



CORRESPONDENCE

BENEDICT DE SPINOZA

Global Grey ebooks

CORRESPONDENCE

BY
BENEDICT DE SPINOZA

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY R. H. M. ELWES

TAKEN FROM THE CHIEF WORKS OF BENEDICT DE SPINOZA, VOL. II

Correspondence by Benedict de Spinoza.

This edition was created and published by Global Grey

©GlobalGrey 2018



globalgreeyebooks.com

CONTENTS

Note

Letter I. (I) Henry Oldenburg To B. De Spinoza

Letter II. (II) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter III. (III) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter IV. (IV) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter V. (V) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter VI. (VI) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter VII. (VII) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter VIII. (XI) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter IX. (XIII) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letters X.-XIV

Letter XIII.A. Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XV. (XXXII) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter XVI. (XXXIII) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XVII. (LXI) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XVIII. (LXII) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XIX. (LXVIII) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter XX. (LXXI) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XXI. (LXXIII) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter XXII. (LXXIV) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XXIII. (LXXV) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter XXIV. (LXXVII) Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XXV. (LXXVIII) Spinoza To Oldenburg

Letter XXV.A. Oldenburg To Spinoza

Letter XXVI. (VIII) Simon De Vries To Spinoza

Letter XXVII. (IX) Spinoza To Simon De Vries

Letter XXVIII. (X) Spinoza To Simon De Vries
Letter XXIX. (XII) Spinoza To L. M. (Lewis Meyer)
Letter XXIX.A. Spinoza To Lewis Meyer
Letter XXX. (XVII) Spinoza To Peter Balling
Letter XXXI. (XVIII) William De Blyenbergh To Spinoza
Letter XXXII. (XIX) Spinoza To Blyenbergh
Letter XXXIII. (XX) Blyenbergh To Spinoza
Letter XXXIV. (XXI) Spinoza To Blyenbergh
Letter XXXV. (XXII) Blyenbergh To Spinoza
Letter XXXVI. (XXIII) Spinoza To Blyenbergh
Letter XXXVII. (XXIV) Blyenbergh To Spinoza
Letter XXXVIII. (XXVII) Spinoza To Blyenbergh
Letter XXXIX. Spinoza To Christian Huyghens
Letter XL. (XXXV.) Spinoza To Christian Huyghens
Letter XLI. (XXXVI) Spinoza To Christian Huyghens
Letter XLI.A. Spinoza To * * * * (May Or June, 1665)
Letter XLII. (XXXVII) Spinoza To I. B.
Letter XLIII. (XXXVIII) Spinoza To I. V. M
Letters XLIV., XLV., XLVI. (XXXIX., XL., XLI.) Spinoza To I. I
Letter XLVII. (XLIV.) Spinoza To I. I
Letter XLVIII
Letter XLIX. Spinoza To Isaac Orobio
Letter L. (L) Spinoza To Jarig Jellis
Letter LI. (XLV) Godfrey Leibnitz To Spinoza
Letter LII. (XLVI) Spinoza To Leibnitz
Letter LIII. (XLVII) Fabritius To Spinoza
Letter LIV. (XLVIII) Spinoza To Fabritius
Letter LV. (LI) Hugo Boxel To Spinoza

Letter LVI. (LII) Spinoza To Hugo Boxel

Letter LVII. (LIII) Hugo Boxel To Spinoza

Letter LVIII. (LIV.) Spinoza To Hugo Boxel

Letter LIX. (LV) Hugo Boxel To Spinoza

Letter LX. (LVI) Spinoza To Hugo Boxel

Letter LXI. (LVII) * * * * * To Spinoza

Letter LXII. (LVIII) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXIII. (LIX) * * * * * To Spinoza

Letter LXIV. (LX.) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXV. (LXIII) G. H. Schaller To Spinoza

Letter LXVI. (LXIV.) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXVII. (LXV) * * * * *To Spinoza

Letter LXVIII. (LXVI) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXVIII.A. G. H. Schaller To Spinoza

Letter LXVIII.B. Spinoza To Schaller

Letter LXIX. (LXXX) * * * * * To Spinoza

Letter LXX. (LXXXI) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXXI. (LXXXII.) * * * * * To Spinoza

Letter LXXII. (LXXXIII) Spinoza To * * * * *

Letter LXXIII. (LXVII) Albert Burgh To Spinoza

Letter LXXIV. (LXXXVI) Spinoza To Albert Burgh

Letter LXXV. (LXIX) Spinoza To Lambert Van Velthuysen (*Doctor Of Medicine At Utrecht.*)

exist without memory, hearing, sight, &c., or that a sphere exists without a circle, because a circle exists without a sphere?

Your fourth, and last reason, is the same as your first, and I refer you to my answer given above. I will only observe here, that I do not know which are the highest or which the lowest places, which you conceive as existing in infinite matter, unless you take the earth as the centre of the universe. For if the sun or Saturn be the centre of the universe, the sun, or Saturn, not the earth, will be the lowest.

Thus, passing by this argument and what remains, I conclude, that these and similar reasons will convince no one of the existence of all kinds of ghosts and spectres, unless it be those persons, who shut their ears to the understanding, and allow themselves to be led away by superstition. This last is so hostile to right reason, that she lends willing credence to old wives' tales for the sake of discrediting philosophers.

As regards the stories, I have already said in my first letter, that I do not deny them altogether, but only the conclusion drawn from them. To this I may add, that I do not believe them so thoroughly, as not to doubt many of the details, which are generally added rather for ornament than for bringing out the truth of the story or the conclusion drawn from it. I had hoped, that out of so many stories you would at least have produced one or two, which could hardly be questioned, and which would clearly show that ghosts or spectres exist. The case you relate of the burgomaster, who wanted to infer their existence, because he heard spectral brewers working in his mother's brewhouse by night, and making the same noises as he was accustomed to hear by day, seems to me laughable. In like manner it would be tedious here to examine all the stories of people, who have written on these trifles. To be brief, I cite the instance of Julius Caesar, who, as Suetonius testifies, laughed at such things and yet was happy, if we may trust what Suetonius says in the 59th chapter of his life of that leader. And so should all, who reflect on the human imagination, and the effects of the emotions, laugh at such notions; whatever Lavater and others, who have gone dreaming with him in the matter, may produce to the contrary.

LETTER LIX. (LV) HUGO BOXEL TO SPINOZA

[A continuation of the arguments in favour of ghosts, which may be summarized as follows:—I say a thing is done by chance, when it has not been the subject of will on the part of the doer; not when it might never have happened.—Necessity and freedom, not necessity and chance, are contraries.—If we do not in some sense attribute human qualities to God, what meaning can we attach to the term?—You ask for absolute proof of the existence of spirits; such proof is not obtainable for many things, which are yet firmly believed.—Some things are more beautiful intrinsically than others.—As God is a spirit, spirits resemble Him more than embodied creatures do.—A ghost cannot be conceived as clearly as a triangle: can you say that your own idea of God is as clear as your idea of a triangle?—As a circle exists without a sphere, so a sphere exists without a circle.—We call things higher or lower in proportion to their distance from the earth.—All the Stoics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists, Empedocles, Maximus Tyrius, Apuleius, and others, bear witness to ghosts; and no modern denies them. It is presumption to sneer at such a body of testimony. Cæsar did not ridicule ghosts, but omens, and if he had listened to Spurina he would not have been murdered.]

LETTER LX. (LVI) SPINOZA TO HUGO BOXEL

[*Spinoza again answers the argument in favour of ghosts. (The Hague, 1674).*]

Dear Sir,—I hasten to answer your letter, received yesterday, for if I delay my reply, I may have to put it off longer than I should like. The state of your health would have made me anxious, if I did not understand that you are better. I hope you are by this time quite well again.

The difficulties experienced by two people following different principles, and trying to agree on a matter, which depends on many other questions, might be shown from this discussion alone, if there were no reason to prove it by. Pray tell me, whether you have seen or read any philosophers, who hold that the world has been made by chance, taking chance in your sense, namely, that God had some design in making the world, and yet has not kept to the plan he had formed. I do not know, that such an idea has ever entered anyone's mind. I am likewise at a loss for the reasons, with which you want to make me believe, that chance and necessity are not contraries. As soon as I affirm that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles necessarily, I deny that they are thus equal by chance. As soon as I affirm that heat is a necessary effect of fire, I deny that it is a chance effect. To say, that necessary and free are two contrary terms, seems to me no less absurd and repugnant to reason. For no one can deny, that God freely knows Himself and all else, yet all with one voice grant that God knows Himself necessarily. Hence, as it seems to me, you draw no distinction between constraint or force and necessity. Man's wishes to live, to love, &c., are not under constraint, but nevertheless are necessary; much more is it necessary, that God wishes to be, to know, and to act. If you will also reflect, that indifference is only another name for ignorance or doubt, and that a will always constant and determined in all things is a necessary property of the understanding, you will see that my words are in complete harmony with truth. If we affirm, that God might have been able not to wish a given event, or not to understand it, we attribute to God two different freedoms, one necessary, the other indifferent; consequently we shall conceive God's

will as different from His essence and understanding, and shall thus fall from one absurdity into another.

The attention, which I asked for in my former letter, has not seemed to you necessary. This has been the reason why you have not directed your thoughts to the main issue, and have neglected a point which is very important.

Further, when you say that if I deny, that the operations of seeing, hearing, attending, wishing, &c., can be ascribed to God, or that they exist in Him in any eminent fashion, you do not know what sort of God mine is; I suspect that you believe there is no greater perfection than such as can be explained by the aforesaid attributes. I am not astonished; for I believe that, if a triangle could speak, it would say, in like manner, that God is eminently triangular, while a circle would say that the divine nature is eminently circular. Thus each would ascribe to God its own attributes, would assume itself to be like God, and look on everything else as ill-shaped.

The briefness of a letter and want of time do not allow me to enter into my opinion on the divine nature, or the questions you have propounded. Besides, suggesting difficulties is not the same as producing reasons. That we do many things in the world from conjecture is true, but that our reflections are based on conjecture is false. In practical life we are compelled to follow what is most probable; in speculative thought we are compelled to follow truth. A man would perish of hunger and thirst, if he refused to eat or drink, till he had obtained positive proof that food and drink would be good for him. But in philosophic reflection this is not so. On the contrary, we must take care not to admit as true anything, which is only probable. For when one falsity has been let in, infinite others follow.

Again, we cannot infer that because sciences of things divine and human are full of controversies and quarrels, therefore their whole subject-matter is uncertain; for there have been many persons so enamoured of contradiction, as to turn into ridicule geometrical axioms. Sextus Empiricus and other sceptics, whom you quote, declare, that it is false to say that a whole is greater than its part, and pass similar judgments on other axioms.

However, as I pass over and grant that in default of proof we must be content with probabilities, I say that a probable proof ought to be such that, though we may doubt about it, we cannot maintain its contrary; for that which can be contradicted resembles not truth but falsehood. For instance, if I say that Peter is alive, because I saw him yesterday in good health, this is a probability, in so far as no one can maintain the contrary; but if anyone says that he saw Peter yesterday in a swoon, and that he believed Peter to have departed this life to-day, he will make my statement seem false. That your conjecture about ghosts and spectres seems false, and not even probable, I have shown so clearly, that I can find nothing worthy of answer in your reply.

To your question, whether I have of God as clear an idea as I have of a triangle, I reply in the affirmative. But if you ask me, whether I have as clear a mental image of God as I have of a triangle, I reply in the negative. For we are not able to imagine God, though we can understand Him. You must also here observe, that I do not assert that I thoroughly know God, but that I understand some of His attributes, not all nor the greater part, and it is evident that my ignorance of very many does not hinder the knowledge I have of some. When I learned Euclid's Elements, I understood that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and this property of a triangle I perceived clearly, though I might be ignorant of many others.

As regards spectres or ghosts, I have hitherto heard attributed to them no intelligible property: they seem like phantoms, which no one can understand. When you say that spectres, or ghosts, in these lower regions (I adopt your phraseology, though I know not why matter below should be inferior to matter above) consist in a very thin rarefied and subtle substance, you seem to me to be speaking of spiders' webs, air, or vapours. To say, that they are invisible, seems to me to be equivalent to saying that they do not exist, not to stating their nature; unless, perhaps, you wish to indicate, that they render themselves visible or invisible at will, and that the imagination, in these as in other impossibilities, will find a difficulty.

The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, does not carry much weight with me. I should have been astonished, if you had brought forward Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius, or any of the atomists, or upholders of the

atomic theory. It is no wonder that persons, who have invented occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms, and a thousand other trifles, should have also devised spectres and ghosts, and given credence to old wives' tales, in order to take away the reputation of Democritus, whom they were so jealous of, that they burnt all the books which he had published amid so much eulogy. If you are inclined to believe such witnesses, what reason have you for denying the miracles of the Blessed Virgin, and all the Saints? These have been described by so many famous philosophers, theologians, and historians, that I could produce at least a hundred such authorities for every one of the former. But

I have gone further, my dear Sir, than I intended: I do not desire to cause any further annoyance by doctrines which I know you will not grant. For the principles which you follow are far different from my own.

LETTER LXI. (LVII) * * * * * TO SPINOZA

This letter is by Van Vloten, followed by Mr. Pollock, assigned to Ehrenfried Walter von Tschirnhausen, a Bohemian nobleman. See Introduction, p. xvi. The correspondence with Tschirnhausen was formerly supposed to be with Lewis Meyer. The letters of Tschirnhausen contain by far the most acute contemporary criticism of Spinoza.

[Philosophers often differ through using words in different senses. Thus in the question of free will Descartes means by free, constrained t y no cause. You mean by the same, undetermined in a particular way by a cause. The question of free will is threefold:—I. Have we any power whatever over things external to us? II. Have we absolute power over the intentional movements of our own body? III. Have we free use of our reason? Both Descartes and yourself are right according to the terms employed by each (8th October, 1674).]

LETTER LXII. (LVIII) SPINOZA TO * * * * *

This letter is addressed to G. H. Schaller, who had sent on Letter LXI. to Spinoza.

(The Hague, October, 1674).

[Spinoza gives his opinions on liberty and necessity.]

Sir,—Our friend, J. R.⁴⁹ has sent me the letter which you have been kind enough to write to me, and also the judgment of your friend⁵⁰ as to the opinions of Descartes and myself regarding free will. Both enclosures were very welcome to me. Though I am, at present, much occupied with other matters, not to mention my delicate health, your singular courtesy, or, to name the chief motive, your love of truth, impels me to satisfy your inquiries, as far as my poor abilities will permit. What your friend wishes to imply by his remark before he appeals to experience, I know not. What he adds, that *when one of two disputants affirms something which the other denies*, both may be right, is true, if he means that the two, though using the same terms, are thinking of different things. I once sent several examples of this to our friend J. R.,⁵¹ and am now writing to tell him to communicate them to you.

I, therefore, pass on to that definition of liberty, which he says is my own; but I know not whence he has taken it. I say that a thing is free, which exists and acts solely by the necessity of its own nature. Thus also God understands Himself and all things freely, because it follows solely from the necessity of His nature, that He should understand all things. You see I do not place freedom in free decision, but in free necessity. However, let us descend to created things, which are all determined by external causes to exist and operate in a given determinate manner. In order that this may be clearly understood, let us conceive a very simple thing. For instance, a stone

⁴⁹ John Rieuwerts, a bookseller of Amsterdam.

⁵⁰ Tschirnhausen; the "judgment" is Letter LXI.

⁵¹ John Rieuwerts.

receives from the impulsion of an external cause, a certain quantity of motion, by virtue of which it continues to move after the impulsion given by the external cause has ceased. The permanence of the stone's motion is constrained, not necessary, because it must be defined by the impulsion of an external cause. What is true of the stone is true of any individual, however complicated its nature, or varied its functions, inasmuch as every individual thing is necessarily determined by some external cause to exist and operate in a fixed and determinate manner.

Further conceive, I beg, that a stone, while continuing in motion, should be capable of thinking and knowing, that it is endeavouring, as far as it can, to continue to move. Such a stone, being conscious merely of its own endeavour and not at all indifferent, would believe itself to be completely free, and would think that it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. This is that human freedom, which all boast that they possess, and which consists solely in the fact, that men are conscious of their own desire, but are ignorant of the causes whereby that desire has been determined. Thus an infant believes that it desires milk freely; an angry child thinks he wishes freely for vengeance, a timid child thinks he wishes freely to run away. Again, a drunken man thinks, that from the free decision of his mind he speaks words, which afterwards, when sober, he would like to have left unsaid. So the delirious, the garrulous, and others of the same sort think that they act from the free decision of their mind, not that they are carried away by impulse. As this misconception is innate in all men, it is not easily conquered. For, although experience abundantly shows, that men can do anything rather than check their desires, and that very often, when a prey to conflicting emotions, they see the better course and follow the worse, they yet believe themselves to be free; because in some cases their desire for a thing is slight, and can easily be overruled by the recollection of something else, which is frequently present in the mind.

I have thus, if I mistake not, sufficiently explained my opinion regarding free and constrained necessity, and also regarding so-called human freedom: from what I have said you will easily be able to reply to your friend's objections. For when he says, with Descartes, that he who is constrained by no external cause is free, if by being constrained he means acting against

one's will, I grant that we are in some cases quite unrestrained, and in this respect possess free will. But if by constrained he means acting necessarily, although not against one's will (as I have explained above), I deny that we are in any instance free.

But your friend, on the contrary, asserts that *we may employ our reason absolutely, that is, in complete freedom*; and is, I think, a little too confident on the point. *For who, he says, could deny, without contradicting his own consciousness, that I can think with my thoughts, that I wish or do not wish to write?* I should like to know what consciousness he is talking of, over and above that which I have illustrated by the example of the stone.

As a matter of fact I, without, I hope, contradicting my consciousness, that is my reason and experience, and without cherishing ignorance and misconception, deny that I can by any absolute power of thought think, that I wish or do not wish to write. I appeal to the consciousness, which he has doubtless experienced, that in dreams he has not the power of thinking that he wishes, or does not wish to write; and that, when he dreams that he wishes to write, he has not the power not to dream that he wishes to write. I think he must also have experienced, that the mind is not always equally capable of thinking of the same object, but according as the body is more capable for the image of this or that object being excited in it, so is the mind more capable of thinking of the same object.

When he further adds, that the causes for his applying his mind to writing have led him, but not constrained him to write, he merely means (if he will look at the question impartially), that his disposition was then in a state, in which it could be easily acted on by causes, which would have been powerless under other circumstances, as for instance when he was under a violent emotion. That is, causes, which at other times would not have constrained him, have constrained him in this case, not to write against his will but necessarily to wish to write.

As for his statement, that *if we were constrained by external causes, no one could acquire the habit of virtue*, I know not what is his authority for saying, that firmness and constancy of disposition cannot arise from predestined necessity, but only from free will.

What he finally adds, that *if this were granted, all wickedness would be excusable*, I meet with the question, What then? Wicked men are not less to be feared, and are not less harmful, when they are wicked from necessity. However, on this point I would ask you to refer to my Principles of Cartesian Philosophy, Part II., chap. viii.

In a word, I should like your friend, who makes these objections, to tell me, how he reconciles the human virtue, which he says arises from the free decision of the mind, with God's pre-ordainment of the universe. If, with Descartes, he confesses his inability to do so, he is endeavouring to direct against me the weapon which has already pierced himself. But in vain. For if you examine my opinion attentively, you will see that it is quite consistent, &c.

LETTER LXIII. (LIX) * * * * * TO SPINOZA

This letter is from Tschirnhausen, who had in the meantime, as appears from its contents, had an interview with Spinoza.

[The writer exhorts Spinoza to publish the treatises on Ethics and on the Improvement of the Understanding.—Remarks on the definition of motion. On the difference between a true and an adequate idea.]

Most excellent Sir,—When shall we have your method of rightly directing the reason in the acquisition of unknown truths, and your general treatise on physics? I know you have already proceeded far with them. The first has already come to my knowledge, and the second I have become aware of from the Lemmas added to the second part of the Ethics; whereby many difficulties in physics are readily solved. If time and opportunity permit, I humbly beg from you a true *definition of motion* and its explanation; also to know how, seeing that extension in so far as it is conceived in itself is indivisible, immutable, &c., we can infer *à priori*, that there can arise so many varieties of it, and consequently the existence of figure in the particles of any given body, which are, nevertheless, in every body various, and distinct from the figures of the parts, which compose the reality of any other body. You have already, by word of mouth, pointed out to me a method, which you employ in the search for truths as yet unknown. I find this method to be very excellent, and at the same time very easy, in so far as I have formed an opinion on it, and I can assert that from this single discovery I have made great progress in mathematics. I wish therefore, that you would give me a true definition of an adequate, a true, a false, a fictitious, and a doubtful idea. I have been in search of the difference between a true and an adequate idea. Hitherto, however, I can ascertain nothing except after inquiring into a thing, and forming a certain concept or idea of it. I then (in order to elicit whether this true idea is also an adequate idea of its object) inquire, what is the cause of this idea or concept; when this is ascertained, I again ask, What is the cause of this prior concept? and so I go on always

inquiring for the causes of the causes of ideas, until I find a cause of such a kind, that I can not find any cause for it, except that among all the ideas which I can command this alone exists. If, for instance, we inquire the true origin of our errors, Descartes will answer, that it consists in our giving assent to things not yet clearly perceived. But supposing this to be the true idea of the thing, I nevertheless shall not yet be able to determine all things necessary to be known concerning it, unless I have also an adequate idea of the thing in question; in order to obtain such, therefore, I inquire into the cause of this concept, how it happens that we give assent to things not clearly understood—and I answer, that it arises from defective knowledge. But here I cannot inquire further, and ask what is the cause, that we are ignorant of certain things; hence I see that I have detected an adequate idea of the origin of our errors. Here meanwhile I ask you, whether, seeing that many things expressed in infinite modes have an adequate idea of themselves, and that from every adequate idea all that can be known of its object can be inferred, though more readily from some ideas than others, whether, I say, this may be the means of knowing which idea is to be preferred? For instance, one adequate idea of a circle consists in the equality of its radii; another adequate idea consists in the infinite right angles equal to one another, made by the intersection of two lines, &c., and thus we have infinite expressions, each giving the adequate nature of a circle, Now, though all the properties of a circle may be inferred from every one of them, they may be deduced much more easily from some than from others. So also he, who considers lines applied to curves, will be able to draw many conclusions as to the measurement of curves, but will do so more readily from the consideration of tangents, &c. Thus I have wished to indicate how far I have progressed in this study; I await perfection in it, or, if I am wrong on any point, correction; also the definition I asked for. Farewell.

5 Jan., 1675.

LETTER LXIV. (LX.) SPINOZA TO * * * * *

Tschirnhausen.

[*The difference between a true and an adequate idea is merely extrinsic, &c. The Hague, Jan., 1675.*]

Honoured Sir.—Between a true and an adequate idea, I recognize no difference, except that the epithet true only has regard to the agreement between the idea and its object, whereas the epithet adequate has regard to the nature of the idea in itself; so that in reality there is no difference between a true and an adequate idea beyond this extrinsic relation. However, in order that I may know, from which idea out of many all the properties of its object may be deduced, I pay attention to one point only, namely, that the idea or definition should express the efficient cause of its object. For instance, in inquiring into the properties of a circle, I ask, whether from the idea of a circle, that it consists of infinite right angles, I can deduce all its properties. I ask, I repeat, whether this idea involves the efficient cause of a circle. If it does not, I look for another, namely, that a circle is the space described by a line, of which one point is fixed, and the other movable. As this definition explains the efficient cause, I know that I can deduce from it all the properties of a circle. So, also, when I define God as a supremely perfect Being, then, since that definition does not express the efficient cause (I mean the efficient cause internal as well as external) I shall not be able to infer therefrom all the properties of God; as I can, when I define God as a Being, &c. (see Ethics, I. Def. vi.). As for your other inquiries, namely, that concerning motion, and those pertaining to method, my observations on them are not yet written out in due order, so I will reserve them for another occasion.

As regards your remark, that he "who considers lines applied to curves makes many deductions with regard to the measurement of curves, but does so with greater facility from the consideration of tangents," &c., I think that from the consideration of tangents many deductions will be made with

more difficulty, than from the consideration of lines applied in succession; and I assert absolutely, that from certain properties of any particular thing (whatever idea be given) some things may be discovered more readily, others with more difficulty, though all are concerned with the nature of the thing. I think it need only be observed, that an idea should be sought for of such a kind, that all properties may be inferred, as has been said above. He, who is about to deduce all the properties of a particular thing, knows that the ultimate properties will necessarily be the most difficult to discover, &c.

LETTER LXV. (LXIII) G. H. SCHALLER TO SPINOZA

In the Opera Posthuma this letter is arranged, so as to seem to be from the person who puts the questions himself, and the names of Schaller and Tschirnhausen are suppressed.

[Schaller asks for answers to four questions of his friend Tschirnhausen on the attributes of God, and mentions that Tschirnhausen has removed the unfavourable opinion of Spinoza lately conceived by Boyle and Oldenburg.]

Most distinguished and excellent Sir,—I should blush for my silence, which has lasted so long, and has laid me open to the charge of ingratitude for your kindness extended to me beyond my merits, if I did not reflect that your generous courtesy inclines rather to excuse than to accuse, and also know that you devote your leisure, for the common good of your friends, to serious studies, which it would be harmful and injurious to disturb without due cause. For this reason I have been silent, and have meanwhile been content to hear from friends of your good health: I send you this letter to inform you, that our noble friend von Tschirnhausen is enjoying the same in England, and has three times in the letters he has sent me bidden me convey his kindest regards to the master, again bidding me request from you the solution of the following questions, and forward to him your hoped-for answer: would the master be pleased to convince him by positive proof, not by a reduction to the impossible, that we cannot know any attributes of God, save thought and extension? Further, whether it follows that creatures constituted under other attributes can form no idea of extension? If so, it would follow that there must be as many worlds as there are attributes of God. For instance, there would be as much room for extension in worlds affected by other attributes, as there actually exists of extension in our world. But as we perceive nothing save thought besides extension, so creatures in the other world would perceive nothing besides the attributes of that world and thought.

Secondly, as the understanding of God differs from our understanding as much in essence as in existence, it has, therefore, nothing in common with

it; therefore (by Ethics, I. iii.) God's understanding cannot be the cause of our own.

Thirdly (in Ethics, I. x. note) you say, that *nothing in nature is clearer than that every entity must be conceived under some attribute* (this I thoroughly understand), and *that the more it has of reality or being, the more attributes appertain to it*. It seems to follow from this, that there are entities possessing three, four, or more attributes (though we gather from what has been demonstrated that every being consists only of two attributes, namely, a certain attribute of God and the idea of that attribute).

Fourthly, I should like to have examples of those things which are immediately produced by God, and those which are produced through the means of some infinite modification. Thought and extension seem to be of the former kind; understanding in thought and motion in extension seem to be of the latter.

And these are the points which our said friend von Tschirnhausen joins with me in wishing to have explained by your excellence, if perchance your spare time allows it. He further relates, that Mr. Boyle and Oldenburg had formed a strange idea of your personal character, but that he has not only removed it, but also given reasons, which have not only led them back to a most worthy and favourable opinion thereof, but also made them value most highly the Theologico-Political Treatise. Of this I have not ventured to inform you, because of your health. Be assured that I am, and live,

Most noble sir,
for every good office your most devoted servant,
G. H. SCHALLER.

Amsterdam, 25 July, 1675.

Mr. à Gent and J. Rieuwerts dutifully greet you.

LETTER LXVI. (LXIV.) SPINOZA TO * * * * *

Tschirnhausen.

[*Spinoza answers by references to the first three books of the Ethics.*]

Dear Sir,—I am glad that you have at last had occasion to refresh me with one of your letters, always most welcome to me. I heartily beg that you will frequently repeat the favour, &c.

I proceed to consider your doubts: to the first I answer, that the human mind can only acquire knowledge of those things which the idea of a body actually existing involves, or of what can be inferred from such an idea. For the power of anything is defined solely by its essence (*Ethics*, III. vii.); the essence of the mind (*Ethics*, II. xiii.) consists solely in this, that it is the idea of body actually existing; therefore the mind's power of understanding only extends to things, which this idea of body contains in itself, or which follow therefrom. Now this idea of body does not involve or express any of God's attributes, save extension and thought. For its object (*ideatum*), namely, body (by *Ethics*, II. vi), has God for its cause, in so far as He is regarded under the attribute of extension, and not in so far as He is regarded under any other; therefore (*Ethics*, I. ax. vi.) this idea of the body involves the knowledge of God, only in so far as He is regarded under the attribute of extension. Further, this idea, in so far as it is a mode of thinking, has also (by the same proposition) God for its cause, in so far as He is regarded as a thinking thing, and not in so far as He is regarded under any other attribute. Hence (by the same axiom) the idea of this idea involves the knowledge of God, in so far as He is regarded under the attribute of thought, and not in so far as He is regarded under any attribute. It is therefore plain, that the human mind, or the idea of the human body neither involves nor expresses any attributes of God save these two. Now from these two attributes, or their modifications, no other attribute of God can (*Ethics*, I. x.) be inferred or conceived. I therefore conclude, that the human mind cannot attain knowledge of any attribute of God besides these, which is the proposition

you inquire about. With regard to your question, whether there must be as many worlds as there are attributes, I refer you to Ethics II. vii. note.

Moreover this proposition might be proved more readily by a reduction to the absurd; I am accustomed, when the proposition is negative, to employ this mode of demonstration as more in character. However, as the question you ask is positive, I make use of the positive method, and ask, whether one thing can be produced from another, from which it differs both in essence and existence; for things which differ to this extent seem to have nothing in common. But since all particular things, except those which are produced from things similar to themselves, differ from their causes both in essence and existence, I see here no reason for doubt.

The sense in which I mean that God is the efficient cause of things, no less of their essence than of their existence, I think has been sufficiently explained in Ethics I. xxv. note and corollary. The axiom in the note to Ethics I. x., as I hinted at the end of the said note, is based on the idea which we have of a Being absolutely infinite, not on the fact, that there are or may be beings possessing three, four, or more attributes.

Lastly, the examples you ask for of the first kind are, in thought, absolutely infinite understanding; in extension, motion and rest; an example of the second kind is the sum of the whole extended universe (*facies totius universi*), which, though it varies in infinite modes, yet remains always the same. Cf. Ethics II. note to Lemma vii. before Prop. xiv.

Thus, most excellent Sir, I have answered, as I think, the objections of yourself and your friend. If you think any uncertainty remains, I hope you will not neglect to tell me, so that I may, if possible, remove it.

The Hague, 29 July, 1675.

LETTER LXVII. (LXV) * * * * * TO SPINOZA

Tschirnhausen.

[*A fresh inquiry as to whether there are two or more attributes of God.*]

Distinguished Sir,—I should like a demonstration of what you say: namely, that the soul cannot perceive any attributes of God, except extension and thought. Though this might appear evident to me, it seems possible that the contrary might be deduced from Ethics II. vii. note; perhaps because I do not rightly grasp the meaning of that passage. I have therefore resolved, distinguished Sir, to show you how I make the deduction, earnestly begging you to aid me with your usual courtesy, wherever I do not rightly represent your meaning. I reason as follows:—Though I gather that the universe is one, it is not less clear from the passage referred to, that it is expressed in infinite modes, and therefore that every individual thing is expressed in infinite modes. Hence it seems to follow, that the modification constituting my mind, and the modification constituting my body, though one and the same modification, is yet expressed in infinite ways—first, through thought; secondly, through extension; thirdly, through some attribute of God unknown to me, and so on to infinity, seeing that there are in God infinite attributes, and the order and connection of the modifications seem to be the same in all. Hence arises the question: Why the mind, which represents a certain modification, the same modification being expressed not only in extension, but in infinite other ways,—why, I repeat, does the mind perceive that modification only as expressed through extension, to wit, the human body, and not as expressed through any other attributes? Time does not allow me to pursue the subject further; perhaps my difficulties will be removed by further reflection.

London, 12 Aug., 1675.

LETTER LXVIII. (LXVI) SPINOZA TO * * * *

Tschirnhausen

[*In this fragment of a letter Spinoza refers his friend to Ethics, I. x. and II. vii. note.*]

Distinguished Sir,— . . . But in answer to your objection I say, that although each particular thing be expressed in infinite ways in the infinite understanding of God, yet those infinite ideas, whereby it is expressed, cannot constitute one and the same mind of a particular thing, but infinite minds; seeing that each of these infinite ideas has no connection with the rest, as I have explained in the same note to Ethics, II. vii., and as is also evident from I. x. If you will reflect on these passages a little, you will see that all difficulty vanishes, &c.

The Hague, 18 August, 1675.

LETTER LXVIII.A. G. H. SCHALLER TO SPINOZA

[Schaller relates to Spinoza Tschirnhausen's doings in France, and letter to him, and makes known to Spinoza the answers contained in that letter to Spinoza's objections in Letter LX VIII. and the request of Leibnitz to see Spinoza's unpublished writings.]

Amsterdam, 14 Nov., 1675.

Most learned and excellent Master, my most venerable Patron,—I hope that you duly received my letter with ——'s method,⁵² and likewise, that you are up to the present time in good health, as I am.

But for three months I had no letter from our friend von Tschirnhausen, whence I formed sad conjectures that he had made a fatal journey, when he left England for France. Now that I have received a letter, in my fulness of joy I felt bound, according to his request, to communicate it to the Master, and to let you know, with his most dutiful greeting, that he has arrived safely in Paris, and found there Mr. Huygens, as we had told him, and consequently has in every way sought to please him, and is thus highly esteemed by him. He mentioned, that the Master had recommended to him Huygens's conversation, and made very much of him personally. This greatly pleased Huygens; so he answered that he likewise greatly esteemed you personally, and he has now received from you a copy of the Theologico-Political Treatise, which is esteemed by many there, and it is eagerly inquired, whether there are extant any more of the same writer's works. To this Mr. von Tschirnhausen replied that he knew of none but the Demonstrations in the first and second parts of the Cartesian Principles. But he mentioned nothing about the Master, but what I have said, and so he hopes that he has not displeased you herein.

* * * * *

⁵² See the next Letter.

To the objection that you last made he replies, that those few words which I wrote at the Master's dictation,⁵³ explained to him your meaning more thoroughly, and that he has favourably entertained the said reasonings (for by these two methods⁵⁴ they best admit of explanation). But two reasons have obliged him to continue in the opinion implied in his recent objection. Of these the first is, that otherwise there appears to be a contradiction between the fifth and seventh propositions of the second book. For in the former of these it is laid down, that the objects of ideas are the efficient causes of the ideas, which yet seems to be refuted by the quotation, in the proof of the latter, of the fourth axiom of Part I. "Or, as I rather think, I do not make the right application of this axiom according to the author's intention, which I would most willingly be told by him, if his leisure permits it. The second cause which prevented me from following the explanation he gives was, that thereby the attribute of thought is pronounced to extend much more widely than other attributes. But since every one of the attributes contributes to make up the essence of God, I do not quite see how this fact does not contradict the opinion just stated. I will say just this more, that if I may judge the minds of others by my own, there will be great difficulty in understanding the seventh and eighth propositions of Book II., and this for no other reason than that the author has been pleased (doubtless because they seemed so plain to him) to accompany the demonstrations annexed to them with such short and laconic explanations."

He further mentions, that he has found at Paris a man called Leibnitz, remarkably learned, and most skilled in various sciences, as also free from the vulgar prejudices of theology. With him he has formed an intimate acquaintance, founded on the fact that Leibnitz labours with him to pursue the perfection of the intellect, and, in fact, reckons nothing better or more useful. Von Tschirnhausen says, that he is most practised in ethics, and speaks without any stimulus of the passions by the sole dictate of reason. He adds, that he is most skilled in physics, and also in metaphysical studies concerning God and the soul. Finally, he concludes that he is most worthy of having communicated to him the Master's writings, if you will first give your

⁵³ Letter LXVIII.

⁵⁴ That is, I think, hearing from the author criticized what his precise meaning is, and attending carefully to his arguments in favour of the opinion thus precisely ascertained.—[Tr.]

permission, for he believes that the author will thence gain a great advantage, as he promises to show at length, if the Master be so pleased. But if not, do not doubt, in the least, that he will honourably keep them concealed as he has promised, as in fact he has not made the slightest mention of them. Leibnitz also highly values the Theologico-Political Treatise, on the subject of which he once wrote the Master a letter, if he is not mistaken. And therefore I would beg my Master, that, unless there is some reason against him, you will not refuse your permission in accordance with your gracious kindness, but will, if possible, open your mind to me, as soon as may be, for after receiving your answers I shall be able to reply to our friend von Tschirnhausen, which I would gladly do on Tuesday evening, unless important hindrances cause my Master to delay.

Mr. Bresser,⁵⁵ on his return from Cleves, has sent here a large quantity of the beer of that country; I suggested to him that he should make a present to the Master of half a tun, which he promised to do, and added a most friendly greeting.

Finally, excuse my unpractised style and hurried writing, and give me your orders, that I may have a real occasion of proving myself, most excellent Sir,

Your most ready servant,
G. H. SCHALLER.

⁵⁵ See Letters XLI.A, XLII.

LETTER LXVIII.B. SPINOZA TO SCHALLER

[*Spinoza answers all the points in Schaller's letter, and hesitates to entrust his writings to Leibnitz.*]

Most experienced Sir, and valued Friend,—I was much pleased to learn from your letter, received to-day, that you are well, and that our friend von Tschirnhausen has happily accomplished his journey to France. In the conversation which he had about me with Mr. Huygens, he behaved, at least in my opinion, very judiciously; and besides, I am very glad that he has found so convenient an opportunity for the purpose which he intended. But what it is he has found in the fourth axiom of Part I. that seems to contradict Proposition v. of Part II. I do not see. For in that proposition it is affirmed, that the essence of every idea has for its cause God, in so far as He is considered as a thinking thing; but in that axiom, that the knowledge or idea of a cause depends on the knowledge or idea of an effect. But, to tell the truth, I do not quite follow, in this matter, the meaning of your letter, and suspect that either in it, or in his copy of the book, there is a slip of the pen. For you write, that it is affirmed in Proposition v. that the objects of ideas are the efficient causes of the ideas, whereas this is exactly what is expressly denied in that proposition, and now think that this is the cause of the whole confusion.⁵⁶ Accordingly it would be useless for me at present to try to write at greater length on this subject, but I must wait, till you explain to me his mind more clearly, and till I know whether he has a correct copy. I believe that I have an epistolary acquaintance with the Leibnitz he mentions. But why he, who was a counsellor at Frankfort, has gone to France, I do not know. As far as I could conjecture from his letters, he seemed to me a man of liberal mind, and versed in every science. But yet I think it imprudent so soon to entrust my writings to him. I should like first to know what is his business in France, and the judgment of our friend von Tschirnhausen, when he has been longer in his company, and knows his character more

⁵⁶ It appears to me, that Schaller correctly states the difficulty of Tschirnhausen, but that by leaving out a negative in the sentence in question, he has attributed the doctrine of Prop. v. to Prop. vii., and *vice versa*.—[Tr.]

intimately. However, greet that friend of ours in my name, and let him command me what he pleases, if in anything I can be of service to him, and he will find me most ready to obey him in everything.

I congratulate my most worthy friend Mr. Bresser on his arrival or return, and also thank him heartily for the promised beer, and will requite him, too, in any way that I can. Lastly, I have not yet tried to find out your relation's method, nor do I think that I shall be able to apply my mind to trying it. For the more I think over the thing in itself, the more I am persuaded that you have not made gold, but had not sufficiently eliminated that which was hidden in the antimony. But more of this another time: at present I am prevented by want of leisure. In the meanwhile, if in anything I can assist you, you will always find me, most excellent Sir, your friend and devoted servant,

B. de Spinoza.

The Hague, 18 Nov., 1675.

LETTER LXIX. (LXXX) * * * * * TO SPINOZA

Tschirnhausen

[The writer asks for explanations of some passages in the letter about the infinite (XXIX).]

Distinguished Sir,—In the first place I can with great difficulty conceive, how it can be proved, et priori, that bodies exist having motion and figure, seeing that, in extension considered absolutely in itself, nothing of the kind is met with. Secondly, I should like to learn from you, how this passage in your letter on the infinite is to be understood:—"They do not hence infer that such things elude number by the multitude of their component parts." For, as a matter of fact, all mathematicians seem to me always to demonstrate, with regard to such infinities, that the number of the parts is so great, as to elude all expression in terms of number. And in the example you give of the two circles, you do not appear to prove this statement,⁵⁷ which was yet what you had undertaken to do. For in this second passage you only show, that they do not draw this conclusion from "*the excessive size of the intervening space,*" or from the fact that "*we do not know the maximum and the minimum of the said space;*" but you do not demonstrate, as you intended, that the conclusion is not based on the multitude of parts, &c.

2 May, 1676.

⁵⁷ Viz., "They do not hence infer component parts."

LETTER LXX. (LXXXI) SPINOZA TO * * * * *

Tschirnhausen

[*Spinoza explains his view of the infinite.*]

Distinguished Sir,—My statement concerning the infinite, that an infinity of parts cannot be inferred from a multitude of parts, is plain when we consider that, if such a conclusion could be drawn from a multitude of parts, we should not be able to imagine a greater multitude of parts; the first-named multitude, whatever it was, would have to be the greater, which is contrary to fact. For in the whole space between two non-concentric circles we conceive a greater multitude of parts than in half that space, yet the number of parts in the half, as in the whole of the space, exceeds any assignable number. Again, from extension, as Descartes conceives it, to wit, a quiescent mass, it is not only difficult, as you say, but absolutely impossible to prove the existence of bodies. For matter at rest, as it is in itself, will continue at rest, and will only be determined to motion by some more powerful external cause; for this reason I have not hesitated on a former occasion to affirm, that the Cartesian principles of natural things are useless, not to say absurd.

The Hague, 5 May, 1676.

LETTER LXXI. (LXXXII.) * * * * * TO SPINOZA

Tsehirnhausen

[*How can the variety of the universe be shown à priori from the Spinozistic conception of extension?*]

Most learned Sir,—I wish you would gratify me in this matter by pointing out how, from the conception of extension, as you give it, the variety of the universe can be shown *à priori*. You recall the opinion of Descartes, wherein he asserts, that this variety can only be deduced from extension, by supposing that, when motion was started by God, it caused this effect in extension. Now it appears to me, that he does not deduce the existence of bodies from matter at rest, unless, perhaps, you count as nothing the assumption of God as a motive power; you have not shown how such an effect must, *à priori*, necessarily follow from the nature of God.

A difficulty which Descartes professed himself unable to solve as being beyond human understanding. I therefore ask you the question, knowing that you have other thoughts on the matter, unless perhaps there be some weighty cause for your unwillingness hitherto to disclose your opinion. If this, as I suppose, be not expedient, give me some hint of your meaning.

You may rest assured, that whether you speak openly with me, or whether you employ reserve, my regard for you will remain unchanged.

My special reasons for making the requests are as follows:—I have always observed in mathematics, that from a given thing considered in itself, that is, from the definition of a given thing, we can only deduce a single property; if, however, we require to find several properties, we are obliged to place the thing defined in relation to other things. Then from the conjunction of the definitions of these things new properties result.

For instance, if I regard the circumference of a circle by itself, I can only infer that it is everywhere alike or uniform, in which property it differs essentially

from all other curves; I shall never be able to infer any other properties. But if I place it in relation with other things, such as the radii drawn from the centre, two intersecting lines, or many others, I shall be able hence to deduce many properties; this seems to be in opposition to Prop. xvi. of your Ethics, almost the principal proposition of the first book of your treatise. For it is there assumed as known, that from the given definition of anything several properties can be deduced.

This seems to me impossible, unless we bring the thing defined into relation with other things; and further, I am for this reason unable to see, how from any attribute regarded singly, for instance, infinite extension, a variety of bodies can result; if you think that this conclusion cannot be drawn from one attribute considered by itself, but from all taken together, I should like to be instructed by you on the point, and shown how it should be conceived.—
Farewell, &c.

Paris, 23 June, 1676.

LETTER LXXII. (LXXXIII) SPINOZA TO * * * *

Tschirnhausen

[*Spinoza gives the required explanation. Mentions the treatise of Huet, &c.*]

Distinguished Sir,—With regard to your question as to whether the variety of the universe can be deduced *à priori* from the conception of extension only, I believe I have shown clearly enough already that it cannot; and that, therefore, matter has been ill-defined by Descartes as extension; it must necessarily be explained through an attribute, which expresses eternal and infinite essence. But perhaps, some day, if my life be prolonged, I may discuss the subject with you more clearly. For hitherto I have not been able to put any of these matters into due order.

As to what you add; namely, that from the definition of a given thing considered in itself we can only deduce a single property, this is, perhaps, true in the case of very simple things (among which I count figures), but not in realities. For, from the fact alone, that I define God as a Being to whose essence belongs existence, I infer several of His properties; namely, that He necessarily exists, that He is One, unchangeable, infinite, &c. I could adduce several other examples, which, for the present, I pass over.

In conclusion, I ask you to inquire, whether Huet's treatise (against the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus") about which I wrote to you before, has yet been published, and whether you could send me a copy. Also, whether you yet know, what are the new discoveries about refraction. And so farewell, dear Sir, and continue to regard yours, &c.

The Hague, 15 July, 1676.

LETTER LXXIII. (LXVII) ALBERT BURGH TO SPINOZA

[*Albert Burgh announces his reception into the Romish Church, and exhorts Spinoza to follow his example.*⁵⁸]

I promised to write to you on leaving my country, if anything noteworthy occurred on the journey. I take the opportunity which offers of an event of the utmost importance, to redeem my engagement, by informing you that I have, by God's infinite mercy, been received into the Catholic Church and made a member of the same. You may learn the particulars of the step from a letter which I have sent to the distinguished and accomplished Professor Craanen of Leyden. I will here subjoin a few remarks for your special benefit.

Even as formerly I admired you for the subtlety and keenness of your natural gifts, so now do I bewail and deplore you; inasmuch as being by nature most talented, and adorned by God with extraordinary gifts; being a lover, nay a coveter of the truth, you yet allow yourself to be ensnared and deceived by that most wretched and most proud of beings, the prince of evil spirits. As for all your philosophy, what is it but a mere illusion and chimera? Yet to it you entrust not only your peace of mind in this life, but the salvation of your soul for eternity. See on what a wretched foundation all your doctrines rest. You assume that you have at length discovered the true philosophy. How do you know that your philosophy is the best of all that ever have been taught in the world, are now being taught, or ever shall be taught? Passing over what may be devised in the future, have you examined all the philosophies, ancient as well as modern, which are taught here, and in India, and everywhere throughout the whole world? Even if you have duly examined them, how do you know that you have chosen the best? You will say: "My philosophy is in harmony with right reason; other philosophies are not." But all other philosophers except your own followers disagree with you, and with equal right say of their philosophy what you say of yours, accusing you, as you do them, of falsity and error. It is, therefore, plain, that before the

⁵⁸ The whole of this very long letter is not given here, but only such parts as seemed most characteristic, or are alluded to in Spinoza's reply.—[Tr.]

truth of your philosophy can come to light, reasons must be advanced, which are not common to other philosophies, but apply solely to your own; or else you must admit that your philosophy is as uncertain and nugatory as the rest.

However, restricting myself for the present to that book of yours with an impious title,⁵⁹ and mingling your philosophy with your theology, as in reality you mingle them yourself, though with diabolic cunning you endeavour to maintain, that each is separate from the other, and has different principles, I thus proceed.

Perhaps you will say: "Others have not read Holy Scripture so often as I have; and it is from Holy Scripture, the acknowledgment of which distinguishes Christians from the rest of the world, that I prove my doctrines. But how? By comparing the clear passages with the more obscure I explain Holy Scripture, and out of my interpretations I frame dogmas, or else confirm those which are already concocted in my brain." But, I adjure you, reflect seriously on what you say. How do you know, that you have made a right application of your method, or again that your method is sufficient for the interpretation of Scripture, and that you are thus interpreting Scripture aright, especially as the Catholics say, and most truly, that the universal Word of God is not handed down to us in writing, hence that Holy Scripture cannot be explained through itself, I will not say by one man, but by the Church herself, who is the sole authorized interpreter? The Apostolic traditions must likewise be consulted, as is proved by the testimony of Holy Scripture and. Thus,

Fathers, and as reason and experience suggest. your first principles are most false and lead to destruction, what will become of all your doctrine, built up and supported on so rotten a foundation?

Wherefore, if you believe in Christ crucified, acknowledge your pestilent heresy, reflect on the perverseness of your nature, and be reconciled with the Church.

⁵⁹ "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus."

How do your proofs differ from those of all heretics, who ever have left, are now leaving, or shall in future leave God's Church? All, like yourself, make use of the same principle, to wit, Holy Scripture taken by itself, for the concoction and establishment of their doctrines.

Do not flatter yourself with the thought, that neither the Calvinists, it may be, nor the so-called Reformed Church, nor the Lutherans, nor the Mennonites, nor the Socinians, &c., can refute your doctrines. All these, as I have said, are as wretched as yourself, and like you are dwelling in the shadow of death.

If you do not believe in Christ, you are more wretched than I can express. Yet the remedy is easy. Turn away from your sins, and consider the deadly arrogance of your wretched and insane reasoning. You do not believe in Christ. Why? You will say: "Because the teaching and the life of Christ, and also the Christian teaching concerning Christ are not at all in harmony with my teaching." But again, I say, then you dare to think yourself greater than all those who have ever risen up in the State or Church of God, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, doctors, confessors, and holy virgins innumerable, yea, in your blasphemy, than Christ himself. Do you alone surpass all these in doctrine, in manner of life, in every respect? Will you, wretched pigmy, vile worm of the earth, yea, ashes, food of worms, will you in your unspeakable blasphemy, dare to put yourself before the incarnate, infinite wisdom of the Eternal Father? Will you, alone, consider yourself wiser and greater than all those, who from the beginning of the world have been in the Church of God, and have believed, or believe still, that Christ would come or has already come? On what do you base this rash, insane, deplorable, and inexcusable arrogance?

* * * * *

If you cannot pronounce on what I have just been enumerating (divining rods, alchemy, &c.), why, wretched man, are you so puffed up with diabolical pride, as to pass rash judgment on the awful mysteries of Christ's life and passion, which the Catholics themselves in their teaching declare to be incomprehensible? Why do you commit the further insanity of silly and futile carping at the numberless miracles and signs, which have been

wrought through the virtue of Almighty God by the apostles and disciples of Christ, and afterwards by so many thousand saints, in testimony to, and confirmation of the truth of the Catholic faith; yea, which are being wrought in our own time in cases without number throughout the world, by God's almighty goodness and mercy? If you cannot gainsay these, and surely you cannot, why stand aloof any longer? Join hands of fellowship, and repent from your sins: put on humility, and be born again.

*[Albert Burgh requests Spinoza to consider: (i.) The large number of believers in the Romish faith. (ii.) The uninterrupted succession of the Church. (iii.) The fact that a few unlearned men converted the world to Christianity. (iv.) The antiquity, the immutability, the infallibility, the incorruption, the unity, and the vast extent of the Catholic Religion; also the fact, that secession from it involves damnation, and that it will itself endure as long as the world. (v.) The admirable organization of the Romish Church. (vi.) The superior morality of Catholics. (vii.) The frequent cases of recantation of opinions among heretics. (viii.) The miserable life led by atheists, whatever their outward demeanour may be.] * * * **

I have written this letter to you with intentions truly Christian; first, in order to show the love I bear to you, though you are a heathen; secondly, in order to beg you not to persist in converting others.

I therefore will thus conclude: God is willing to snatch your soul from eternal damnation, if you will allow Him. Do not doubt that the Master, who has called you so often through others, is now calling you for the last time through me, who having obtained grace from the ineffable mercy of God Himself, beg the same for you with my whole heart. Do not deny me. For if you do not now give ear to God who calls you, the wrath of the Lord will be kindled against you, and there is a danger of your being abandoned by His infinite mercy, and becoming a wretched victim of the Divine Justice which consumes all things in wrath. Such a fate may Almighty God avert for the greater glory of His name, and for the salvation of your soul, also for a salutary example for the imitation of your most unfortunate and idolatrous followers, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who with the Eternal Father liveth and reigneth in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, God for all Eternity. Amen.

Florence, III. Non. Sept. CICICCLXXV. (Sept. 3, 1675.)

LETTER LXXIV. (LXXVI) SPINOZA TO ALBERT BURGH

[Spinoza laments the step taken by his pupil, and answers his arguments. The Hague, end of 1675.]

That, which I could scarcely believe when told me by others, I learn at last from your own letter; not only have you been made a member of the Romish Church, but you are become a very keen champion of the same, and have already learned wantonly to insult and rail against your opponents.

At first I resolved to leave your letter unanswered, thinking that time and experience will assuredly be of more avail than reasoning, to restore you to yourself and your friends; not to mention other arguments, which won your approval formerly, when we were discussing the case of Steno,⁶⁰ in whose steps you are now following. But some of my friends, who like myself had formed great hopes from your superior talents, strenuously urge me not to fail in the offices of a friend, but to consider what you lately were, rather than what you are, with other arguments of the like nature. I have thus been induced to write you this short reply, which I earnestly beg you will think worthy of calm perusal.

I will not imitate those adversaries of Romanism, who would set forth the vices of priests and popes with a view to kindling your aversion. Such considerations are often put forward from evil and unworthy motives, and tend rather to irritate than to instruct. I will even admit, that more men of learning and of blameless life are found in the Romish Church than in any other Christian body; for, as it contains more members, so will every type of character be more largely represented in it. You cannot possibly deny, unless you have lost your memory as well as your reason, that in every Church there are thoroughly honourable men, who worship God with justice and charity. We have known many such among the Lutherans, the Reformed Church, the Mennonites, and the Enthusiasts. Not to go further, you knew your own relations, who in the time of the Duke of Alva suffered every kind

⁶⁰ A Danish anatomist, who renounced Lutheranism for Catholicism at Florence in 1669.

of torture bravely and willingly for the sake of their religion. In fact, you must admit, that personal holiness is not peculiar to the Romish Church, but common to all Churches.

As it is by this, that we know "that we dwell in God and He in us" (1 Ep. John, iv. 13), it follows, that what distinguishes the Romish Church from others must be something entirely superfluous, and therefore founded solely on superstition. For, as John says, justice and charity are the one sure sign of the true Catholic faith, and the true fruits of the Holy Spirit. Wherever they are found, there in truth is Christ; wherever they are absent, Christ is absent also. For only by the Spirit of Christ can we be led to the love of justice and charity. Had you been willing to reflect on these points, you would not have ruined yourself, nor have brought deep affliction on your relations, who are now sorrowfully bewailing your evil case.

But I return to your letter, which you begin, by lamenting that I allow myself to be ensnared by the prince of evil spirits. Pray take heart, and recollect yourself. When you had the use of your faculties, you were wont, if I mistake not, to worship an Infinite God, by Whose efficacy all things absolutely come to pass and are preserved; now you dream of a prince, God's enemy, who against God's will ensnares and deceives very many men (rarely good ones, to be sure), whom God thereupon hands over to this master of wickedness to be tortured eternally. The Divine justice therefore allows the devil to deceive men and remain unpunished; but it by no means allows to remain unpunished the men, who have been by that self-same devil miserably deceived and ensnared.

These absurdities might so far be tolerated, if you worshipped a God infinite and eternal; not one whom Chastillon, in the town which the Dutch call Tienen, gave with impunity to horses to be eaten. And, poor wretch, you bewail me? My philosophy, which you never beheld, you style a chimera? O youth deprived of understanding, who has bewitched you into believing, that the Supreme and Eternal is eaten by you, and held in your intestines?

Yet you seem to wish to employ reason, and ask me, "*How I know that my philosophy is the best among all that have ever been taught in the world, or are being taught, or ever will be taught?*" a question which I might with much

greater right ask you; for I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy, I know that I understand the true philosophy. If you ask in what way I know it, I answer: In the same way as you know that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles: that this is sufficient, will be denied by no one whose brain is sound, and who does not go dreaming of evil spirits inspiring us with false ideas like the true. For the truth is the index of itself and of what is false.

But you; who presume that you have at last found the best religion, or rather the best men, on whom you have pinned your credulity, you, "*who know that they are the best among all who have taught, do now teach, or shall in future teach other religions. Have you examined all religions, ancient as well as modern, taught here and in India and everywhere throughout the world? And, if you have duly examined them, how do you know that you have chosen the best*" since you can give no reason for the faith that is in you? But you will say, that you acquiesce in the inward testimony of the Spirit of God, while the rest of mankind are ensnared and deceived by the prince of evil spirits. But all those outside the pale of the Romish Church can with equal right proclaim of their own creed what you proclaim of yours.

As to what you add of the common consent of myriads of men and the uninterrupted ecclesiastical succession, this is the very catch-word of the Pharisees. They with no less confidence than the devotees of Rome bring forward their myriad witnesses, who as pertinaciously as the Roman witnesses repeat what they have heard, as though it were their personal experience. Further, they carry back their line to Adam. They boast with equal arrogance, that their Church has continued to this day unmoved and unimpaired in spite of the hatred of Christians and heathen. They more than any other sect are supported by antiquity. They exclaim with one voice, that they have received their traditions from God Himself, and that they alone preserve the Word of God both written and unwritten. That all heresies have issued from them, and that they have remained constant through thousands of years under no constraint of temporal dominion, but by the sole efficacy of their superstition, no one can deny. The miracles they tell of would tire a thousand tongues. But their chief boast is, that they count a far greater number of martyrs than any other nation, a number which is daily increased

by those who suffer with singular constancy for the faith they profess; nor is their boasting false. I myself knew among others of a certain Judah called the faithful,⁶¹ who in the midst of the flames, when he was already thought to be dead, lifted his voice to sing the hymn beginning, "To Thee, O God, I offer up my soul," and so singing perished.

The organization of the Roman Church, which you so greatly praise, I confess to be politic, and to many lucrative. I should believe that there was no other more convenient for deceiving the people and keeping men's minds in check, if it were not for the organization of the Mahometan Church, which far surpasses it. For from the time when this superstition arose, there has been no schism in its church.

If, therefore, you had rightly judged, you would have seen that only your third point tells in favour of the Christians, namely, that unlearned and common men should have been able to convert nearly the whole world to a belief in Christ. But this reason militates not only for the Romish Church, but for all those who profess the name of Christ.

But assume that all the reasons you bring forward tell in favour solely of the Romish Church. Do you think that you can thereby prove mathematically the authority of that Church? As the case is far otherwise, why do you wish me to believe that my demonstrations are inspired by the prince of evil spirits, while your own are inspired by God, especially as I see, and as your letter clearly shows, that you have been led to become a devotee of this Church not by your love of God, but by your fear of hell, the single cause of superstition? Is this your humility, that you trust nothing to yourself, but everything to others, who are condemned by many of their fellow men? Do you set it down to pride and arrogance, that I employ reason and acquiesce in this true Word of God, which is in the mind and can never be depraved or corrupted? Cast away this deadly superstition, acknowledge the reason which God has given you, and follow that, unless you would be numbered with the brutes. Cease, I say, to call ridiculous errors mysteries, and do not

⁶¹ "Don Lope de Vera y Alarcon de San Clemente, a Spanish nobleman who was converted to Judaism through the study of Hebrew, and was burnt at Valladolid on the 25th July, 1644."—Pollock's *Spinoza*, chap. ii., last note. Mr. Pollock refutes the inference of Grätz, that Spinoza's childhood must have been spent in Spain, by pointing out that the word used here, "novi," is the same as that used above of Albert Burgh's knowledge of his ancestors' sufferings, of which he was certainly not, an eye-witness.

basely confound those things which are unknown to us, or have not yet been discovered, with what is proved to be absurd, like the horrible secrets of this Church of yours, which, in proportion as they are repugnant to right reason, you believe to transcend the understanding.

But the fundamental principle of the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," that Scripture should only be expounded through Scripture, which you so wantonly without any reason proclaim to be false, is not merely assumed, but categorically proved to be true or sound; especially in chapter vii., where also the opinions of adversaries are confuted; see also what is proved at the end of chapter xv. If you will reflect on these things, and also examine the history of the Church (of which I see you are completely ignorant), in order to see how false, in many respects, is Papal tradition, and by what course of events and with what cunning the Pope of Rome six hundred years after Christ obtained supremacy over the Church, I do not doubt that you will eventually return to your senses. That this result may come to pass I, for your sake, heartily wish. Farewell, &c.

LETTER LXXV. (LXIX) SPINOZA TO LAMBERT VAN VELTHUYSEN (DOCTOR OF MEDICINE AT UTRECHT.)

[Of the proposed annotation of the "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*."]

Most excellent and distinguished Sir,—I wonder at our friend Neustadt having said, that I am meditating the refutation of the various writings circulated against my book,⁶² and that among the works for me to refute he places your MS. For I certainly have never entertained the intention of refuting any of my adversaries: they all seem to me utterly unworthy of being answered. I do not remember to have said to Mr. Neustadt anything more, than that I proposed to illustrate some of the obscurer passages in the treatise with notes, and that I should add to these your MS., and my answer, if your consent could be gained, on which last point I begged him to speak to you, adding, that if you refused permission on the ground, that some of the observations in my answer were too harshly put, you should be given full power to modify or expunge them. In the meanwhile, I am by no means angry with Mr. Neustadt, but I wanted to put the matter before you as it stands, that if your permission be not granted, I might show you that I have no wish to publish your MS. against your will. Though I think it might be issued without endangering your reputation, if it appears without your name, I will take no steps in the matter, unless you give me leave. But, to tell the truth, you would do me a far greater kindness, if you would put in writing the arguments with which you think you can impugn my treatise, and add them to your MS. I most earnestly beg you to do this. For there is no one whose arguments I would more willingly consider; knowing, as I do, that you are bound solely by your zeal for truth, and that your mind is singularly candid, I therefore beg you again and again, not to shrink from undertaking this task, and to believe me, Yours most obediently,

b. de Spinoza.

⁶² The "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*."