

**ADDITIONAL
OBSERVATIONS ON THE
DISCOURSE OF
NATURAL THEOLOGY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649037209

Additional Observations on the Discourse of Natural Theology by Henry Lord Brougham & Thomas Wallace

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

HENRY LORD BROUGHAM & THOMAS WALLACE

**ADDITIONAL
OBSERVATIONS ON THE
DISCOURSE OF
NATURAL THEOLOGY**

ADVERTISEMENT TO READER.

It is obvious that these Additional Observations relate to the same general subject, as those which the reader has had before him. It may naturally be asked why, therefore, the whole were not published together? The reason is, (and the reader is entitled to know it,) that it was after I had by the former Observations endeavoured to shew that his Lordship's *general reasoning* was fallacious—and after I had sent the sheets to press—that it occurred to me it would be useful to inquire more particularly how far authorities, and of what weight and character, could be found in support of his Lordship's *peremptory* and *positive* assertion, that the *immortality* of the soul depends on its essence being *immaterial*. I found that instead of being *ALL with* him, in that absolute and unqualified doctrine, they were *against* him, and that therefore his Lordship had failed not only in proving his main proposition, but in the *fact* as it related to the authorities. The search after authorities in support of the doctrine of *immateriality*, naturally disclosed much of the

of its future immortal existence. His Lordship must have had in his mind, at the time of pronouncing this fearful denunciation, some qualification of it, which I am quite at a loss to comprehend—for, in my view (of course a summary one) of those authorities, or of the “doctrines” to which he refers, they appear not only not to be unanimous, or even, in the general, with him; but, on the contrary, whether we look to the opinions of the ancient Philosophers of the Grecian schools, or to the Latin Philosophers, Orators or Poets—or to the Christian controversialists—or to the Metaphysicians of the last or present century, those authorities appear to be—often conflicting—sometimes unintelligible from their obscurity,—and very generally expressive of the highest degree of doubt upon the doctrine; and that, finally in the silence of revelation on the subject, the mind of any unprejudiced enquirer must rest in the conclusion—that it is not within the power of the human mind, in its present condition, to arrive at truth. On a view of what I have already

offered on this important and somewhat novel doctrine of his Lordship, I incline to think that the error into which I believe he has fallen may be somewhat more clearly shewn by some further observations, which I therefore venture to submit.

No man who is a friend to his species can doubt that he who assists in placing the belief of a future state on a rational and firm base, renders a most important service to society. Natural theology may give an independent, and when judiciously cultivated, does afford, a most powerful aid to revealed religion in this great work ; it widens, while it strengthens the foundations of individual human hope, and protects, by additional safeguards, the peace and security of human society. But if Natural Theology is to render to mankind all the valuable benefit which she is capable of doing, she must act as the handmaid, not the rival or competitor of Revealed Religion. If Revelation be a cheat, and the doctrine of a future life, which it teaches, a fable or a phantom, let the philosophers of mind apply themselves

with honest and direct aim to expose the one, and undeceive us as to the other. In the present advanced state of knowledge, and with the aids which that advanced knowledge affords to the human mind to prosecute further the search for truth in every region into which the human understanding can penetrate, Natural Theology, as an independent science, may, possibly, teach a creed at once perfectly true, and, to a large extent, promotive of individual and social good. But if, as a false ally, she becomes a concealed competitor—if, while she professes to assist, she subverts, or weakens, or brings into doubt, the doctrines of Revelation, or any of them—if, instead of confirming and extending the hope of a futurity which religion promises, she weakens, embarrasses, trifles with, or narrows that hope, and by vain pretensions to superior evidence, diverts the belief of the great mass of mankind from simple and intelligible doctrines, in which they have placed their faith, to the unintelligible subtleties and sophistry of dark and mystic learning—she becomes a most dangerous, by

being the insidious, enemy of the peace, faith, and hope of society, so far as that society is Christian.

Do I attribute to Lord Brougham, in his theological work, such a motive or such a wish? Most undoubtedly not. I am fully persuaded he had none such. But I cannot but acknowledge that to a certain degree I do fear that his work is likely, from the high character of the writer, and the seductive eloquence with which it is written, to produce some such effect. It tends to do so, by leading every reader who may have leisure or taste for metaphysical inquiries—or may feel an interest in corroborating his religious opinions by the concurrent doctrines of Natural Theology, or, above all, that unhappy class “who,” to use Goldsmith’s definition of the *very* miserable, “by suicide, shew us that they have nothing left to hope”; it tends, I say, to lead every such reader of this extraordinary disquisition, to deliberate, and without reference to Revelation, on this abstract and abstruse inquiry—“is my mind—is the human soul—*immaterial*?—is it

quite a distinct, separate, independent entity or essence, from the body—from matter, from all and every modification of matter—from every combination with material elements?" He who enters on this inquiry may, I think, most naturally reason thus—"This is to me a momentous question, for I am now told, by the very high authority of Lord Brougham, that if my mind be such distinct, separate, immaterial, independent essence, then *I shall live for ever*—but if *not*—if my mind be *not* indissolubly connected with my body—if that mind be not a *thing* separate from and independent of my body and bodily organs—from the brain which now throbs with the doubt—from the nerves, or other organ, which conveys to that brain the written words which I am now contemplating—then my *whole rational, mental being is annihilated on the dissolution of my physical frame!*—On this awful question, then, depends, *as to me*, whether there be any life after the present—the present! which may this hour end!—whether I shall continue to bear the

heavy load of accumulated ills, which urge me to despair, or instantly terminate those ills by the bullet or the knife! or, shall I rather, fearless of future responsibility, and certain of present power, seize on wealth and pleasure, which nothing but the cobweb of a human law now withholds from me?—shall I thus snatch at happiness, which tempts me, and laugh at despair, and justice, and humanity! Let me, however, yet pause—*is my mind immaterial?*—is it, indeed, clear and free from every possible modification of matter? If it be, then, indeed, I must *beware* of death, and of a judgment to come! But how am I to decide this vital question?—If I look to one class of philosophers, among whom are reckoned names eminent for extensive learning, great talents, and comprising some who were zealous professors of the Christian faith; and others who attained the highest reputation in a profession to which physiological learning and practical knowledge of the human frame are essential—I am told by *them* that the Immateriality of the Human Mind