

*How the Reformation
Trained Us to be Sceptics*

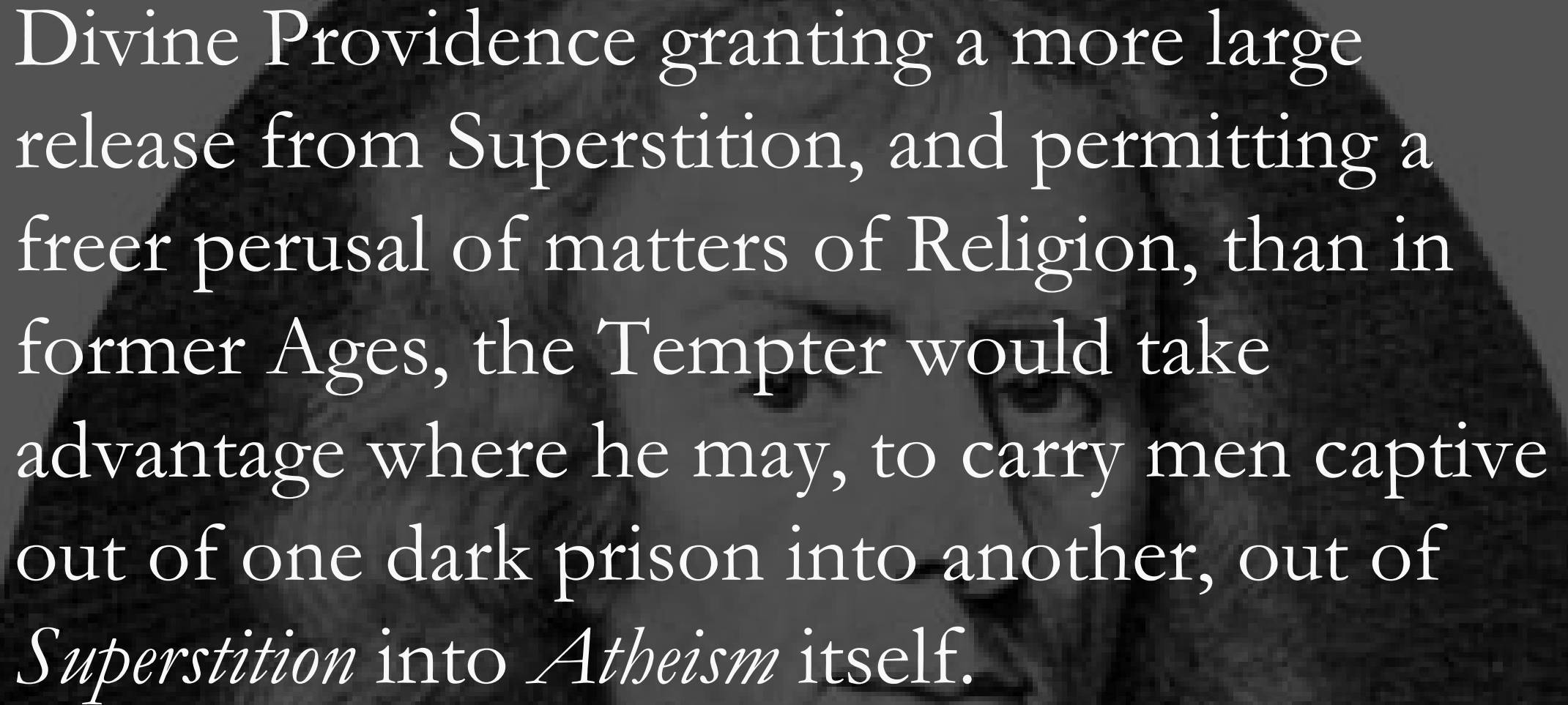
Alec Ryrie

A Catholic may commonly become sooner
Superstitious, than a Protestant; And a
Protestant sooner become an Atheist, than a
Catholic.

Lawrence Anderton, *Miscellania* (1640)

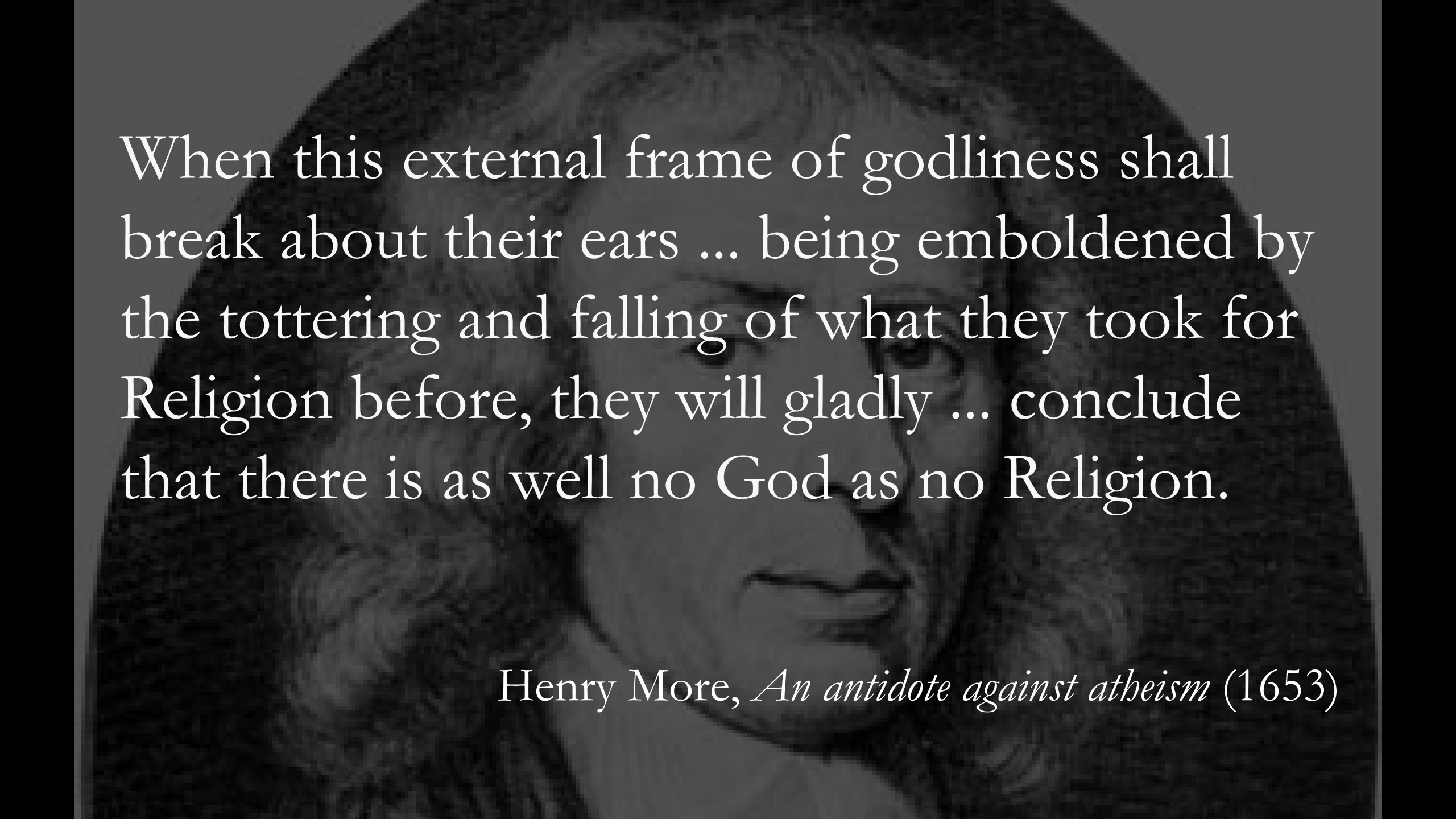
Henry More
(1614-87), leader
of the so-called
'Cambridge
Platonists'





Divine Providence granting a more large
release from Superstition, and permitting a
freer perusal of matters of Religion, than in
former Ages, the Tempter would take
advantage where he may, to carry men captive
out of one dark prison into another, out of
Superstition into *Atheism* itself.

Henry More, *An antidote against atheism* (1653)



When this external frame of godliness shall
break about their ears ... being emboldened by
the tottering and falling of what they took for
Religion before, they will gladly ... conclude
that there is as well no God as no Religion.

Henry More, *An antidote against atheism* (1653)

It is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd.

Tertullian, *De carne Christi* (c. 204)

[Transubstantiation] is out of the limits and order of all nature, surmounting incomparably all wit and reason of man. ... The more that [a doubter] by reason, ransacketh and searcheth for reason, in those things that passeth reason ... into the further doubt he falleth.

William Peryn, *Thre godly and notable Sermons* (1546)

In this sacrament, there be many things that appear strange ... unto carnal reason. ... Unless we believe we shall not understand. ... Unless we ... think ourselves unworthy, and unable to know ... such high mysteries and secret things, the said mysteries and secret things shall be hid from us.

Richard Smith, *The assertion and defence of the sacramente of the aulter* (1546)

Popish priests ... are not ashamed to swear, that ... they eat [Christ] up raw, and swallow down into their guts every member and parcel of him: and last of all, that they convey him into the place where they bestow the residue of all that which they haue devoured.

Reginald Scot, *The discoverie of witchcraft* (1584)

Michel de
Montaigne
(1533-92)

Once you have put into their hands the foolhardiness of despising and criticizing opinions ... and once you have thrown into the balance of doubt and uncertainty any articles of their religion, they soon cast all the rest of their beliefs into similar uncertainty. ...

Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond'

... They had no more authority for them, no more foundation, than for those you have just undermined. ... They then take it upon themselves to accept nothing on which they have not pronounced their own approval, subjecting it to their individual assent.

Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond'

Doctor Redman ... paused and did hold his
peace a little space, and shortly after he spoke,
saying: 'I will not say so; I cannot tell; it is a
hard question. But, surely,' saith he, 'we
receive Christ in our soul by faith. When you
speak of it other ways, it soundeth grossly.'

John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1563)

Thou didst all those pains endure
To abolish Sin, not Wheat ...
Flesh ... cannot turn to soul.
Bodies and minds are different spheres.

George Herbert, 'The Holy Communion'

Caravaggio, *The
Inspiration of St.
Matthew* (1602)

Since the abuses of false religion were demonstrated to them, they judge both the true and the false in the same way and despise them both as if all was merely the dreams and reveries of the human mind. ...

Pierre Viret, *Interim fait par dialogues* (1565)

... They therefore think they see more clearly than all the others, as if those who call themselves Roman Catholics were entirely blind ... those of the Reformed Church one-eyed ... and themselves seeing with both and entirely *deniaisez*.

Pierre Viret, *Interim fait par dialogues* (1565)

Michel de
Montaigne
(1533-92)

Do you not know that in real death there will be no second You, living to lament your death and standing by your corpse. 'You' will not desire the life which now you so much lament. ... Death does not concern you, dead or alive; alive, because you are: dead, because you are no more.

Montaigne, 'To philosophise is to learn how to die'

There is more barbarity in eating a man alive
than in eating him dead.

Montaigne, 'On the cannibals'

There is a plague on Man: his opinion that he knows something.

Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond'

Our religion did not come to us through reasoned arguments or from our own intelligence: it came to us from outside authority, by commandments. That being so, weakness of judgement helps us more than strength; blindness, more than clarity of vision.

Montaigne, 'An Apology for Raymond Sebond'

William
Chillingworth
(1602-44)

Had you represented to my understanding such reasons ... as being weighed in an even balance ... with those on the other side, would have turned the scale, and have made your Religion more credible then the contrary; certainly I should ... with both mine armes and all my heart most readily have embraced it.

William Chillingworth, *The religion of Protestants a safe way to salvation* (1638)

Methinks there be not impossibilities enough
in Religion for an active faith. ... I love to lose
myself in a mystery.

Thomas Browne, *Religio medici* (1642)

This I think is no vulgar part of faith, to believe a thing not only above, but contrary to reason, and against the arguments of our proper senses.

Thomas Browne, *Religio medici* (1642)

It is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd.

Tertullian, *De carne Christi* (c. 204)

The language of men has its own less elevated forms and must not make use of the dignity, majesty and authority of the language of God. [When] I myself ... say ... fortune, destiny, accident, good luck, bad luck, the gods and similar phrases ... I am offering my own human thoughts ... matters of opinion not matters of faith.

Montaigne, 'On prayer'

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