

**A brief confutation of the pretences against natural and revealed religion /
[Robert Jenkin].**

Contributors

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A BRIEF
CONFUTATION
OF THE
PRETENCES
AGAINST
NATURAL & REVEALED
Religion.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Sam. Smith* and *B. Walford*,
at the *Prince's Arms* in *St. Paul's*
Church-yard. 1702.

A BRIEF
CONFESSION

OF THE
TRUTHS

AND
MYSTERIES
OF THE
GOSPEL

OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT

AS
REVEALED
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

AND
THE
APOSTOLICAL
TEACHING

AND
THE
PRACTICE
OF THE
CHURCH

THE
PREFACE.

After so much Learned
Pains has been taken
by so many, on a Subject, which
has so little need of it, if men
were not strangely unwilling to
be undeceived; I thought the
most proper Method would be
to expose the Nonsense of A-
theism to every common Ca-
pacity.

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capacity. And perhaps Atheistical and Prophane Men have had too much honour done them in being treated as Men of Parts and Learning, and discoursed withal in Mode and Figure, and tedious Disputes, as if they had any thing to offer, which could deserve a strict and formal Debate.

My present Business is with the Contradictions and Absurdities of Atheism, not with the Mischiefs of Irreligion, which are visible in every days Experience. As there never was so great contempt of
all

The Preface.

all Religion in this Nation as at present; so there never were such evident and horrid **Effects** of the Prophanation of all things Sacred, such falshood in Trade, such publick Bribery, such dangerous Treachery and Unfaithfulness in all kinds of Trust, nor were there ever so many Impeachments and Bills of Divorce, as of late years.

The Reformation of those Crimes, which are the unavoidable Consequences of Irreligion, require the united Wisdom and Courage and Authority of a Parliament. But if Philosophers

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losophers may be allowed of
Council against Atheism; at
Athens, where Philosophy
most flourished, Atheists were
punished with Death, and
Mr. Hobbes himself would
have them banished. But if
these Methods be thought
too severe (tho' what can be
too severe against the Enemies
of God and all Mankind?)
the next Expedient perhaps
may be to order them a Fools-
coat, as the Jews are for-
ced to wear a Badge of Di-
stinction and Infamy in many
Countries of Europe: I ever
looked

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looked upon Irreligion to be an insipid senseless thing, and am every day more confirmed in this Opinion, and doubt not but the ridiculous pretences to Wit and Argument, in so mad a Cause, may easily be exposed to the scorn of all men of common Sense.

A

ERRATA.

Page 3. line 3. for *your* read *the*. l. 18. r. *Epicuriana*
p. 7. l. 15. r. *Empiricus*. p. 16. l. 6. for *your* r. *their*. p. 17
l. 23. for *your* r. *their*. p. 78. for *whether* r. *whither*.

A

A BRIEF
CONFUTATION
OF
ATHEISM,
IN A
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
*A Philosopher, a Countryman,
and an Atheist.*

Philosopher. **G**ood Morrow, Neighbour; What are you musing upon, this Morning? The price of Corn, or of Cattel?

B

Coun-

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Countryman. Truly I was thinking of something of another Nature : I was wondring, why our Minister yesterday should be at so much pains to prove, that there is a God ; when this Corn, and every thing, I see, proves, that there must be a God, and Maker of all things. His Discourse, I remember, was against the Atheists, as he called them. The word is not English, I think ; nor, I hope, the Thing ; neither ; if an Atheist be one, that believes no God. Pray, Sir, what is an Atheist.

Philos. An Atheist ? An Atheist is a Monster, Friend.

Countr. I thought, Sir, he had been a Man.

Philos. Yes ; he has the shape of a Man, but without Eyes or Brains. And I see one of this kind coming ; you shall hear what he has to say for himself. Sir, your Servant. What do you think, my Neighbour here and I were talking of ? He tells me, he wonders, that there should be any man in the world, that can disbelieve the Being of a God.

Atheist.

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Atheist. All the Blockheads in the World believe a God ; and so do all your Children.

Philos. And do they not believe, there is a Sun too ?

Atheist. And all the Women believed a Deity too till of late ; but now the Women begin to be Wiser.

Philos. Wiser.

Atheist. Wiser, Sir. For I must tell you ; Parts and Learning and Conversation are requisite to make an Atheist.

Philos. I have heard of a Laundress that was an eminent Epicurean ; and of old Time, we find in *Athenæus*, that he was reckoned, but an ill Cook, who was not well read in *Democritus* and *Epicureus*.

Atheist. Were all the Cooks Atheists then ?

Philos. I hope not ; but the Philosophy of Atheists was, it seems, thought fitter for the Kitchen than for the Schools.

Atheist. I say again, every Fool believes a God.

Philos. Not every Fool. For *the*
B 2 *Fool*

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Fool hath said in his heart, there is no God; and as, Sir William Temple somewhere observes, it is strange that the Fools of David's Age should be the Wits of ours. Your Atheists may perhaps lead captive some weak Women, or as weak Men, an easy Prey, prepared to receive all their Follies, as the Oracles of Reason. And the least Figure, you know, looks big at the head of a few Cyphers. Come, come, if Atheists will stand to their Point, and talk like themselves, they must renounce their Reason, and their very Senses, as well as their God.

Atheist. How so?

Philos. Does the Sun shine?

Atheist. Does it not?

Philos. Prove it.

Atheist. It proves it self, and needs no other proof, nor is capable of any

Philos. Why, can there be no Light without the Sun?

Atheist. There may.

Philos. There is not only Light, but Day, when no Sun appears. And how do you prove that the Sun makes the

Day?

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Day, because he never appears to us, but by day, any more than that the Moon makes the Night, because she is seen by night?

Countr. This puts me in mind of a Neighbour of mine, that observed to me, as we came home one Moonshiny night, that we are much beholden to the Moon; but, says he, the Sun never shines but in the day time, when we have no need of him.

Atheist. This is pleasant Talk indeed; as if the Sun did not shine through the Clouds which intercept part of his Rays, and hide the Sun's Body from us.

Philos. As pleasant as this Talk is, it is not half so ridiculous, as to deny the Being of God, who made the Sun and every thing else; because he is invisible. You own the Influence of the Sun, and the Communication of his Light and Heat, when he is out of our sight, but the Influence of God, which is much more necessary and beneficial, is disregarded, and his Being is denied, because our Bodily eyes cannot discern a Spi-

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rit: tho' as plain Reason, as any, which can tell us, that the Sun shines upon us, when he is not seen by us, or that the Wind blows, which we never see; will assure us, that God not only exists, but is ever present with us, tho' we cannot see him.

Atheist. This is Cant.

Philos. It is Reason, and agreeable to all, that Philosophy has been able to discover, after so many thousand years by the Study and Observation of the wisest men in all Ages. It is agreeable to the best Philosophy even of this profane Age, that no man can move a Finger, but by an immediate Divine concurrence, it being as impossible to move, without the immediate presence and concurrence of God, as that the Sun's Light should be without the Sun.

Atheist. You would make me believe, that Two and Two are not Four.

Philos. I will undertake to do it, upon as good Principles as any, by which you can believe, that there is no God.

Atheist.

Atheist. As how, I pray?

Philos. If Two and Two be Four, then Two and Two must be Ten: for that Number Four carries Ten in the Belly of it, Man. You have heard of the famous *Tetractys* of *Pythagoras*, and this is it: 1. 2. 3. 4. make Ten, but 1. 2. 3. are contained in Four; therefore the Number Four containing these three Numbers in it, must be equal to the Number Ten.

Atheist. This is ridiculous Sophistry.

Philos. I can't help that. This and Twenty other things as foolish, are to be found in *Sextus Empyricus*. The Atheists of old were Scepticks, and denied down right, that we can have any certainty, that the Sun shines, or that Snow is white; they held that there is no certain difference between sleeping and waking, or between talking, as we do now, and in a dream. They framed to themselves abundance of Subtilties to take off the force and evidence of Demonstrations in Arithmetick and Geometry. They saw very well, that if there be any certainty in the Nature

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of things, there must be the same certainty of the existence of the Author and Creator of them. *Plato* truly assigned one chief cause of Atheism to be a conceited Ignorance.

Atheist. Poor men! They were, it seems, put to hard shifts for want of Philosophy, which has received great improvements since their Time. The Atheists of our days, I can assure you, are for the Truth of your Senses, and for the enjoyment of them too. We live in a Wise and Philosophicall Age.

Philos. But shew me one, that deserves the Name of a Philosopher in this wise and Philosophical Age, that has denied, or so much as doubted of the Being of God. Are not all the famous Books of Philosophy direct contradictions to Atheism? Do not my Lord *Bacon*, *Des Cartes*, *Gassendus*, *Willis*, *Boyle*, *Newton*, &c. imply, and suppose, or prove the Being of God in every Page? It is a known Maxim of my Lord *Bacon's*, that Philosophy never can make an Atheist, tho' an ignorant

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norant and vain pretence to it may. And I may confidently affirm, that never any weaker and more trifling Books have appeared in the World, than those, which have been designed to serve the cause of Atheism and Irreligion; which is to be ascribed, not so much to the Authors, as to the Subject, that they had undertaken. For to defend Atheism, is for a Man to run his Head against a Wall, he can endanger nothing but his own Brains. And these idle and inconsistent Whimfies, which would have been despised upon a better Subject, have thro' the strange partiality and stupidity of vice, given their Authors a greater vogue among some of our Wits, than the most truly rational or really witty Discourses could have done.

Atheist. What say you to Mr. *Hobbes*?

Philos. I say he is full of Absurdities and Contradictions.

Atheist. Was he not a Man of great Parts?

Philos. Not so great perhaps as his conceit of them was. One of his Friends

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Friends has declared of him in Print. that he was of a constant, undaunted Resolution of maintaining his own Opinions. He pretended to know every thing, and always affected something singular upon every Subject. If he studied the Mathematicks, it was to contradict the old Principles, and advance new ones; and in his Dialogue of the Common Laws of England, he says (in the Person of the Philosopher) *If I pretend within a Month or two, to make my self able to perform the Office of a Judge, you are not to think it arrogance.* For what could be thought arrogant in Mr. Hobbes? But he is not altogether so much your Friend perhaps as you imagine: he confesses, that Atheists ought to be banished and driven out of all Humane Society.

Atheist. So did Epicurus profess himself no Atheist.

Philos. He did. And this proves Atheism an absurd thing, which is to be maintained upon no Principles of Philosophy, ancient or modern. E-

picurus

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picurus pretended to make a World with his Atoms, but yet he could not hope to root the Notion of a God out of mens minds, but endeavoured to set up Gods after his own Heart ; and of his own Contrivance, since he despaired of bringing men to a persuasion that there is no God at all.

Atheist. He knew the danger of such Attempts, and saw, how much it concerned him to be cautious.

Philos. He did so. But Atheism is as much contrary to all Notions of Philosophy , as against the common Sense and Interest of Mankind. And when men once come to argue the case, they have found themselves reduced to this necessity , either of acknowledging a God , in contradiction to their own Principles and Inclinations ; or of denying the certainty of all Principles whatsoever, as well as the certainty of the Divine Existence. Is it possible to prove there is no God ? Or to contrive a System of Philosophy, supposing there were none ?

Atheist. Why not ?

Philos.

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Philos. By a God we understand a Being of all Possible Perfections, as all possible Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. Now it is impossible to prove, that there can be no such Being, as has all possible Perfections; which would be to prove that impossible, which is possible. Nay it is impossible, that a Being of all possible Perfections should not actually exist, because necessary Existence it self is one possible Perfection; but necessary Existence would be impossible, unless it were actual: for it is a necessity of existing always; and that which in its own nature necessarily exists, must ever exist, and can have neither Beginning, nor End of its Existence. Something of Necessity must always have been, or else Nothing ever could have been; necessary Existence therefore cannot be pretended to be impossible in it self. But that which necessarily Exists could never begin to exist, and the existence of what is possible, cannot be impossible; therefore it is impossible.

ble, that a Being of all possible Perfections should not actually exist: because the same thing cannot be both possible, and impossible; that is, it cannot be necessarily existent, and not necessarily existent, nor so much as actually existent.

Atheist. I don't well understand you.

Philos. Necessity of Existence is an impossibility of Non-existence; and the necessity of the Existence of God being possible, his Non-existence must be impossible.

Atheist. These are fine Subtilties! But why could not the World be Eternal?

Philos. Because it is of a Successive Duration, divided into Past, Present, and Future. And there is no part of this Duration, which is now past, but it was once present, and whatever once was present, was future before it was present, (at least all but one Moment) and therefore had a Beginning, or else it never could have been either present or past. Or in plainer Terms;

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Terms ; there cannot be an Eternity consisting of an infinite Succession of Days, or Months, or Years : because there are more Hours than Days, and more Days than Months, and more Months than Years, whereas there can be neither more nor less of things infinite, but all Infinity is equal and the same.

Atheist. These are Mysteries indeed !

Philos. True, they are Mysteries ; but they are such Mysteries, as must be acknowledged by all, that duly consider the Nature of things.

Atheist. Well ! why may not the World have been made and unmade again innumerable times from all Eternity.

Philos. My Argument lies against the Eternity of Motion, and necessarily proves the first Motion, and a first Mover ? there must of necessity have been a first Making of the World, if you suppose it never so often to have been changed and destroyed, and made up again. And neither the
Motion

Motion it self, whereby the World was made, nor the Creation of the World, could have been eternal; because no Succession of Action or Existence could be eternal. God, who is most perfect, and necessarily existent, has a permanent Duration, as perfect as his Nature is, comprehending all Successions of Time, and above all the changes of it: But the Duration of Creatures is in Succession, imperfect, and always changing: for the Duration of things must be according to their Nature?

Atheist. I can't see, why the World may not have been made mechanically.

Philos. How can there be Mechanism without Motion? And I have proved, that no Motion can be eternal; but there must be a first Motion, and a first Mover, who is God.

Atheist. Who knows, what Atoms in an Infinite Succession of Ages might do?

Philos. We may know sufficiently, what they could not do: they could
not

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not at first move themselves, nor direct their own course at any time.

Atheist. But they might move by chance.

Philos. How move by chance? They must receive the Principle of your Motion and Activity from a Superior Power.

Atheist. They might then make the World by chance, when they were once in Motion.

Philos. What! Make a World by chance! Is this, I pray, to turn Treess into Syllogisms, or Syllogisms into Trees?

Atheist. What is that Banter for?

Philos. 'Tis the Language of a Friend of yours in another case.

Atheist. But why may not the World have been made by chance?

Philos. A World of Order and wise Contrivance made by chance! and preserved and governed by chance?

Atheist. Are there not Animals now generated by the operation only of the Sun upon Mud, or other Matter fitly disposed?

Philos.

Philos. The Sun doth not perform his Course and Operations by chance. And then as to equivocal Generation, all the Discoveries in Philosophy are against it. Name me the Philosopher, that now asserts it. And *Epicurus's* Dance of Atoms is such a Whimsy, as no conceit of a Man in a Frenzy can be more absurd. Speak out in plain Terms, and own to this honest Man here, that you believe, that Men at first sprung out of the Earth, and that the Fields once bore Men, as they now do Grass or Mushrooms.

Countr. You have been too learned for me hitherto: but I will undertake to maintain against any Man, that this is mere Nonsense. Men spring out of the Ground!

Atheist. They were first Infants, and then grew up to be Men.

Countr. Were they so? Well! I will ask no Questions about your Cradles and Nurses. But where is that Spot of Earth to be found, that bears a Crop of Infants, I wonder.

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Atheist. No body says, Friend, that there is such Ground now, but there may have been in Ancient Times: and the World has undergone so many Alterations, that we know not what formerly may have happened.

Countr. Is there any History, that mentions this wonderful Birth of Humane Race?

Atheist. Perhaps not: but many Histories are lost.

Countr. Is there any Tradition for it?

Atheist. Tradition is an uncertain Conveyance, nothing more easily lost.

Philos. Here is a profound way of Reasoning. Men must spring out of the Ground at first; tho' no Man has ever been known to come thus into the World, and neither History, nor Tradition give the least Intimation of any such thing. I should have thought, that this Original of Mankind would have been retained, as the most memorable thing, which nearly concerned us all. Besides, how is it possible, but

but that in some parts of the World, the Earth should now bring forth Men, if it had formerly done so?

Atheist. The Earth is grown old and barren, and the Sun's Heat is not so strong and vigorous as it has been. Have we not complained for many years of Cool Summers?

Philos. If the Age of the Earth and any decay in the Sun be the cause of the Earth's Barrenness: then it is plain, that for many Ages the Earth must have born Men and Women, as she now does Corn. For this Barrenness could not be occasioned, till after many Ages, and therefore some Remembrance must have been left of her former fruitfulness in this kind. It happened fortunately however, that when the Earth grew barren, Nature had provided another way for the Propagation of the World. But did the whole Earth grow barren at once?

Atheist. I suppose not.

Countr. You suppose, I see, just what you please, rather than be forced to acknowledge the Being of a God.

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Philos. Methinks, if this had been the Origin of Mankind, the Earth which was once so fruitful in this sort of Productions, should now throw out, at least, an Abortion sometime in some places. But to say, without any thing to countenance you in it that Man at first grew out of the Ground, because you must else acknowledge a God, is such stuff, as I know not whether it be more wicked or more foolish.

Countr. Why, Sir, if it were for your Purpose, rather than acknowledge a God, you might much better say, that there was a Time, when Men walked upon their Heads, and their Brains lay in their Heels.

Philos. *Anaximander*, I remember held, that Men were at first generated in the Bellies of Fishes.

Countr. He might as well have said they came down from the Moon in a shower of Rain, or any thing else that is but ridiculous enough. But from whence then were the first Fishes?

Philos.

Philos. This *Anaximander* is reckon'd the first Atheistical Philosopher, tho' *Lucretius* does *Epicurus* the Honour to make him the first.

Countr. It is no great matter, whether we know who was the first Atheist, if we could but know, who would be the last.

Philos. Yes, it shews the Novelty of Atheism.

Countr. I wonder there ever should be any. But pray what beginning had Birds, and Beasts, and Plants?

Atheist. The very same with Men; the Earth produced them.

Countr. This is stranger still, that the Earth should now produce none of all these; but Plants only. I am rather for crowding them all into the Bellies of *Anaximander's* Fishes. Were there no Houses thus produced?

Atheist. No.

Countr. Not a Cottage?

Atheist. No. I tell you.

Philos. As if there were not more skill and wise design in the Fabrick of

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the Body of any one Animal, than off all the Houses in the World.

Countr. What think you of Menss creeping up and down like Snails, every one with his House upon his Back? We seem to have something of this Primitive way still retained among a sort of Men called Pedlars. Who knows, but some of these Strollers may have crept out of the Earth with their Packs upon their Backs?

Atheist. What if I say, there were Houses grew up at first, which were the Patterns of all, that have been ever since?

Countr. Then you would speak more like your self. For why should you deny any thing, but a God? Whoever disbelieves the Being of a God, must boggle, I perceive, at the Belief of nothing besides.

Atheist. The very Notion of a God is incomprehensible: it is all Darkness and Confusion.

Philos. The Essence of God is indeed incomprehensible; but which way soever you turn your self, you must

must meet with something incomprehensible, as Infinity, and Eternity, either of stupid Matter, or of an Active Principle of all Perfection, which is God. And what thing is there in the World, which has not something of incomprehensible in it?

Atheist. As how?

Philos. You know the Argument of the Philosopher against Motion: if you move, it must be in the Place where you are, or where you are not: But no man can move in the Place, where he is, because Motion is change of Place: and it is ridiculous to say, a Man can move, where he is not: for he may move in Two thousand Places at once, if he may move in Two.

Atheist. These are the learned Follies of the Schools.

Philos. They are, if you will, of the old Scepticks, who had many the like: As to prove that no Man can die, they argued, That if a Man die, it must be, when he lives, or when he is dead; but no Man can die either while he lives, or after he is dead;

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therefore it follows, that there can be no Dying at all.

Atheist. This is rare stuff indeed.

Philos. It is such as the Scepticks of old set a mighty value upon; and as contemptible, as it is, I defie any Man breathing to shew the hundredth part of Proof in any of your pretences against the Being of a God. These were substantial Arguments of old, and would be so still, if they could be made serviceable to your purpose of Atheism.

Atheist. I can never believe, as you do.

Philos. You believe your Senses I hope, and are fully persuaded, that there are Bodies in the World, whatever you think of Spirits.

Atheist. Yes sure, I am not mad yet.

Philos. But there is a fairer Pretence to Reason in denying, that there is any such thing as Matter, then there can be in denying a God.

Atheist.

Atheist. Now I perceive, I am to be persuaded out of my Senses.

Philos. God is a Being infinitely perfect, a Being in whom are all possible Perfections, and there can be no contradiction in the Essence of a Being of all possible Perfections. But there is a contradiction in the very Nature and Essence of Matter: and Philosophers bring Demonstrations on both sides, to prove that Matter is in its own Nature capable of infinite Division, and that it is incapable of it.

Atheist. These are things above our Reach.

Philos. And is not God much more above it?

Atheist. Well! but we see and feel material things, and our experience informs us, that Nature does her work: and Seeing, you know is Believing. For my part, my Faith goes no further.

Philos. Have you not heard of a Place lately discovered in the *East-Indies*, where the Boys build Houses with

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with as much ease, and much after the same manner, as our Boys play at Cross and Pile?

Atheist. How is that?

Philos. When a House is to be built, the Boys meet together, and cast up Stones or Bricks, and little pieces of Wood into the Air, and they fall down again in exact Order, and range themselves into large Rooms and Turrets, and Cupuloes; there is nothing comparable to them at *Versailles*, or the *Louvre*.

Atheist. And you believe this!

Philos. This is not all: When a good number of Houses are thus built by the Boys in one place, the Men play a kind of Engine against them, something like the Roman Ram; this batters the Houses down again with that force, that the several pieces of Timber and other Materials, at a Rebound, by a happy and never-failing chance, dispose themselves into spacious and regular Squares; the like are not to be seen in all *Europe*.

Countr.

Countr. It seems the Boys build Houses by Cross and Pile, and the Men turn them into Squares by playing at Nine Pins.

Atheist. You Men of Mystery can believe any thing.

Philos. But in earnest, is this, or any thing else more incredible, than it is, that the beautiful Frame and Order of things in the whole World, should be first shuffled together by a chance more ridiculous and uncertain than any Child's Play, and then should be preserved as odly for many thousands of years, without any Cause, or Reason, or Design; but should at first proceed, and then depend, upon a Tarantula in the Atheist's Head? There is no Fly nor Insect, not so much as a Blade of Grass, or Grain of Sand, without it's wondrous Beauties, and inimitable Art in the Texture and Order of its Parts: and not one Man alive can explain, how these Parts came and hang together. Nature it self is all Mystery, the Mysterious Work of God.

Atheist.

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Atheist. I magnifie Nature as much as you can do.

Philos. But Nature without a God is but a Word that can have no Meaning, an Effect without a Cause, a Magick Round of Day and Night, Summer and Winter; it is an enchanted Circle, a Mystick Dance, or any thing, that sounds high, and means nothing. You have, I know, often heard of the House in the Church of *Loretto*, brought thither by Angels.

Atheist. Yes, yes, a Popish Legend.

Philos. I am as much convinced of the Vanity and Falshood of that Story, as you can be, and am sorry that Religion it self should suffer in the Opinion of unwise Men, by the officious Folly and Baseness of some, that pretend to it. For, as *Sir Thomas More* once jestingly said, That he would not upon any Terms hear such a Man, who was a notorious Lyar, repeat the Creed, for fear, he should never believe it afterwards: So some are imprudent enough in earnest to disbelieve the plainest and most necessary

sary Truths, because Impostors have found it sometimes their Interest to assert them. But after all it is not impossible, that Angels might remove a House from one place to another; but it is absolutely impossible, that ever they should make a World; and it is much more impossible (if there can be degrees in Impossibilities) at least it seems more evidently impossible to the meanest Capacity; that a World should be made without any one to make it, but that the Atoms should once upon a Time, by Agreement, at a general Rendezvous, have erected themselves into a World.

Atheist. Never trouble your self about that, we have World-makers enough in this Age. I can name you the Men, that if they do but step into their Study, and take a pair of Compasses in hand, can either mend the Old World, or make a New one in half a days time.

Philos. No, no. The World-making Trade is quite ruined.

Atheist.

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Atheist. There are so many of it, you mean.

Philos. Not for that Reason only :: But their Tools of Mechanism are taken from them by a certain Gentleman in the *Tower*, who will no more suffer us to be imposed upon by a factitious World, than by false Coin. Our Countrymen, I think, have driven a freer Trade of making Worlds, than any other Nation. But New Companies daily setting up against the Old, they never could unite in any common Principles, but are all at last dissolved. Attractive Powers have torn them to pieces, and a prodigious, yawning *Vacuum*, has swallowed them up.

Atheist. There is no great loss of them. We have World good enough, if they would but let it alone, and I never disturb my head to consider how it was made.

Philos. But you may consider, that it must have been made, and could not make it self. What do you think of the Tradition, that vast Stones were

were

were brought by Magick through the Air, and placed in that odd manner, as they are now seen in that famous Wonder of *Stone-henge*?

Atheist. I suppose, most Men have the same Thoughts of such Stories.

Philos. Why this, and the idle Fables, that are told Children of Giants and Fairies, are all Demonstration to the Blunders and Contradictions of Atheism. What would you say of a Man that should imagine, that this Watch was eternal? that it made it self? or was made by the casual meeting of Brass, and Steel, and the other Materials? Would you not think him mad, that should believe any thing like this?

Atheism. Little less.

Philos. What then must his Madness be, who can believe this vast and wonderful Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, with all its Motions and variety of Creatures to have had no other Original?

Atheist.

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Atheist. The case is different.

Philos. It is so; but all the difference is against you.

Atheist. We see Watches want mending, and winding up, and we see new ones made every day.

Philos. But there is but one World, which remains continually the same, and wants no mending: and you will not believe, that God made this World, because you never saw him make another. Is this your Argument?

Countr. Pray, Sir, in what part off the World was you born?

Atheist. Why do you ask that Question? In *Ireland*, Friend.

Countr. Are your Parents living?

Atheist. No. How doth this concern you?

Countr. Can you prove your Birth by any Register, or produce any Witnesses of it?

Atheist. Perhaps not; the Witnesses may be dead in the late War, and the Registers lost. What then?

Countr.

Countr. Give me leave to say, Sir, that I begin to suspect, that you are the Son of a Morass, and of the same Original, which you assign to the Primitive Race of Mankind. Methinks, I see the little Atheist, half-Babe, half-Mud, sprawling among his kindred Frogs, and the first words the croaking thing attempts to speak, are *No Mys— No Mysteries.*

Atheist. This is very abusive.

Countr. Not at all, Sir, it is an honour to you to begin a New Race, and it is the best confirmation of your Opinion, that I can think of.

Atheist. These are things, which we have talked a thousand times, and I little expected now to have the same Trumpery over again. You know, Sir, we have often discoursed these things among our selves, but they are of that difficulty, as not to bear a Vulgar Dispute.

Countr. Of that plainness, he means.

Atheist. But I was coming to shew you a Curiosity lately found, and sent me from abroad; here it is.

D

Philos.

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Philos. A Medal ! It seems to be a Roman Coin ; an *Otho* ! I thank you for the sight of it. It is a Rarity.

Atheist. There are but few Coins of this Emperour, because his Reign was so short. But many Medals of divers other Emperours are found in several Counties of *England*.

Philos. How is it supposed, they came hither ?

Atheist. No doubt, they were brought over by the *Romans*, when they were in possession of this Island.

Philos. That is not so clear, as you imagine. Metals are as natural to some Countreys, as Stones are to others. I know a Piece of Ground, that is called the *Money-Piece*, from the great Numbers of those, which you call *Roman* Coins, that are found in it.

Atheist. And do you think them to be the Product of the Ground ?

Philos. Why not ? Coins are dug up in *Italy*, and in *France*, and in most Countreys of *Europe*, tho' not in all Grounds. *Non omnis fert omnia Tellus.* Here is a Coin, that was taken out of the Ground.

Atheist.

Atheist. It is one of *Augustus* : do'nt you see his Name and Titles , and his very Effigies ? The Reverse is——

Philos. I know it. But why is it necessary, that this should be the Product of Art rather than of Nature ?

———*Inscripti nomina Regum Nascuntur Flores*——— Some Countreys naturally afford Quarries of rough Stone, and others produce Stones curiously wrought and fashioned in several Forms. And as divers Countreys produce Oar of Gold, and Silver, and Brass ; so why may not some produce all these Metals shaped and adorned after this manner ?

Atheist. This is such a Fancy ! I see you have a mind to maintain a Paradox. These Coins are never found in Countreys, which were not under the Dominion of the *Romans*, but commonly near Places, where they had their Stations and Cities.

Philos. Probably in the best Ground : and the *Romans* were a wise People, they knew how to chose for themselves. But how do you know, where

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the *Romans* had their Cities and Stations ?

Atheist. From History and Tradition, and from these very Coins, which agree in their Inscriptions with the Histories of those Times, and explain many difficult Points both in History and Geography.

Philos. You tell me, they are *Roman* Coins, because they are found near *Roman* Stations, and that *Roman* Stations were in those Places, because these Coins are found there. This is proving in a Circle, Sir. And what do you speak of History, and Tradition ? shall I credit these against my own Senses, when I see Coins dug out of the Earth ? Does any History or Tradition tell me, where I might have found this Coin, which I my self took out of the Ground.

Atheist. They are commonly found in Pots, or Urns, which are known to be *Roman*, and other Reliques of *Roman* Antiquities are often found with them.

Philos. Let Pots, or Urns, or whatever else:

else you please be found there ; never think to perswade me, that they are not all the Productions of the Earth. Dig but deep enough, and you may find Houses, I warrant you. Sir *William Dugdale* informs us, that in the Fens, a Smith's-Forge, with Horse-shoes, and Tongs, and all its Furniture, was found many Fathoms under Ground. And do you think the Fairies have not Houses as well as we? Or do you imagine that they build them themselves? Or will you say, the *Romans* built them for them? The Fairies are a lesser Race of Men, such as the Earth in this decayed and decrepitate state is able to produce, and their Houses and little Money are of the same Proportion. I wonder you should not think of this, as the best proof, you can bring in your cause.

Atheist. You are in Jest, I find.

Philos. Never more in Earnest, I do assure you. And I must confess myself amazed to observe, that you, who will not allow this Trifling for Argu-

ment in a thing of little or no Moment, can yet think fit to make use of it in a Matter of the highest Concernment. You will by no means admit that the Earth could produce this Coin, which bears but the Image and imperfect Representation of a Man, tho' at the same time, you maintain, that it produced the Race of Mankind. You will not believe that the Earth could produce this Medal by the same Chance, by which you would persuade us, that the Metal, of which it is made, and all things else are produced. As if there were not ten Thousand more Excellencies in the Metal it self, and every other Production of Nature, than in the Figure, the Letters, the Effigies, and the Reverse of the most curious and accurate Coin in the World. Could all the Art of Mankind ever make so much as one Insect or Plant? Or did ever Chance produce any piece of Art? How then can Chance, or the Imaginary Play and Sport of Atoms do more than any Art, when it
was

was never known to perform any thing which Art can do? Can that Wisdom and Design, that Regularity and Constancy in the Course of Nature, which is beyond the imitation of all Art, proceed from Chance and Fortune, and Ignorance, and want of all Design!

Countr. I understand now, Sir, why you told me that an Atheist is a Monster, without Eyes or Brains.

Philos. He must be blind, that sees not the Power and Wisdom of God, in the Beauties of the Field, the Wonders of the Seas, and the Glories of the Heavenly Bodies. And I know not what Wit that Man has, or of what use it can be to him, that observes not, that all these things must have an Author, who can be no other than God. Nothing is more absurd than for an Atheist to pretend to Philosophy, which enquires into the Causes, and Order, and End of things: he must renounce his Reason and Senses, and must resolve all into blind Chance and Ignorance, and Nonsense.

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Atheist. I confess, there is something in what you say ; I will consider of it , and at our next Meeting , will hear what you can say for the Christian Religion.

Philos. With all my Heart. No Man that duly and impartially considers things, can be either an Atheist, or a Deist.

A BRIEF

A BRIEF
CONFUTATION
OF
DEISM,
IN A
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
A Christian and a Deist.

A BRIEF
CONFESSION
OF
FAITH
IN A
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
A Christian and a Deist

A BRIEF
CONFUTATION
OF
DEISM,
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A Christian and a Deist.

Deist. **I** Have thought further upon the Subject of our late Discourse; and tho', I confess, I was not convinced by any thing you said: yet by the force of my own Reasoning, I am now fully satisfied,

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satisfied, that there must be a God.

Christian. I am glad of your Conviction, by whatever means you attained to it. It is a sufficient Satisfaction to me, that I could give any occasion to the strength of your own Judgment to exert it self. I am far from assuming to my self the Glory of gaining Converts; but the Providence of God often vouchsafes to make use of the weakest Means to awaken Men to consideration; and there needs no more but this, with the aids of the Divine Grace in the ordinary use of Reason, to bring any one off from Atheism or Deism.

Deist. I am as much for Reason as any Man; and so far as that leads me, will I go, but not one step further.

Chr. I hope you are willing to consider what may be offered in behalf of Revealed Religion.

Deist. Natural Religion is the Result of Reason, and becomes a Rational Man; but Revealed Religion is a Renouncing of Reason; and this is what I can never think of.

Chr.

Chr. Natural Religion, if it be well considered, must lead Men to Revelation; and Revealed Religion obliges us to believe God upon his Word delivered to us; which is the most Reasonable thing in the World. It is not contrary to Reason, I suppose, to believe, whatever God reveals.

Deist. By no means; but how shall I know, that he has revealed any thing, or what it is, which he has revealed?

Chr. You will grant it Reasonable to expect, that God should Reveal himself to Mankind.

Deist. He has done it to all in the use of those Faculties, which he has bestowed upon Men. What other way should he reveal himself to Rational Creatures, than by the Light of their own Reason?

Chr. Reason, we see, is a very obscure Light, and the greatest part of the World notwithstanding lies in Error and Wickedness.

Deist.

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Deist. The World, it is true, is too wicked, and too full of Errors: but how does Revelation mend the matter. The World is neither better nor worse, but just as we find it, whether there be only Natural Religion, or Revealed Religion besides.

Chr. Right, but it alters the case very much in respect of God, that he has given warning to a wicked World, and has used all fit Means to reclaim Men from Sin and Error. Can you imagine that a God so holy, so just and good, should take no care of Men for their Information and Amendment? Would a good Father shew so little Concern for his Children? And shall we dare to think that, of the infinitely good and merciful God, which would be thought an intolerable Affront and Slander, if spoken of Humane Parents?

Deist. I never like this method of arguing from the Attributes of God: it is to determine what God should do: and what a Presumption is that?

Chr.

Chr. I confess this is a method which may be abused. But if we must not be allowed to argue from the Divine Attributes, there is an end of all Natural Religion. For how can we be assured according to any Principles of Natural Religion, but from the Divine Attributes, of the Immortality of the Soul, and of the Rewards and Punishments of another Life.

Deist. The Soul in its Nature is an Immaterial Substance, and therefore immortal.

Chr. The Soul indeed is not Subject to Dissolution as the Body is; but how shall we be satisfied that it will not be annihilated, when it goes out of the Body, or that it shall be rewarded or punished, according to the Actions of this Life, in a future State, but because the Divine Wisdom and Justice and Goodness require, that Death should not put an end to our Being, but that the Good should be rewarded, and the Evil punished, when they depart out of this World?

World? Unless you will allow of Arguments taken from the Divine Attributes; Natural Religion is a Word without a Meaning; a Law without any force or obligation.

Deist. But, if God, as you would argue, must have revealed himself to Mankind, in order to their Instruction and Reformation; how comes it to pass, that the greatest part of the World still remains in Ignorance, of this Revelation?

Chr. It has been shewed, That all Nations have had the Revealed Will of God preached among them, first: by the Hebrews, and since by Christians. Which makes the case extremely different from what it would have been, if God had never concerned himself to reveal his Will at all to Men. If he has afforded Men of all Nations frequent Means and Opportunities of becoming acquainted with his Revealed Will, this is all, which can be expected from the Divine Goodness: and the fault must lie solely upon Men, if they will
not

not make a due use of the Means offered them.

Deist. How many poor *Indians* are there, that never heard of Christ, or of Revealed Religion?

Chr. The more is the shame of Christians. Yet perhaps these *Indians* owe most of their Notions of Vertue and Vice, and of Rewards and Punishments in a future state to Revealed Religion: since there is no part of the World, where Revealed Religion has not been formerly taught, and tho' it be long since it had been preached in the *East* and *West-Indies*, yet many Ceremonies and Doctrines of it were still retained, as it appears upon Observation, among the most barbarous Nations. And I am so firmly persuaded of the Goodness of God, as fully to believe, that whatever Heathen lives according to the Knowledge, which he already has, God will rather send a Messenger on purpose to him, as he did to *Cornelius*, to instruct him in the Gospel of Christ, than suffer him to perish thro' ignorance.

E

Deist.

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Deist. Whether Revealed Religion has been promulged, as you pretend, can be known only by a tedious search into Books, which is a Business of Time and Leisure, and cannot be determined by Personal Discourse.

Chr. This search has been already made, and the Case appears to be, as I have told you.

Deist. Suppose it, as you say. A mere Promulgation can prove nothing to be the Word of God: the Divine Authority must be made evident, and the suitableness of it to the end and purposes of a Revelation.

Chr. Have you any thing to object against the Doctrine of Scripture? I mean, have you any Objection to alledge, which proves, that any Part of Scripture implies a Contradiction to any of the Divine Attributes, and therefore cannot be supposed to be the Subject of Divine Revelations?

Deist. The Doctrine of the Trinity, is a plain Contradiction to Reason, at least as some Men explain it.

Chr.

Chr. But are you certain that no such Explication can be given to that, or any other Doctrine of Scripture, as to reconcile it to Reason so far, as to prove, that there is no Contradiction, nor Absurdity in it?

Deist. I cannot undertake to say, what may be done; nor, to confess a Truth to you, what has been done towards it. I am little read in Divinity, as you call it; and least of all in Books of Controversie, further then to observe, how the Gladiators in Dispute murder the Cause between them, whilst they so fiercely cut and wound one another. The main Controversie, in the Case before us, lies in the proof of the Authority of a Revelation: for if a Divine Revelation be once proved, it ought indeed to be received and read, with all Reverence and Submission of Judgment.

Chr. You seemed to acknowledge, that there must be some Divine Revelation: and can you think of any that is more likely to be Divine, than that of the Bible? What think you

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of the Heathen Oracles, or the Alcoran of *Mahomet* ?

Deist. I think them to be Impostors, and if there be any such thing, as Divine Revelation in the World, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament seem to stand fairest for it. But how shall I be assured of the Divine Authority of the Scriptures ?

Chr. By Matter of Fact, by the Prophecies and Miracles, which confirmed them. If God reveal himself to Men, it must be in some such manner, as to distinguish what is delivered to them in his name, from what is Humane or Diabolical, and this may be either by Prophecies, or Miracles, or both. For if God empower Men to do what no Man can do, or to know what no Man can know, but by the Divine Power and Inspiration, then we have reason to receive what they deliver in the Name of God for Divine Doctrine. And if any Revelation be so delivered to us, as that it cannot be proved false, but we are obliged in reverence to the Divine Attributes

tributes to receive it as from God ; this must be from him , unless God can be supposed wanting to himself, and his own Attributes, as well as to Men.

Deist. But how does this appear to be the Case in Question?

Chr. It would be tedious now to insist upon the proof of all Particulars. I will instance but in one Article of our Faith, and it shall be that of Christ's Resurrection from the Dead , which as *St. Paul* argues, is a Direct Evidence of the Truth of the whole Christian Religion. If I can make out the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection beyond all Contradiction, I suppose you will reject no part of his Religion.

Deist. I see no Reason to dispute any thing else , if the Resurrection of Christ be clearly proved ; for if he did indeed rise from the dead, whatever he taught must be acknowledged True.

Chr. If there can be any Scruple remaining in the most incredulous concerning the Resurrection of Christ, it must be upon one of these three Accounts. Either they suspect that he was not really dead, or that he did not really rise from the dead, or, that tho' he was really dead, and did really rise again, yet this might be brought to pass by some other Power than that of God.

Deist. That Christ suffered Death under *Pontius Pilate* is affirmed, I remember, by *Tacitus*, and both the Jews and Heathens have all along asserted it: so that there can be no Objections among Men in their Wits upon that Head. I will give you no Trouble about it, the main difficulty lies in the second Point, tho' I know the last Particular was much disputed by the Heathens.

Chr. In order to prove the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, I shall only desire it may be considered, that the Apostles were at least Men of common Sense, and of the same Nature with other Men.

Deist.

Deist. Their Books, and the Success, which their Doctrine has met with, in the World, prove them to have been Men of common Sense and Reason, or else we must say, that all Christians are Fools. And whoever doubted but that all Men are of the same Nature?

Chr. Then no Man can be supposed to run himself upon Persecutions and Torments, without any Prospect of Honour, or any other Advantage, but merely for the delight he takes in Falshood, and the pleasure of asserting what he knows to be False. Are Lies wont to be so dear to Men? Or was ever any Man so enamoured of a Lye, as that he was resolved to die for it, and would not by any Menaces or Tortures be brought to renounce it? Men may suffer much for what they think True, tho' it be False; but sure no one Man ever suffered to all Extremities for what he knew to be false, when he could avoid suffering only by desisting from saying it: much less could many at once dote so

strangely upon a feigned Story, which they knew to be such : there never were known to be such wonderful Charms in a Lye.

Deist. But might not the Disciples of Christ be mistaken, and think him be risen again, when he was not ?

Chr. The Disciples of Christ were so timorous, that they forsook him as soon as he was apprehended, and they retained no hopes of his Resurrection, when he was dead. For never any Matter of Fact met with more slowness and difficulty of Belief, and with more scruple and doubtfulness than Christ's Resurrection did from his own Disciples. The Women came to the Sepulchre with full expectation to find his dead Body there, and with a design to embalm it ; and nothing could be a greater surprize and disappointment to them, than to miss of it. As soon as it was told St. Peter and St. John, that the Body was taken away, they ran with haste and amazement to inform themselves

selves of so strange an Accident ; being come to the Sepulchre they saw the Linen Clothes wrapt up and laid in order, neither taken away with the Body, nor thrown aside in haste or fear, but disposed of, in such a manner, as if all the leisure and all the deliberation imaginable had been used about it. This nevertheless gave no Satisfaction to the rest of the Disciples ; tho' they saw him, and heard him discourse to them, they were distrustful all the while, and did not believe for joy, but wondred when they had looked upon his Hands and his Feet : and he commanded them to touch and handle his Wounds, and did at last eat in their sight, before they were confirmed in their Belief. *St. Thomas* was so incredulous, that nothing which all the rest could say to him, prevailed with him, but he would not be perswaded of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, till he had thrust his Finger into the Holes, which the Nails had made in his Hands and Feet, when he was fastned to the
Cross,

Cross, and which the Spear had made in his side, just before he was taken down from it.

Deist. If the Disciples themselves were so hard of Belief, what wonder is it, if others be so, at this distance of Time?

Chr. They were suffered to be thus doubtful, that there might be no longer any room for doubts in others, when they had once been convinced; since they proceeded with all the Caution, and used all the Means for their Satisfaction, that the greatest Infidel could have done, if he had been in their place: for what would any Infidel demand or desire to have been done more than was done by them? They heard him speak, and knew his Voice, they saw, they touched him, they saw his Wounds, and put their Hands into them. What could they do more? They did eat and drink with him, they conversed with him for forty days after his Resurrection,

Deist.

Deist. But they were but few in number.

Chr. That is not to the present Point: the Question before us is, whether these Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, be they few or many, could be deceived in what they witnessed. But at a general Appearance of the Disciples in *Galilee*, he was seen by above five hundred at once, who met there purposely by his Appointment, and therefore did not see him on the sudden, and by surprize, but went prepared to take all the notice, and make all the observation, that it was possible for them to do. And *Galilee* was the place, where he was best known, where he had preached most, and lived longest; and these were the Persons, who had there been most intimate and familiar with him, before his Death.

Deist. But methinks his Resurrection should have been as publick as his Death was.

Chr.

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Chr. It was as publick, tho' not in it self, yet in the evident Effects and Consequences of it. Miracles were wrought in the midst of *Jerusalem* it self, and all over *Judea*, and in *Samaria*, and in all the known parts of the Earth, by those who professed themselves to be Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection, and declared, that they wrought all their wonderful Works by virtue of it.

Deist. It must indeed be acknowledged, that the Apostles gave Testimony to this Doctrine in the most publick manner.

Chr. Yes, never any Doctrine in the World was better proved, nor asserted with more assurance and constancy, by Witnesses, who could hope to get nothing, but were sure to lose all, even Life it self, by their Testimony. It was not required of them to retract what they had said; if they would but have been silent, they had secured themselves from danger; but they would not desist; they preached it publickly, notwithstanding any Threatnings,

nings, they joyfully died for Preaching this Doctrine, and nothing but Death could put a stop to their preaching it, and those, that survived, were still the more couragious and resolute to preach the same Doctrine for which others had suffered. Here was no Awe of Authority, no Constraint or Fear of any Power or Force, no Temptation of any Allurements or Promises, which this World can make; but against all these, the Belief of this Article was received and established by Means as strange as the Doctrine it self.

Deist. Zeal, you know, may be without knowledge, and then it proves nothing.

Chr. True; but what I say, is, that the Apostles were zealous, and miraculously successful in publishing their own knowledge. They were absolutely certain of what they delivered, and they delivered it in miraculous Tongues and Gifts of the Holy Ghost to the face of their very Enemies, that had a little before crucified him, whom they

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they affirmed to be risen from the dead ; and testified it in all Places , and before all People. But besides the direct Proof in the proper Evidence of the Fact, never any Matter of Fact has had more constant and universal Memorials of it, than the Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour has had.

Deist. What Memorials ?

Chr. I mean the Memorial of it every year in the Observation of *Easter*, and the Weekly Memorial of it every *Sunday*.

Deist. But the Observation of *Easter* is a disputed Point.

Chr. The Lawfulness of its Observation has been disputed, but not the Fact ; and that, which I contend for, is that in Fact, *Easter* has been observed in Remembrance of Christ's Resurrection, from the very time of his Rising from the dead. *Aerius* was the only Person in ancient times, that opposed the Observation of *Easter*, and his singularity herein serves to prove to us the Antiquity, and the universal Reception in the Church , of the Custom

stom of Celebrating this Festival. And since his Innovation; the Lawfulness of observing *Easter* has never been called in question till of late, by a few Dissenters from the Practice of the Church of Christ in all Ages and Nations. And I wish they would consider, how far this superstitious Singularity tends to extirpate, as much as in them lies, the memory of the Great Article of our Faith, upon which our whole Religion depends.

Deist. But were there no Disputes about *Easter* in the Primitive Times.

Chr. There were Disputes about the Time of its Observation, but never any concerning the Lawfulness of it, but by *Aerius*, as I told you, who was as singular in this, as in other things. All Christian Churches were agreed both in the Lawfulness and in the Antiquity of its Observation; but they disagreed in the Time of keeping *Easter*, which is a Confirmation, that it ever had been, and ever ought to be observed, because that was agreed
on

on all sides, or else this Dispute could never have been.

Deist. How came there to happen any Difference about the Time of *Easter* ?

Chr. It appears from the *Acts of the Apostles* and other Books of the New Testament, that great condescensions were made by the Apostles to the Infirmities of the Jewish Converts; whereupon the Christians of the lesser *Asia*, and the parts adjacent, kept their *Easter* on the Fourteenth day of the Moon, which is the day of the Jewish Passover. But in all other Places, as well as in the West, they did not keep it on the Fourteenth day, but deferred it till the Sunday following, and blamed the Asiatics as Judaizers. But the Proceedings upon this Controversie, as we find in the Epistles of *Polycrates* and *Ireneus* to *Victor*, and by the Councils, which were held upon this occasion, are an unanswerable Argument, that some Day in Remembrance of Christ's Resurrection had always been yearly observed

ved in all Churches from the Times of the Apostles.

Deist. But is there not great difficulty in calculating the exact day?

Chr. To prevent any Inconvenience from that, Cycles, or Tables for finding *Easter* for a certain Number of Years, were composed: a Cycle was made by *Hippolitus* (Disciple to *Irenæus*,) less than Two hundred years after the Resurrection of Christ, calculated for Sixteen years: And others seem to have been made before, and one of them probably by *Clemens Alexandrinus*. And in succeeding Ages divers Cycles were made by some of the most eminent Men of their Times.

Deist. It seems it was a difficult matter to be exactly adjusted.

Chr. But you see, that Christians thought no pains too much to remove any Difficulty in a Point of this Nature.

Deist. But what was the End of all this Business?

F

Chr.

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Chr. Irenæus by his Interposition put an End to the Contentions, which arose about this Controversie in his Time. And it was determined in the Council of *Nice*, that *Easter* should be kept not on the Fourteenth day of the Moon, but on the *Sunday* following; and that *Easter-day* should be always the first *Sunday* after the first Full Moon, which happened after the 21st of *March*; and that if the Full Moon happened on a *Sunday*, *Easter-day* should be the *Sunday* after. To this Decree all Churches submitted; and if private Men stood out, they were known by the distinction of *Quarto decimani*.

Deist. But was the Skill in Astronomy of the Men in those Times sufficient to fix the Day precisely by these Rules?

Chr. To obviate this Difficulty, the Bishops of *Alexandria* were appointed by the Council of *Nice*, to send out their Paschal Epistles every year, to give an account to other Churches, in what Month, and what Day of the Month *Easter* fell.

Deist.

Deist. But how could the Bishops of one Church give timely Notice to all the other Churches in Christendom, especially in time of War, or in case of other Accidents?

Chr. Therefore it was ordered, that these Paschal Epistles should be sent, not in the beginning of each year, as the custom had been, but in *August*, to give Notice of *Easter-day* for the year following. Afterwards the Bishop of *Alexandria* drew up Paschal Tables for Ninety five years; and at last *Dionysius Exiguus* settled that Method, which we now use, by perfecting the Cycle of Nineteen years, and affixing the Golden Number to shew the Day of the New Moon in each Month, upon which the finding *Easter* depends.

Deist. Here was great care taken indeed, and this was a Matter, it seems, upon which great weight was laid.

Chr. Yes, it was always esteemed as the constant Annual Memorial of

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the great Article and Foundation of our Faith. *Polycrates* in his Epistle to *Victor* testified, that *St. Philip* and *St. John* observed *Easter*; and *St. Irenæus*, a Disciple of *St. Polycarp*, in his Epistle to the same Bishop, says, that *Polycarp* observed *Easter* with *St. John* and the other Apostles, with whom he conversed. And the Paschal Epistles were in use before this Controversie with *Victor* Bishop of *Rome* arose. No wonder therefore that the Christians in all succeeding Times were very circumspect and exact in a thing, wherein they had Apostolical Example for their Rule.

Deist. But is there not still a great difference among Christians in the time of observing *Easter*?

Chr. This is occasioned by the New and Old Style: for tho' both follow the Rule ordained by the Council of *Nice*, yet the difference between the Two Styles makes it impossible, that those who keep to the Old Style should always have their *Easter* fall on

on the same day with that of those, who follow the New Style.

Deist. How can they follow the same Rule, and yet not observe the same day?

Chr. The Rule is, that *Easter* is to be kept the first *Sunday* after the first Full Moon, after the 21st of *March*, which was the Vernal Equinox at the time of the Council of *Nice*. But the New Style counting 11 Days before the Old, the 21st of *March* by the New Style must be 11 Days before the 21st of *March* by the Old Style. So that when the first Full Moon falls on any of those 11 Days, which make the difference between the New and Old Styles, *Easter* must fall sooner according to the New Style than according to the Old. But otherwise it is on the same Day according to both Styles.

Deist. This is an intricate Business: and how few Christians are able to understand Cycles, Paschal Epistles, and New and Old Style.

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Chr. My Argument doth not require, that these Matters should be understood by the generality of Christians, but it evidently proves from these Particulars, that the Christians of all Ages have with the greatest care and solemnity observed a day every year in Memory of Christ's Resurrection, that the Apostles, who were Witnesses to his Resurrection, first instituted this Observation as a standing Testimony to all Ages in the yearly Festivals and Solemnities of their Worship. *Easter*, for many Ages, was the most solemn Time for Baptism, as it is now for Receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and as often as either of these Sacraments is received, they bring to our Remembrance the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. You see upon the whole Matter, that no greater Care has ever been taken about any thing, than concerning *Easter*; that Christians always have looked upon it, as of necessary Observation; that
when

when they disputed the Time, they were all agreed in the thing it self; that they made Decrees and Rules, and thought no labour and care too great in a thing of this moment.

Deist. But how is *Sunday* too a Memorial of Christ's Resurrection?

Chr. Because he rose from the dead on the first day of the Week, in remembrance whereof, Christians from the first Propagation of the Gospel have always had their publick and solemn Worship on this day of the Week, whereas the Day for the Jewish Worship, you know, was the Seventh. One day in seven was from the Creation of the World of perpetual Obligation, but the last day of the seven was to be observed in remembrance of the Creation, and the first of the seven days in remembrance of Christ's Resurrection.

Deist. Do you say, this was always observ'd by Christians.

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Chr. Yes, from the very beginning. We read that St. *John* was *in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, (Rev. i. 10.) or on the Day observed in remembrance of our Lord; and that this Day, which was set apart for the Christian Worship, was *Sunday*, we know from the express words of *Justin Martyr*. And now lay all things together, and then tell me, Whether any Matter of Fact in the World has been better testified than the Resurrection of Christ, and consequently than the Christian Religion, the Truth whereof depends upon the Truth of his Resurrection? It was infallibly proved by Witnesses at first, as has been delivered down to us by a continued successive Testimony to this day. This Testimony has been confirmed by Martyrs, and asserted in Histories of all Ages and Nations, and preserved by yearly and weekly Festivals, which have been, and still are observed in all Parts of the World.

Deist.

Deist. I must acknowledge that the best way, which the Heathens could contrive to preserve the Remembrance of any great Action, was to appoint Festivals and solemn Assemblies in memory of it.

Chr. But you cannot, but at the same time acknowledge, that never any Memorial of any Action or Event among the Heathens has been so uninterrupted, so lasting, and so universal as these of our Christian Faith. These are standing Monuments, and a constant, perpetual Testimony, which survives the first Witnesses, and by a Succession of Living Witnesses descends to Posterity, in all future Ages.

Deist. It was not, I confess, altogether denied by the Heathens in the first Ages of the Gospel, that Christ did rise from the dead, but then they assigned his Resurrection to some other Power than that of God.

Chr.

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Chr. They did so; but how unreasonably they did it, you may judge. For certainly, when the Soul is departed out of the Body, it must be at God's disposal, and is to be adjudged by him to a state of Rewards or Punishments, and therefore none but God himself can remand it back, to become again united to the Body, from which it was separated.

Deist. Our Reason informs us but little of the State of Souls after Death, and we know not what Power may be allowed to Angels or wicked Spirits in reference to Souls departed.

Chr. This at least we know, that Christ declared himself to be the Son of God, that he introduced a New Religion into the World, and that as an assurance to all Men of the Truth of what he had taught, he declared often, and publickly, that he would rise again, after he had been openly put to Death, and that he

he would rise from the Grave precisely on the third day. We know likewise, that he declared, he would empower his Disciples, by the Mission of the Holy Ghost, to do the greatest Miracles. Now all this coming to pass exactly, as Christ had foretold, is an infallible Argument of the Truth of whatever he had delivered. For can we imagine it consistent with the Truth, and Goodness, and Justice of God to permit these things to be fulfilled in the very manner and circumstances, in which Christ had before said, they should come to pass, unless that, which was to be confirmed by the accomplishment of these Predictions, had been true? Do not the Resurrection of Christ, and the Testimony and Miracles of the Apostles, in the Nature and in all the Particulars of them, concur to enforce our Belief, and to require it of us in the Name of God, and by his Authority? But to think that God will
suffer

suffer us to be deceived, in what we are obliged in honour and obedience to him to believe upon his Authority, is to think he can oblige us to believe a Lie. *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater: because this is the Witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believes in the Son of God hath this Witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a Lyar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son, (1 John v. 9, 10.) To believe the Gospel of Christ, is to bear Witness to the Divine Veracity; but to disbelieve it, is to give God the Lie; for as sure as he is true, the Gospel is true also.*

Deist. After all you have said, there are many things in the Scriptures, which are hard to be reconciled.

Chr. Is it not so in all Books in the World? Do you believe the Histories that relate the Acts of *Alexander*

Alexander the Great, and of *Julius Cæsar*?

Deist. Why not?

Chr. Because they have been charged with Absurdities and Contradictions by fanciful Men. *Isaac Vossius* in his Writings against *F. Simon*, mentions, that he had conversed with a Man, who was prudent in other things, and of great esteem and authority with his Friends; but who told him, that after the study and consideration of many years, he had composed a large Dissertation upon *Cæsar's* Commentaries of the *Gallick* War, in which he had by invincible Arguments proved all, that is contained in those Books, to be false; and he had besides fully shown, that *Cæsar* never passed the *Alps*, nor had so much as seen *Gaul*. And being asked, What Authorities he had to produce in the Case; he answered, That he proved all by Rational Arguments, and that good Sense is more than a thousand Witnesses.

nesses. Our Christian Faith is founded upon Matter of Fact, but if the little Surmises and Fancies of Men pretending to Reason, and fond of Singularity, must be admitted before the clearest Evidence; there is an end of all certainty in any Matter of Fact. At this rate a Man might muster up all the old Arguments against Antipodes, and bring abundance of Demonstrations to prove, that, let Travellers say what they will, there can be no such place as *America*.

Deist. But how many Controversies are there in Religion?

Chr. And are there not Controversies and Difficulties in every Art and Science? Consider, whether this way of arguing leads you; and you will soon find, it can end in nothing, but down-right Scepticism. For, if when any thing has been clearly proved by direct and proper Arguments, you suspect the Truth of it, because some Objections may be

be started, which do not take off the Evidence, whereby it is proved; you must upon the same Principles believe neither your Eyes, nor your Ears, nor any of our Senses, because there is no sense, by which you may not be deceived, or which is free from abundance of Difficulties in the Explication of it upon any Hypothesis of Philosophy.

Deist. But after all, you cannot deny, that there are infinite Errors in the World, and there is nothing so absurd, but it has been obtruded upon the Belief of Men, under the pretence of some Religion or other.

Chr. Observe, I beseech you, the Force of your Argument, There are many false and absurd Religions in the World, from whence you conclude, there can be no true. Which is just as much to the purpose, as if you should say, there are abundance of Knaves and Fools in the World, therefore there is neither a Wise
nor

nor an Honest Man in it. But I hope, you and I may be excused from being either Knaves or Fools for company: and I cannot imagine, why we should think the worse, and not the better of the True Religion, because there are so many false Religions.

Deist. Yes, if Truth could be found and distinguished amidst so many Errors, undoubtedly the great number of Errors in the World would make it but so much the more valuable. But how shall I discover it? or know it, if I chance to light upon it?

Chr. It is not a Matter of Chance, but of Evidence and Certainty. May not I be certain that I see, tho' so many have been mistaken in the Object of Sight? Or may not an ordinary Traveller be certain, that he is in the right way, because there are so many wrong Paths? what would you think of a Man, that should always imagine himself sick
for

for no other Reason, but because there are so many Diseases in the World?

Deist. But Men of Parts and Learning, you know, are never wont to be so tame and credulous, as others.

Chr. I am not for perswading any Man to be either tame or credulous: but I must needs say, that Men that talk boldly, or that read, or perhaps write much, have not always the soundest Judgment, or the best Morals. And to speak freely, I never could discern much Learning in an *Atheist* or *Deist*. Some seem to deal with the Scriptures, as the poor *Indian* did with the Breviary, who opening it, turned over the Leaves very busily, and at last threw it to the Ground, saying, It told him no such things, as had been related to him out of it. Do not some Men use the Bible with as little Discretion or Reverence? Is there any thing remarkable

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able in their Discourse or Writings, but an idle Rant, or vain Boast, and the most ignorant pretence to Reason, that ever appeared in any Cause? When you expect an Argument, they make a Jest perhaps, at least they aim at one, and then laugh at it. But for any Man to think to bear down manifest Truth by ignorant Noise and Confidence, is as if he would put out the Sun by winking, or make a Demonstration false by a Mimick Face and Gesture. Fools, they say, are known by looking wise, and a little Philosophick Cant, and a Rabble Wit, sets up an Atheist or Deist.

Deist. These are hard Words.

Chr. Not that I would fasten this Character upon all, who in this loose Age, may be unsettled in the Principles of Religion: But let no Man so far mistake himself, as to think, there can be either Wit or Learning in Profaneness and Irreligion. And I think so well of you,
Sir,

Sir, and of many others, as to entertain great Hopes, that upon a serious consideration of the Grounds of our Religion, you will own yourself fully convinced of the certainty of it.

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