

**SPINOZA AND RELIGION; A STUDY OF  
SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS AND OF HIS  
PARTICULAR UTTERANCES IN REGARD TO  
RELIGION, WITH A VIEW TO DETERMINING THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS THOUGHT FOR  
RELIGION AND INCIDENTALLY HIS PERSONAL  
ATTITUDE TOWARD IT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649710355

Spinoza and Religion; A Study of Spinoza's Metaphysics and of His Particular Utterances in Regard to Religion, with a View to Determining the Significance of His Thought for Religion and Incidentally His Personal Attitude Toward It by Elmer E. Powell

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](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ELMER E. POWELL**

**SPINOZA AND RELIGION; A STUDY OF  
SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS AND OF HIS  
PARTICULAR UTTERANCES IN REGARD TO  
RELIGION, WITH A VIEW TO DETERMINING THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS THOUGHT FOR  
RELIGION AND INCIDENTALLY HIS PERSONAL  
ATTITUDE TOWARD IT**



# Spinoza and Religion

A study of Spinoza's metaphysics and of his particular utterances in regard to religion, with a view to determining the significance of his thought for religion and incidentally his personal attitude toward it.

By

**Elmer Ellsworth Powell, A. M., Ph. D.**

*Professor of Philosophy in Miami University*



Chicago

**The Open Court Publishing Company**

London

**Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.**

1906

TO MY WIFE

## PREFACE.

A German translator and expounder of Spinoza's works declares that in the whole history of human thought there is not to be found a system more difficult to understand and to explain. After studying the system in its details, I am disposed to accept this assertion as probably true. I have blinked no difficulties, however; but have felt it my duty to study each one until I have succeeded either in harmonizing it with the system as a whole, or in clearly showing it to be a logical inconsistency. Spinoza's logical inconsistencies are of two kinds: (1) fallacies of reasoning, and (2) the acceptance of contradictory propositions which are correctly deduced, although from different and incompatible presuppositions.

My excuse for adding another book to the already formidable pile of literature on Spinoza is the fact that his relation to religion has not yet been made the subject of specific, comprehensive, and *candid* treatment; and that consequently there prevail not only among intelligent people in general, but even among students of philosophy, the vaguest possible notions in regard to this matter. Anyone who may feel disposed to think that I am performing a work of supererogation, is asked to suspend his judgment until he has read Chapter II. of my "Introduction."

In order to go to the bottom of the question and attempt to settle it, it has been necessary to pass beyond Spinoza's specific utterances in regard to re-

ligion, and to subject his metaphysics to careful analysis. Those who are not used to abstract thinking (if any such should do me the honor of reading my book), will doubtless find my exposition of Spinoza's metaphysics in some parts difficult, perhaps dull; although I have spared myself no pains, in order to attain the utmost clearness.

In conducting my investigations and in presenting the results, I have endeavored to maintain a strictly impersonal attitude, aiming solely to determine (1) what Spinoza taught and (2) how his doctrine is related to the religious consciousness. Accordingly, I must disappoint those who seek in the present work either a polemic against Spinoza or an apology for him. I will not deny, however, that my book is after all a polemic, a polemic against a mistaken interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy and personality.

While, as the basis of my judgments, I have taken, of course, Spinoza's own writings (in the original Latin where extant, and in the Dutch translation where the Latin is lost), I have derived valuable hints from several of his expounders. My obligations are acknowledged in the foot-notes to the text. The "Biographical Sketch" is the part for which I claim the least merit; for, considering it as of minor importance for the question at issue, I have been willing to accept, in regard to the original sources, the critical labor of others, save when facts significant for our estimate of Spinoza's personality were involved. In this part I am most indebted to Dr. Freudenthal of Breslau, who has done so much in recent years to enrich our scanty knowledge of Spinoza's life; although I have sometimes



been led to express quite other judgments on the facts. In a general way, I owe most to my former instructor in philosophy, Professor Benno Erdmann; although he should not be held responsible for the point of view here represented.

Spinoza's works I have cited according to Van Vloten and Land's edition: "Benedicti de Spinoza Opera," The Hague, 1895.

E. E. POWELL.

March, 1906.



# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION.

	Page
Chapter I. Biographical Sketch .....	1
1. Historical Antecedents .....	1
2. Environment in which Spinoza's Lot was Cast .....	3
3. Spinoza's Early Years .....	6
4. Rupture with the Synagogue .....	12
5. Sojourn in Rijnsburg .....	23
6. Sojourn at Voorburg .....	26
7. At The Hague .....	33
8. His Personality .....	42
Chapter II. Diversity of Opinion in Regard to Spinoza's Relation to Religion .....	45
1. Various Expressions on the Subject.....	45
2. Causes and Significance of the Diversity of Opinion .....	51
Chapter III. Spinoza's Doctrine of Knowledge	66
1. Certain Peculiarities of Spinoza's Psychol- ogy .....	66
2. The Imagination .....	75
3. The Reason .....	80
4. Logical Presuppositions .....	86

## PART I.

### SPINOZA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD.

Chapter I. His Definition of Substance (God) and His Problem .....	97
---	----