

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would never have befallen me were it not for two events. One was moving to the forested foothills of Lexington, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley, where I came to live the need to make and hold open a sort of clearing of my own, like those I struggle to understand in this book. The power that this exercised over me as I wrote was something I was aware of. I was, however, less aware of the influence of the other event: the gift of my two children. It took more than one friend and colleague pointing out the insistence of the children in these pages for me to recognize it. One of them, wise beyond her years, described the genesis of the book when she called it “some new vision for you of the world born of your relationship with your children,” and another offered the most revealing of thoughts about the book’s end when he said, “One day your children will read the book and see their father contemplating the sacred places in it.” Learning from friends like this what inspired the book, I have dedicated it to Claire and Oscar.

This inspiration is matched by the material support given by Washington and Lee University, where I teach. This support came, importantly, in the form of a place where I could talk and share with others, students and colleagues with whom I could think—but also in the form of several fellowships. In particular, I am grateful to the Glenn Grant and the Lenfest Summer Fellowship programs for supporting summer writing and for funding trips to many of the artworks. Special thanks is owed to June Aprille and the Office of the Provost at Washington and Lee for additional support securing permissions and the publication of this book. These programs and the individuals involved in them display the university’s understanding of and commitment to providing the material conditions that make research and writing in the humanities possible.

What came over me with the two events of displacement to the hills of Virginia and the reception of Claire and Oscar would never have grown into this work if many friends and colleagues had not offered their as-

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Last but not least, Stephanie Hodde. A book dedicated to my children and what I receive from them cannot not also be indebted to their mother, my wife: what I receive from them I receive together with you, always, and not without you. I am mindful of that—and when I am not, I owe you even more.

ARTS OF WONDER



FIGURE 1. Frontispiece from Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen auch allen Dingen überhaupt den Liebahren der Wahrheit* (1720). Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.