



Behold the Antichrist: Bentham on Religion

Delos Banning Mckown

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During his long, productive life the great English philosopher and exponent of utilitarianism Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) wrote not just on political philosophy but also clandestinely on religion. Under the pseudonym of Philip Beauchamp he published an attack on natural religion called *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* and under the pseudonym of Gamaliel Smith he published a book of New Testament criticism called *Not Paul, But Jesus*. In addition, Bentham bravely released under his own name *Church-of-Englandism and Its Catechism Examined*, a thorough, biting critique of Anglican doctrine. These little-known works are discussed at length by philosopher Delos B. McKown in this informative contribution to Bentham scholarship.

McKown introduces these major works on religion, and then presents an extensive synopsis of each. He defends Bentham against the criticisms of opponents where necessary, but does not hesitate to criticize Bentham when he feels he goes astray. McKown also shows how Bentham's attacks on the Christianity of his time, which denigrated human life in the here-and-now for some imagined future postmortem state of glory, fully complemented his utilitarian philosophy of the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

This thorough analysis of three little-known works by one of philosophy's great minds makes an outstanding contribution to Bentham scholarship and will be of interest to humanists and philosophers of religion.

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