

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

Knud Haakonssen

General Editor



Map of Aberdeen

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

Education for Life
Correspondence and
Writings on Religion and
Practical Philosophy

George Turnbull

Edited and with an Introduction
by M. A. Stewart and Paul Wood

Latin texts translated
by Michael Silverthorne

Philosophical Works and Correspondence
of George Turnbull



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INTRODUCTION

Although George Turnbull was a recognized member of the European republic of letters in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, his reputation as an exponent of the moderate Enlightenment was eclipsed soon after his death in 1748. By the turn of the nineteenth century, he had come to be regarded as a figure of little intellectual significance. In 1802, for example, Dugald Stewart indicated that, at most, Turnbull deserved mention as the teacher of Thomas Reid but was otherwise of no interest.¹ Moreover, Stewart's later assertion that the "rise and progress of the Metaphysical Philosophy of Scotland" originated in "the lectures of Dr. Francis Hutcheson, in the University of Glasgow" meant that Turnbull's role in the formation of the Scottish Enlightenment was overlooked by those nineteenth-century writers who championed the merits of the Scottish "school" of philosophy, with the notable exception of James McCosh. McCosh cast Turnbull alongside Hutcheson as a founder of the Scottish "school," yet his positive assessment of Turnbull was largely ignored.² Consequently, Turnbull slipped from view until the latter part of the twentieth century, when David Fate Norton stimulated interest in Turnbull's philosophical writings by situating them in the context of Scottish responses to moral and cognitive scepticism. Turnbull's writings on art theory, education, and natural law also began to receive the attention they deserve, as did his teaching at Marischal College Aberdeen.³ Nevertheless, Turnbull remained a shadowy

1. Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid, D.D., F.R.S.E. Late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow*, in Dugald Stewart, *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart, Esq., F.R.S.S.*, edited by Sir William Hamilton, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1854–60), X:326, note B.

2. Dugald Stewart, in Stewart, *Works*, I:427–28; James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy, Biographical, Expository, Critical, from Hutcheson to Hamilton* (London, 1875), pp. 95–106.

3. The relevant works by David Fate Norton, Vincent Bevilacqua, Carol Gibson-

figure because a number of basic biographical facts had not been established and important facets of his thought had not been explored.

The Travels and Travails of a Man of Letters

James McCosh was the first scholar to research the details of Turnbull's life and writings. But his biography is flawed because he did not have access to some of the most valuable sources of information regarding Turnbull's life, including the surviving correspondence published below. These sources enable us to construct a richer narrative of his life and the context of his work.

George Turnbull was born on 11 July 1698 in Alloa, near Stirling, the son of the clergyman George Turnbull the elder. The younger Turnbull was probably expected to enter the ministry and was sent to the University of Edinburgh in 1711, where he likely finished his courses in the spring of 1716.⁴ He did not graduate formally with his Master of Arts degree after completing his course work and in 1717 entered Edinburgh's divinity school. While studying divinity, he may have been one of the founding members of the Rankenian Club.⁵ In the Club, he was close to his fellow divinity student Robert Wallace, the preacher and later minister William Wishart, the surgeon George Young, and the Edinburgh Professor of Universal History Charles Mackie, although each of these friendships later cooled.⁶ Apparently disillusioned with a career in the Church of Scotland, Turnbull instead sought employment in the Scottish universities and was elected on 14 April 1721 as a regent at Marischal College Aberdeen.⁷

Wood, M. A. Stewart, K. A. B. Mackinnon, Knud Haakonssen, and Paul Wood are listed in the bibliography.

4. Rev. Robert Paul (ed.), "The Diary of the Rev. George Turnbull, Minister of Alloa and Tynninghame, 1657–1704," in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society* 1 (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 308, 376. Turnbull's name appears in the University of Edinburgh matriculation records in the sessions for 1711–12, 1712–13, and 1714–15. In the first two years he was in the Latin class of Laurence Dundas and in 1714–15 he matriculated in the Logic class of Colin Drummond.

5. M. A. Stewart, "Berkeley and the Rankenian Club," *Hermathena*, 139 (1985): 25–45.

6. Robert Wallace later married Turnbull's younger sister Helen in October 1726.

7. *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdoniensis: Selections from the Records of the Marischal College and University MDXCIII–MDCCCLX*, edited by P. J. Anderson, 3 vols. (Aberdeen, 1889–98), II:40; Roger L. Emerson, *Professors, Patronage, and Politics: The*

At Marischal, Turnbull joined a phalanx of young, innovative colleagues, including the distinguished mathematician and leading Newtonian, Colin Maclaurin (1698–1746). Maclaurin was, however, unhappy at Marischal and Turnbull shared his friend's disaffection with academic life at the college. His correspondence shows that in May 1723 he ventured to ask Lord Molesworth to help him find a post as a travelling tutor but without success. In 1724–25 a political battle within the college, which involved both Maclaurin and Turnbull, precipitated their departure. In the spring of 1725 Maclaurin moved to the Edinburgh Chair of Mathematics, while Turnbull took an unofficial leave to become the tutor to Alexander Udny.⁸ Turnbull and Udny travelled to Groningen via London in the autumn of 1725, but Turnbull was forced to return to Marischal because he had not been granted a formal leave.⁹ In January 1726 he was again lecturing and took his class (which included Udny) to graduation in April. Since he was back in Aberdeen in the autumn of 1726, it would seem that he was neither retained by the Udny's nor able to find another position as a tutor. During the ensuing session he put himself forward as a candidate for the vacant Chair of Ecclesiastical History at St. Andrews and solicited the support of Maclaurin and Charles Mackie in Edinburgh.¹⁰ However, his bid for the Chair failed and he decided to abandon academe, if only temporarily. He resigned from Marischal in the spring of 1727 and was given the first honorary Doctor of Laws degree awarded by the college upon his departure.¹¹

Having left Aberdeen, Turnbull became a tutor to Andrew Wauchope of Niddrie. To prepare for travel and study on the continent, Wauchope

Aberdeen Professors in the Eighteenth Century (Aberdeen, 1992), p. 38. Prior to Turnbull's appointment at Marischal he obtained a testimonial letter from his father's presbytery in late March and his Edinburgh Master of Arts degree on 5 April 1721; see "Dunbar and Haddington Presbytery Minutes, 1720–34," National Records of Scotland, MS CH2/99/5, p. 36 (29 March 1721) and "First Laureation Album," Edinburgh University Archives, EUA MS IN1/ADS/STA/1/1, where Turnbull's signature appears against the date he was given his degree.

8. M. A. Stewart, "George Turnbull and Educational Reform," in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, edited by Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 97, 100–101; Emerson, *Professors*, pp. 47–48.

9. See below, pp. 15–18.

10. Roger L. Emerson, *Academic Patronage in the Scottish Enlightenment: Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews Universities* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp. 424–26.

11. Anderson, *Fasti*, II:95.

was enrolled in Mackie's history class at the University of Edinburgh in the autumn of 1727.¹² Three years later we find Turnbull and his pupil in Groningen, where Turnbull attended classes on natural and Roman law.¹³ Turnbull may have kept up his legal studies in the hope of securing another academic appointment because he sounded out Mackie about the possibility of negotiating a deal with Mackie's colleague William Scott which would have seen Turnbull succeed Scott as the Edinburgh Professor of Moral Philosophy.¹⁴ But this scheme also proved abortive and he continued in the employ of the Wauchope family. By October 1730, Turnbull and Wauchope had left the United Provinces and were in Paris en route to Italy. In the French capital Turnbull socialized with Dr. (later Sir) John Pringle and apparently visited the Chevalier Ramsay as well as other scholars to whom he was introduced by letters from Colin Maclaurin.¹⁵ A year later, Turnbull was in the south of France and disillusioned with the life of a travelling tutor. Although he was enjoying the company of another tutor, the Cambridge classicist Jeremiah Markland, he reported to Mackie that he would not be going to Italy as initially planned and that he expected to be in England by the spring of 1732. Turnbull was anxious to find another pupil and asked Mackie to put out feelers on his behalf.¹⁶ Mackie did so, only for Turnbull to reject the offer of a position when he arrived back in London in May 1732. Moreover, Turnbull now chose not to return to Scotland, presumably because he believed his prospects were better in England.¹⁷

Turnbull's last surviving letters to Mackie speak of repeated disappointment and chart the decline of his friendships with Mackie and Maclaurin. By September 1733 Maclaurin was no longer responding to his letters, and there appears to have been no further contact between Mackie and Turnbull after this date.¹⁸ Turnbull was now entirely reliant upon the assistance of

12. Stewart, "Turnbull and Educational Reform," p. 101.

13. See below, p. 20.

14. See below, pp. 21–22.

15. See below, pp. 23–25. For a fragment of a letter of introduction from Maclaurin see *The Collected Letters of Colin Maclaurin*, edited by Stella Mills (Nantwich, 1982), pp. 147–48.

16. See below, p. 26.

17. See below, pp. 28–29.

18. See below, p. 31.

his English patrons and his circle of fellow Scots in the metropolis, which included the poet James Thomson, the physician Alexander Stuart, and his old friend from Edinburgh William Wishart.¹⁹ Although still willing to be a tutor, he decided to take orders in the Anglican Church. To that end, he matriculated at Exeter College Oxford in 1733 and was granted a Bachelor of Civil Law degree.²⁰ He may have been encouraged in his decision by the Low Churchman and soon to be Bishop of Derry, Thomas Rundle, who had affiliations with Exeter College and was an associate of James Thomson, William Wishart, and one of Turnbull's English patrons Charles Talbot.²¹ Turnbull's defense of the credibility of Christ's miracles and his attack on the Deist Matthew Tindal in his early pamphlets on religion would have received a sympathetic reading from Rundle, who likewise defended the reasonableness of Christianity against Deists like Tindal. Moreover, Turnbull's pamphlets would have put him in good stead with Low Churchmen more generally in his search for preferment. Nevertheless, Turnbull failed to find long-term employment in the years 1733 to 1735 and was obliged to accept an offer to become a travelling tutor for the future third earl of Rockingham, Thomas Watson.²² Unfortunately their Grand Tour is poorly documented. The travel diaries of Alexander Cunyngham (later Sir Alexander Dick) record that he and the artist Allan Ramsay socialized with Watson and Turnbull in Rome in December 1736.²³ Otherwise we know little about their itinerary or the duration of their trip.

19. On Thomson see James Sambrook, *James Thomson 1700–1748: A Life* (Oxford, 1991), p. 155. Turnbull probably first met Thomson in Paris in the winter of 1730, when Thomson was there as a travelling companion to Charles Richard Talbot, the son of the then solicitor-general.

20. Turnbull had also received a Doctor of Laws degree from Edinburgh on 13 June 1732; David Laing, *A Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity, and Law, of the University of Edinburgh, since its Foundation* (Edinburgh, 1858), p. 256. See also Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1715–1886: The Parentage, Birthplace, and Year of Birth, with a Record of Their Degrees*, 4 vols. (Oxford and London, 1888), IV:1448.

21. On Rundle and Talbot, see the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB).

22. George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom*, edited by Vicary Gibbs, revised edition, 12 vols. (London, 1910–59), XI:59.

23. *Curiosities of a Scots Charta Chest, 1600–1800. With the Travels and Memoranda of Sir Alexander Dick, Baronet of Prestonfield, Midlothian Written by Himself*, edited by the Honourable Mrs. Atholl Forbes (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 114.

Prior to leaving London, Turnbull subscribed to the fledgling Society for the Encouragement of Learning, which eventually began formal meetings in May 1736. Initially the Society's membership was largely made up of antiquarians and Scots living in London, leavened with a few Jacobites, physicians, and men of science.²⁴ Turnbull's involvement in the Society marks a turning point in his career, for he now began to move in the circles of virtuosi and antiquarians in the metropolis centered on Dr. Richard Mead. It is unclear when Turnbull first met Mead, but by the late 1730s Turnbull had access to Mead's spectacular library and collections. Turnbull cultivated Mead's patronage, not least in dedicating his *Three Dissertations* (1740) to Mead.²⁵ Mead, however, rebuffed Turnbull's overtures. Consequently, Turnbull remained on the periphery of the metropolitan antiquarian community.²⁶ By contrast, in 1737 Turnbull succeeded in befriending Mead's close associate, the Rev. Thomas Birch. Turnbull probably first encountered Birch in the Society for the Encouragement of Learning and, in 1739, Turnbull turned to Birch for help with his ordination as an Anglican priest.²⁷ Even though Turnbull did not understand the mechanics of the process, he managed to be ordained by one of the leading Low Churchmen of the day, the Bishop of Winchester, Benjamin Hoadly, to whom he had apparently been introduced by the Bishop's protege and Birch's friend, Arthur Ashley Sykes.²⁸

Faced with an uncertain future, Turnbull turned to his pen to improve

24. Clayton Atto, "The Society for the Encouragement of Learning," *The Library*, 4th series, 19 (1938): 263–88. Turnbull had signed on as a subscriber by 1 August 1735 and he began attending the Society's meetings on 7 April 1737; see British Library, Additional Manuscripts 6184, fol. 2v, and "Memoirs of the Society for the Incouragement of Learning taken from the Register of Their Meetings, and Minute Books of the Committee," BL Add. Mss 6185, p. 34.

25. See below, pp. 281–86.

26. His marginality is reflected in the fact that he failed in his bid to replace the Scottish antiquary Alexander Gordon as Secretary of the Society for the Encouragement of Learning in 1739; see below, pp. 34–35.

27. See below, pp. 35–36.

28. See below, p. 38. For a helpful discussion of the steps involved in ordination, see W. M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 31–37. Birch had been ordained by Hoadly; A. E. Gunther, *An Introduction to the Life of the Rev. Thomas Birch D.D., F.R.S., 1705–1766* (Halesworth, 1984), p. 8.

his finances. In 1739 he published a greatly expanded third edition of his popular pamphlet, *A Philosophical Enquiry concerning the Connexion betwixt the Doctrines and Miracles of Jesus Christ*, as well as his *Treatise on Ancient Painting*. The year 1740 saw the appearance of *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, his *Three Dissertations*, and *An Impartial Enquiry into the Moral Character of Jesus Christ*. A spate of books followed in 1741, including his heavily annotated translation of Johann Gottlieb Heineccius's *A Methodical System of Universal Law*, his repackaging of the plates from the *Treatise of Ancient Painting* under the title *A Curious Collection of Ancient Paintings*, and his student edition of Marcus Junianus Justinus's history. Then, in 1742, he produced his last major publications, his *Observations upon Liberal Education, in all its Branches* and his abortive translation of Blainville's *Travels*. Most of these works reveal that Turnbull was desperately, and largely unsuccessfully, searching for patronage. He dedicated his books to a number of prominent public figures, notably his old acquaintance the Bishop of Derry, Thomas Rundle, and the Duke of Cumberland. The Duke did not accept Turnbull as a client, but his brother and rival, Frederick Lewis, the Prince of Wales, appointed Turnbull as his chaplain in 1741. Turnbull moved to Kew, where the Prince had his primary residence outside of London, and set himself up as a schoolmaster.²⁹ Rundle rewarded Turnbull in 1742 by making him rector of the remote rural parish of Drumachose, County Derry, to which he apparently travelled since he was in Dublin, probably in 1742 or 1743.³⁰

None of Turnbull's correspondence survives from this point onward, and hence the details of his life become increasingly obscure. We know that he made a further trip on the Grand Tour with Horatio Walpole, the eldest son of the politician Horatio or Horace Walpole.³¹ Turnbull and Walpole

29. See below, p. 40, and Stephen Duck, *Hints to a School-Master. Address'd to the Revd. Dr. Turnbull* (London, 1741).

30. An undated letter from the Dublin physician James Arbuckle (1700–1746) to the Rev. Thomas Drennan (1696–1768) in Belfast bears the added inscription "to the Care of the Revd Dr Turnbull." The letter thus suggests that Turnbull visited Dublin (where he was likely inducted as rector of his parish by Rundle) and Belfast while en route to Drumachose. See James Arbuckle to Thomas Drennan, undated, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, MS D531/2A/3.

31. The elder Walpole was the brother and political ally of Sir Robert Walpole.

set out in October 1744 and visited Milan and Turin before residing in Florence from June 1745 until April 1746. For much of the time Turnbull suffered from a debilitating attack of what he described as “rheumatism,” a condition that had already afflicted him in 1739.³² His illness became so severe that in January 1746 the British resident in Florence, Sir Horatio Mann, confided to the young Walpole’s cousin, Horace Walpole, that Turnbull was “in a bad way, and I don’t believe will recover.”³³ But despite being incapacitated, Turnbull went to Rome with Walpole because he had been engaged by Horatio Walpole senior and the Duke of Newcastle to gather intelligence about the Jacobite uprising launched in Britain in the summer of 1745. After a period in the Eternal City, Turnbull and Walpole went on to Naples before returning to England in the spring of 1747.³⁴ Turnbull then drops entirely from view until his death from unspecified causes in the Hague on 31 January 1748. What took him to the United Provinces is unknown, but it is said that he was again spying on exiled Jacobites for the British government.³⁵

Turnbull’s Place in the Enlightenment

Turnbull’s intellectual identity was defined by his formative experiences as a student at Edinburgh and his understanding of the relations between the different branches of human learning. At the turn of the eighteenth century, proponents of what we now identify as Enlightenment in Europe were consolidating their hold over the cultural institutions of Edinburgh.³⁶ Thanks to the Gregory family, the University became a bastion of Newtonianism in the 1690s, while other parts of the curriculum were gradually updated, especially following the adoption of the professorial system of teaching in 1708. When Turnbull arrived in 1711, he would have encoun-

32. See below, p. 40.

33. Mann to Walpole, 4 January 1746, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, edited by W. S. Lewis, 48 vols. (New Haven, 1937–83), XIX:192.

34. *Walpole Correspondence*, XIX:184, note 12; John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701–1800* (New Haven and London, 1997), p. 976.

35. *The London Magazine: Or, Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*, 17 (1748): 236.

36. Roger L. Emerson, “Sir Robert Sibbald, Kt, the Royal Society of Scotland, and the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Annals of Science* 45 (1988): 41–72.

tered a residue of scholasticism mixed with newer currents of thought, including the natural law theories of Grotius and Pufendorf. He would also have been given a good grounding in Greek and Latin; significantly, his Latin professor, Laurence Dundas, apparently used Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus's *Philippic Histories*, which Turnbull subsequently edited.³⁷ Turnbull then studied divinity under the Principal, the Rev. William Wishart, and the Professor of Divinity, the Rev. William Hamilton. Wishart was an orthodox Calvinist who had been sympathetic to the Covenanters in his early years, whereas Hamilton was said to have instilled in his pupils "moderation and a liberal manner of thinking upon all subjects."³⁸ Outside of the classroom, Hamilton's moderate form of Presbyterianism seems to have inspired the discussion of religious topics in the Rankenian Club.

We know little about the proceedings of the Club. Comments made by Robert Wodrow in the mid-1720s show that the Rankenians were known to be critical of orthodox Calvinism.³⁹ A manuscript dating from before 1720 by Wallace challenging the use of "Creeds or Confessions of faith" and Turnbull's contemporaneous manuscript on civil religion published below, indicate that they debated whether the state or a national church can legitimately regulate religious belief.⁴⁰ These manuscripts show that the Rankenians registered not only the case for religious toleration advanced by John Locke, but also the arguments involved in the Bangorian Controversy sparked by Benjamin Hoadly and the disputes over subscription to formulas such as the Westminster Confession of Faith that had recently flared up in Ireland, England, and Scotland.⁴¹ Moreover, Turnbull's letter

37. For a detailed discussion of the Edinburgh curriculum in Turnbull's day see M. A. Stewart, "Hume's Intellectual Development, 1711–1752," in *Impressions of Hume*, edited by M. Frasca-Spada and P. J. E. Kail (Oxford, 2005), pp. 11–25.

38. [James Oswald], *Letters concerning the Present State of the Church of Scotland, and the Consequent Danger to Religion and Learning, from the Arbitrary and Unconstitutional Exercise of the Law of Patronage* (Edinburgh, 1767), p. 23.

39. Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: Or, Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences; Mostly Relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*, 4 vols. (Glasgow, 1842–43), III:175.

40. Robert Wallace, "A Little Treatise against Imposing Creeds or Confessions of Faith on Ministers or Private Christians as a Necessary Term of Laick or Ministerial Communion," Edinburgh University Library, MS La II 620/18.

41. Colin Kidd, "Scotland's Invisible Enlightenment: Subscription and Heterodoxy

to John Toland written in 1718 (below, pp. 3–4) suggests that the club members were exploring the writings of Toland and other English Deists and flirting with radical Enlightenment ideas. The place of religion in society and the credibility of Christianity continued to preoccupy Turnbull over the next two decades. His letters to Molesworth show that in private he echoed the Deists in railing against priestcraft and the imposition of creeds, and that he had read Anthony Collins.⁴² But Turnbull was also a theist who maintained that the design and order of the moral and natural realms evinced in the work of Newton refuted “atheism,” in both its ancient and modern forms.⁴³ Moreover, in the early 1720s he was already familiar with the debate over miracles sparked by Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670), which rumbled across Europe for a century.

Turnbull entered this debate in *A Philosophical Enquiry concerning the Connexion betwixt the Doctrines and Miracles of Jesus Christ*, which appeared anonymously in 1731 while he was on the continent. The *Enquiry* was ostensibly a letter written “to a Friend” dated 10 April 1726 (that is, while he was still teaching at Marischal College) and signed “Philanthropos” (lover of humanity). In the “Advertisement” to the first two impressions of the pamphlet he explained that he had delayed publication because he had

expect[ed] to see a Discourse upon Miracles, promised by the Author of the *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, [but] does not know whether that Discourse is at last published or not, [or] whether a late Book entitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, takes any notice of miracles; and is, in one word, an utter stranger to what has been publish’d in *England* for two years past.⁴⁴

The “Author” referred to here was Anthony Collins, and Turnbull’s puzzlement was genuine because Collins mentions his “Discourse upon Mir-

in the Eighteenth Century Kirk,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 30 (2000): 28–59; M. A. Stewart, “Rational Dissent in Early Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 42–63; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978–95), 1:371–82.

42. See below, pp. 10, 13–14.

43. See especially Turnbull’s graduation theses, below pp. 43–74.

44. [George Turnbull], *A Philosophical Enquiry concerning the Connexion betwixt the Doctrines and Miracles of Jesus Christ. In a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1731), p. [iii].

acles” in *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* (1726), but the “Discourse” remained unpublished at Collins’s death in December 1729.⁴⁵ The *Enquiry* was thus most likely initially conceived as a response to Collins’s argument that miracles were no proof of the truth of Christianity, which he likewise advanced in *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724) and the *Scheme*. Turnbull may also have been prompted to publish because of the furor over Thomas Woolston’s six discourses on Christ’s miracles published in the years 1727 to 1729. Woolston’s pamphlets, his imprisonment for blasphemy in 1729, and the deluge of attacks on him ensured any contribution to the dispute over miracles a wide readership, which the *Enquiry* evidently enjoyed. And although Turnbull did not fundamentally alter the miracles debate the way Hume later did, his ingenious argument that Christ’s miracles provided “experimental” or empirical proof of the truth of His teachings was a striking attempt to show that belief in the miraculous foundations of Christianity was as rational as a belief in the truth of Newtonian natural philosophy.⁴⁶

Turnbull and his bookseller likewise took advantage of the controversy aroused by Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730) by publishing *Christianity Neither False nor Useless, Tho’ Not as Old as the Creation* as a pendant to the *Enquiry*. Turnbull here insists that in humanity’s fallen state, unaided reason can discover the basic principles of morality, but not establish the truth of the doctrines of the resurrection, a future state, the forgiveness of sins, and divine rewards and punishments. These doctrines, he argues, are necessary to “enforce sufficiently upon [human-kind] obedience” to the law of nature; hence we need revelation to assist us in the pursuit of virtue. Against Tindal, he maintained that the moral teachings of Christianity amount to more than simply the dictates of natural law, and that miracles are not only credible but also provide us with the necessary evidence of the truth of revelation.⁴⁷ *Christianity Neither False nor Useless* was thus not merely a cynical attempt to promote the *Enquiry*

45. [Anthony Collins], *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered; in a View of the Controversy, Occasioned by a Late Book, Intituled, A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. ([The Hague], 1726), II:420.

46. See below, pp. 91–170.

47. See below, pp. 177, 182–83, 191–93.

among readers of Tindal.⁴⁸ Rather, Turnbull's pamphlet is intellectually significant because it underlines his debt to Samuel Clarke's blend of rational Christianity and moderate Enlightenment.

Turnbull's indebtedness to Clarke resurfaced in his last pamphlet, *An Impartial Enquiry into the Moral Character of Jesus Christ* (1740). Turnbull elaborated on Clarke's assertion that Christ's spotless character showed that he was "neither an *Imposter* nor an *Enthusiast*," and that Jesus' moral integrity "add[s] great Weight and Authority to his Doctrine, and make[s] his own Testimony concerning himself exceedingly credible."⁴⁹ Using the epistolary form, Turnbull addresses himself to a Deist and endeavors to persuade this imaginary friend that Christ was an even greater teacher of morality than Socrates and that Christ's exemplary behavior and good works attested to his divine mission. Turnbull was implicitly arguing that Christ's unimpeachable character and his miracles constitute "extrinsic" evidence for the truth of Christianity which complements the "intrinsic" evidence derived from the excellence of his teachings. Together, this evidence suffices to persuade the candid unbeliever of the reasonableness of Christian belief.⁵⁰ With the *Impartial Enquiry* (and *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*), therefore, Turnbull's protracted dialogue with Deism and his public defense of the reasonableness of Christianity (and hence of the moderate Enlightenment) came to an unresolved end.

Turnbull's apologetic agenda in his writings on religion was set while he was a student in Edinburgh. His Aberdeen graduation theses, which doc-

48. See also on p. 187 the puff for his friend and brother-in-law Robert Wallace's *The Regard due to Divine Revelation, and to Pretences to It, Considered* (London, 1731).

49. Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion*, seventh edition (London, 1728), pp. 370–71.

50. In making this distinction Turnbull drew on the Port-Royal Logic, first published in 1662; Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking: Containing, Besides Common Rules, Several New Observations Appropriate for Forming Judgment*, translated and edited by Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge, 1996), p. 264. The distinction subsequently became a standard one in the apologetic literature in Scotland; see, for example, Alexander Gerard, *Dissertations on Subjects Relating to the Genius and Evidences of Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1766), pp. ix–x, and James Beattie, *Evidences of the Christian Religion; Briefly and Plainly Stated*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1786), I:12.

ument the transformation of the curriculum at Marischal College in the 1720s, likewise show that his teaching reflected his studies at the University of Edinburgh and his conversations in the Rankenian Club.⁵¹ The theses demonstrate that much like his colleagues he was conversant with a wide range of ancient and modern writers and that he incorporated the ideas of Bacon, Descartes, Locke, and Newton into his lectures. But the theses also indicate that his courses differed significantly from those of the other regents. First, his topics for student disputations contain little on metaphysics and logic, which suggests that he limited the time spent on these subjects. It seems, therefore, that he went further than some of his colleagues in removing scholastic remnants from the curriculum. Second, as noted, the theses reveal his preoccupation with countering the threat of irreligion. Such apologetics was by no means novel, for the primary aim of a university education was to inculcate sound moral and religious principles. The formulation of his argument was, however, original because he relied exclusively on the argument from design to refute atheism and he blended Newton's theocentric vision of the physical universe with Shaftesbury's conception of a benevolent natural and moral order to illustrate the design in nature.⁵² Third, the disputation topics set in 1726 imply that his teaching of ethics and politics was framed in terms of the natural law tradition. Regents in the two Aberdeen colleges had drawn on the writings of Grotius and Pufendorf from the latter part of the seventeenth century onward, but it was Turnbull (along with his fellow regent at Marischal David Verner) who did most to recast the study of moral philosophy in the mold of natural law.⁵³ Last, Turnbull was the first Scottish regent or professor to state explicitly that moral philosophy ought to be studied using the same method as that employed by Newton in natural philosophy. Much had been made

51. Paul Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1993), pp. 35–49.

52. See below, pp. 43–74.

53. See below, pp. xxxi, 73–74; Wood, *Aberdeen Enlightenment*, pp. 6, 39–40, 46, 60. It is telling that Turnbull later said that he lectured on pneumatology at Marischal “by way of preparative to a course of lectures, *on the rights and duties of mankind*.” That is, he taught natural law and saw it as being founded on the science of human nature. See George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, edited by Alexander Broadie, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, 2005), I:17.