

**Słowa kluczowe:** Isaac Jaquelot, fizyko-teologia, istnienie Boga, rozum i wiara

**Keywords:** Isaac Jaquelot, physico-theology, the existence of God, reason and faith

*Adam Drozdek*

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY, PITTSBURGH, PA, USA

ORCID: 0000-0001-8639-2727

# ISAAC JAQUELOT ON THE PREEMINENCE OF PHYSICO-THEOLOGY

Isaac Jaquelot (1647-1708) became in 1668 a minister of the Reformed church in Vassi/Wassy working alongside his father and by himself after his father's death. In 1685, after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, he left France for Heidelberg. In 1687, he moved to The Hague where he was a preacher in a local church, and in 1702, to Berlin where he became a preacher for the first king of Prussia, Frederick I ([Gabriel-Louis Pérau], 1744; Noack, Splett, 2000, pp. 217-221).

Jaquelot, an ecclesiastic, was concerned about the growing anti-religious sentiment in France and wanted to stem its tide with his theological and polemical publications. He was concerned about defending the Christian religion, in particular, defending the divinity of Christ, and the moral and eschatological teachings proclaimed by the Gospel, but he also addressed a larger theological issue: as he phrased it, first, he wanted to show that God exists (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 417), second, that God is a spiritual being, and third, that He created the world as described by Moses (418). First, however, some epistemological issues should be addressed.

## FAITH AND REASON

In the ages-long discussion of the relation between faith and reason, Jaquelot was convinced that the opposition between faith and reason leads to atheism and libertinage (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 267). If not an opposition, then there should be

a cooperation or reconciliation, since, apparently, consigning faith and reason to separate areas was not an option for Jaquelot. However, he appears to have been vacillating about the roles of faith and reason in this cooperation. On the one hand, faith appears to have an upper hand: 1. Reason is needed to prove the divinity of the revelation to submit oneself to the authority of God (271). 2. “Reasoning serves authority, because if Reason tells me that a thing is apparent or probable, well-established authority decides the fact and pronounces that the thing [actually] exists, in which human Faith and Reason join hands.” In religion the authority of God is infallible; thus, reason has to submit to it even if it would imagine to see contradictions (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 273). Also, if there were ten arguments against religion as opposed to one in its favor, religion should be chosen since “the regard that Religion proposes is infinitely greater and more important than there are goods for which it is abandoned” (Jaquelot, 1715, p. 8), which is an argument very close in spirit to Pascal’s wager.

When reason and faith agree, this should be accepted with joy. When revelation teaches a mystery precisely and evidently, which reason cannot comprehend, reason should submit itself to faith. When faith is based on taste and inner sentiment, it should be rejected (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 162). Thus, the areas of faith and reason are not isolated from one another, but also, they do not exactly coincide with one another. There is an overlap between the two and in the overlapping part, an agreement between reason and faith is expected. And thus, in the greatest mysteries, and there are very few of them, Christianity “has nothing that is manifestly contrary to Reason. In everything else, it so conformed to natural lights that it can be said that the Revelation only leads where they themselves were heading. In other words, the Christian Religion is almost nothing else than the proper sentiment of the right Reason [which is] enlightened and supported by the authority of God” (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 111). There are inscrutable religious mysteries accepted only by faith, but important as they are, for everyday life they constitute the background. Since this life is but a prelude to the life after death, the earthly conduct should assure the reward in the afterlife. In this, reason is just as important as faith. Faith acting with reason leads people to the ways of sanctity and repentance (Jaquelot, 1705, preface [37]). Sanctity is the conduct conforming to reason (9). Stronger yet, the morality of the Gospel is a pure emanation of the right reason and the reason requires the observation of the silver rule – don’t do to others what you wouldn’t want to be done to you – which is the foundation of society (242).

Although there are things above reason and should be accepted by faith, it is also stated that religion is an emanation and outpouring of the light of reason (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 43; 1710-1712, p. 1.203, cf. 242), which may be seen as a statement

that leaves no room for faith. However, why are some things accepted by faith? Jaquelot used two traditional arguments: prophecies and miracles. Prophecies are statements about the future, and their veracity can be confirmed empirically at the time when they were said to be fulfilled. Empirical confirmation and rational assessment are involved: could such predictions announced in prophecies be made relying solely upon human ken? Hardly, when they are fairly detailed and involve times far ahead – maybe decades, maybe centuries – from the time of their pronouncement. Jaquelot showed that Christ was the Messiah using the many prophecies that were made by the Jewish prophets (see his (Jaquelot, 1692; Jaquelot, 1699)). Also, what are miracles? These are events that break the natural course of things. How do we know it? Since the accumulated knowledge humans possess about the natural and social laws indicate that some phenomena are flatly contrary to these laws. Thus, empirical and rational assessment indicates that they should be accepted as supernatural events caused by the Being who is able to do it, the Being who also created the laws that He may temporarily suspend at His will. In fact, miracles can only be performed by God to the extent that, for instance, to harden the pharaoh's heart, God Himself performed miracles at the word of the Egyptian magicians either by changing their rods into serpents or by creating an optical illusion of this change (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 669). Thus, reason assesses where faith can take over, reason assesses where its competence and reach ends, reason decides what is above reason, and, consequently, perceiving its own limitations, reason submits itself to faith. The criticism that seeing religion to be but an emanation of reason is too reductionist and that Jaquelot put Christianity on the level of all human science ([Hayer, Soret], 1757, vol. 3, p. 276), is not justified if not reason, but Reason, the Reason of God Himself is understood here, the Reason not quite accessible to the limited human reason. However, religion may be seen as an emanation of the human reason by acknowledging that reason is judicious enough to see the scope of its competence and agreeing with what exceeds this competence.

Faith and reason should be collaborators. The revelation came to secure reason and to support the authority of God by fortifying reason (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 43). This may be the reference to the fact that revelation contains some truths within the power of reason, but they are revealed by God, for instance, the decalogue in which faith joins reason to set laws in the human heart (87-88). Moreover, in Jaquelot's view, God does not constantly perform miracles, since He wants to save people by faith, i.e., by free choice in the just usage of the lights of reason fortified by grace (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 165).

God gave reason as the first guide and the revelation should not reverse the rights of reason and should be used in religion as it is in science (Jaquelot,

1706, p. 152-153). On account of God's authority, the revelation is accepted by faith since there can be no error in the declarations of the Holy Spirit. But reason still can investigate, know, and declare the truth of the decision of faith to unite with faith through the discovery of the truths taught by faith (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 280). The revelation teaches: 1. There is one God, and reason is not opposed to it; 2. God created the world (281), and reason says that many problems are avoided by this article of faith (282); at least the creation of the world does not shock reason. 3. The revelation teaches about the immortality of the soul and a violence is made to reason by thinking that the body can think, not the soul, a spiritual substance (285). In religious matters, faith illuminates and strengthens reason (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 186). People believe by reason on account of natural lights; they believe by faith when revelation joins reason. But there are religious truths that are known only through revelation, in which faith is the principal foundation (187). Reason should be subjected to faith in matters of revealed dogmas, which reason could never discover (190). In particular, the mystery of the Trinity is above reason since people don't have a clear and distinct idea of this mystery, but it is not contrary to reason, since it does not lead to a contradiction (422). This would be Jaquelot's verdict in respect to the conformity of faith and reason announced in the title of his book. What Jaquelot wanted to avoid was an argument that what is above human reason is contrary to reason. No, not contrary, said Jaquelot, but conforming to reason – if it does not lead to a contradiction. And if it does, it may be just an appearance of a contradiction. And so, "three are one" is contradictory if "person" is understood as a separate nature different from others, but the word is used about God, since there is no better word (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 290), and in the context of the Trinity, "person" should be understood differently than in respect to humans (107).

## THE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Jaquelot repeatedly expressed his veneration of Descartes, but he found his ontological argument for the existence of God wanting.<sup>1</sup> Descartes, "an incomparable Philosopher," proves that God must necessarily exist because of His perfection, but Jaquelot did not find this proof to be persuasive convinced that there are proofs acceptable to all people, including the unschooled and non-philosophers, and these

1 A wanting argument it may have been, but not unacceptable. In one letter Jaquelot stated that the idea, "I think, therefore, I am," necessarily gives an idea of a Being. Since I am an imperfect being, this leads necessarily to the idea of a perfect Being, and thus, to the necessary existence of a perfect Being, and the nature of a perfect Being necessarily includes existence. The existence of God is concluded not from the nature of my idea, but from the nature of what it represents (Jaquelot, 1744, vol. 3, pp. 470-472).

proofs should be in agreement with all sciences. Incidentally, this is important since the eternal happiness depends on it (Jaquelot, 1697, preface [5-6]).

The first proof is from the beginning of motion, which Aquinas would approve. Epicureans ascribed weight to atoms so that they could move downwards, but atoms could also execute an oblique swerving so that they could move sideways, but, according to Jaquelot, nothing is less rational than these principles and there is no wonder that Epicurus was criticized by using such a frivolous cause to be used for the formation of the stars, animals, and human freedom (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 320). What is up, what is down in an infinite space (321)? The weight of atoms is a pure chimera since without up and down it cannot cause the motion of atoms. Also, what would cause a swerving movement (323)? Motion is not part of the essence of bodies since bodies are always extended and impenetrable, but they can be at motion or at rest (326), but bodies cannot stop or initiate a motion by themselves (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 168). “The human reason and the good sense oppose in their force and by their lights to the principles of Epicurus and of Atheism” since matter demonstrably received its motion from God (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 327).

The second proof comes from the impossibility of the world’s origin from random causes. This is more of a declaration than a proof since Jaquelot simply posited the fact that the face of the earth was always the same and the universe was always the same as it is today and thus it was formed by a wise and intelligent Cause, not by a mere motion of matter throughout centuries (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 331, 333). There were reports on stars coming to being and then disappearing (332), but these were likely comets (333).

The third proof is from the intention of the Creator, and it is really a continuation of the second proof: if the world is not the result of random motion of matter, it must be the result of design, of an intentional work of its Maker. The Scripture says that He did all for His glory (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 333). God wanted to imprint the characters of His wisdom and His infinite power on the immensity of the universe and on the multitude of great works (334). By looking at the makeup of the eye or of the ear, can anyone say that the ear was not made for hearing and the eye for seeing? However, in the atheistic system it is not more credible to say that the eye was made for seeing than that it was made for walking, but we would have to believe that the blind nature acting without any design arrived by accident at making an eye fitting for seeing just as it made a foot for walking (337). “It must be believed that people have done little reflection on these principles, so as not to feel an absurdity so gross that the simplest and most natural lights of good sense raise against it” (339). And again, if an intelligent cause of the world is rejected, then everything in the world is the result of chance. Therefore, according to this belief of atheists,

it would be false to say that the eye was made for seeing and the ear for hearing; “the absurdity of this statement is palpable” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 687). There is thus an intelligent Cause that presides over nature and directs its operations.

The proof from God’s intention could be considered another name for the proof from design, or for teleological proof, a version of which was physico-theology which started fairly forcefully in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was very popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It appeared in France very strongly in the first part of François Fénelon’s *Traité de l’existence et des attributs de Dieu* (1713), in the French translation of Bernard Nieuwentijt’s *De l’existence de Dieu démontrée par les merveilles de la nature* (1725, the Dutch original in 1714) and in one of the strongest French expressions of physico-theology, Noël-Antoine Pluche’s monumental *Le spectacle de la nature* (1732-1739). And thus, in his 1697 *Dissertations*, Jaquelot appears to have been at the forefront of the French physico-theological movement.

Jaquelot captured the essence of physico-theology in the statement that the investigation of the world leads to the recognition of “the sovereign Director of the machine of the world” (Jaquelot, 1710-1712, p. 1.4) and to the admiration of His wisdom and power (5), and, in particular, the machine of the human body cries out that it is a work of the wise and powerful Creator (6). The earth, this point in the grand theater of the universe, is “the masterpiece of the Creator, since it includes the most august and the most brilliant traits of the wisdom, goodness, and infinite power of God” (109-110). Consider the works of God, immense universe with its stars, the oceans, the earth with its plants, animals, and humans (114). Each element of creation executes the purpose for which it was created (116). In the works of God can be seen the profundity of His intelligence: there is more wisdom in the composition of the smallest insect than in the structure of the most superb palace (316).

The fourth proof can be considered a particular application of the two preceding proofs; in the light of the then popular belief that at least insects come from the dirt, Jaquelot stated that if the earth could generate animals, it would do it today since its nature did not change (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 343; 1715, p. 19). That is, if first animals were generated randomly from the earth, then why wouldn’t this mechanism be continued but, instead, animals and humans multiply themselves only through procreation (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 420; 1705, p. 14)?

To find a common theme in all these proofs, we should refer to a remarkable statement Jaquelot gave in one of his sermons: God created the world to manifest His wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, and He created humans, intelligent beings, to recognize God’s majesty in His works to be worshipped and blessed as the author of all goods. To suppose that God did not manage to make Himself known through His work would be an outrage against Him (Jaquelot, 1710-1712, p. 2.85).

“Since God has created the Universe to manifest himself to Creatures capable of knowing him, it would be going against his intention to demand other proofs; it would even be insulting his honor. It is up to us to study these proofs, without requiring other [proofs], to satisfy our laziness, our indifference to seek God, or an obstinate and criminal incredulity” (Jaquelot, 1710-1712, p. 2.86). In this, according to Jaquelot, God advocated, even demanded a physico-theological approach to be used as the only admissible way to gain knowledge about God. Learning about God through other avenues being a sign of laziness, even criminal incredulity – hardly can the preeminence of physico-theology be expressed in stronger terms. And thus, the four proofs he provided may be considered variations on the physico-theological reasoning, even the first proof, from the first cause of motion. After all, the experience of motion comes obviously from nature, which leads to the reflection on its ultimate origin. Epistemologically important here is the fact that reason suffices to listen to the voice of the universe which shouts from all sides that there is God (265-266). And this opens a rational avenue to religion: people can assess the excellence of the Creator by the magnificence of His works (312). Consequently, since He is the Master of the universe, people should submit to Him (313).

The primacy of the physico-theological approach advocated by Jaquelot can be strengthened by the reason why God created anything at all: God created everything for His glory (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 333) since God can act only for Himself and for His glory (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 161). God wanted to make Himself known through His works and He created free rational humans for them to seek Him in His works (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 317) and see the grandeur of God through the magnificence of His works (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 165).<sup>2</sup> In other words, God wanted to use a physico-theological approach for humans, intelligent beings, to see His presence behind nature and see His greatness behind the greatness of His works.

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD

The second thing Jaquelot also wanted to show was that God has a spiritual nature. The first proof coincides with the first proof for the existence of God: since motion is infused into corporeal nature, it has to come from God, but God must be of incorporeal nature to be the first cause of motion (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 327). That

<sup>2</sup> In Jaquelot’s view, the main reason “why God created human beings intelligent and free, was so that they could discover God in His works by forming a free and sincere judgment of the surpassing beauty of those works. It is in witnessing this praise by humans that God finds His greatest glory,” (Hickson, 2016, p. 76). God “created spiritual beings adorned with intelligence and capable of contemplating in his works the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator.” (Brun, 1862, p. 12).



is, in a way, the problem was solved by the definition of matter as a substance that cannot originate its own motion; therefore, the motion has to come from elsewhere.

The second proof is of the Cartesian provenance. It begins with the human soul. Starting with the famous “I think, therefore I am” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 359), Jaquelot stated that thinking is the faculty of spiritual, immaterial substance, which in the human being is the soul. The human reason can think about “that which does not exist” as well as about “that which exists”, which indicates that a person can think without an influence of an outside object. There is thus a thinking faculty which is the principle of its action. Neither this faculty nor a thought includes the idea of extension, figure, or motion, thus, the substance that thinks is not a body (362; Jaquelot, 1715, p. 25-26). The proponents of the atomic structure of the soul cannot explain why the same word, the same sound that reaches the ear, evokes an idea in the mind of one person, but remains ineffective for a person that speaks a different language (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 364). Interestingly, the ability to form particular thoughts from particular impressions comes from the Author of the human nature (370), which amounts to the admission that the cognitive mechanism is unknown.

Human freedom points to the spirituality of the soul. “I sense and I know that my will has no other cause than itself. I want it since I want it. My will, my Spirit is thus the proper principle of its actions; it knows itself, it acts of itself, it reflects on itself and on its operations: none of it belongs to a body” (385). The will “is a Director that I have in myself that conducts everything according to its good pleasure; it sets the [animal] spirits of my imagination in motion, when it wants, it opens and closes when it pleases these valves, these little locks in my brain, which determine the course of these spirits” (387-388). For the atomists, the swerving motion of atoms that made wood and stone also account for the human freedom; “is it possible without blinding oneself to swallow such an absurdity?” (376).

The soul is a rational entity able of free actions, and on these two counts, it is a spiritual, immaterial substance. Next, the soul’s self-reflection indicates that the soul did not create itself (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 359). A principle accepted by Jaquelot states that the effect cannot be “more excellent” than the cause. Thus, when we see “what wisdom is in the arrangement of the parts of the Universe, in its motions and in its behavior; if there are some intelligent Creatures, it has to be necessarily concluded that God, the Author of all things, has all these perfections in the highest degree” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 6; 1715, p. 16); that is, intelligent creatures could not be produced by “brute and insensible cause following this certain and incontestable maxim that the effect cannot be more noble nor more excellent than the cause, since the effect has nothing that it did not receive from the cause that produced it” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 462).

Having established the spirituality of the human soul, the Cartesian spirit in this argument is extended by adding a flavor of ontological proof. Jaquelot stated that “Since I have an idea of a Being that can act according to its will, by perfecting this idea, I can represent a Cause so perfect that it can create this Universe by its will” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 140). The human soul is endowed with the will which assures the possibility of free actions, but the will can be hampered in the exercise of its power, so the full, perfect will must be sought beyond the humankind – in God.

### THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The third thing Jaquelot wanted to prove was that the world was created, which is shown in two ways. First, he showed it rationally. The first proof states that there is only one being that can necessarily exist of itself since among multiple beings, at least one must exist necessarily (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 426); if multiple beings existed of themselves (*par leur propre vertu*), they would all exist incidentally (*accessairement*), which is unlikely (427). Why incidentally? Why unlikely? No explanation. Also, existing on account of an external cause and the nonexistence of a necessary cause would be possible if an infinite causal chain could be admitted, which is a possibility Jaquelot rejected out of hand (427).

The second proof of the fact of the creation of the world states that the being that exists necessarily has all perfections, since all perfections in the universe must eventually come from the first Being and existence is the greatest perfection, so this being exists; it is God (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 428-429). But what are these perfections in the world? Perfect goodness? Hardly. There is a great deal of good things in the world, but perfection? So, at best, it could be said that the first Being has goodness as its attribute, but this goodness should be at least as large as that in the world, but not necessarily infinite. The same limitation would hold for other possible attributes: intelligence, power, etc. if intelligence and power found in the world are used as the starting point.

The third argument: the Being that exists necessarily and has all perfections is a spirit, not a body, since the spiritual substance is infinitely more noble in its essence and its operations than the corporeal substance (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 429-430); never mind why this nobleness has to be infinitely higher. Presumably, this nobleness comes from the spiritual substance to be the source of motion and also from rationality being a spiritual attribute. The argument appears to be rather misplaced. In any event, according to Jaquelot, the three arguments indicate that all that exists, including matter, received its existence from this perfect spiritual Being (436).

The second way that the creation of the world is also proven is in a somewhat circuitous way by the reliance on the Bible. First, Jaquelot wanted to empirically establish the reliability of the Bible and then he extended this reliability to what exceeds the limits of empirical investigation.

Jaquelot delved into the history of the world to show that the Bible is trustworthy as a historical account. He showed that when studying all monuments, laws, customs, inscriptions, etc. there is no indication of an event that came before the war of Thebes and the Trojan war. People were reasoning 2000 years ago as they are today and long-time disputes indicate that the history of the world conforms to the system of Moses and there is no proof which would attribute to the world an older age than the one attributed by Moses (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 144). For instance, the history of Greece does not go beyond 2000 years BC (164), nothing in Sicily and Italy is older than 2000 years BC (168), the history of India has nothing contrary to the sacred history (215), and neither does the history of Scythia (218). When some chronologies apparently did not fit the Biblical timeline, Jaquelot simply rejected them. For example, various dynasties in the chronology of Manetho were just a rhapsody invented for pleasure by the vanity of Egyptian priests (248-249). Apparently, when the Egyptians spoke about six gods before the time of heroes, they meant the Mosaic six days of creation (250). Consequently, the Egyptian history agrees with the system of Moses (257). "Those Peoples who boasted of their antiquity not only had no proof of what they said; but even it appears enough from these remarks on their observations, that they are very far from having the least argument contrary to the system or to the Chronology of Moses" (287). "If some Nations wanted to attribute to themselves some vain antiquity, this pretense was unsustainable by the history of the Neighboring States as an invention of sciences, arts which the good sense does not allow to pay attention to nor to stop at it as some kind of difficulty" (313).

The divine provenance of Mosaic accounts can be garnered from the fact that all events are referred to God: a military victory is due to God; a defeat is a punishment from God; "the divinity is an object that this wise Historian never loses sight of the human Spirit is not capable of such strong application, and of such continuous and undistracted attention." All historians discuss private lives of kings and princes, but not Moses whose history is always directed toward God and speaks about actions of king and people only in relation to God and religion, which shows that this is a divine work (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 541-542).

The inspired character of the Tora is indicated by the divinity of the Mosaic laws. According to Jaquelot, the history of laws shows that the laws of Moses were certainly the first among all laws. They were not changed, which is a proof of their

divinity: the Jews were convinced that they came from God and did not modify them in spite of their harshness and complexity (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 529-530). Many laws are useless, inconvenient, hard, punishing and yet they are accepted by the Jews with submission; no one proposed any changes (Jaquelot, 1715, p. 79-80). Also, consider circumcision, painful and useless. There was an authority of God behind it, the power of Moses would not be sufficient here (82). "If a Jew submitted himself to this yoke, it could not have been any other reason than to submit himself to the authority of God" (83). Also, Moses condemns practices which are permitted or indifferent in other laws (542; Jaquelot, 1715, p. 66). Prostitution was not permitted among the Jews, although other laws allowed it (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 543). All legislators had the interest of the state on their mind, religion was for them subordinated to the state. "Only Moses, filled with the ideas of God and of the excellence of Religion, which includes our duties towards God and towards men, had no greater design than to preserve religion, regardless of the cost to the state" (548). Only the law of Moses is opposed to kidnapping, so common in the antiquity, the law was humanly concerned about widows, orphans, and the poor, even servants and slaves (554-555), also people with infirmities and the old (558-559).

Jaquelot's fairly detailed journey through world history and his theological scrutiny of the Mosaic law were designed to show that the Tora can be trusted as a historical record, that the history of the world does not contradict the sacred history, in which case the trust can be extended to the rest of the Bible. There are many facts that Moses did not witness, the most important being 1. the age of the world; 2. the origin of the humankind from one couple; 3. the flood; and 4. the use of one language before the time of the construction of the tower of Babel. The knowledge of these facts could only have come from the divine source given directly to Moses through an inspiration or he got it from tradition (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 27-28) since only the Creator could know about these events (Jaquelot, 1715, p. 110). Thus, in particular, Moses wrote that the world existed for 3000 or 4000 years, that the global flood was 2000 years before his time, that once there was one language until 1200 years before him; thus, this history is of divine origin since he could know this only from revelation (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 135, 311-312).

Jaquelot established rationally that the world was created and having established the divine origin of the Tora, he established it on the authority of the Scripture. Thus, in all three areas Jaquelot investigated: the existence of God, God's spirituality, and the creation of the world by God, Jaquelot relied upon rationally assessed empirical data. The created world was a starting point: the world in its entirety, the psychological makeup of the human being, and the human history, and the data were evaluated by reason to arrive at theologically relevant conclusions.

At all times, Jaquelot tried to avoid laziness and criminal ignorance by beginning in theological matters with the created world.

## INFINITY

Jaquelot referenced infinity quite often, most significantly, in relation to God. God perfection lay, among others, in God's infinity: God is infinitely wise and intelligent since a lot of wisdom can be seen in the composition of the universe (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 6); the wisdom and infinite power of the Creator manifests itself in the multiplicity and variety of His works (Jaquelot, 1705, p. 160).

This can be accepted as a statement of faith, as when Jaquelot said that one of the principles on which the Mosaic system is founded states that there is an intelligent, wise, free cause of infinite power (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 141); when he argued that just as the infinite power of God suffices to accept the dogma of creation, the infinite knowledge of God (*la Science infinie de Dieu*) should be enough to believe that God knows the decision of free will (296); when he stated that the preeminence of God above creatures is infinite (312). However, Jaquelot also said that the investigation of nature points to God's infinite power, but the transition from an investigation by a finite rational being of a finite part of the universe performed in finite time to the infinity of God is made too quickly and rather glibly. By the principle that the effect cannot be better/stronger/more powerful/more noble than the cause, the transition from the finite to the infinite is not quite justified. However, such an argument is possible. A verse oft-quoted throughout history by many theologians states that God had "ordered all things by number, and measure, and weight" (Wisdom 11:20). By number, thus, the knowledge of numbers was necessary in making the decision as to the design of each element of creation. Even limiting ourselves to natural numbers gives us numbers 1, 2, 3, ..., etc. into infinity. Augustine recognized this and stated that "the infinity of number[s], although there is no number for infinities of numbers, is yet not incomprehensible by Him of whose understanding there is no number" (*De civ. Dei* 12.18). Augustine could not give a number for the cardinality of denumerable infinity (today we would say aleph zero, following Cantor), but he acknowledged the fact that in God's mind all these numbers are present. Hence, God's mind is infinite. Also, Jaquelot followed the Leibnizian spirit by saying that the intelligent creation is best possible. In such an assessment, numbers would have to be involved, and hence God's infinite comprehension would become a part of the act of creation.

Some of analyses that involved infinity have not been up to par. Jaquelot admitted that people do not understand infinity, but, in spite of Spinoza, there must be the first cause, not an infinite causal chain, "for if we could not go back to the first

cause, we could never, descending, encounter the last effect, which is manifestly false, since the movement which is taking place at the moment that I am speaking is necessary the last. However, it is easily understood that ascending from effect to cause, or descending from cause to effect, are things united in the same way as a mountain with its valley” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 418). Also, the world is in motion so, it could not exist from eternity since motion cannot exist from eternity, because motion is successive, “one part goes before another part and this is not compatible with eternity” (Jaquelot, 1697, p. 137). This was a frequent stumbling block for philosophers: if an effect is the result of some cause, then eventually we should be able to reach the first cause, at least mentally, otherwise, the current effect would not take place because it would be unreachable through an infinite causal chain. However, if this infinite chain is executed in infinite time, then there is no reason to reject the infinity of this chain. Admittedly, this is quite hard to comprehend, but Jaquelot agreed that infinity is not comprehensible.

Another problem is the comparison of infinities. Matter is infinitely divisible, but for Jaquelot this implies that there are as many parts in the grain of sand as in the earthly sphere (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 150; 1705, p. 275). If there were an eternity of duration, then the number of hours and days would be equal to the number of years and centuries; doesn't it imply a contradiction (Jaquelot, 1706, p. 150)? Why a contradiction? Since the whole would not be greater than its part. It is incontestable that two infinities should be perfectly equal (285), but, for Jaquelot it was apparently obvious that the number of hours in an eternal universe should be larger than the number of years. But this is where he was wrong, and no profound knowledge of Cantorian set theory would be needed to untangle that. Jaquelot would surely agree that even numbers 2, 4, 6,... etc. form a proper subset of all integers, but would he also say that it is a contradiction that both of these sets – even numbers and all natural numbers – are infinite? A confusing part in such a reasoning is the assumption that principle that a whole is greater than its part holds for all wholes, finite and infinite. Jaquelot was ready to acknowledge that “person” should be understood one way when speaking about humans and another way when speaking about the Trinity, so he should have been more flexible about the whole-part principle. So, the set of natural numbers is greater than its subset of even numbers since the former contain numbers, odd numbers, which are not in the set of even numbers, but the two sets are of the same cardinality since one to one correspondence can be established between the two. The same goes for hours and years in an eternal universe, unintuitive, even incomprehensible, as it may be.

Jaquelot was very well versed in the current scientific and theological trends. He applauded the fact that so much progress was made in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,

“so many new experiences were brought to the light of day which help the spirit to penetrate beyond limits,” but he lamented the fact that religion did not benefit much from it (Jaquelot, 1697, preface [1]). However, he referred to specific scientific accomplishments rather infrequently making only rather general statements that the orderliness found in celestial bodies or the complexity of the animal and human anatomy clearly indicated the hand of God. Physico-theology arrives at full steam in the next century, soon after the completion of Jaquelot’s *Dissertations*. Only then theologians and theologically minded scholars explored in theological context particular, sometimes very narrow, domains of nature to see that the harmony and intricate design detected there indicated their supernatural source. By then, the primacy and even exclusiveness of physico-theology introduced by Jaquelot was very well-entrenched.

### **Bibliography :**

- Brun, É. (1862). *Essai de Jaquelot, considéré surtout comme prédicateur et comme théologien*. Strasbourg: G. Silbermann.
- [Hayer, H., J. Soret], (1757). *La religion vengée, ou réfutation des auteurs impies*. Paris: Chausert et Herissant, vol. 3.
- Hickson, M.W. (2016). Introduction, in: Pierre Bayle, *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*, Leiden: Brill, 1-101.
- Jaquelot, I. (1705). *Conformité de la foi avec la raison*. Amsterdam: Henry Desbordes.
- Jaquelot, I. (1692). *De Jesus Christ, qu’il est le Messie et le vrai Dieu*. La Haye: Abraham Troyel.
- Jaquelot, I. (1697). *Dissertations sur l’existence de Dieu*. La Haye: Etienne Foulque.
- Jaquelot, I. (1744). *Dissertations sur l’existence de Dieu*. Paris: François Didot.
- Jaquelot, I. (1699). *Dissertations sur le Messie*. La Haye: François L’Honoré.
- Jaquelot, I. (1706). *Examen de la théologie de Mr. Bayle*. Amsterdam: François L’Honoré.
- Jaquelot, I. (1710-1732). *Sermons sur divers textes*. Amsterdam: Jaques Desbordes, vol. 2.
- Jaquelot, I. (1715). *Traité de la vérité et de l’inspiration des livres du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament*. Rotterdam: Depens de Gaspard Fritsch.
- Noack, L., J. Splett (2000). *Bio-Bibliographien. Branderburgische Gelehrte der frühen Neuzeit, Berlin-Cölln 1688-1713*. Berlin: Akademische Verlag.
- [Péreau, G.L.] (1744). Vie de l’auteur, in: Jaquelot 1744, vol. 1, xli-xcii.

# ISAAC JAQUELOT ON THE PREEMINENCE OF PHYSICO-THEOLOGY

## SUMMARY

Isaac Jaquelot was a seventeenth-century ecclesiastic concerned about the rising tide of deism and atheism. In his theological treatises he wanted to prove, among others, the existence of God, the fact that God is a spiritual being, and that He created the world as described in the Tora. In his proofs, he relied very strongly on empirical approach and human rationality recognizing the limitation of the human reason. In this, he promoted physico-theology as the most viable approach to be used.

*Article submitted: 20.09.2022; accepted: 15.12.2022.*