectural article discussing engineering physics.</b>

1842 January	Architectural Precedent	Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal	In this article, Spencer describes "Veneration for antiquity," as "one of the greatest obstacles, not only to the advancement of architecture, but to the progress of every species of improvement." <sup>6</sup> <b>Unlikely that he would have found a place for the quotation here.</b>
1842 March	Letter on "Architectural Precedent"	Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal	This was evidently a follow-up letter to his January article on this topic. <b>Again, there is not a place for the quotation in any of these civil engineering articles.</b>
1843 August 2	Mr. Hume and National Education	Nonconformist	Duncan tells us that in this article, Spencer "opposed the doctrine 'that it is the duty of the State to educate the people.'" <sup>7</sup>
1843 June 28	Effervescence - Rebecca and her Daughters	Nonconformist	The Rebecca Riots were a major upheaval in Wales in which men wore women's clothing while attacking toll gates and the gate keepers. In a letter to Edward Lott, Spencer tells us something of this article: "If you get hold of the last week's Nonconformist, you will find a leading article written by me, entitled 'Effervescence -- Rebecca and her Children.' It will amuse you, I fancy, it being somewhat queer in its ideas. It might be appropriately classified under the head of 'The Chemistry of Politics.'" <sup>8</sup>
1843 October	Letter about the Derby flood of 1842	Architect, Engineer, and Surveyor	In Spencer's own words: "April, 1842, brought a temporary return to engineering activities. A tributary of the river Derwent which runs through Derby, called the Markeaton Brook, was raised suddenly to an immense height by a local deluge of rain, and overflowed to the extent of producing in the main street a flood of some six feet in depth: the level attained being so unusual that it was marked by an iron plate let into the wall. It occurred to me to write a report on this flood; and to make suggestions for the prevention of any like catastrophe hereafter. This report was presented to the Town Council, and afterwards printed and distributed by their order." <sup>9</sup>
1843 October 11	The Non-Intrusion Riots	Nonconformist	Duncan tells us that in this article, Spencer "deals with the disturbances in Scotland, arising from 'the determined opposition given by the State party to the erection of edifices for the Free Church.'" <sup>10</sup>

<p>1844 Sept- Dec</p>	<p>Various Articles</p>	<p>Birmingham Pilot</p>	<p>From September to December of 1844, Spencer was sub-editor of the Pilot, an organ of the Complete Suffrage Union. He wrote a number of leading articles, all of them political, but not specifically concerned with suffrage. He gives us the following titles: "Railway Administration"; "A Political Paradox"; "Magisterial Delinquencies"; "A Political Parable and its Moral"; "Honesty is the Best Policy"; "The Impolicy of Dishonesty"; and "The Great Social Law." In his autobiography, Spencer quotes from one of these articles to describe a belief that he saw developing in his own mind from that period which ran through all of the articles he wrote for the Pilot: "The life and health of a society are the life and health of one creature. The same vitality exists throughout the whole mass. One part cannot suffer without the rest being ultimately injured."<sup>11</sup></p>
<p>1848 June or July</p>	<p>Article on "Political Smashers"</p>	<p>Standard of Freedom</p>	<p>Spencer was in the process of negotiating a position with the Standard where he would contribute weekly leading articles. The negotiations did not pan out, but he did contribute one article.<sup>12</sup></p>
<p>1852 October 11</p>	<p>A Theory of Tears and Laughter</p>	<p>Leader</p>	<p>Spencer's regular articles to the Leader came under the heading "The Haythorne Papers." They were printed anonymously as he did not want his name associated with the socialistic leanings of the paper. Some of his Haythorne Papers were later republished in his <i>Essays</i> as they represent some of his earliest ideas on evolution.<sup>13</sup> <b>Because these articles were published anonymously, they can be absolutely ruled out.</b></p>
<p>1853 February</p>	<p>The Value of Physiology</p>	<p>National Temperance Chronicle</p>	<p>Spencer's uncle was editor of the <i>Chronicle</i> and delayed publication of this article due to a perceived reference to himself to which he took offense.<sup>14</sup></p>

<p>1859 January</p>	<p>The Laws of Organic Form</p>	<p>British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review</p>	<p>Spencer tells us of this article in his Autobiography, "The thesis was that organic forms in general, vegetal and animal, are determined by the relations of the parts to incident forces. Radial symmetry, bilateral symmetry, and asymmetry, alike in stationary and moving organisms, were shown, one or other of them, to become established, according as the parts are similarly disposed towards the environment all round an axis, or similarly disposed on two sides of an axis, or not similarly disposed on any side. The explanation given was that here the necessities entailed by position and there the necessities entailed by locomotion, entailed likenesses between parts which were conditioned in like ways. This general interpretation of external forms was congruous with the more special interpretation of internal forms in the case of the vertebrate skeleton -- an interpretation appended to the critique on Prof. Owen's theory.</p> <p>"A systematized and elaborated statement of the hypothesis set forth in this essay, was in later years incorporated in Part IV. of the Principles of Biology."<sup>15</sup> <b>Spencer's description of the article is characteristic of most of the man's scientific and biological writings. Note the lack of rhetoric or emotion. Biological tracts such as this article can be ruled out.</b></p>
<p>1878 May 30</p>	<p>Letter on the toast of "The Fraternity of the two Nations" proposed at a dinner in Paris</p>	<p>Standard</p>	<p>On 25 January 1878, Spencer, dined in Paris with "a party of 16 professors, journalists and deputies, invited by Baillière [the publisher] to meet [him]. Replying to the toast of his health he proposed 'The Fraternity of the two nations,' commenting on the great importance of cordial relations between France and England."<sup>16</sup> <b>It's hard to imagine why Spencer would want to use a quotation that insinuated anyone's "everlasting ignorance" in such a context. On these grounds I rule this one out.</b></p>

<p>1879 July</p>	<p>Letter to M. Algave about the "Lois Ferry"</p>	<p>Reveu Scientifique</p>	<p>In France, a reactionary member of the Chamber of Duties had been using quotations from one of Spencer's books to support their opposition to the Lois Ferry bills which were related to public education. Spencer wrote the letter to Algave, editor of Reveu Scientifique to correct the impression that this member of the Chamber was giving of Spencer's own opinion.<sup>17</sup> <b>The character of Spencer's letters to editors when correcting errors like this was generally short and to the point. He was not flamboyant, and would give examples of places in his writing that prove that he held a contrary opinion to the one he was being represented as holding.</b></p>
<p>1880 December 26</p>	<p>Letter disclaiming having had to do with "George Eliot's education"</p>	<p>Standard</p>	<p>Spencer left this entire letter in his Autobiography: "SIR, -- Though, as one among those intimate friends most shocked by her sudden death, I would willingly keep silence, I feel that I cannot allow to pass a serious error contained in your biographical notice of George Eliot. A positive form is there given to the belief which has been long current, that I had much to do with her education. There is not the slightest foundation for this belief. Our friendship did not commence until 1851 -- a date several years later than the publication of her translation of Strauss, and when she was already distinguished by that breadth of culture and universality of power which have since made her known to all the world. -- HERBERT SPENCER."<sup>18</sup> <b>The length and tone of this letter is a good example of many of his letters to the editor. Obviously, the "Paley" quotation does not appear in this letter.</b></p>
<p>1882 March 27</p>	<p>Pecuniary liberality of Mr. J.S. Mill</p>	<p>Daily News</p>	<p>When writing his <i>System of Synthetic Philosophy</i> was proving to be an overwhelming financial burden, he announced to his subscribers that he could not afford to follow through on the project. John Stuart Mill generously offered to finance the project until it was accomplished. Spencer declined Mill's generosity, and eventually accepted the efforts of other friends.<sup>19</sup> Mill died in 1873, nine years before this article appeared. Spencer probably wrote this letter to contest some public impression that Mill was miserly or ungenerous.</p>

<p>1883 February 14</p>	<p>Letter on the Edinburgh Review and on the Land Question</p>	<p>St. James' Gazette</p>	<p>An ongoing controversy for Spencer was his views on the nationalization of land. He was strongly opposed to all forms of socialism and from the appearance of his <i>Social Statics</i> (1851), a strong protest against socialism, his views came under scrutiny. Though neither his <i>Autobiography</i> or Duncan's <i>Life and Letters</i> give a summary of this letter to the St. James Gazette, it is definitely related to his opinions on rightful land ownership.</p>
<p>1884 August 8</p>	<p>Letter repudiating opinion attributed to him that we should be all the better in the absence of education</p>	<p>Standard</p>	<p>Spencer's essays on <i>Education</i> were highly influential in the development of progressive education in the United States. Put simply, Spencer opposed common methods of teaching, especially rote memorization of facts. Though neither his <i>Autobiography</i> or Duncan's <i>Life and Letters</i> give a summary of this letter, it is likely a clarification of his views that rote memorization is useless if our hope is to develop creative thinking minds.</p>
<p>1885 June 10 and 13</p>	<p>Letters on the Spencer-Harrison Book</p>	<p>Standard</p>	<p>These letters came at the end of a well-known controversy between Spencer and Frederic Harrison which began in January of 1884. Spencer was publishing chapters of his upcoming <i>Principles of Sociology</i> in the <i>Nineteenth Century</i> in England and in <i>The Popular Science Monthly</i> in America. A chapter that appeared in January 1884 was titled <i>Religion Retrospect and Prospect</i> in which he gave one of his most extensive agnostic treatises. Harrison challenged some of Spencer's assumptions in a later issue of both of these periodicals. The result was an ongoing public dispute in the pages of these journals. In the end, Spencer's American publisher, D. Appleton &amp; Co., had arrange to publish these articles as a book. This was done without Harrison's knowledge who accused Spencer of copyright fraud. Spencer's response to the accusation was to telegram D. Appleton and order them to suppress the book and destroy the stereo plates so it could never be mass produced, to which D. Appleton acquiesced. The <i>Standard</i> published an article telling the story in which they concluded that D. Appleton had actually refused to suppress the book, but that they would arrange for another publisher to print it. Spencer's letters to the <i>Standard</i> in June of 1885 were written to correct this false report.<sup>20</sup> <b>Again, these letters would have been short and to the point, the second of which probably thanked the <i>Standard</i> for correcting their story in the end.</b></p>

<p>1888 February 24</p>	<p>Letter with Reference to his Opinions on Painting</p>	<p>Architect</p>	<p>Though neither his <i>Autobiography</i> or Duncan's <i>Life and Letters</i> give a summary of this letter, Spencer says of painting, "a great divergence from naturalness in any part, so distracts my attention from the meaning or intention of the whole, as almost to cancel gratification."<sup>21</sup> It would not be surprising to find a similar opinion expressed in this letter to Architect, as it fits with his earlier views of architecture and the intimacy of all of his ideas with what he regarded as natural.</p>
<p>1890 February 7</p>	<p>Reasoned Savagery so-called</p>	<p>Daily Telegraph</p>	<p>Spencer's close friend Thomas H. Huxley used the phrase "reasoned savagery" publicly to describe Spencer's political views. This deeply hurt Spencer and he wrote a letter to the Daily Telegraph to challenge the notion that his political views deserved that characterization. Duncan explains: "To realise the bitterness of Spencer's feelings it is necessary to be reminded of the sense of injustice that rankled in his breast on reflecting that, notwithstanding the precept and example of a lifetime in denouncing every form of oppression and injustice, he should be charged with upholding brutal individualism and his views should be branded as 'reasoned savagery.'"<sup>22</sup></p>
<p>1892 December 3</p>	<p>Letter on the sales of his books</p>	<p>Daily Chronicle</p>	<p>In 1892 there was a movement to restore a fixed price system on retail books. This would overturn a free trade system of book sales which had benefited consumers as well as authors since 1852.<sup>23</sup> This letter was likely a response to this movement concerning his own book sales.</p>
<p>1894 Aug- Sept</p>	<p>Letters relating to the Land Question Controversy</p>	<p>Daily Chronicle</p>	<p>Duncan tells us: "When examining Spencer's various utterances on the Land Question in <i>A Perplexed Philosopher</i>, Mr. Henry George went out of his way to ascribe the changes of view to unworthy motives, alleging that [Spencer's] recantation of early opinions had been made with a view to curry favour with the upper classes. This attack upon his character Spencer felt very keenly."<sup>24</sup> These letters were among others that Spencer wrote to other newspapers at this time to describe his actual change of viewpoint and to refute the motives Henry George ascribed to him.</p>
<p>1902 March 1</p>	<p>Ethical Lectureships</p>	<p>Ethics</p>	<p>This was a letter to the editor of <i>Ethics</i> requesting that his name not be listed as a subscriber to the Ethical Lectures Fund. Spencer had previously written privately to the editor requesting that his name no longer be considered for title of a lectureship. He did this because many of the views on ethics expressed in <i>Ethics</i> were not in accordance with his own.<sup>25</sup></p>



## Notes for Appendix B

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- <sup>1</sup> Spencer, Herbert. *An Autobiography*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co., New York. 1904. Vol. I, page 127.
- <sup>2</sup> Carneiro, Robert, and Perrin, Robert. Herbert Spencer's Principles of Sociology: A Centennial Retrospective and Appraisal. *Annals of Science*, 59 (2002), 221-261. Taylor and Francis Ltd. Page 227, footnote 26.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Duncan, David. *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1908. Vol.I, page 43.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., page 44.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., page 52.
- <sup>8</sup> Spencer, Herbert. *An Autobiography*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co., New York. 1904. Vol. I, page 259.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. Pages 231-232.
- <sup>10</sup> Duncan, David. *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1908. Vol.I, page 52.
- <sup>11</sup> Spencer, Herbert. *An Autobiography*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co., New York. 1904. Vol. I, page 291.
- <sup>12</sup> Duncan, David. *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1908. Vol.I, pages 72 and 73.
- <sup>13</sup> Spencer, Herbert. *An Autobiography*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co., New York. 1904. Vol. I, page 447.
- <sup>14</sup> Duncan, David. *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. In two volumes. D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1908. Vol.I, page 89.
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