

Theology and the Literary Scholar: A Review Article

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TWENTY YEARS AGO, one could complete an honours course in English at most universities on this continent without encountering a hint that a knowledge of Christian theology might be useful in reading the works of Chaucer or Spenser or Milton or Swift or Wordsworth. There were rare exceptions; at Toronto, A. S. P. Woodhouse might insist on asking just what Spenser *meant* when he wrote: "If any strength we have, it is to ill, / But all the good is God's, both power and eke will." But usually such passages were passed over with an embarrassed smile, as some sort of obsolete and irrelevant nonsense one had to wade through in order to get at the important things. We read Chaucer for his "humanity," Spenser and Milton for their style, Swift for his "misanthropy," Wordsworth for his "love of nature." Had anyone told us that all these writers had something, and something of overriding importance, in common—that they were Christians, and took their Christianity seriously, and were writing from a Christian, not a pagan, point of view—we should have stared in pitying amazement.

The result of this was a set of fantastic misreadings, some of which still persist. Let me be clear; I am writing here, not as a missionary, but as a student of literature. In that role, what concerns me is not the student's lack of contact with salutary Christian teaching, but the distortion and loss in his *reading*. I should object equally to a student's being allowed to think he had adequately read Aeschylus or Virgil without a grounding in Graeco-Roman theogony and theodicy; though, indeed, most artsmen now probably know rather more about the meanings of *hubris* and *nemesis* than of original sin and justification, and about the genealogy of Venus than of Mary.

The reasons for the neglect of Christian theology in the study of the great English Christian writers are perhaps to be found in the history of English literary study itself. As an academic subject, it is, at most, a century old, and its founders were men whose early training was that of journalists—superior journalists, to be sure: Gosse and Saintsbury, Quiller-Couch and Walter Raleigh. Now theology *is* an intellectual discipline, entailing a certain amount of systematic brain work, such as seldom appeals to journalists and dilettantes. Why spend months, years, trying to arrive at a precise formulation of, say, Shelley's theological and philosophical position, when "chatter about Harriet"—as an old don, opposing the establishment of the English

school at Oxford, put it—will please the customers just as much, and probably more?

In the 1920's and 1930's, in spite of the intellectually fashionable agnosticism of the time, the situation began to change for the better—thanks chiefly, perhaps, to T. S. Eliot, one of the few critics of the last hundred years who have both known their Catechism and Thirty-Nine Articles and been able to read a poem with genuine aesthetic appreciation. Eliot was seconded by a small handful of academics, such as Woodhouse. The tide first began to turn in seventeenth-century studies, for obvious reasons. One cannot get very far into the *Sermons* and *Holy Sonnets* of the Very Reverend John Donne, or the Reverend George Herbert's *The Temple*, without at least a nodding acquaintance with the Creeds and the Prayer Book. It was gradually discovered that, a great deal of the time, Milton and Spenser were talking about similar matters. And so it has come to be accepted that one cannot comprehend the work of the great Renaissance Christian writers without at least some knowledge of the elements of Christian theology.

The outlook is not yet so cheerful in later periods. Critics have seldom suggested that the magnificent conclusion of *The Prelude*, "What we have loved, / Others will love, and we will teach them how," may have some relation to Matthew 22:37-40, and students are still being allowed to think that the "moral" of *The Ancient Mariner* is "Be kind to animals." In eighteenth-century studies, only with painful slowness, the notion is gaining ground that the Very Reverend Dean Swift may have had certain important attitudes in common with the Very Reverend Dean Donne; the amount of nonsense still being written about *Gulliver's Travels*, a straightforward exposition of orthodox Christian morality as presented in a thousand homilies from the time of Augustine on, passes belief.

At long last, a book¹—the first—has been written about the religion of the Christian *par excellence* among eighteenth-century literary figures, Samuel Johnson. Mr. Quinlan is to be commended for actually having *read* and analysed Johnson's fine sermons (two dozen have survived of the forty or so he wrote for his clerical friends—he charged two guineas each, which was a bargain), and pondered his voluminous prayers and meditations, and studied some, at least, of the writers on divinity whom Johnson read. (Although one might wish he had studied more: Bishop Pearson, whose great work on the Creed was a standard exposition throughout the century and whom Johnson recommended to "every man whose faith is yet unsettled"; Barrow, Tillotson, South; above all, Pascal. To select only two—Samuel Clarke and William Law—and devote a whole chapter to each is surely to throw things out of perspective.) Quinlan also deserves thanks for moderating some of the ignorant judgments that used to be made about Johnson: that, because expressions of contrition often appear in his private

1. Maurice J. Quinlan, *Samuel Johnson: A Layman's Religion*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press (Toronto: Burns and MacEachern), 1964. Pp. xv, 240. \$6.95.

prayers, he suffered from "morbidity"; that, because he (sometimes) expressed a degree of tolerance for certain Roman Catholic practices, he was a crypto-Roman Catholic; that, because he displayed concern for the state of his soul after death, he was afflicted by a "neurotic fear of death." Quinlan, rightly I think, blames Boswell for this last distortion (one of so many Boswell was responsible for): "The view that Johnson had an obsession about dying was created largely by Boswell."

And yet, relatively commendable as the book is by the standard of studies of religious questions by literary students, to the serious student of theology it must seem a strange work. To begin with, Mr. Quinlan, who is a professor at Boston College, a Jesuit institution, is not really at home in an Anglican milieu. Theoretically, there is no reason why a Roman Catholic or a Pentecostalist or a Mohammedan, by taking enough time and thought, could not write a perfectly satisfactory account of Johnson's religion. Yet it must be admitted that if one has not spend many years, from childhood on, in the same atmosphere as Johnson, learning the same Catechism, following the same services in the same wonderful English from the same Prayer Book, one is handicapped. To the writer of this article (a lifelong Anglican) it strikes a jarring note to be told of Johnson's "taking the Viaticum" before his death; to have his friend John Taylor described as "a Prebend of Westminster"; to be referred clumsily to "the penitential exercises listed in the Book of Common Prayer, in the section entitled 'The Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper'"² (i.e. the Communion service). When one sees a writer thus struggling with an idiom unfamiliar to him, it tends to diminish one's confidence in his ability to deal with his subject.³

But other oddnesses in the book come, I think, not from Mr. Quinlan's having been brought up in a church other than Johnson's, but rather from the fact that his training as a "literary scholar" makes him approach the whole project of writing a book about religion as though it were foreign territory. The title he gives it is disconcerting—"A *Layman's Religion*." Are there *two* sorts of religion, one for the clergy and another (watered-down, presumably) for the laity? This is certainly no Anglican doctrine, at least. Probably the explanation is rather that Mr. Quinlan, uneasy about

2. The 1662 Revision of the English Book of Common Prayer (that used by Johnson), and eighteenth-century copies of it I have consulted, read "The Order for the Administration," although some nineteenth-century copies read "of." In the extract given on p. 58 from the *Gloria in excelsis* in the Communion service, the text given at the beginning is that of the American Prayer Book of 1789, "O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ"; the 1662 book reads "O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ." Mr. Quinlan nowhere states what Prayer Book (or Books) he is using, whether the English one of Johnson's time or others, merely referring to "the Book of Common Prayer," as though only one existed. There are, of course, important differences in the various forms.

3. Quinlan has an irritating mannerism of referring to the Church of England throughout the book as "the Establishment." The expression was sometimes (though rarely) used in the nineteenth century, usually in a derogatory sense. But one suspects that its frequency here is the result of linguistic "contamination" by its current popularity in a very different meaning.

the whole thing, is trying to commend it to the "literary" public, who might be bored by the thought of having to struggle through all the incomprehensible stuff an ordained clergyman presumably has to believe. Perhaps a similar motive is responsible for some of the "authorities" he introduces to help clarify Johnson's Anglicanism. At the outset, William Law's virtues are guaranteed for us by a testimonial from, of all people, Aldous Huxley. What Mr. Quinlan thinks to be the "Evangelical" doctrine of conversion is expounded to us out of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, with an assist from Mgr. Ronald Knox (a wonderful combination). That staunch agnostic Leslie Stephen is called in to explain the teachings of the Reverend Samuel Clarke. I am not saying that Huxley and Stephen and James are not all right in their place; but I have grave doubts that this is their place. All this, I suppose, is to convince us that one does not have to read theologians to learn theology—if you cannot cope with Aquinas or Barth, Aldous Huxley or Bernard Shaw (also cited) will do as well. This, unfortunately, is what too many literary students have been allowed to believe.

And I think—I devoutly hope—that it is the obsession of the literary scholar that he must discover something *new* about his subject which has led Mr. Quinlan to find that Johnson is a very strange sort of Anglican indeed. He finds that Johnson deviates from orthodoxy in three particulars:

- (a) He does not believe in the doctrine of justification by faith only, as set out in Article XI and the Book of Homilies;
- (b) He does not believe in the doctrine of the Real Presence, as set out in Article XXVIII, the Communion rubrics, and the Catechism;
- (c) "Because Johnson did not, apparently, believe in the propitiatory nature of Christ's sacrifice until late in life, he was inclined to the view that man must alone atone for his sins" (p. 75).

I quote the last hair-raising assertion verbatim; otherwise its existence would be scarcely credible. Mr. Quinlan apparently does not see that, if it were true, it would make Johnson not only not an Anglican, but not a Christian of any kind, rather an adherent of some kind of primitive heathenism. The theological student is warned; this is the kind of thing he may expect to run into when he reads literary scholars struggling with theological matters.

To take up these charges of heresy against Johnson in reverse order—first, what leads Quinlan to believe that Johnson did not (until late in life) hold the fundamental and distinguishing belief of all Christianity, that Christ died for our sins? One piece of evidence is this (p. 56): "Until the last few years of his life, there are relatively few allusions to Christ except in the formal, liturgical ending of [Johnson's] prayers. Despite Law's urging that one address his prayers directly to Christ, Johnson never does." What Quinlan calls "the formal, liturgical ending" (but how can the word "liturgical" be used of *private* prayers?) consists of petitions like these: "[May I] finally obtain mercy and everlasting happiness, for the sake

of Jesus Christ our Lord"; "[May I] obtain life everlasting for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ"; "[May I] be received into thine everlasting kingdom through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ thine only son our Lord and Saviour." Mr. Quinlan apparently thinks these words have no meaning in themselves. If he were familiar with the Order of Service for morning and evening prayer, he would know that *all* the prayers there have the same pattern as Johnson's, being addressed to the Father, with a concluding reference to the mediation of the Son (so do the vast majority of the Collects). Clearly Johnson prefers following the model of the Prayer Book to taking Law's advice:⁴ and why not, unless Mr. Quinlan is going to argue that the doctrine of the Prayer Book is likewise that "man must alone atone for his sins"?

A second line of reasoning is based on Johnson's *Dictionary*. In the entry for "atonement," Quinlan says: "What seems chiefly significant is the passage selected to illustrate how the word is employed. The quotation is . . . from the Old rather than the New Testament" (p. 53). Under "expiatory," he grants, there is "a specific Christian allusion"; but "even here the reference is made, not in the definition, but in the illustrative passage that accompanies it." (Quinlan has forgotten that a few lines earlier it was the illustrative passage that was "chiefly significant.") And so on. Unaccountably, with all the words Quinlan examines in the *Dictionary* to illustrate Johnson's disbelief in Christ's propitiation, he somehow misses "propitiation" itself, which Johnson illustrates by the great text 1 John 2: 1, 2, pronounced at every celebration of the Eucharist: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and *he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*"⁵

4. This is an example of the kind of question-begging reasoning that R. S. Crane complains that literary scholars and historians of ideas are addicted to ("The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas," in J. A. Mazzeo (ed.), *Reason and the Imagination* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1962], pp. 236-242). Quinlan starts with the hypothesis that Johnson implicitly followed Law's guidance in religious matters. Then he encounters a piece of evidence like this one, which goes counter to the hypothesis. But instead of its causing Quinlan to modify the hypothesis, to say that Law was apparently not so all-powerful an influence on Johnson's religious practice as he had earlier assumed, he uses the hypothesis (which by now has mysteriously become no longer hypothesis but established fact), in conjunction with the new piece of evidence, as the basis for a new hypothesis—that Johnson did not believe in Christ's sacrifice—more fantastic than the original one. ("Since we *know* that Law carried great weight with Johnson, and since we here find Johnson doing something against Law's advice, the explanation must be etc., etc.")

5. Mr. Quinlan has a nice talent for selective quotation. On p. 189 he quotes one sentence from the *Quarterly Review* of 1834 to support his contention (which is certainly true) that Johnson did not wait until the year before his death before adopting the doctrine of Christ's propitiation for our sins: "This attempt to persuade us that Dr. Johnson's mind was not made up as to the great fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion until it was forced on him *in extremis* by sectarian or Methodistical zeal, cannot redound to the credit of Mr. Roberts' understanding." So far, so good. But Mr. Quinlan is careful not to quote the continuation, which would be fatal to his own thesis that Johnson in fact "made up his mind" about the doctrine some time between 1773 and 1776, as a result of reading Samuel Clarke. The piece goes on: "If he had condescended to peruse the Doctor's own 'Prayers and Meditations,' he would have found him to have been, as far back as his religious feelings can be traced, fully convinced

Still a third piece of evidence is that at Easter, 1776, Johnson recorded that on hearing "the concluding address to our Saviour" in the Communion service—"O Lord God, Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world"—he was "so mollified" that he could not utter it. Quinlan comments: "Never before had this address, containing in essence the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice, come home to him in its full significance" (p. 58). That it had "never before" happened is a piece of bare-faced "historical fiction" added by Quinlan; Johnson says nothing of the sort.

There is a piece of something like evidence (as distinguished from the fantasy noted in the paragraphs above) that has caused trouble. This is a report by Boswell of a conversation in 1773 that begins:

I spoke of the satisfaction of Christ. He said his notion was that it did not atone for the sins of the world. But by satisfying divine justice, by showing that no less than the Son of God suffered for sin, it showed men and innumerable created beings the heinousness of sin, and therefore rendered it unnecessary for divine vengeance to be exercised against sinners, as it otherwise must have been. In this way it might operate even in favour of those who had never heard of it.

Now Boswell's own theological equipment was not all it might have been (and the accuracy of his reporting is not always to be relied on implicitly, as Quinlan himself points out in connection with other matters), and Quinlan concedes that the report as it stands is puzzling: "In a context in which Johnson appears to be rejecting the idea of a vicarious atonement, it seems strange that he should say Christ's sacrifice 'might operate even in favour of those who never heard of it'" (p. 218). Strange indeed; and perhaps the answer is that it is not in such a context at all. Except for the opening statement, "that it did not atone for the sins of the world," it all seems orthodox enough. As for that statement, there are various possibilities, one that Boswell somehow garbled it (in the printed version of the *Tour to the Hebrides*—the above is from his MS journal—he managed to omit a group of words in the later part of the statement so as to make it nonsense), another that Johnson is here using "atone" ("being at one with") in the sense of "being quantitatively equivalent to"—there seems some support in the *Dictionary* for such a reading. But in no way can the passage be read to support Quinlan's shocking contention that Johnson believed "that it is man alone who must make propitiation for his sins" (p. 55).

Mr. Quinlan worries about Johnson's praying for the dead ("so far as it may be lawful," Johnson always added), and thinks that Johnson "obviously had reservations about Article XXII, which rejects the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory" (p. 153). Mr. Quinlan is not aware that petitions like Johnson's are found in the Burial service: "that we, *with all those that are departed* in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect

of the *propitiatory sacrifice*. In his prayer on his birthday in 1738 . . . he expressly states his hope of salvation to be 'through the *satisfaction* of Jesus Christ.' Presumably the second part of the *Quarterly Reviewer's* comment carries equal evidential weight with the first part.

consummation and bliss . . . in thy eternal and everlasting glory." Johnson's prayers for the welfare of the souls of his dead wife and mother no more imply a belief in purgatory than the Prayer Book petition. He is more categorical when he enters in his index, under "Johnson," "Real Presence: no evidence of belief in." Would he take it as evidence that Johnson learned his Catechism as a child, and that the Catechism contains this:

Q. What is the inward part, or thing signified [in the Lord's Supper]?

A. The inward part or the thing signified in the Lord's Supper is, the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper,

and that Article XXVIII explains, "the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith"? Although, as Quinlan says, in Johnson's two sermons on the Eucharist he emphasizes its commemorative nature, nevertheless in one he makes much of the phrase which follows his text, in 1 Corinthians 11:29, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, *not discerning the Lord's body*," insisting "It is, therefore, the first duty of every Christian to discern the Lord's body" (Sermon XXII), and in the other says that the Sacrament is effective "not only by the new strength which every idea acquires by a new impression . . . but likewise by *the supernatural and extraordinary influences of grace*" (Sermon IX; my italics). Yet Quinlan argues (p. 174): "His silence on the nature of the Eucharist suggests that he did not believe Christ to be present except symbolically." If one cannot distinguish between the concepts of what is "supernatural" (and *real*) and what is merely "symbolical" (or fictitious), one is in a poor position to undertake an exposition of the doctrine of the Real Presence. After pointing out that Johnson rejected transubstantiation on the ground that it imposes too much of a strain on the evidence of one's senses, Quinlan continues (p. 175): "It is possible that his empiricism made it equally difficult for him to subscribe to an Anglican belief in the Real Presence." What possible bearing can empiricism, or the evidence of the senses, have on belief in the Anglican doctrine of the Real Presence?

On these two points—Johnson's alleged rejection of the doctrines of Christ's sacrifice and the Real Presence—Quinlan at least goes through the motions of argument. But the possibility that Johnson could have in any way agreed with his Church's Article XI—

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification—

is brushed aside without a hearing. If Quinlan's position were that Johnson, like some later Anglicans, had serious doubts about the Articles, there would be at least a basis for argument. But, on the contrary, he makes much of Johnson's loyalty to them; he describes at length Johnson's opposition

to a movement to abolish subscription to them as a condition for admission to the universities, and expounds (p. 152): "Even if the boys did not comprehend what they were subscribing to, he reasoned, the custom should be preserved, inasmuch as the Thirty-Nine Articles was a basic document, showing the distinctive beliefs of the Church of England." The fact seems to be that Quinlan is *unaware* that the Articles affirm the doctrine of "justification by faith only" in those very words. Had he looked at Article XI, he might have been moved to turn to the Book of Homilies (which he also seems never to have heard of) and learned from it a little of what the Anglican version of that doctrine entails, about which he seems to be appallingly ignorant—for instance, from Cranmer's Homily of Faith:

True faith doth ever bring forth good works, as St. James saith, Shew me thy faith by thy deeds. Thy deeds and works must be an open testimonial of thy faith; otherwise thy faith, being without good works, is but the devil's faith, the faith of the wicked, a phantasy of faith, and not a true Christian faith.

There is not the slightest evidence that Johnson rejected the doctrine as set forth in the Articles and expounded in the Homilies and by innumerable sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Anglican divines. Neither did Henry Hammond, whom Quinlan quotes as writing, "Faith, in whatever acceptation, is no proper efficient cause of justification." Of course not; does Quinlan think that Cranmer, or Luther, or Wesley, or any other believer in "justification by faith alone" ever maintained that the *efficient* cause of man's justification was anything but the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross? Not, of course, that Johnson's position on justification matters much when Mr. Quinlan assures us that for most of his life he did not even believe in the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. All this is depressing evidence of Mr. Quinlan's lack of the basic knowledge of Christian theology needed to understand the religious position of Johnson, or any other serious and instructed Christian.

Mr. Quinlan quotes William Law's fine declaration:

We must enter into a Catholic affection for all men, love the spirit of the Gospel wherever we see it, not work ourselves into an abhorrence of George Fox or Ignatius Loyola, but be equally glad of the light of the Gospel wherever it shines, or from what quarter it comes.

This was certainly Johnson's own attitude. But it has seldom been that of his students. Quinlan, one is glad to be able to say, is much less inclined than some earlier writers to seize on and play up imagined differences between Johnson and Christians of other traditions. Even so, there is much partisanship in his book. His villains are an unidentified group referred to simply as "the Evangelicals." These are never defined, and their alleged doctrines are never documented from works by specified "Evangelical" writers. Johnson in his last prayer asked forgiveness for his "late conversion." William Cowper wrote to John Newton that he rejoiced to hear of Johnson's "conversion." That both Johnson and Cowper might have known perfectly well what they meant by the word, and used it in the same sense,

Mr. Quinlan will not grant. Cowper was "an Evangelical," Johnson was not; therefore Cowper *must* be using the word in a different sense from Johnson. How does Quinlan go about determining what that sense was? By citation of passages from works by Cowper and Newton? No! (For the good reason that he would not find in their writings any definition of "conversion" differing essentially from the meaning of the word when used by Hammond and other earlier Anglicans.) Instead, he expounds it by quoting William James. "The Puritans," too (who seem almost interchangeable with "the Calvinists"), are ominous figures. As a refutation of contemporary suggestions that Johnson's theology had a strong Calvinistic tinge, Quinlan cites (p. 163) the fact that Johnson refused to attend a "Presbyterian assembly" when he was in Scotland. Can Quinlan be unaware that the word "Presbyterian" refers to a theory of church government, and that the Church of England in the eighteenth century (and earlier) contained many Calvinists as staunchly anti-Presbyterian as Johnson? "Perhaps," Quinlan speculates (p. 159), Johnson "thought of all Puritans as Calvinistic." Perhaps, indeed. If so, however, Quinlan neatly refutes his own earlier contention, for Johnson says in his life of Milton (who was surely a Puritan) that he "appears . . . to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion" and quotes him copiously in his *Dictionary* in illustration of theological terms. It is ironical to find Johnson absolving Milton from heretical peculiarities of opinion, and Quinlan eagerly convicting Johnson of all kinds of them.

There is much other strange theology and church history in the book, if there were space to mention it.⁶ But enough has been said to make it clear that what literary scholarship, at least of the eighteenth century, needs is, first, some elementary instruction of the sort young people used to receive in Sunday School—instruction in creeds, catechisms, sacraments, confessions of belief, the meaning of such terms as faith, grace, justification, sanctification, conversion. There are on the market useful handbooks, for students of literature, on such matters as historical background, the terminology of rhetoric, even—save the mark—Graeco-Roman "theology." Perhaps an enterprising divinity student will some day provide one in the terminology of Christian theology.

And the second thing literary scholarship needs is a radical change in its whole method of inquiry into the religion of Christian writers like Dryden and Swift and Johnson and Cowper. The time is long overdue for the abandonment of the sport of tracing minute imagined differences in doctrine by the use of strained and out-of-context quotations, the triumphant detection of fancied idiosyncrasies, the partisan approach, where the subject is seen against a background of dimly discerned but ominous "bad guys" ("the Puritans," "the Evangelicals," "the Calvinists") struggling against

6. The demonstration (pp. 68-72) that Johnson held "the Roman Catholic belief in the efficacy of both attrition and contrition" is as flimsy as that concerning the other heterodox beliefs imputed to him.

the "good guys" (who of course include the subject and the critic).⁷ What is needed is a return to the ideal of William Law. It was an ideal with which Johnson was profoundly in sympathy—and so, many modern critics to the contrary notwithstanding, was Swift. Had Mr. Quinlan devoted half the time and space he consumes trying to prove Johnson heretical to showing how the basic teachings of Christianity (which Johnson held in common with the great Puritans, the great Evangelicals, the great Catholics) are powerfully illuminated by Johnson's writings, and thus to making those writings more meaningful and more valid for the reader, we should have had the kind of book on Johnson's religion we have long needed and still need.

7. When I recently asked ("Dr. Johnson's 'Late Conversion': A Reconsideration," in M. Wahba (ed.), *Johnsonian Studies* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1962], pp. 61–92) what evidence there was for thinking that Cowper's idea of "conversion" differed from Johnson's (or, for that matter, from Bishop Fulton Sheen's, as expounded in the last three chapters of his *Peace of Soul*, which are an exhortation to conversion), I was rebuked by one of the leading journals of literary scholarship: "Nothing is gained by smothering the traditional theological distinctions and by pointing to undeniable, if frequently only verbal, similarities (otherwise why all the controversies?) between Saint Paul, Augustine, Aquinas . . . the Reverend Billy Graham!" (*Philological Quarterly*, 42 [1963], 357). Let the Vatican Council, and ecumenically minded theologians generally, take heed. To the question "Why all the controversies?" Jonathan Swift had some pungent answers.