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The citeable version of record will appear on Project Muse in Hume Studies 52(2) in spring of 2027.

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Abstract: In late 1739, less than a year after the first two Books of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* were published, a review of this work appeared in *The History of the Works of the Learned*. It is now widely accepted that William Warburton was (very) likely the author of this early review. Although this paper will add some further evidence in support of this conjecture, it is primarily concerned to consider the historical and philosophical significance of this review for our understanding of Hume's philosophy and its early reception. A central thread running throughout this paper is the relevance of Hume's Scottish context for an understanding of these matters. Warburton's dismissive and contemptuous review of Hume's *Treatise* was, it is argued, intimately connected with the Borders debate in Scotland during the 1730s. The principal figures involved in this (heated) debate were Andrew Baxter and William Dudgeon. That debate became part of the essential fabric of Hume's philosophical context when he was planning the *Treatise* in Chirnside the late 1720s and early 1730s. The general framework in which all this took place was the wider debate about atheism in the early Enlightenment. All of this is fundamental to understanding Hume's philosophy, the figures and debates that shaped it, and the reception that it received throughout Hume's life.

Keywords: Hume, David; Hume, biography; atheism; liberty and necessity; Warburton, William; Baxter, Andrew; Dudgeon, William; Enlightenment; God, cosmological argument; Clarke, Samuel;

> There is a book, published two or three years, in 4to, called 'An Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul.' It is a master-piece in its kind. I am told it is wrote by one Baxter.
>
> – William Warburton (24th October, 1737; Nichols 1817, 2:74)

In November and December of 1739, less than a year after the first two Books of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* were published, a review of this work appeared in *The History of the Works of the Learned* (353–90 and 391–404; Feiser 1999, 3:3–40). The review was not only the most substantial early review, it was also notably critical and hostile. Although the author of the review was anonymous, it has long been conjectured that it was written by William Warburton, a prominent figure in the Church of England and a notoriously aggressive defender of the Christian religion.[1] Over the years there has been some debate about the identity of the author but now there is a general consensus that Warburton was (very) likely the author. This paper will introduce some additional evidence in support of the case for attributing the review to Warburton but, for the most part, it will take the case for Warburton's authorship to be well-established.[2]

[1] An article on Hume in Chalmers' *General Biographical Dictionary* has "no hesitation in ascribing [this review] to Warburton" (1814, 18:304).

[2] Among those who accept this conjecture are Kemp Smith (1941, 522-23) and Mossner (1980, 617-18). A strong case in favour of this view, along with a helpful account of the case for and against, has been made recently by

Granted that Warburton was the author of the early review, we still need to ask what the historical and philosophical significance of this review is for our understanding of Hume's philosophy and its early reception. A central thread running throughout this paper is the relevance of Hume's Scottish context for an understanding of these matters. What is of particular importance was the heated debate about "atheism" that took place in the Scottish Borders during the late 1720s and 1730s. This debate occurred at a crucial time, when Hume resided in Chirnside and the project of the *Treatise* began to take shape. At the time that Warburton wrote his review he became involved with the two principal "antagonists" concerned, Andrew Baxter and William Dudgeon. In relation to this debate, Hume's and Warburton's philosophical commitments and allegiances were directly opposed. It may be argued, in light of this, that Warburton may well have been aware of Hume's identity as the author of the *Treatise*. More importantly, whether Warburton was aware of Hume's identity or not, his response to Hume's work is consistent with, and reflects, his own connections and involvement in the Borders' controversy concerning "atheism." Clearly, these observations relating to Warburton and the Scottish debate about atheism are essential to our understanding of the early reception of Hume's philosophy and also to its interpretation.

1. Warburton and "the Tribe of Freethinkers"

There can be no doubt about Warburton's considerable reputation during the middle decades of the 18th century.[3] His reputation was based largely on the success of his influential writings, many later collected in WW,[4] which were notoriously dogmatic and aggressive.[5] His fundamental aim in these works was to defend the truth and doctrines of the Christian religion and the Anglican establishment. The primary targets of his polemics were "the tribe of freethinkers" and "atheists" whose writings had attracted followers and adherents over the preceding century.[6] At the head of this tradition were Hobbes and Spinoza.[7] Among the doctrines that Warburton was especially concerned to vindicate against sceptical attack were the immortality of the soul and a future state, free will, and revealed religion – all of which he considered essential to true religion.

The thinkers with whom Warburton most closely aligned himself were John Locke and Samuel Clarke.[8] Clarke is routinely praised, cited and represented in the most flattering terms throughout Warburton's writings. What Warburton shared with Clarke, Locke, and other like-minded figures in latitudinarian and Newtonian tradition, was the core ambition to defend the Christian religion against the rising tide of "infidelity" and "atheism" (for example, WW 1:163 and

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Coventry, Mazza, and Mori (2024).

[3] It has been said of Warburton that he was over-estimated during his lifetime and underestimated after it (Evans, 1932, 1). Warburton was appointed Bishop of Gloucester in 1759.

[4] References to *The Works of William Warburton*, above and hereafter WW, are to volume and page numbers of Warburton, 1811-1841.

[5] "For many years together Warburton led the life of a terrier in a rat-pit, worrying all theological vermin." (Stephen 1962 1:293).

[6] Warburton referred to "the whole tribe of Free-thinkers" at WW 5:151. In his *Commentary on Pope* Warburton spoke of "the torrent of Impiety" at this time and stated that he had "declared eternal war" on the freethinkers, who he "esteems no better than the pests of society" (WW 11:21 and 4:30). Warburton's Dedication to *Divine Legation* suggests that he lived in an age that had a "strange propensity to infidelity" (WW 1:142).

[7] Warburton, like many of his contemporaries closely linked Hobbes and Spinoza as the two leading atheists of the period. (On Hobbes importance in this tradition see WW 4:31.) Hobbes and Spinoza's most influential freethinking followers included Shaftesbury, Bayle, Toland, Collins, Tindal, and Mandeville. All were also prominent targets of Warburton's polemics.

[8] See, for example, WW 1:159n, 162-64, 174; 2:215; 5:200; 6:340; , 9:224; 12:104, 149, 197, 242, 265; 13:362-68. Several other thinkers, associated with the latitudinarian and Newtonian tradition, are also praised by Warburton. This includes Cudworth, Cumberland, and Wollaston. Joining them at the top of Warburton's list, is Andrew Baxter, a prominent Scottish disciple of Clarke's.

4:30–2). Clarke's reputation rested to a considerable extent on his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, his Boyle Lectures of 1704-05.[9] The subtitle of Clarke's *Demonstration* was in "Answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers." Clarke's Demonstration was widely regarded as the most distinguished of the Boyle Lectures and it enjoyed enormous influence throughout much of the 18th century.[10] Warburton's philosophical and theological orientation and aims were entirely consistent with those of Clarke. Clarke's defence of the Christian religion, in his *Demonstration* and elsewhere, focused on issues of proving (demonstrably) the being and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of a future state, free will, and the absolute and eternal distinction between right and wrong in morals. All this constituted the basic fabric of Warburton's theological outlook and philosophical concerns (for example, WW 13:358–68).

Warburton's first major work was *The Alliance of Church and State*, published in 1736. In this work Warburton argued that Church and State are independent societies that voluntarily associate or unite in order to better realize their distinct ends (i.e. the salvation of souls and serving our temporal interests). It is on this basis that Warburton defended the Established Church and the Test Act (Sorkin 2008, 25–39; Taylor 1992). The argument of the *Alliance*, as Warburton made clear, led him directly into *The Divine Legation of Moses*, his most influential work.[11] In the Dedication of *Divine Legation*, Warburton addressed his remarks to "the Free-Thinkers" and made clear that his work is a response to the view that revealed religion is, at best, unnecessary and, more generally, unbelievable and corrupting.[12] His argument begins by way showing "the Usefulness of religion to Society" (WW 4:29). In general, it was Warburton's aim in the *Divine Legation* to vindicate revealed religion, the doctrine of a future state, and the Mosaic foundation of Christianity. To this end Warburton claimed to present a "demonstration" that is "as strong … as any of Euclid's" (WW 6:109; also 1:199-200].[13]

A core theme that the *Alliance* and *Divine Legation* share concerns the importance and necessity of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, which is not only essential to religion but also essential to morality and society.[14] While Warburton attached importance to liberty and freedom of the press, he condemned its abuse by freethinkers (WW 1:178). Although toleration is to be encouraged, attacks on the clergy and the fundamental articles of religion (e.g. the existence of God, a future state, etc.) may pose a threat to morality and society. At that point, views of this nature are, Warburton maintained, a legitimate matter of concern for the civil authorities (WW 1:144,159, 165, 179; 7:41-48).[15]

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[9] The title of Clarke's first series of lectures (1704) was *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*. The second series was titled *A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*.

[10] Clarke's reputation can be gauged in any number of works and commentaries during the first half of the 18th century. See, for example, the remarks in an article on Clarke in *Biographia Britannica* (Kippis 1784, 3:607): "Dr. Clarke's Treatise on the Being and Attributes of God, and on the Evidences of Natural and revealed religion, is a production of great importance in the annals of English literature[.]"

[11] Warburton's *Divine Legation* was published in two volumes. The first volume (published in 1738) contains Books I-III of *Divine Legation* and the second volume (published in 1741) contains Books IV-VI. Warburton planned a third volume of this work which was never completed. A fragment of this final part was published in 1788, nine years after he died. On the importance of Warburton's *Divine Legation* in the 18th century context see Evans (1932, 52): "For few English books in the eighteenth century attracted more general and immediate attention[.]"

[12] See, in particular, Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation*, which was published in 1730. Tindal's book was widely debated and attracted a great deal of controversy and criticism in the decade that followed its publication.

[13] For an account of Warburton's central argument in defence of the claim that "the Mosaic dispensation" was of divine origin see Evans (1932, 52-3): "The main thesis of *The Divine Legation* is both simple and ingenious[.]" For a different assessment of the merits of Warburton's core argument see Stephen (1962, 1:300).

[14] Freethinkers and atheists, such as Bayle and Mandeville, were particular targets of Warburton's criticism since they encouraged the (false) view that a society of atheists might be viable (WW 1:226, 246, 280; 3:228, 246).

[15] Warburton views on the subject of toleration are broadly in line with those of Locke, to whom he referred his readers on this subject WW 7:43). The relevant boundary for tolerance is when the views being expressed pose a threat to the social order. Plainly "atheists" and freethinkers, such as Bayle, would have denied that atheism has any

2. Warburton and Baxter's "Master- Piece"

In 1733 the Scottish philosopher Andrew Baxter published *An Enquiry into the Human Soul*.[16] The fundamental aim of this work is to "confute atheists" by way of arguing from the inactivity or *vis inertiae* of matter. According to Baxter, this is the "shortest" way to defeat and discredit the atheism of Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers (1733, 1:79-85). Baxter's general line of argument is modelled closely after Clarke's argument *a priori* (Baxter 1733, 1:95-101). Baxter's *Enquiry* was widely praised and highly regarded by many of his own contemporaries.[17] Among several replies to Baxter's work was Jackson (1735). Jackson was an active and influential defender of Clarke's philosophy. He summarized his assessment of Baxter's work in the following terms:

> ... the main Design of his Work, ... is to confute *Atheism* by a Demonstration of the *universal* providence of an Omnipotent and All-wise Agent distinct from, and independent of *Matter*, and who is the *Creator, Preserver*, and *Director* of it. This Argument he has handled with great Judgment and Learning; and has so demonstrably confuted the Scheme of *Atheism*, that his Book is highly worthy of the serious and careful perusal of all lovers of truth and Religion. (40–1)

An article on Baxter published in Kippis' *Biographica Britannica* describes his *Enquiry* as "a very learned and ingenious work" (2:25nB) Another article, on Samuel Clarke, mentions Baxter as a notable defender of the argument *a priori* (3:608). Although Baxter published several other works that enjoyed some profile, it was his *Enquiry* that was most influential and widely discussed.[18]

It is evident that Warburton and Baxter were well-aligned in their aims and allegiances. Both these thinkers viewed themselves as warriors in the battle against the atheist "monster." Both took the philosophy of Clarke to provide the right path forward in this conflict. In the article on Baxter that appeared in the *Biographia Britannica*, Warburton is mentioned as among Baxter's closest friends and correspondents (2:26).[19] The question that arises from this is when and how did Warburton and Baxter come into contact with each other? The most plausible answer to this rests with Warburton's correspondence with Rev. Thomas Birch.[20] In October 1737 Warburton wrote to Birch:

> There is a book … called 'An Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul.' It is a master-piece in its kind. I am told it is wrote by one Baxter. I wish you could inform me who he is, and where he is; for he appears to me a very extraordinary person[.] (Nicols 1817, 2:74)

It is likely that Warburton had noticed that Birch was listed among the subscribers to the 1733

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such consequences.

[16] Three editions of Baxter's *Enquiry* were published (1733, 1737, and 1745), which is evidence of the success and high profile of this work in the years immediately following its publication in 1733.

[17] This includes a number of leading figures with Clarkean sympathies among the English dissenters (many of whom had strong connections with circles in the Scottish universities and church). See, for example, Henry Grove's remarks in his Preface to his *Sermons* (1742), where he refers to Baxter's "master-piece of metaphysical reasoning".

[18] In 1738 Baxter published (in Latin) another work titled *Matho*. An English edition appeared in 1740. In October 1738 an article in the *Works of the Learned* discussed Baxter's *Matho* and a two-part review appeared in the same journal in December 1740 and January 1741. In 1750, the same year that he died, Baxter published an *Appendix* to his *Enquiry*, much of which is a response to criticism that came from Colin Maclaurin, a distinguished Newtonian and professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh University. Suffice it to say that this is all (further) evidence of Baxter's high profile and significance in the middle decades of the 18th century.

[19] A likely source for this information was David Dalrylmple (Lord Hailes), who knew Baxter and was also a contributing correspondent for *Biographica Britannica*. (See the Dedication to Dalrymple in the fifth volume published in 1793.)

[20] Birch was a regular correspondent of Warburton's. He is now probably best remembered for his biographical introduction to Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* (1743).

edition of Baxter's *Enquiry*.[21] Warburton's request seems to have been satisfied, since in another letter to Birch, written in September 1738, he mentions that he had "received a pamphlet from Mr. Baxter, of which only 30 copies have been printed at Edinburgh, intituled 'Matho'" (Nicols 1817, 2:95). It is evident, therefore, that by 1738, well before Hume's *Treatise* was published, Warburton had not only read Baxter's *Enquiry*, he was in direct correspondence with him. In March 1740, in another letter to Birch, Warburton told him, that he had "received a letter, not long since, from Baxter, of Dun's Castle." Warburton explained to Birch that he "had not heard from [Baxter] for a considerable time" due to Baxter having fallen ill the previous year (Nichols 1817, 2:120). This suggests that during the period between 1738 and 1740, the correspondence between Warburton and Baxter, although interrupted, was well-established. What is not so clear is what their correspondence was about and whether or not it mentioned Hume's *Treatise* (which Warburton was reading and writing a review of).

Warburton's familiarity with and admiration for Baxter's *Enquiry* was first made plain in the 1738 edition of *Divine Legation*. In the context of a passage discussing Spinozism, Warburton described Baxter's *Enquiry* in these terms:

> ... we have lately seen a treatise, intitled, 'An Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul', &c., so well reasoned on the principles of [Newtonian] philosophy, as totally to dispel the impious phantasm of *Spinozism*. He who would have just and precise notions of GOD and the SOUL, may read that book; one of the best purest pieces of reasoning that, in my humble opinion, the present times, greatly advanced in true philosophy, have produced. (WW 3:173)[22]

These remarks concerning the considerable merits of Baxter's philosophy are just the first of many such remarks that are scattered throughout Warburton's writings and works (for example, WW 5:200, 11:55, 12: 140–1, 13:366). These multiple, laudatory references generally link Baxter with Clarke and other great thinkers of a similar philosophical and theological orientation. Baxter is, in fact, one of the few living philosophers who Warburton ranked with the likes of Locke, Cudworth, and Clarke. There can be no doubt, therefore, that when Warburton was reading the *Treatise*, and writing his review, he had not only read Baxter's *Enquiry*, he also enthusiastically and publicly endorsed it.

In 1738 and 1739 Warburton published a series of "Letters" in defence of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*, a work that originally appeared in 1733 as a series of independently published, poetic "Epistles," later revised and collected in various places. Warburton's "Letters," published anonymously in *The History of the Works of the Learned*, concerned the issue of free will.[23] This was another topic that he and Baxter were both entirely agreed on and aimed to defend against "necessitarians" and "fatalists."[24] There was, however, another contributor to the *Works of the Learned* who was also interested in Pope's views on free will in his *Essay on Man*. This was the Scottish freethinker William Dudgeon, who held very different views on this subject from those of Warburton and Baxter.

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[21] A number of Baxter's subscribers were prominent and distinguished figures. This includes several major Newtonian thinkers, Scottish "Rankenians", and some leading clergy and English dissenters.

[22] This passage was cited in a number of different contexts, over a period of many years, for advertising Baxter's *Enquiry*.

[23] In 1740 Warburton's "Letters" were gathered together and published as *A Vindication of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man*. In that same year *A Seventh Letter* was published. An expanded edition with a Dedication was published in 1742 under the title *A Critical and Philosophical Commentary on Mr. Pope's Essay on Man*.

[24] In this context, Baxter's *Enquiry* was, once again, mentioned by Warburton as "a Work that had entirely demolished the whole system of *Spinozism*" *Works* 11:55); originally "Article 47" in *The History of the Works of the Learned* (December 1738).

3. Warburton's *Vindication of Pope* and Dudgeon's *Best Scheme*

Warburton's "Letters" are presented as a response to criticisms of Pope that had been made by Jean-Pierre De Crousaz in a work titled *An Examination of Pope's Essay on Man*.[25] At the heart of Crousaz's criticism is the accusation that Pope's *Essay* rests with the optimistic view that God must create what is best. According to Crousaz, Pope's belief that "Whatever is, is right" (Epistle 1 line 294) led Pope directly into the Leibnizian system of a pre-established harmony, and from there to the view that humans are "machines" without free will (Crousaz 1739, 18–24). The Leibnizian system "takes it for granted that all is the Work of God, that all our thoughts, all our Actions are the inevitable consequences of an Impulse whose Movements nothing in the world can stop or divert" (70). This system of "fatality", Crousaz argued, "overturns Religion" (25, 98, 102).

In reply to these charges, Warburton agreed that without free will humans would be like clocks and religion would be a "farce" (WW 11: 18, 20). He denied, however, that Pope was committed to Leibniz's system of "fatalism." On the contrary, Pope's *Essay* aims to "vindicate the Ways of God to man" (Epistle 1 line 16). It is written "against the impious objections of atheistic Men" (WW 11:41). Everyone - except perhaps, the "downright atheist" - is aware or conscious of their freedom of will simply by "looking within." (19, 20). It is also obvious to us all that the "Doctrine of Fate ... subverts and annihilates *all Religion*" (20). Properly interpreted, Pope maintains that the source of moral evil in this world is not God but rather "Man's abuse of his own Free-will" (48). Warburton concludes, on this basis, that Crousaz's claim that Pope's *Essay on Man* is committed to Leibnizian fatalism and the annihilation of all religion is mistaken and without any true foundation.

In 1739 another response to Crousaz was published in London, William Dudgeon's *A View of the Necessitarian or Best Scheme*. Dudgeon's concern was to defend "the Necessitarian or Best Scheme" against objections, not to show that Pope was not a "necessitarian" or "fatalist." Dudgeon's position turns on a distinction between a liberty understood as an absence of compulsion or freedom to do what we will, in contrast with a liberty of indifference understood as an absence of necessity (DW 201, 208, 212–17).[26] On the "scheme of necessity" both God and humans enjoy a freedom of the first kind. There is, nevertheless, a "necessity for God to prefer a more perfect Work to a less perfect one" (214). As such, God prefers a world in which "Intelligent Beings" are determined to will their own happiness, on the basis of pleasure and pain, than beings who are "indifferent" to such considerations. It follows from this that, consistent with God's preference for what is best, "every Thing [Intelligent Beings] do necessarily comes to pass, according to the perfect Design of the Creator and Governor of both the corporeal and intellectual Worlds" (206).

With regard to "the grand Objection" that the scheme of necessity implies that God is the source of evil, Dudgeon's reply depends on a distinction between evil that is relative to some "finite mind" and evil with respect to "the whole Creation." Just as it is no objection to God's perfections that we discover natural evils in the world so too is the existence of moral evil no less consistent with God's perfection. The moral evils that we observe and experience are not "real evils" but "relative evils" (219–24). "A wicked Prince", Dudgeon suggested, may be as necessary to the good of the whole "as a Plague, or famine and as worthy of God for his Author" (223). It is along these lines that Dudgeon set out to show that the scheme of necessity is the best scheme and that "Whatever is, is right" (224–5).[27]

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[25] This work was originally published as *Examen de l'Essai de Monsieur Pope* in 1737 and then translated into English in 1739.

[26] References to Dudgeon's *Philosophical Works and Some Additional Letters to the Revd. Mr. Jackson*, hereafter DW, are to the pagination of Dudgeon ([1765] 1994).

[27] Dudgeon's philosophical optimism is heavily influenced by Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, a particular target of Warburton's polemics

Just a few months after Warburton had published his review of Hume's *Treatise*, Dudgeon published a short reply to Warburton (Dudgeon 1740).[28] Dudgeon's remarks largely repeat the same basic points made in his *Best Scheme*. According to this scheme:

> God is necessarily good; therefore he must, of Necessity, will or chuse always what is best, which infinite Wisdom necessarily knows. Let Warburton prove the contrary if he can[.] (328)

Dudgeon argued that neither Crousaz nor Warburton "proves this freedom of Will in either God or Man" (329).[29] Warburton never directly replied to Dudgeon's critical remarks concerning his *Vindication*. It is clear, nevertheless, that Warburton was well aware of Dudgeon and his "freethinking" views. In his 1742 Preface to his *Commentary on Pope*, Warburton listed Dudgeon among "the tribe of Free-thinkers" and described them as "the mortal Foes both of Reason and Religion" (WW 11:22; in a passage just before this Warburton told his reader that he had "declared eternal War" on these Free-thinkers). Warburton's characteristic contempt for his philosophical opponents could not have been more evident.

Dudgeon's reply to Warburton may well have been his last publication, as he died at the age of thirty-seven in 1743.[30] His responses to Crousaz and Warburton are, however, by no means all that he wrote and published. In December 1738, in the same issue that Warburton published his first "Letter" on Pope and Crousaz (that is, in the preceding article), Dudgeon published a brief note criticizing Clarke's view on free will. Against Clarke, Dudgeon argued that with respect to willing, God is "not *free* or at *Liberty to will*, but necessarily determined by his essentially good Disposition to *will* what is *best*, whether to *act*, or to *forbear acting*" (1738, 424).

Earlier, in April 1737 and February 1738, a two-part review ("Article 26," by an anonymous author) had appeared in *The History of the Works of the Learned* discussing two collections of letters exchanged between Dudgeon and John Jackson. This correspondence was occasioned by two pamphlets that Jackson has recently published in defence of Clarke's philosophy.[31] The exchange covered a number of topics and issues, including those of free will and the origin of evil as later addressed in Dudgeon's *Best Scheme* in 1739. The attitude of the reviewer towards Dudgeon's contributions contrasted sharply with Warburton's tone and harsh rhetoric. The assessment that was made of Dudgeon's views was, nevertheless, generally consistent with Warburton's view of Dudgeon as a member of "the tribe of Free-thinkers."

> Mr. *Dudgeon*, who seems to be a Person of very good Sense, and great Ingenuity of Temper, had imbided some of *Spinoza's* Notions concerning the deity; and agreed with Bishop *Berkley* in supposing Matter to have no Existence distinct from its Idea in the Mind; he looked upon all things as necessarily what they are, and entertained some incoherent Opinions of Liberty, Virtue and

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[28] In this article Warburton is named as the author of the *Vindication*. Warburton's "Letters" on Pope were originally published anonymously but when the *Vindication* was published in 1740, the author was identified as the author of the *Divine Legation*.

[29] It is significant that the editor of the *Works of the Learned* inserted a note defending Warburton by noting that it was not his aim to defend "Freedom of Will" but to show that Pope was not a Necessitarian.

[30] There is, however, some reason to suppose that Dudgeon was the author of remarks on Thomas Morgan's *Physio-Theology* (1741) that was published in *The History of the Works of the Learned* in 1741 ("Article 24." [December]: 395-413). The author of these remarks, who is described as "a gentleman in the North", defends the necessitarian "best scheme" along lines that are strikingly similar to Dudgeon's earlier contributions. It is also of interest that there is a separate two-part review of Morgan's *Physio-Theology* that was published in *The History of the Works of the Learned* in 1741 prior to this ("Article 15." [September]: 203-234; and "Article 16." [October]: 235-257). The editor, Jacob Robinson, stated that the reviewer was the same person who earlier wrote the review of Hume's *Treatise* in late 1739 (namely, Warburton). A detailed review of the evidence relating to this is presented in Coventry, Mazza, and Mori (2024, 285-90.)

[31] The relevant works are *The Existence and Unity of God* (1734) and *A Defence of Existence and Unity of God* (1735). As already noted, in 1735 Jackson also published *A Dissertation on Matter and Spirit*, which contains a reply to Baxter's *Enquiry*. Suffice it to say that the *Works of the Learned*, during the period 1737-1741, was *saturated* with articles relating to the (overlapping) contributions of Dudgeon, Baxter, and Warburton.

> Vice, Good and Evil; very different from what the Generality of Christians think to be consistent with religion, and to terminate in downright Atheism. (Article 26 1737, 318–19)

These remarks make clear that Dudgeon's standing as a "freethinker" did not rest solely with his necessitarian views.[32] Nor was Warburton alone in identifying Dudgeon as a philosophical thinker whose outlook and allegiances were fundamentally opposed to those of Clarke, Warburton, and others of their (more orthodox) ilk. Several years before Warburton tangled with Dudgeon, his correspondent and admired friend Andrew Baxter had a much more combative encounter and exchange with Dudgeon in the context of the Parish of Chirnside, in Scottish Borders, where they both resided.

4. The Battle in the Borders and Hume's *Treatise*

In May 1740, the same month that Dudgeon's reply to Warburton appeared in the *Works of the Learned*, Baxter sent a letter to Warburton that describes his earlier exchanges with Dudgeon (Klemme 1992, 256–7). Baxter began by telling Warburton that he had sent him three pamphlets that relate to a "squabble" between Baxter and his "antagonists."[33] The pamphlets concerned were Dudgeon's *The State of the Moral World Considered* (1732), Baxter's *Reflections* on Dudgeon's *Moral World* (1732), and Dudgeon's *A Letter to the Author of the State of the Moral World* (1734), which is a reply to Baxter's *Reflections*.[34] Apart from these works, Baxter also told Warburton that he had asked Millar to send him a copy of the recently published *Matho*. He closed off his letter with remarks that make clear the extent of his regard for Warburton. "I have not words", he said, "to express the sense I have of the Honour ye do me, and protection ye have given me." There are at least two features of this letter that require further comment, First, why did Baxter speak of his "antagonists" (i.e. in the plural)? Who else apart from Dudgeon did Baxter have in mind here? Second, what sort of "protection" was Baxter referring to in this context? Clearly it must have been something that Warburton had written or said that Baxter took to fend off criticism or threat of some kind. But what was this about?

Let us begin by examining the views advanced in the pamphlets that were sent to Warburton. The *Moral World* was not Dudgeon's first work. His first work was *The Necessity of some Positive Institutions of Ch--ty Considered* (1731).[35] This work was a defence of Tindal's doctrine in *Christianity as Old as Creation* in response to criticisms that were made of it by Robert Wallace, who was at that time minister in nearby Moffat.[36] The freethinking themes that Dudgeon advanced in this work return in the *Moral World*, where it is argued that human beings are governed by necessity and that all just punishment in this world or the next aims at reform and education, not retribution. In line with the position that he later presented in *Best Scheme*, Dudgeon defended the "optimistic" view that there is no real evil in this world and that every

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[32] A concise summary of many of Dudgeon's "freethinking" and "anti-clerical" views is presented in Dudgeon 1739a. On Dudgeon's views as they relate to immaterialism (and Berkeley) and his Spinozism see Berman's "Introduction", to DW. For a brief biography of Dudgeon see Russell (1999). Two older (but, nevertheless, helpful) accounts of Dudgeon's life and works can be found in McCosh 1875, 111-3 and Robertson 1936, 2: 762-3.

[33] Baxter reminded Warburton that he had mentioned two of these pamphlets in his previous letter. The pamphlets sent to Warburton were sent through Andrew Millar, Baxter's publisher in London. (A few years later, in 1748, Millar also became Hume's chief London publisher.)

[34] Baxter mentioned another work he wrote in reply to Dudgeon's *Letter*, saying that it "was too large to be printed." An unpublished manuscript by Baxter titled "Vindication of the Principles of Human Liberty" that fits this description is possessed by the University of Edinburgh (La 111, 807.1).

[35] See Sefton (1962, 61–71) for a brief description of this work and the debate in the Scottish Borders between Dudgeon and Wallace (notably about Clarke and Tindal).

[36] Wallace was a member of the "Rankenian Club." In 1732 George Turnbull, who was also a Rankenian (and Wallace's brother-in-law), published *Christianity neither False nor Useless*, a defence of Clarke against Tindal. Shortly after this Turnbull moved to London where he came into contact with Birch and Warburton, a thinker whom he admired. In 1741 Turnbull joined Warburton as one of the chaplains to the Prince of Wales.

feature of it, moral as well as natural, "is the best that can be made, to make up the best whole, according to the design of the most perfect being" (DW, 44).

In his *Reflections* Baxter criticized Dudgeon in the sharpest and most severe terms. The fundamental issue for Baxter was that Dudgeon's (sceptical) view that there is no "liberty of indifference" leads to the conclusion that there is no real distinction to be drawn between good and evil. Dudgeon's necessitarian view is coupled with the related and equally dangerous claim that the only proper end of punishment is correction and improvement but not retribution. Baxter objected that this is nothing better than a "Philosophy of Unaccountableness" that "pulls up the Roots of Morality" (1732, 12, 18). Sceptical arguments of this kind, Baxter concluded, would "subvert all society" and lead us into "down right Anarchy and Atheism" (14–15; see also Baxter 1737, 2:415–16n.q).

The publication of Baxter's *Reflections* is closely connected to the Church prosecution launched against Dudgeon by the Presbytery of Chirnside in 1732. In May of that year the ministers concerned summoned Dudgeon to appear before the session to answer the charge that he was the author of the *Moral World*, a pamphlet containing "many gross errors in direct opposition to Christianity."[37] Two specific charges were made that correspond closely to the core objections that Baxter presented in his *Reflections*. The first was that he denied "all distinction between good and evil or else [made] God the author of sin." The second charge was that Dudgeon denied "the punishment of another life and that God punishes Men for sin in this life... which cuts off all accountableness and positive punishment" (29th August, 1732). In reply to these charges Dudgeon said that he denied only that "man is accountable in the sense that Arminians or freewill-men hold," which he took to be contrary to scripture. Dudgeon also refused to acknowledge that he was the author of *Moral World*. The ministers at Chirnside declared that they were not satisfied with Dudgeon's answers and upheld their sentence of "contumacy." Dudgeon appealed this sentence and the case dragged on through the Synod (Merse and Teviotdale), and then to the General Assembly, where his case was eventually dropped.[38]

There is considerable reason to believe that it was Baxter who initiated and encouraged the prosecution of Dudgeon. Quite apart from the obvious correspondence between the charges made and Baxter's criticisms in his *Reflections*, it is evident that it was Baxter's view that Dudgeon's philosophical views were a threat and danger to the social order and that this called for stronger measures to be taken against him.[39] Of the dozen or so ministers directly involved in the Dudgeon prosecution at Chirnside there were three subscribers to Baxter's *Enquiry*. What is even more striking, when considering the relevance of the Baxter-Dudgeon dispute in relation to Warburton's 1739 review of Hume's *Treatise*, is that the minister at Chirnside who was a central figure in these proceedings was Hume's uncle, Rev. George Home.[40] Most of the several sessions dealing with the Dudgeon case were held in Chirnside. Early on in the proceedings, Hume's uncle was sent out with one other minister to "deal" with Dudgeon. The minister who accompanied George Home on this occasion was Rev. James Landereth (of Simpron), who was a subscriber to Baxter's *Enquiry*.

What, then, is the relevance of the Dudgeon-Baxter dispute for Hume's *Treatise*?[41] By 1726 Hume had left Edinburgh University and spent most of the following eight years at his family home in Chirnside. At this time Hume was especially close to Henry Home (Lord Kames).

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[37] The relevant records are in the Scottish Record Office: CH 2/265/2; CH1/3/22.

[38] For further details relating to these proceedings against Dudgeon see Sinclair 1998, Appendix L.

[39] Dudgeon drew his readers attention to Baxter's role in this respect in several different passages of his writings. See, for example, DW 48; and also Dudgeon 173?: 9-11, 44. (The latter work is not included in DW but it is clearly his work, and it is especially aggressive in defence of his views and criticism of his persecutors, including Baxter.)

[40] Ironically enough, one of the three ministers from the parish of Chirnside who was also a subscriber to Baxter's *Enquiry* was another Rev. George Home of Hilton - i.e. a *different* person from Rev. George Home of Chirnside.

[41] The relevance of the Borders debates for Hume's *Treatise* is examined in some detail throughout Russell 2008 (see esp. chap. 4). Earlier discussions relating to this matter are presented in Russell 1988 and Russell 1997.

Kames had an estate in Duns, just a few miles away from Chirnside.[42] Kames and Hume shared philosophical interests and Kames served as something of a mentor for Hume during this period. It is significant, therefore, that in 1723 Kames had a correspondence with both Clarke and Baxter.[43] The correspondence with Baxter concerned the *vis inertiae* of matter (i.e. its inactivity), which as we noted, served as the foundation of Baxter's "confutation of atheism" in his *Enquiry*, published ten years later. The Baxter-Kames correspondence ended in sharp disagreement and some animosity.[44] Given Hume's considerable interest in the metaphysical issues being debated, especially as they relate to Clarke's philosophy, it is reasonable to suppose that he was (well) aware of Baxter's views and contributions on this subject. It is also not impossible that, on a more personal level, he picked-up on Kames' hostility towards Baxter.

With respect to Dudgeon, while it is also not clear if Hume and Dudgeon were in direct contact or communication with each other, it is clear that they had (very similar) "freethinking" views concerning free will, moral sense, substance scepticism, and on other such matters.[45] The close overlap in their interests and views, as well as their close proximity to each other, suggests that it is very likely that there would have been some degree of contact. Whether this is the case or not, there is every reason to believe that Hume would have known about Dudgeon's philosophical (freethinking) views and the controversy that they generated, since Hume was living in Chirnside and his uncle was directly involved in the relevant proceedings against Dudgeon. Assuming that Hume was well aware of this case, and that he shared many of Dudgeon's philosophical interests and views, Hume had every reason to be concerned, if not alarmed, by Dudgeon's treatment at the hands of Baxter, his uncle, and others among the local clergy. These events may well explain why Hume decided to leave Chirnside in early 1734.

The Borders debates and controversies, involving Baxter, Dudgeon, Kames (as well as the accompanying correspondence with figures such as Clarke and Jackson), were plainly of considerable relevance to Hume's philosophical development at this time. It was during the period of 1729-1734 that the "plan" of the *Treatise* was first laid down.[46] At this time, Hume's immediate philosophical environment was steeped in the controversies and debates relating to Clarke's philosophy and the wider controversy associated with the question of atheism. This was, from the beginning, the intellectual fabric upon which the *Treatise* was being stitched together. It is no less significant that Hume was directly and indirectly exposed to a set of thinkers who were making substantial contributions on these topics and debates - substantial enough that they came to enjoy a high profile in the *Works of the Learned* in the late 1730s. While Dudgeon and Baxter may be considered marginal or peripheral figures by our own contemporaries, they were not obscure or unknown to Hume's contemporaries (such as Warburton).

To what *degree* the Borders debate influenced or shaped the details of Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise* remains a matter of some conjecture.[47] What we do know, however, is that at

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[42] On the Hume-Kames relationship see Mossner (1980, 57-60); and Ross (1972, chap.5). In a letter written to Kames in 1745 Hume states that he regards Kames "as the best friend, in every respect, I ever possest" [NHL,17].

[43] The correspondence with Clarke concerned issues relating to Clarke's *Demonstration*. On the Kames-Clarke correspondence see Ferguson (1974, 88-9). Kames's correspondence with Baxter is transcribed in Sinclair, 1998: Appendix J.

[44] Mossner (incorrectly) suggests that the exchange between Kames and Baxter "ended amicably" (Mossner 1980, 58). Gray (1915, 6–7) gives a different assessment and points out that ."Home [Kames] lost his temper, and terminated the intercourse with a proposal that Baxter and he should burn the correspondence and their "philosophical heats" with it."

[45] There were also, of course, some significant points of difference between Dudgeon and Hume (e.g. on the issue of optimism).

[46] On this see Mossner 1980, Chps. 5 and 6. Mossner suggests that the plan for the *Treatise* was beginning to take shape by early 1729 and that the project was well underway before Hume left Chirnside in 1734 (73-4). See also Stewart 2005, 70: "There is no reason to dispute the evidence that when [Hume] went to France he had the plan of the *Treatise* in mind[.]"

[47] It has been suggested by Sinclair that the Borders debates were "the principal reason why the *Treatise of Human*

some point Hume's *Treatise* became known to Andrew Baxter. Evidence of this is provided in a letter written by David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) to Thomas Balguy in 1778.[48] In this letter Dalrymple tells Balguy that Baxter was someone he knew well as a young man and that Baxter "could not speak with patience of those who made light of the Priori argument." He goes on to say that Baxter "abhorred the early work of Mr. Hume." Baxter died in 1750 and so, as Dalrymple notes, he did not live to see Hume "in the height of his literary glory." We can better understand the basis for Baxter's (strong) distaste for Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise* when we turn to Warburton's 1739 review, given that it was written by an author who had strong sympathies with the arguments and philosophical principles defended in Baxter's *Enquiry*.[49]

5. Warburton's Review and Baxter's *Enquiry*

The review of the *Treatise* in *The History of the Works of the Learned* is divided into two articles. The, first published in November 1739, is longer and covers material up to the fourth part of Book I (T, 1.4.4). The second part, which was published the following month, is shorter and covers the issues of the immateriality of the soul, personal identity and the (sceptical) conclusion to Book I. Nothing is said about Book II. The commentary is heavily sarcastic, critical, and frequently patronizing. The final paragraph suggests that the reviewer does not know the author's identity. This sits awkwardly with accompanying remarks that show that the reviewer knows that the author of the *Treatise* is young. No explanation is offered as to how the reviewer (Warburton) knows that the author is young but not who he is.[50]

Under cover of praise, the reviewer (Warburton) made clear that the author youth's left him poorly qualified to deal with the difficult topics he was addressing. The project of the *Treatise*, the reviewer said, "requires a very mature Judgment to handle it as becomes its Dignity and Importance; the utmost Prudence, Tenderness and Delicacy are required to this desirable Issue" (Article 26 1739, 404; Feiser 3:40). The reviewer's final sentence dismisses the author by way of extending a sliver of hope that "time and use may ripen these qualities in our author" and we may view "his later Productions, in the same Light as we view the Juvenile Works of Milton, or the first Manner of a Raphael, to other Painter." These remarks complement earlier sarcastic references to the author's "superlative Modesty" and "Genius" (Article 26 1739, 373, 377, 386, 404; Feiser 3:39–40).

Although much of the review is devoted to précis or summaries of Hume's arguments, a few particular points of criticism stand out. The review begins not with the theory of ideas, where Hume began, but with the issue of liberty and necessity. This what we might expect from Warburton, since he spent much of the previous year writing about this topic (in relation to Crousaz and Pope). The reviewer pointed out that the "system of human nature" being considered is based on "Necessity, in opposition to Liberty or Freedom" (Article 26 1739, 353; Fieser 3:4). In regard to this subject the reviewer recommended readers consult the works of "Mr. Locke and Mr. Limborch, and the incomparable Dr. Clarke's Answers to several Pieces of

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Nature was written at all" and that "it seems certain that the inspiration and motivation that led David Hume to produce his *Treatise* are to be found here" (Sinclair 1998: 121-22). That is a stronger thesis than is argued for here (or in the works cited in note 41 above). What is true, nevertheless, is that these debates are of *considerable* importance and relevance to the development of Hume's aims and objectives in the *Treatise* as this relates to the wider Enlightenment debate about atheism. (I return to this issue below.)

[48] Dalrymple to Balguy, 17 September 1778 [Beinecke Library Yale University, Osborn Shelves, Balguy box]. Balguy was a correspondent and admiring disciple of Warburton's. His father, John Balguy, was a strong defender Clarke's philosophy. Dalrymple also corresponded with Warburton. On Hume's (antagonistic) relationship with Dalrymple see Gray 1915, 137-8.

[49] Dalrymple's remarks about Baxter are echoed in the article on "Clarke" in the *Biographia Britannica* (3:608). [See also note 19 above.]

[50] Warburton's claim that he did not know the identity of the author of the *Treatise* should not be accepted uncritically. Warburton had a pattern of dissimulation and concealment in his writings.

Leibnitz and Collins" (Article 26 1739, 353; Fieser 3:4). These suggestions are entirely consistent with Warburton's views, as well as the views of (his admired friend) Baxter.[51]

The sharpest criticism of the *Treatise* is found in a passage devoted to Hume's account of causation and its relevance to the argument *a priori*.

> All manner of Persons, that have any Antipathy to the Argument *a Priori* for the existence of God, may repair to this latter Section [T 1.3.3], where they will have the Satisfaction of seeing it utterly demolished. This Writer has there destroy'd the Foundation of it, and so there's an End of the whole Fabrick. *Dr. Clarke*, and one *John Lock*, Esq., who he particularly names, two of the most superficial Reasoners, were as well as many others, so weak as to fancy, that *whatever begins to exist must have a Cause of Existence*; nay, *Hobbes* himself, as much an Atheist as we believe him, was of this Opinion. (Article 26 1739, 377; Feiser 3:20–1)

The review goes on to say that although the author "has quite erased the Argument a priori for the Divine Existence, I would willingly hope, he has no Intention of Weakening the fundamental Truth, that *there is some one, necessary, eternal, independent Being*". According to the review, these worries about the author's [Hume's] intentions are entirely justified.

The review carries on to make some further observations relating to Hume's views on causation.

> "[A]ny thing may produce any thing.[52] Creation, Annihilation, Motion, Reason, Volition, all these may arise from one another, or from any other Object we can imagine." A most charming System indeed! One can hardly conceive the Uses it may be put to, and the different Purposes it will serve[.] (383; Feiser 3:25–6; citing T 1.3.15.1)[53]

The review returns to this concern as it arises for Hume's views on the immateriality of the soul.

> Alas! Will they exclaim, Poor Dr. *Clarke*, is thy Fate to be branded a true Atheist? Thou illustrious, thou most learned, judicious, sincere, and yet candid Advocate of natural and revealed Religion; thou immortal Defender of the Immateriality and natural Immortality of thinking Substances! Shall all thy strong, thy clear, and unanswerable Arguments, as so many of the best Judges have esteemed them, be now levelled with the Dust, and trampled on with Abhorrence! ... Neither *Locke*, nor *Clarke*, nor the most venerable Names, shall usurp the Place of Truth in his Affections.(397; Feiser 3:35)

Taken together, these passages suggest that the most obvious and prominent targets of Hume's battery of sceptical arguments in the *Treatise* are Locke and Clarke.[54] The general tenor of the whole commentary is that the reviewer regards the young author of the *Treatise* as both arrogant and naïve in launching these arguments against thinkers who are much greater than himself.

One other feature of the review should also be noted. In a passage describing Hume's views on space and time the reviewer refers to the author of the *Treatise* as a "minute Philosopher" (Article 26 1739, 364; Feiser 3:11). In this context, the label of "minute

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[51] For instance, WW 10:357-75 ("Study of Theology") also recommends Limborch's works along with those of Locke, Clarke, and a few others. Baxter 1732, 27n says that Clarke is "the best Defender of Liberty."

[52] For a view diametrically opposed to Hume's principle that (a priori) "any thing may produce any thing" see Baxter 1737, 1:355-61. In this passage Baxter laid down the following principle: "It is impossible that the effect should be perfecter that its cause, either in *kind*, or in *degree* ... the denying of this principle leads to downright atheism."

[53] See the Bibliographical Note to this issue of *Hume Studies* for a key to references to Hume's works.

[54] Other early reviews also noted that the views of Locke and Clarke were particular targets of Hume's sceptical arguments. See, for instance, the review in *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, which was published in early 1740. This review concludes by describing the author [Hume] as a "dogmatic Pyrrhonian" and points to "the pernicious consequences that we could draw from his principles" (Feiser 3:62-3). The review goes on to say that the *Treatise* maintains that "it is false that everything that exists must necessarily have a cause of its existence; that we have *a priori* no proofs of the existence of the deity" (Feiser 3:63).

philosopher" is meant to apply to freethinkers in the tradition of Hobbes and Spinoza. This expression was used, most notably, in Berkeley (1732/1950) to describe those "modern freethinkers" who aimed to discredit the doctrines of free will and the immortality of the soul that were essential to morality and religion. In 1751, a number of years after the review of the *Treatise* was published, Warburton used the label of "minute philosopher" to criticize the "atheistic" philosophy of Lord Bolingbroke, a thinker whom Warburton closely associated with Hume (WW 12:142, 144; the passage immediately preceding 12:142 includes high praise of Clarke and Baxter as distinguished opponents of the doctrines of the "minute philosophers."). Clearly, then, referring to the author of the *Treatise* as a "minute philosopher" would serve to flag the freethinking tradition of thought that the *Treatise* belongs to.[55]

What is the relevance of this review for Warburton's connections with Baxter and Dudgeon? The conjecture that Warburton was the author of the review published in the *Works of the Learned* can be (and has been) defended without reference to Warburton's correspondence with Baxter or his controversy with Dudgeon (Coventry, Mazza, and Mori 2024, 295). It may be argued that Warburton's connections with both Baxter and Dudgeon are, nevertheless, still of considerable interest in relation to the review. In the first place, these connections lend additional support to the conjecture that Warburton was the author of the review. It is entirely possible, for example, that it was through his interest in Baxter's *Enquiry*, and the correspondence that arose out of this, that Warburton got involved. There may, of course, be other channels through which Warburton might have become interested in reviewing the *Treatise*.[56] However, even if this were the case, Baxter and Warburton may still have discussed this work. If Baxter was involved, two conditions would need to be met. First, Baxter would need to be at least *aware* of the *Treatise* and its general line of (freethinking, sceptical) argument. Second, Baxter would also need to be *motivated* to encourage Warburton to take on this task and to influence how the *Treatise* would be reviewed. It may be argued that *both* these conditions were likely satisfied.

Although it is possible that Baxter was wholly unaware of the *Treatise* this seems (very) unlikely. It would not be necessary that he read the *Treatise* 1 and 2, although it is entirely possible that he could have done that. Not only was the *Treatise* in print for almost a year before Warburton's review was published, its contents were plainly of *considerable* relevance to Baxter's philosophy. Moreover, given Baxter's (earlier) proximity to and, perhaps, contact with Hume and the circles to which Hume belonged in Scotland and the Borders, it is hard to credit that this work would not have come to Baxter's attention at some point well before the review was published (and while Baxter and Warburton were corresponding). With regard to Baxter being motivated to get involved in the reception of the *Treatise*, that was something that he had every reason to do. As we have noted, it was obvious to almost any serious reader of the *Treatise* at this time, that the *Treatise* constituted a frontal assault on the fundamentals of Clarke's philosophy and the argument *a priori*, matters that were of the gravest concern to Baxter.

We have already noted that Baxter's letter to Warburton written in May 1740 presents us with some puzzles. More specifically, in this letter Baxter speaks of his "antagonists" and also expresses his gratitude for the "protection" that Warburton has provided him with. Let us consider each aspect separately. This letter makes plain that Dudgeon is Baxter's particular "adversary" in respect of this "squabble", it is also clear that there are others associated with Dudgeon who belong among Baxter's "antagonists." The particular issue at hand is free will and necessity. It is significant, therefore, that Hume who lived in the same vicinity (i.e. the parish of

[55] The review in the *Works of the Learned* was not the only early review or notice of the *Treatise* to highlight the "freethinking" nature of its contents (Russell 2008, 70-3).

[56] One possibility is that Pierre Desmaizeaux, who was known to both Warburton and Hume, could have brought Hume's work to Warburton's attention and perhaps betrayed Hume's identity as well (Coventry, Mazza, Mor 2024, 295-6; see also note 58 below).

Chirnside), and had some contact with Baxter and Dudgeon, took a stance on this subject that shares Dudgeon's necessitarian views and firmly opposed Baxter's (Clarkean) free will position. The fact that the review begins by identifying Hume as a necessitarian and an opponent of "Liberty and Freedom" suggests that Hume fit the "antagonist" description very neatly.[57]

With respect to the question of what sort of "protection" Baxter received from Warburton, the review of the *Treatise* may also be of some relevance here as well. Clearly the kind of protection that Baxter is referring to likely involves something that Warburton wrote and that, in some way, Baxter benefitted from. It might be suggested that Baxter could be alluding to the flattering comments that Warburton had published about Baxter in his (first) Letter on Crousaz and Pope in December 1738, along with other complementary citations that followed this. However, these comments about Baxter would be more accurately described as "praise" or "support" rather than as "protection" of any kind. The language of "protection" suggests that Warburton wrote something that served to fend off a threat or discredit an attack of some sort. With regard to this, the review of the *Treatise* fits the description very well. The review makes clear, as did others that followed it, that Hume's arguments in the *Treatise* strike a sceptical blow against Clarke's philosophy and the argument *a priori*. Since this is what lies at the heart of Baxter's entire philosophical project in the *Enquiry*, any hostile review of the *Treatise* would obviously be welcomed by Baxter. Clearly, then, a review of this nature could well be described as providing "protection" for Baxter and his *Enquiry*. This understanding of Baxter's remarks to Warburton adds further weight to the conjecture that Warburton wrote the review of Hume's *Treatise* and that Baxter was (in some degree) involved in this.[58]

In light of the available evidence, we are in a position to conclude the following. There is substantial evidence that Warburton wrote the review of the *Treatise* in 1739. This is likely whether Baxter was in some way involved or not. What we know (for sure) is that Warburton and Baxter were corresponding in the period prior to the publication of this review. We also know that Warburton greatly admired Baxter's *Enquiry*, as well as the Clarkean philosophy and argument *a priori* that was closely associated with it. We know, furthermore, that Hume's *Treatise* presented a frontal assault on foundations of these philosophical principles and the argument *a priori*. The reviewer of the *Treatise*, along with others, was well aware of this. Granted that Warburton was the author of the review, there is considerable reason to believe that Baxter was, directly or indirectly, involved. Hume's *Treatise* was planned and prepared in Chirnside during the period of 1729–34. At and about this time Baxter was involved in controversies with both Kames and Dudgeon that were of considerable significance and relevance to Hume's philosophical activities and views. It is not impossible that the (significant) philosophical differences between Baxter and Hume may have been a source of some personal hostility. It is clear, in any case, that the core issues that divided them were part of the wider controversy about atheism and freethinking. These were matters about which both Baxter and Warburton were aggressive and belligerent. In this way, there is every reason to conclude that there exists a substantial and significant relationship between Hume's early (Scottish) context in the Borders and the hostile review published in *The History of the Works of the Learned* in 1739. The framework within which all this took place was the battle over atheism that had evolved in the early Enlightenment (Russell 2008).

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[57] Kames (Henry Home) was another philosopher in the same circle (i.e. near Chirnside in the Borders) who also fit the description of being a "necessitarian" and an "antagonist" of Baxter's. Kames' views on "Liberty and Necessity" were eventually published in his *Essays* (1751).

[58] It is not entirely clear whether Hume was aware that Warburton wrote the 1739 review of the *Treatise*. It is not impossible, however, that Hume *was* aware that Warburton wrote the 1739 review. One obvious channel for this might have been Pierre Desmaizeaux (Coventry, Mazza, and Mori 2024, 284, 295; and see note 56 above).

6. Hume's "Downright Atheism" and "the Warburtonian School"

Warburton's various writings and activities against Hume did not end with the 1739 review. On the contrary, Warburton's attacks on Hume's later philosophical works were even more hostile and aggressive.[59] It is no surprise, in light of this, that Hume felt considerable animus towards Warburton.[60] Hume's contempt for Warburton was made plain in remarks that he made in MOL 9, 13. In several passages Hume complained that his work, when not "overlooked and neglected", was given a poor reception and subject to harsh criticism. He mentioned only two critics by name: Warburton and his closest disciple and fellow Anglican clergyman Richard Hurd (MOL 9, 13). With regard to Hurd, Hume complained that the only interest that his "Natural History of Religion" had generated was a pamphlet by Hurd. This pamphlet, Hume said, has "all the illiberal Petulance, Arrogance, and Scurrility, which distinguished the Warburtonian School" (MOL 13; Mossner 1980, 613).[61] These remarks are consistent with earlier remarks Hume made of the same kind. In 1771, in a letter to his publisher William Strahan, Hume referred to Warburton's "gang, the most scurrilous, arrogant, and impudent Fellows in the world" (L2 456: 244). Hume obviously believed that there were a *number* of other individuals who adopted Warburton's particular style of abuse and criticism.

Who, then, did Hume have in mind as belonging to Warburton's "gang" or "school"? Mills (2023, 200–1) has recently argued that the existence of the "Warburtonian School" is a "myth" and that "the notion of a 'Warburtonian School' does not help us understand Hume's context and the reception of his works."[62] It is possible, however, that the early review of the *Treatise* by Warburton and the (Scottish) debate associated with it can illuminate the group of thinkers who Hume had in mind. In order to do this, we need to consider to what extent Warburton's review may have resonated with others or been used by them to criticize Hume's ("atheistic") philosophical views.

Perhaps the single most important document relating to the early reactions to Hume's *Treatise* is a pamphlet Hume wrote in 1745 in reply to a number of accusations made against him when he applied for the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University. The pamphlet, which was published as *A Letter from a Gentleman to his friend in Edinburgh*, is a reply to *A Specimen of the Principles concerning Religion and Morality &c.*, which contains some fragments taken from the *Treatise* followed by a list of six "charges" levelled against Hume. Hume's reply contains an answer to each of the charges. What is striking about the charges made against Hume is that they largely repeat or echo the criticisms levelled against the *Treatise* in Warburton's 1739 review. What we need to consider, therefore, is if there is any (close) connection or relationship of some kind between the 1739 review and the 1745 *Letter*

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[59] Details on this are provided in Mossner (1980). Warburton's (numerous) attacks on Hume's philosophy reached something of a crescendo in the form of his efforts to suppress the publication of Hume's *Four Dissertations*. When Hume's *Four Dissertations* were first printed in 1756, Warburton encouraged the authorities to prosecute the author and publisher. The threat resulted in Hume suppressing two of his essays (on suicide and the immortality of the soul), as well as amending some passages in his "Natural History of Religion" (Mossner 1980, 321-7.)

[60] The earliest evidence we have of Hume making critical and dismissive comments about Warburton is in a letter to John Stewart written in February 1754 (L1 91: 186). In this letter Hume made clear that he neither knew nor liked Warburton. The context of this letter is a dispute that Hume had with Stewart over the issue of causation (Mossner 1980, 257–60) Stewart's essay was particularly critical of the views of both Hume and Kames on this subject. The position that Stewart defended draws on Baxter's *Enquiry*, which he cited with approval and directed against Hume (Stewart 1754, 77, 116-118, 130). It is significant that Stewart's father, Robert Stewart, who was Professor of Natural Philosophy, was a subscriber to Baxter's *Enquiry*.

[61] The pamphlet was, in fact, put together by Hurd based on Warburton's remarks in the margins of his copy of the "Natural History of Religion." For more detail on this see NHR Ed.cxxii- cxxvi and Feiser (2005, 306–7). Warburton/Hurd suggested that the purpose of Hume's work "is to establish Naturalism on the Ruins of Religion" (1757, 8; Feiser 5: 313).

[62] Mills does not mention Baxter, who is someone who would certainly fit this description, as would be obvious to all those who had seen Warburton's (published) praise and puffs of Baxter's work.

that gives some indication of who Hume believed belonged to the "Warburtonian School."

Without taking up each and every charge and answer, we can accurately summarize the most significant features of the *Letter* in these terms. The first and most significant charges made against Hume are that he maintains "universal scepticism" and "principles leading to downright Atheism" (L 14, 15). These charges are based primarily on Hume's views about causation which, the critic continues, result in "errors concerning the very Being and Existence of God" and "God's being the first cause" (L 16, 17). Beyond this, Hume is also charged with "denying the immateriality of the Soul" (L 18) and "denying the essential Difference betwixt Right and Wrong" (L 19). Hume's accuser in the *Specimen* cites only two philosophers, Hobbes and Spinoza, celebrated "atheists" and the particular targets of Clarke's *Demonstration*.

One of the most striking features of Hume's reply to his accuser is that he represented the accusations made against him as coming from a (dogmatic) philosopher of the school of Clarke. With regard to the charge that his sceptical views about causation lead to "downright atheism", Hume replies that it "is only (Clarke's) "metaphysical Argument *a priori*" that is "in any way concerned" (L 28). There are, Hume suggested, other "metaphysical arguments" for God's existence. In this context Hume also mentioned the doctrine of the inactivity of matter, which he dismissed as "a mere Hypothesis" that is hardly worth considering (L 32).[63] The general point that Hume tried to establish is that, while his critic is clearly a dogmatic thinker in the Clarkean school, there is no basis for the accusations of "scepticism" and "atheism" simply on the ground that his philosophy is opposed to their brand of Christian rationalism.[64]

Having characterized the 1745 *Letter* in these terms, we may now ask who levelled these "charges" against Hume? The anonymous author of the *Specimen* has generally been identified as William Wishart, who was principal of Edinburgh University at this time and a leading opponent of Hume's candidacy (Mossner and Price 1967; Mossner 1980, chap.12). While there is substantial evidence to support this conjecture, it faces some difficulties. Wishart has been presented by Mossner (1980, 160) as belonging to the "Evangelical Party." That view has been challenged on the ground that Wishart was, on the contrary, a Rankenian and a leading figure in the early Scottish Enlightenment.[65] Wishart was well connected with a number of Clarkean figures (in both Scotland and England).[66] This includes Bishop Hoadley, who was one of Clarke's closest friends and colleagues.[67] It is not impossible, therefore, that Wishart combined Clarkean and Shaftesburyean philosophical commitments. If this is correct, the charges in the *Specimen* could have come directly from Wishart's own hand.

Another hypothesis is that while Wishart may have *used* the *Specimen* against Hume on this occasion, it was *written* by someone else who aligned more closely with the Clarkean profile. One obvious candidate for this was Warburton's friend and correspondent Andrew Baxter.[68] This was a task that Baxter was particularly well-suited for. At this time, Baxter was widely recognized as Scotland's leading proponent and defender of Clarke's philosophy. We also know that Baxter "abhorred" Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise*. Beyond this, we know that

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[63] Related to this, see also Hume's discussion of the inactivity (i.e. *vis inertiae*) of matter in EHU, 7.25n.1.

[64] Suffice it to say that there is every reason to doubt Hume's sincerity in this context. Clearly (some degree of) subterfuge was required in these circumstances, where "prudence" was called for.

[65] For instance Stewart (1985, 30) suggests that "throughout his career [Wishart's] liberal theology, anti-evangelical style, and espousal of the Moral sense philosophy, made him an object of suspicion and mistrust among Calvinists in the Kirk." For a more nuanced picture of Wishart, see Sher (1985, 152). See also Russell 2008, 310-11n.64 for criticism of Stewart's portrait of Wishart's philosophical associations and commitments.

[66] During the 1720s John Simson, professor of divinity at Glasgow and an important figure in the early Scottish Enlightenment, was charged with heresy. The charges were based on Simson's favourable views on the (Arian and Socinian) philosophy of Clarke. Wishart was one of Simson's most prominent defenders. Ironically enough, in 1738 Wishart was himself charged with heresy but eventually exonerated. These cases are described in Sefton 1962, esp. chaps. 4 and 6; and Cameron 1982, 118-22.

[67] Hoadley was the editor of the 1738 edition of Clarke's *Works*.

[68] For a more detailed defence of this view see Russell 1997; and Russell 2008, 20-3.

Wishart was a subscriber to the first edition of Baxter's *Enquiry*. Another subscriber was Gavin Hamilton, who was also the publisher of Baxter's *Enquiry*.[69] Hamilton was leader of the opposition to Hume's candidacy on the Edinburgh town council, the body that was ultimately responsible for making this appointment. The charges levelled against Hume are, moreover, entirely consistent with the Clarkean views defended in Baxter's *Enquiry*. So too is the aggressive and dogmatic style. For all these reasons there is some reason to believe that Wishart (and Hamilton) might have recruited Baxter to write the *Specimen*.

There is, however, a third possibility. Given Wishart's (various) Clarkean contacts and connections, he was likely well aware of the (highly critical) review of the *Treatise* that had been published in the *Works of the Learned* in 1739.[70] He could, therefore, easily have drawn up the charges in the *Specimen* based on this. This would certainly explain the "Clarkean" nature of the charges, as well as Hume's replies (which are plainly directed at a Clarkean thinker). Although there were some differences between Wishart and Warburton, this does not preclude Wishart using the 1739 review to frame a set of (Clarkean) objections to the contents of the *Treatise*.[71] However, if this were the case, Wishart would have also adopted the aggressive tone and manner of Warburton (and Baxter), which was not characteristic of his own style.

What matters for our purposes is not so much the identity of the author of the *Specimen* (e.g. Wishart, Baxter, etc.), but that the *Specimen* is plainly in the "Warburtonian" mode. We can identity the characteristic features of the "Warburtonian school" in these terms. They are:

(1) A focus or emphasis on the merits and strengths of the Clarkean philosophy (e.g. as it concerns free will, a future state, morality, etc.).
(2) A particular emphasis on the significance of the argument *a priori* and its importance.
(3) An aggressive and hostile manner of dealing with philosophical and theological opponents.
(4) Most importantly, an uncompromising attitude to "freethinkers" and "atheists" identified as enemies of the Christian religion.

Understood in these terms, there is a significant relationship between Warburton's review of the *Treatise* in 1739, and the "charges" presented against Hume in the *Specimen* in 1745.

Having established a standard for what passes as belonging to the "Warburtonian School" (or "gang") along these lines, we may now ask if other critics met this standard and were, in Hume's mind, members of the "Warburtonian School." Without assessing this on a case-by-case basis, there is certainly a line of criticism and critics who might be identified as belonging to this group. This is especially true of a number of Hume's most virulent Scottish critics. Among the names we might consider, apart from Baxter, are George Anderson (1753), John Stewart (1754), David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes), and James Beattie (1770).[72] All these Scottish critics of

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[69] Hamilton was also publisher of Baxter's *Reflections* in 1732.

[70] During the early 1730s Wishart was based in London and enjoyed close connections and contacts with leading members of the dissenting church there. As already noted, among these dissenters there were a number of admirers and defenders of Clarke's (and Baxter's) philosophy. See note 17 above.

[71] Perhaps the most obvious difference between Wishart and Warburton is that they had divergent attitudes regarding the merits of Shaftesbury's philosophy.

[72] Hume's various interactions and encounters with this group of thinkers are described in Mossner (1980). Perhaps the most influential of these critics, among Hume's contemporaries, was Beattie. Beattie's *Essay on Truth* (1770) was a systematic hostile attack on Hume's philosophy. Beattie, like his Aberdeen colleague Thomas Reid, was a defender of the "common sense" philosophy. However, although Reid also recognized the atheistic or irreligious tendencies of Hume's philosophy, his criticism was generally restrained and muted in character. In contrast with this, Beattie's *Essay* was a diatribe against Hume's "apology for atheism" (1770, 487). Beattie's aggressive polemics against Hume secured the success and influence of his book. In light of this it is significant that in 1772 Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) made some effort to bring Beattie to Edinburgh University. It is also significant that Warburton, who corresponded

Hume might be said to fall into the camp of the "Warburtonian School" broadly understood. Several had direct, personal connections with Warburton or Baxter, some with both of them. On this basis, it may be argued that the "Warburtonian School" is not a "myth" or invention in Hume's mind. There was, on the contrary, a pronounced pattern of criticism and (personal) attack on Hume and his philosophy, along these lines, that began with Warburton's review in 1739 and persisted, in one form or another, until the end of Hume's life.[73]

7. Warburton, "Atheism", and Hume's Scottish Context

The evidence cited suggests that there exists a significant relationship between Hume's early (Scottish) context in the Borders and the hostile review published in *The History of the Works of the Learned* in 1739. There are three distinct dimensions to this:

(1) Warburton's hostile review of Hume's *Treatise* which presents this work as belonging squarely in the tradition of "freethinking" and "atheism".
(2) Warburton's close association and friendship with Andrew Baxter which was based on his admiration for Baxter's (Clarkean) philosophy and defence of the argument *a priori*. This was combined with Warburton's contempt for Baxter's "antagonist" William Dudgeon who Warburton viewed as another member of "the tribe of freethinkers".
(3) Warburton's 1739 review was followed by a series of hostile and abusive attacks by others on Hume's *Treatise* (and his philosophy more generally). These critics present Hume in much the same hostile and aggressive terms and style that Warburton adopted in his 1739 review in *The History of the Works of the Learned* (i.e. that Hume is an "atheist", who denies the existence of God, etc.)

For the most part, our understanding of these matters is not a matter of mere conjecture, as there is clear, if not decisive evidence, relating to them. What is a matter of *some* conjecture is how and to what extent these various components are related to each other. Much of our attention has been focused on the relationship between the 1739 review (by Warburton) and Warburton's engagement with the Borders controversies involving Baxter and Dudgeon. There are two ways of understanding this relationship. On a strong interpretation, it may be argued that given that Warburton and Baxter were corresponding at this time, and embraced much the same philosophical views and attitudes, it is entirely possible that Baxter may have conspired and colluded with Warburton in the preparation and publication of this review. On a weaker interpretation, we know that Warburton read Baxter's *Enquiry* prior to writing the review of Hume's *Treatise* and that he greatly admired Baxter's work, especially his defence of Clarke's argument *a priori*. It is clear, therefore, that even if Warburton was unaware of Hume's identity, and did not discuss his review of Hume's work with Baxter, Warburton would, nevertheless, have read Hume's *Treatise* in light of Baxter's work and assessed it accordingly. It is these specific features and aspects of Warburton's 1739 review that account for much of its considerable interest and significance for our understanding of Hume's *Treatise*.

With regard to the relationship between Hume's later ("Warburtonian") critics and Warburton's 1739 *History of the Works of the Learned* review we may also take a weaker or stronger interpretation. The weak view maintains that there is plain evidence that many of Hume's later critics adopted a set of criticisms and abusive style that is similar to that which

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with Dalrymple, admired Beattie's *Essay* (Warburton and Hurd [1808, 344]).

[73] Hume's remarks about a "Warburtonian school" or "gang" do not imply the existence of any organized cabal or conspiracy so much as a (loose) group of critics and opponents (i.e. those who share Warburton's dogmatic philosophical and theological views and attitudes). It should also be kept in mind that Hume had other critics (e.g. Thomas Reid) who shared the view that his philosophy had "atheistic" tendencies but avoided the "Warburtonian" style of abuse

Warburton established in his review of the *Treatise*. This includes a number of Hume's later Scottish critics (e.g. the author of the 1745 *Specime*n, James Beattie, et al). On a stronger interpretation, it may be argued that this was not a matter of simply a shared set of objections and abusive style but also involved a degree of conscious influence or modelling after the pattern and style that Warburton had laid down in his 1739 *History of the Works of the Learned* review. Clearly, this may be true of some of Hume's critics more than others.

It is evident, on any interpretation, that Warburton's review must be considered in the wider context of the Enlightenment debate concerning atheism. This includes the more local context of the Scottish Borders during the 1730s in which some of these controversies and battles took place. It was in this local context that the *Treatise* was planned and its foundations were first laid down. Plainly Warburton understood the *Treatise* as a work that belongs squarely in the "atheistic" tradition of Hobbes, Spinoza, and "the tribe of freethinkers" who followed them. Whatever faults and flaws Warburton may have suffered from, this general understanding of the *Treatise* is more or less entirely accurate. According to the irreligious interpretation, the *Treatise* should be interpreted in terms of Hume's fundamental irreligious motivation (Russell 2008; also Russell 2016/2021). The key elements of this are, on one side of the "atheistic" coin, Hume's commitment to a secular, naturalistic "science of man", as modelled after Hobbes's similar project in *Leviathan*. On the other side, Hume launched a systematic sceptical assault on the ambitions of religious philosophers to defend the central tenets and doctrines of Christian metaphysics and morals. One of Hume's primary targets in this regard was Clarke's (dogmatic) philosophy. To this extent, the irreligious interpretation of Hume's *Treatise* serves to confirm Warburton's early assessment of Hume's "most charming system" as fundamentally "atheistic" in character, much as Warburton's review provides additional and independent support for the irreligious interpretation. What is not vindicated by the irreligious interpretation, however, is Warburton's dismissive and contemptuous attitude to this work. As it turns out, the *Treatise of Human Nature* is indeed the "juvenile work" of a philosophical "genius".[74]

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