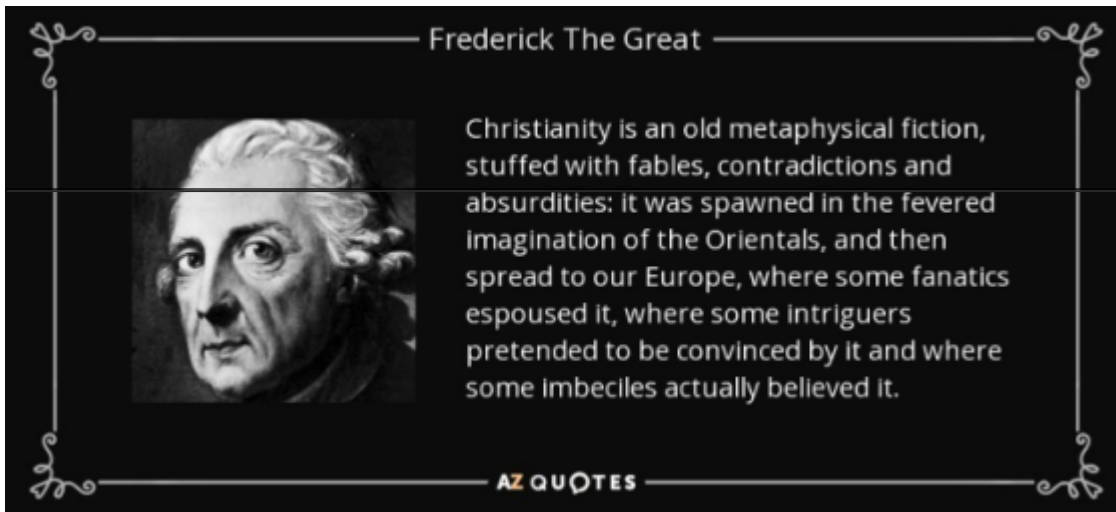


Frederick the Great Quote On Christianity

Post by "Cassius" of February 21, 2019 at 2:20 PM

This quote is new to me, but it appears well sourced. I say that because: (1) It is certainly a reasonable thing for an admirer of Lucretius, like Frederick the Great is known to have been, to say. I too am an admirer of Lucretius, and I think the same thing most every day! Further, (2) it comes quoted from what I understand to be a reputable text (Niall Ferguson's "Civilization, the West and the Rest"). If anyone has evidence that indicates that this quote is spurious, please post and I'll retract point (2).

Further, if anyone knows the exact source, please post that too. Obviously this is a translation so it would be good to know the name of the translator too. Presumably from wherever this



**Post
by**

"Oscar" of February 22, 2019 at 12:30 PM

quote

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2019 at 1:05 PM

I think our friend here [Martin](#), who is from Germany, is much more on top of this than I am, but it is very interesting story - especially [the statue aspect](#). I bet there is a lot more to find over time.

Post by “Martin” of February 22, 2019 at 9:07 PM

While trying unsuccessfully to source the quote, the search - mostly under <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/autor/friedric...on-preussen-185> -

showed that the quote adequately describes his strong disagreement with Christian metaphysics.

He regarded the claim that Jesus was the son of God a misinterpretation of the New Testament and knew about the increasing distortion of the belief in early Christian history and the oppression of other religions and denominations after Christianity's power grab.

What is relevant in the broader context is that he agreed largely with Christian ethics, which he regarded as instrumental to have loyal citizens, was within Prussia for main stream Protestants the equivalent of the Pope and was in general tolerant to any religious group.

He would interfere when he got the impression that a group tried to oppress other religious groups, had a negative effect on the economy or sided with Prussia's rival Austria.

Post by “Cassius” of February 23, 2019 at 2:19 AM

Thank you Martin. That book I linked originally had a cite but it was not visible for free. I will dig further because I hate passing spurious quotes. If I find anything I will report back.

Post by “Cassius” of February 23, 2019 at 2:44 AM

Martin I have made some progress.

The first cite is to this work:

65. Clark, Iron Kingdom, p. 187.

That is a cite to:

Clark, Christopher, Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600–1947 (London, 2006)

There, in Iron Kingdom, I find:

"Throughout his life, Frederick displayed a remarkable disregard for the conventional pieties of his era. He was vehemently irreligious: in the Political Testament of 1768, he described Christianity as 'an old metaphysical fiction, stuffed with miracles, contradictions and absurdities, which was spawned in the fevered imaginations of the Orientals and then spread to our Europe, where some fanatics espoused it, some intriguers pretended to be convinced by it and some imbeciles actually believed it.'⁹"

That reference is as follows:

9. Dietrich, *Die politischen Testamente*, pp. 657–9.
10. Wolfgang Pyta, "Von der Einseite Cordale zur Aufklärung der Ständegesellschaft: Die preussisch-litauischen Beziehungen im Siebenjährigen Krieg 1758–1762", *FRP/G*, New Series 10 (2000), pp. 1–48, here pp. 41–2.
11. For a discussion of the historical works, see Kamisch, *Frederick der Grosse*, pp. 102–3, 119, 218–23.
12. Frederick William I, *Instruction für den Successor* (1722); Frederick II, *Political Testament of 1762*, both in Dietrich, *Die politischen Testamente*, pp. 243, 355.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 681.

Does that help? We may now be at a dead end on that "Political Testament" but maybe not (?)

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 23, 2019 at 8:25 AM

I have only been able to trace this attribution to the same source (Niall Ferguson's "Civilization, the West and the Rest")

That being said, Frederick II of Prussia provides us with a few fun quips:

"I think it better to keep a profound silence with regard to the Christian fables, which are canonized by their antiquity and the credulity of absurd and insipid people." (*Letters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great* [New York: Brentano's, 1927], trans. [Richard Aldington](#), letter 37 from Frederick to [Voltaire](#), June 1738)

"Neither antiquity nor any other nation has imagined a more atrocious and blasphemous absurdity than that of eating God. — This is how Christians treat the autocrat of the universe." (*Letters of Voltaire and Frederick the Great* [New York: Brentano's,

1927], trans. Richard Aldington, letter 215 from Frederick to Voltaire, 19 March 1776)

Post by “Martin” of February 23, 2019 at 10:13 AM

The quote is not included in the free on-line excerpt of what seems to be the political testament of 1768 but a number of books contain that testament. During my time-out in Germany, I can search for it in the library of Cologne, which was an independent city state until Napoleon and became part of Prussia after Napoleon's defeat and therefore should have some books on Prussia and its kings in the library.

Post by “Cassius” of February 23, 2019 at 10:16 AM

Wow that sounds like a lot of trouble but if you are so inclined when you have the chance, that would be great. Maybe we can group-source this and perhaps if someone has library access to a PDF download we could eventually get it that way. One thing I really miss about being in a university town is good access to a library with on-line resources.

Post by “Oscar” of February 23, 2019 at 11:28 AM

quote

Post by “Oscar” of February 23, 2019 at 11:53 AM

quote

Post by “Cassius” of February 23, 2019 at 11:58 AM

Thank you Oscar! i am sort of thinking that something like this is on PDF somewhere in some collection to which the universities subscribe, but for which they charge exorbitant rates to non-students. I know I was able to find the Stanley translation of Gassendi that way at my university library. It wasn't in JSTOR but it was in some sort of generic antique document collection.

(Of course it goes probably without saying that Martin would have no issue with the original German, if we can find it, even though that would be next to useless to me personally.)

Post by “Oscar” of February 23, 2019 at 12:30 PM

quote

Post by “Cassius” of February 23, 2019 at 4:11 PM

Thank you Oscar!1

Post by “Martin” of February 25, 2019 at 10:57 AM

As mentioned in the reply to one Image, the quote is there. At first sight, the translation seems to be accurate.