

A DEFENCE of  
 NATURAL and REVEALED  
 RELIGION:  
 BEING AN  
 ABRIDGMENT  
 OF THE  
 SERMONS

Preached at the LECTURE founded by  
 The Hon<sup>ble</sup> *Robert Boyle, Esq;*

BY

Dr. Bentley	Dr. Stanhope	Mr. Derham
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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

With a GENERAL INDEX.

By *GILBERT BURNET*,

Vicar of COGGESHALL, ESSEX.

L O N D O N:

Printed for ARTHUR BETTESWORTH and

CHARLES HITCH, at the Red-Lion in

*No 1002.* Pater-noster Row. MDCCXXXVII.

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V O L. I.



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T O T H E  
Right Reverend Father in God  
**E D M U N D,**  
Lord Bishop of *London.*

*My Lord,*

**T**HE Dedication of this Abridgment does not only of Right belong to your Lordship, as a Trustee of the Lectures, but also as an eminent Defender of the same Cause, which the honourable Founder designed to promote by his pious Benefaction. And I hope I have in such a Manner executed what I present to your Lordship, as may answer the general Use for which it was designed.

The Originals are confessedly a noble Treasure of spiritual Knowledge, from whence studious Persons, who are desirous of Truth, may be furnished with proper Means of information: But as they are too voluminous for many to read, and at too great a Price for many to purchase, and withal very difficult to be come at; I thought it an useful Piece of Service to reduce them to such a Size, and to so small a Price as might encourage Men to acquaint themselves with the Substance of those excel-  
lent

# DEDICATION.

lent Discourses of natural and revealed Religion, whereby they may be better enabled *to give a Reason of the Faith that is in them*, and be provided with proper Weapons for the Defence of it.

These were the Reasons, my Lord, of the Publication of this Abridgment: And I believe there never was a Time when there was more Occasion to *take Heed lest there should be in any an evil Heart of Unbelief*; Infidelity being now become a Mark of Politeness, and looked upon as the Result of a superior Understanding, which, by a monstrous kind of Affectation, has spread itself through the whole Kingdom.

And if this Performance shall in any Measure contribute to put a Stop to this Torrent of Impiety, I shall think my self very happy, that I have been any way instrumental in promoting the Cause of God, and adding to that Pleasure, which your Lordship always feels at every the least Advancement of Christianity.

*I am, my Lord,*

*Your Lordship's most*

*Obedient and*

*Dutiful Servant,*

GILBERT BURNET.

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Dr. *BENTLEY*'s  
CONFUTATION  
OF  
ATHEISM  
ABRIDG'D.

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THE  
FOLLY of ATHEISM,  
FROM THE  
PLEASURES  
OF A  
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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PROP. I.

**R**ELIGION tells us we are the Workman of a superlatively wise, powerful, and good Being ; that we are placed here to view and applaud these glorious Scenes of Heaven and Earth ; and that God has created a sufficient Store of all Things, either necessary or convenient for us ; and particularly to such as obey him, has promised a Supply of all our Wants, and a Protection from all Dangers : That he has sent his Son into the World to bring *Life and Immortality to Light*, and to render to Mankind, if they would obey his Commandments, *the Promise of eternal Salvation*.

Atheism on the contrary would persuade us, that this is all a Dream ; that there is no such excellent Being as supposed, that created and preserves us ; that all about us is dark senseless Matter, driven on by the wild impulses of Fatality ; that Men rose out of the Slime of the Earth, and that what is called the Soul, perishes by Death.

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And what Stupidity is this, to let go the Hopes of everlasting Life with Willingness, and entertain the Thoughts of Perdition with Exultation?

This inconsiderate Behaviour of the Atheists is so extremely absurd, that it would be deemed incredible, if it did not occur to our daily Observation. It proclaims aloud, that they are not led astray by their Reasoning, but led captive by their Lusts to the Denial of a God.

Did Religion bestow Heaven to both good and bad Men, there would be no Infidels among us: But it is the Way of attaining it, that makes profane Men let go the Expectation of it. They will not practise its Rules, and therefore they cannot believe its Promises.

But, however, let us suppose that they have acted like reasonable Men, and upon diligent inquiry have found they were under a necessity of rejecting Religion, upon account of their being obliged to give their assent to such Things as are repugnant to common sense. And here I confess, that did the Offers of eternal Happiness depend upon our giving a full assent to such Things, the Kingdom of Heaven would become the Inheritance of Idiots and Fools. And if the Atheist can shew me any such Absurdities in the Christian Religion, I will either evince them to be Interpolations and Corruptions of the Faith, or yield myself a Proselyte to Infidelity.

But, perhaps, they may think it is for the Interest of Mankind, that there should be no Heaven, upon this Account, because the Labour to acquire it, is more worth than the Purchase; or in other Words, that it is a greater Advantage to take one's swing in Sensuality, than to be tied up by Commands so contrary to Flesh and Blood. This indeed is the true Language and the Cause of Atheism.

But

But what an Instance is here of the Folly of these Men, who while they reject Heaven for the present Pleasures of the Body, and their boasted Tranquillity of Mind, unwillingly deprive themselves of that very Pleasure and Tranquillity they seek for. For I shall now show, that Religion gives us the greatest Delights, tho' there should prove in the Event to be no Resurrection.

But before I begin that, I must answer this Objection, *viz.* that Religion perpetually disquiets us with dismal Apprehensions of Hell.

1. Therefore, I will freely acknowledge to the Atheists, that some part of what has been said, is not directly conclusive against them, if they say they took up Atheism as a Refuge against the Terrors of Hell: But as I cannot expect they will confess this, I must say again, that it is great Stupidity to prefer final Extinction to a happy Immortality: Nay, tho' they should confess it, I should yet brand them with Folly, who chose Atheism rather than Repentance.

2. As to the Fears of Damnation, those Terrors are not to be charged upon Religion it self; for a good Christian is not at all dismay'd at the Apprehensions of it: Indeed it excites his Diligence, and makes him work out his Salvation with Fear. But he knows if he fears him who is able to *destroy both Soul and Body in Hell*, he need never fear to go thither.

I allow that some debauched Wretches and Hypocrites are liable to these Terrors; and must leave them to those excruciating Fears, that scourge even the most daring Atheists, when they chance to be surprized with Solitude and Sickness.

And now as to the present Advantages which we owe to Religion, they are very conspicuous; whether we consider Mankind, *First, separately,* or *Secondly, under Society.*

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And *ist* in a *single Capacity*. How is a good Christian animated and cheered by a stedfast Belief of the Promises of the Gospel. What a warm and vigorous Influence does a religious Heart feel from the firm Expectation and Rewards of a future State? This Hope is a kind of Anticipation and Pledge of those Joys, and at least gives him one Heaven upon Earth, tho' the other should prove to be a Delusion.

Atheism on the contrary promises nothing but utter Extinction and Cessation of Being. How then can the Atheist reflect on his own Hypothesis, without extreme Sorrow and Dejection of Spirit? Will he say, that when once he is dead this Desire will be nothing? But notwithstanding, while he continues in Life, this melancholy Prospect of final Perdition will frequently occur to his Mind, and imbitter the sweetest Enjoyments of Life. Is it not more comfortable to a Man to think well of himself, to believe a noble Origination of his Race, rather than that Men at first proceeded as Vermin are thought to do, by the Influence of the Sun out of Dirt and Putrefaction? Is it not a firmer Foundation for Contentment, to believe that all Things were at first created, and are continually ordered for the best, than that the whole Universe is mere bungling and blundering, and cobbled and jumbled together by the unguided Agitation and rude Shuffles of Matter?

Can any Man wish a better Support under Affliction, than the Friendship and Favour of an omnipotent, infinitely wise and good Being, who is both able, and willing, and knows how to relieve him? But what a forlorn destitute Creature is the Atheist in Distress? he has no Friend in Extremity but Poison, or a Dagger or a Halter, or a Precipice to fly to.

And

And then as to the *Practical Rules* and Duties of Religion :

As the Miracles of our Saviour are peculiarly eminent above the lying Wonders of Dæmons, in that they were not made out of Ostentation, but for the good of Mankind, so likewise the Commands, which he hath imposed on his Followers, are not like the absurd Ceremonies of *Pagan* Idolatry, which had no Tendency in their Nature to make Mankind the happier ; our Saviour hath enjoined us *a reasonable Service*, accommodated to the rational part of our Nature ; all his Laws are in themselves abstracted from any Consideration of Recompence, conducive to the temporal Interest, *viz.* the Health, Credit, and Estates of them that observe them,

2dly, As to the benign Influence of Religion upon *Communities* and Governments, 'tis so apparent, that it is one of the wise Objections of the Atheist, that it was first contrived and introduced by Politicians to bring the wild Herd of Mankind under Subjection and Laws. And indeed, no Government ever was or can be begun or maintained, but upon the Basis of Religion. What Community can be imagined, without judicial Proceedings ? And what Methods of Judicature, without a religious Oath ? which implies and supposes an omniscient Being, as conscious to its Falshood or Truth, and a Revenger of Perjury ; so that the very Nature of an Oath is subverted by the Atheist ; who professeth to acknowledge nothing superior to himself. Atheism is by no means tolerable in the most private Condition, but if it aspire to Authority and Power, what can be expected but the basest Cowardise and Treachery, but the foulest Prevarication in Justice, and betraying the Rights and Liberties of the People ? Nay, if Atheism were once, as I may say, the

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National Religion, it would make its Followers the most miserable of Men ; it would be a Kingdom of Satan divided against it self. For Perfidiousness and Inhumanity towards one another is the genuine Product of Atheism. No Man that adheres to that Sect can ever be just, generous, or grateful, unless he be sometime overcome by good Nature, and an happy Constitution. No Atheist, as such, can be a true Friend, an affectionate Relation, or a loyal Subject. The Appearance of mutual Amity among them, is owing to the smallness of their Number ; but if Atheism should become universal, farewell all Ties of Friendship and Honour, and whatever else is valuable or laudable in the World.

### P R O P. II.

**H**AVING show'd the Folly of Atheism, I come now to evince the Being of God from the Faculties of human Souls.

1. And first, I say, there is an immaterial Substance in us which we call the Soul, essentially distinct from our Bodies. I shall lay this down as self-evident, that there is something in us that thinks, and perceives, and wills, &c.

And in the next Place 'tis as self-evident, that these Faculties and Operations of thinking, perceiving, and willing, must proceed from something or other, as their efficient Cause. So that if these Operations are neither inherent in Matter, as such, nor acquirable by any Motion or Modification of it, it necessarily follows, that they proceed from some incorporeal cogitative Substance within us, called the Soul.

But 1<sup>st</sup>, these Faculties of Sensation or Thought are not inherent in Matter, as such, may appear from

from this Argument, *viz.* that then every Stone would be as rational as a Man; and every Man would have as many rational self conscious Parts, as he had distinct Atoms in his Body, which is absurd to imagine.

2. As Matter in general, as Matter, has not Thought, so neither can Sensation or Thought be the Result of any Modification of Matter, which I will prove from these following Arguments.

1<sup>st</sup>, Matter being nothing else in the whole Nature and Idea of it, but Magnitude, Figure, and Situation, with a Capacity of being moved and divided, it will appear that it has no inherent Faculty of Sense and Perception.

For all the sensible Qualities of it, such as Light and Colour, Heat and Sound, do not subsist in the Bodies themselves absolutely, but are only the Effects of our Sensation, which arise from the different Motions upon our Nerves, from Objects without, and sympathetic and vital Passions produced within our selves.

2<sup>dly</sup>, No particular Species of Matter, as the Brain and animal Spirits, hath any Power of Sense and Perception. Let us carry in our Minds this true Notion of Body in general, and apply it to our Substance. We observe then, that our Body, as well as other Matter, has Colour, and Warmth, &c. but we have already proved, that these Qualities are not subsistent in those Bodies, therefore we must seek for something else in our Frame, that must receive these Impressions. Will they say that these Ideas are performed by the Brain? I answer, that the Brain is but Body, and therefore those Qualities of Softness, Whiteness, &c. do not belong to the Brain itself, but are the Sensations of some other Substance without it: therefore it cannot be the Brain, which imagines those Qualities to be in itself. If they say that the animal  
Spirits,

Spirits, and insensible Particles in the Brain, hath the Power of Perception; I answer, that all these have some determined Figure, as they are Matter, howsoever small, and that there is no more Relation between a minute Body and Cogitation, than the greatest.

*3dly*, No Motion in general superadded to Matter, can produce any Sense or Perception; for if Motion, or any Degree of it can beget Cogitation, the whole Mass of the World upon these Terms must be allowed to have Life and Understanding, no part of it being absolutely at Rest. Nor

*4thly*, Can any determinate Motion, as of the animal Spirits through Muscles and Nerves, beget any Sense and Perception? For among all the Kinds of Motion, whether direct or circular, or parabolical, or on what Curve they please; what Pretence can one make to Thinking and Liberty of Will, more than another? No circular Motion of an Atom can be all of it existent at once; it must be made gradually, both as to Place and Time, so that at any Instant of Time the moving Atom is but in one single Point of the Line. Therefore all but that one Point is either future or past; now what is not present, is nothing at all, and can be the efficient of nothing. So that if Motion be the Cause of Thought, then Thought must be produced by one single Point of Motion with relation to Time as well as Place. And such a Point to our Conceptions is almost equivalent to Rest, or at least to any other Point whatsoever. What then is become of the Privilege of that organical Motion of the animal Spirits above any other? Again, we have shewn, that this circular and other Motion is but the successive Flux of an Atom, and is never existent together, is a pure Operation of the Soul, which, considering past Motion and future, and recollecting the whole by  
Memory,

Memory, calls this by one Denomination, and that by another. How then can that Motion be the Efficient of Thought, which is evidently the Effect of it? Nor,

*5thly*, Can the Action or Percussion of the animal Spirits, one Particle against another, create any Sense and Perception.

All that can be effected by such Encounters of Atoms is either the imparting or receiving of Motion, or a new Determination and Direction of its Course. Concussions of Atoms can never be capable of begetting those intrinsical and vital Affections, that Self-Consciousness, and other Powers that we feel in our selves, seeing they only strike upon the outward Surfaces; they cannot inwardly pervade one another, they cannot have any Penetration of Dimensions and Conjunction of Substance. It is impossible that all the natural Powers and acquired Habits of the Mind, that penetrating Understanding and accurate Judgment, that Strength of Memory and Readiness of Wit, that Liberality and Justice, and Prudence and Magnanimity, that Charity and Beneficence to Mankind, that ingenuous Fear and awful Love of God, that comprehensive Knowledge of History and Language, that experienced Insight into the Works of Nature, that rich Vein of Poetry, and inexhausted Fountain of Eloquence, those exalted Discoveries of mathematical Theorems, can proceed from the blind Shuffling and casual Clashing of Atoms, and we cannot without Indignation go about to confute it.

And yet, though they are so miserably confounded, they will,

*6thly*, Urge Matter of Fact, that meer Body may produce Cogitation and Sense, as may be observed in Brutes.

If Brutes have immaterial Souls, they'll say, then they must be either annihilated or immortal. This Objection supposeth the Being of God; and God can as easily annihilate as create. Or if they be immortal, what need we be concerned about it? 'Tis only by the good Pleasure of their Maker. And if they be Engines and Machines, as *Cartesius* thought, I admire and adore the divine Artifice of such a wonderful Contrivance; but I deny that they have any reason, if they be nothing but Matter.

Omnipotence cannot create cogitative Body, though not from any Imperfection in the Power of God, but an Incapacity in the Subject, and this the *Cartesians* allow. Do but convince them that Brutes have the least Participation of Thought, and they'll retract their Opinion, for none but Atheists join the two Notions together, and believe Brutes to be rational or sensitive Machines.

And now having shewn, that Sense and Perception can never be the product of Matter and Motion, it remains that it must necessarily proceed from some incorporeal Substance within us. And though we cannot conceive the Manner of the Soul's Action and Passion, nor what hold it can lay on the Body when it moves it, yet we are as certain that it doth so, as of any Truth whatsoever. All that I resolve into the sole Pleasure of our omnipotent Creator, whose Existence is plainly deducible from the Proof of an immaterial Soul. For seeing, as we have shewn, that there is an incorporeal Substance within us, it must either be from Eternity, which is absurd, or it must come out of nothing without any efficient Cause. Something therefore must have created our Souls, and that Something must itself have all the Perfections it has given to them. There is therefore an immaterial and intelligent Being that created our  
Souls,