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PITCAIRNEANA: AN ATHEIST TEXT BY ARCHIBALD PITCAIRNE*

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ABSTRACT. *This article presents an overtly atheistic text from the early eighteenth century that has hitherto been completely unknown. It survives in manuscript in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, to which it was presented in 1841, and is claimed to be the work of the Scottish medical theorist, satirist, and poet, Archibald Pitcairne (1652–1713). Here, its links with Pitcairne and his milieu are assessed and its content evaluated, in conjunction with the provision of an annotated edition of the text itself.*

Archibald Pitcairne (1652–1713) was one of the most remarkable intellectuals of his age. With his close colleague, David Gregory, he was an unusually early enthusiast for the work of Isaac Newton, whom Pitcairne himself met in 1692, when Newton entrusted him with one of his most seminal manuscripts.[1] Thereafter, Pitcairne was a pioneer in the application of mathematics to medicine, something for which he became famous while Professor of Medicine at Leiden in 1692–3.[2] After his return to Scotland, he was embroiled in bitter

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[1] See Simon Schaffer, 'The Glorious Revolution and medicine in Britain and the Netherlands', *Notes & Records of the Royal Society*, 43 (1989), pp. 167–90; John Friesen, 'Archibald Pitcairne, David Gregory and the Scottish origins of English Tory Newtonianism', *History of Science*, 41 (2003), pp. 163–91. For the text that Newton vouchsafed to Pitcairne, 'De natura acidorum', see H. W. Turnbull et al., eds., *The correspondence of Isaac Newton* (7 vols., Cambridge, 1959–77), III, pp. 205–14.

[2] See R. E. Schofield, *Mechanism and materialism: British natural philosophy in an age of reason* (Princeton, NJ, 1970), ch. 3; Arnold Thackray, *Atoms and powers: an essay on Newtonian matter-theory and the development of chemistry* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), ch. 3; Lester S. King, *The philosophy*

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disputes in Edinburgh in the later 1690s over medical practice and its rationale, which have left a profuse published record.[3] Subsequently, his medical influence was spread by his followers, many of whom left Scotland for England, where they became leading practitioners in the early eighteenth century.[4] Pitcairne was equally notable for being a fervent Jacobite and a scourge of the Presbyterian establishment in Scotland, whom he attacked mercilessly in his Hudibrastic satire, *Babell*, and his play, usually known as *The assembly*.[5] Lastly, he was one of the most notable Latin poets of his day and his verse has received fresh attention in recent years, as has the slightly idiosyncratic way in which it was published, often in the form of single-sheet broadsides.[6]

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of medicine: the early eighteenth century (Cambridge, MA, 1978), pp. 109ff; T. M. Brown, 'Medicine in the shadow of the *Principia*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48 (1987), pp. 629–48; Anita Guerrini, 'Archibald Pitcairne and Newtonian medicine', *Medical History*, 31 (1987), pp. 70–83; see also her account of Pitcairne in the *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (*ODNB*). On Pitcairne's Leiden period, see G. A. Lindeboom, 'Pitcairne's Leyden interlude described from the documents', *Annals of Science*, 19 (1963), pp. 273–84, and Rienk Vermij, 'The formation of the Newtonian philosophy: the case of the Amsterdam mathematical amateurs', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 36 (2003), pp. 183–200, on pp. 185–7.

[3] Andrew Cunningham, 'Sydenham versus Newton: the Edinburgh fever dispute of the 1690s between Andrew Brown and Archibald Pitcairne', in W. F. Bynum and V. Nutton, eds., *Theories of fever from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (*Medical History*, supplement no. 1, London, 1981), pp. 71–98; Stephen M. Stigler, 'Apollo mathematicus: a story of resistance to quantification in the seventeenth century', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 136 (1992), pp. 93–126; Anita Guerrini, '"A club of little villains": rhetoric, professional identity and medical pamphlet wars', in Marie Mulvey Roberts and Roy Porter, eds., *Literature and medicine during the eighteenth century* (London, 1993), pp. 226–44.

[4] Anita Guerrini, 'James Keill, George Cheyne and Newtonian physiology, 1690–1740', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 18 (1985), pp. 247–66; eadem, 'The Tory Newtonians: Gregory, Pitcairne and their circle', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 288–311; eadem, 'Newtonianism, medicine and religion', in O. P. Grell and Andrew Cunningham, eds., *Religio medici: medicine and religion in seventeenth-century England* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 293–312; eadem, *Obesity and depression in the Enlightenment: the life and times of George Cheyne* (Norman, OK, 2000); D. E. Shuttleton, '"A modest examination": John Arbuthnot and the Scottish Newtonians', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18 (1995), pp. 47–62.

[5] Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite risings in Britain, 1689–1746* (London, 1980), pp. 223–5; idem, 'Physicians and politics in the Jacobite era', in Jeremy Black and Evelyn Cruikshanks , eds., *The Jacobite challenge* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 74–91, on pp. 77–9; Colin Kidd, 'Enlightenment and ecclesiastical satire before Burns', in Ralph McLean and Ronnie Young, eds., *Literature and Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Scotland* (Lewisburg, PA, forthcoming). For *Babell*, see G. R. Kinloch, ed., *Babell; a satirical poem, on the proceedings of the General Assembly in the year MDCXCII* (Edinburgh, 1830). For the play, see Terence Tobin's edition of it as *The assembly* (Lafayette, IN, 1972) and more recently John MacQueen's Scottish Text Society edition of an early MS of it under the title, *The phanaticks* (Woodbridge, 2012), though it might be felt that this is a rather arbitrary choice of title and that *The committee* (or *The comitie*) would have been equally appropriate: see ibid., pp. xiii, lvii. On Pitcairne's further dramatic sketch, published in Kinloch, ed., *Babell*, pp. 70–8, see John MacQueen, '*Tollerators and con-tollerators* (1703) and Archibald Pitcairne: text, background and authorship', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 40 (2014), pp. 76–104.

[6] See David Money's account of Pitcairne in his *The English Horace: Anthony Alsop and the tradition of British Latin verse* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 142ff; more recently, see John and Winifred MacQueen's invaluable edition of his *Latin poems* (Assen and Tempe, AZ, 2009). For the

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All these aspects of Pitcairne have received extensive scrutiny of late, as the profuse citations in the notes to the previous paragraph witness. At the same time, attention has also been paid to his religious views, though these remain elusive. In 2002, David Shuttleton gave an overview of Pitcairne's role in relation to the 'articulate irreligion' to be found in Edinburgh in the years around 1700, exemplified particularly by the trial and execution of Thomas Aikenhead in 1696–7.[7] Shuttleton surveyed the evidence concerning contemporary reactions to Pitcairne, including the evaluation of the Presbyterian divine, Robert Wodrow, that 'he was a great mocker at religion, and ridiculer of it', and the confrontation between Pitcairne and another minister, James Webster, in 1712, which confirmed his reputation as a sceptic.[8] The latter exchange occurred at a book auction that Pitcairne attended, and it is interesting that his library (which still survives in St Petersburg, having been purchased for what was to become the Russian Academy of Sciences) is noticeably thin on religious titles other than rather heterodox ones, in contrast to its great richness in other areas, especially the classics, science, and medicine.[9] It is also revealing

publication of Pitcairne's verse, see D. F. Foxon, *English verse, 1701–1750: a catalogue of separately printed poems with notes on contemporary collected editions* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1975), I, p. 577 and entries P294–409. For one of Pitcairne's disciples who was involved in this, Thomas Ruddiman, see Douglas Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman: a study in Scottish scholarship of the early eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1965), especially ch. 2, and idem, 'Scholarship and politeness in the early eighteenth century', in Andrew Hook, ed., *The history of Scottish literature*, II: *1660–1800* (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 51–63, on pp. 55–7 (Pitcairne's *Assembly* is briefly discussed on pp. 194–5 of the same volume). See also Colin Kidd, 'The ideological significance of Scottish Jacobite Latinity', in Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory, eds., *Culture, politics and society in Britain, 1600–1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 110–30.

[7] David E. Shuttleton, 'Bantering with scripture: Dr Archibald Pitcairne and articulate irreligion in late seventeenth-century Edinburgh', in Claire Jowitt and Diane Watt, eds., *The arts of seventeenth-century science* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 58–73. On the Aikenhead case, see Michael Hunter, '"Aikenhead the Atheist": the context and consequences of articulate irreligion in the late seventeenth century', in idem, *Science and the shape of orthodoxy: intellectual change in late seventeenth-century Britain* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 308–32 (revised version of essay originally published in Michael Hunter and David Wootton, eds., *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 221–54); Michael F. Graham, *The blasphemies of Thomas Aikenhead: boundaries of belief on the eve of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2008). Both studies deal briefly with Pitcairne by way of background. For engagement with free-thinking ideas among savants of the following generation, see George Turnbull, *Education for life: correspondence and writings on religion and practical philosophy*, ed. M. A. Stewart and Paul Wood (Indianapolis, IN, 2014), pp. 3ff; James Erskine, Lord Grange, *Extracts from the diary of a senator of the College of Justice* (Edinburgh, 1843), pp. 79ff.

[8] Robert Wodrow, *Analecta* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1842–3), II, p. 255; cf. I, pp. 322–3, III, p. 307; Shuttleton, 'Bantering with scripture', pp. 63, 68–9 and passim. For a further commentary on the 1712 episode, see Grange, *Extracts*, pp. 13–14 and 101ff.

[9] For the printed catalogue, see Edinburgh University Library (EUL) MS La.III.629. For a transcript of the manuscript catalogue in St Petersburg, see National Library of Scotland MS Acc 8042. See also John H. Appleby and Andrew Cunningham, 'Robert Erskine and Archibald Pitcairne – two Scottish physicians' outstanding libraries', *Bibliotheck*, 11 (1982), pp. 3–16, and John H. Appleby, 'Archibald Pitcairne re-encountered – a note on his manuscript poems and printed library catalogue', ibid., 12 (1986), pp. 137–9.

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that Pitcairne more than once expressed interest in Newton's religious views in his letters to his friends and contacts, evidently in connection with 'the Relligio mathematici, or Euclidis &c' that he professed 'a vast propensitie to writ' – though aware that this could not be published during his lifetime and that it would in any case be much misunderstood.[10] More recently, John and Winifred MacQueen have drawn attention to a Latin poem by Pitcairne with a strongly Epicurean flavour which was widely circulated in manuscript and print, an English rendering of it being published by the eminent poet, Matthew Prior; the MacQueens consider that this 'more than anything else… was the cause of his reputation'.[11]

Then, there is Pitcairne's *Epistola Archimedis ad regem Gelonem, Albæ Græcæ reperta anno æræ Christianæ 1688* (*Epistle from Archimedes to King Gelo, found at Alba Graeca* AD *1688*), a strange text in Latin purporting to be a letter from Archimedes to the king of Syracuse, giving his views on religious matters, which has never been translated into English.[12] This is undoubtedly a consciously heterodox work, as seen in its adulation of geometrical reasoning even in religious matters, its fascination with the role of lawmakers like Numa Pompilius, its fierce rejection of priestcraft and superstition, and its mocking attitude towards doctrines like that of the Trinity.[13] Indeed, though (like much of Pitcairne's Latin verse) it is deliberately obscure, it could be seen to present an outright

[10] See W. T. Johnston, *The best of our owne: letters of Archibald Pitcairne, 1652–1713* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 18, 19, 22, 43, though note that the 'Relligio mathematici' is specifically described as an anti-Catholic work. See also below, n. 27. For the claim that mathematics led to infidelity in Pitcairne's play, see MacQueen, *Phanaticks*, pp. 59 and 189ff.

[11] MacQueen, *Latin poems*, pp. 134–7 and 354–7. For Prior's version, see also H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears, eds., *The literary works of Matthew Prior* (2 vols., Oxford, 1959), I, pp. 396–7, and II, pp. 923–4. See also MacQueen, *Latin poems*, pp. 30, 254–7, and 436, for a reference to Arian/Socinian views.

[12] *Epistola Archimedis ad regem Gelonem* (n.p., n.d.). The British Library (BL) has two versions, both in 8°, one of 48 pp. followed by an unpaginated errata leaf (BL 531.b.1(1)), the other of 15 pp. (BL 531.b.1(2)). Both are from the library of Sir Hans Sloane and Pitcairne is identified as author in a MS note on the title page of both; the latter also has the inscription 'ex dono Auctore' (a presentation copy of the 48 pp. version to Dr Richard Mead is now BL G16831). The 15 pp. version lacks various passages that appear in the 48 pp. one and it ends differently; it also contains various misprints which are emended in MS in the BL copy and are corrected in the 48 pp. version. From a MS at EUL which may well be a draft preface to a further planned edition (MS Dc.4.101), it appears that at least one of these was published in Amsterdam in 1706 while the other may date from 1710: see S. M. Simpson, 'An anonymous and undated Edinburgh tract', *The Book Collector*, 15 (1966), p. 67. There is also a MS copy of the shorter version in BL MS Sloane 2623, fos. 61–73, though it is not linked with Pitcairne in extant catalogues. For an edition of this, see G. Henning, ed., *Ein unächter brief des Archimedes* (Darmstadt, 1872) (though deducing that it is a composition of post-classical date, Henning completely misses the Pitcairne connection). A further MS copy of this version in the hand of David Gregory is in EUL MS La.II.36. It is perhaps worth noting that Newton owned a copy of the book, now Trinity College, Cambridge, NQ.16.99[1]: see John Harrison, *The library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 138 (no. 566). See further below, n. 16.

[13] *Epistola Archimedis* (BL 531.b.1(1) version), pp. 18ff, 35ff, and passim.

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attack on revealed religion.[14] This was certainly how it was read at the time by commentators like George MacKenzie, earl of Cromarty, and the divine, Thomas Halyburton: the latter devoted his entire inaugural lecture to a refutation of it in 1710, while the former regarded it as 'certainly a Piece hammered out of the Devil's Forge' which 'stricks [sic] at Christianity, in its Primitive Root'.[15] It is also revealing that, having apparently been printed at Pitcairne's behest in Amsterdam in 1706, an extended edition evidently of c. 1710 was reprinted in The Hague in 1716, when it came to the attention of the Huguenot savant, Prosper Marchand; it thus entered the milieu of clandestine heterodox publishing represented most notoriously by the famous *Treatise of the three impostors*.[16] In spite of this, however, the current consensus, represented both by Anita Guerrini in her *Oxford dictionary of national biography* article on Pitcairne and more recently endorsed by John and Winifred MacQueen, is that, although his criticisms of the kirk led to charges of atheism, 'it is more likely that Pitcairne, like his friend Gregory, was a devoted, if not devout, Episcopalian'.[17] It certainly has to be admitted that Pitcairne's Latin verse often celebrates Christian, and

[14] On the obscurity of his verse, see the remarks in the article on Pitcairne in Pierre Bayle, *A general dictionary, historical and critical*, ed. J. P. Bernard, Thomas Birch, John Lockman, etc. (10 vols., London, 1734–41), VIII, pp. 419–22, on p. 421. The article, there attributed to 'a very intimate and learned friend of our Author', is in fact by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik: see the MS version in BL Add MS 4223, fos. 146–7 (with covering letter dated 7 Sept. 1738, ibid., fos. 144–5).

[15] George MacKenzie, 1st earl of Cromarty, *Synopsis apocalyptica* (Edinburgh, 1708), pp. iv–v [sigs. a2v–3]; Thomas Halyburton, *Oratio inauguralis* (1710), in his *Natural religion insufficient; and reveal'd necessary to man's happiness in his present state* (Edinburgh, 1714), pp. 1–24.

[16] For the 1706 and c. 1710 editions, see above, n. 12. For the further edition, see Vermij, 'Formation of the Newtonian philosophy', pp. 192ff, and Alasdair Raffe, 'Archibald Pitcairne and Scottish heterodoxy, c. 1688–1713' (unpublished paper), which refines Vermij's conclusions, giving a definitive account of the various editions of the work, including variant copies at the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, and elsewhere, and the reprint in Leiden University Library with Marchand's annotations. It is perhaps worth noting that Pitcairne's library (see above, n. 9) contained a copy of Toland's *Adeïsidaemon*, published at The Hague in 1709. For the milieu, see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), ch. 36; Silvia Berti, Françoise Charles-Daubert, and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *Heterodoxy, Spinozism and free thought in early eighteenth-century Europe: studies on the 'Traité des trois imposteurs'* (Dordrecht, 1996); Françoise Charles-Daubert, ed., *Le 'Traité des trois imposteurs' et 'L'esprit de Spinosa': philosophie clandestine entre 1678 et 1768* (Oxford, 1999); and Georges Minois, *The atheist's bible: the most dangerous book that never existed* (English trans., Chicago, IL, 2012).

[17] *ODNB*; MacQueen, *Latin poems*, p. 29 and passim. For a somewhat different assessment, see Roger Emerson, 'The religious, the secular and the worldly: Scotland, 1680–1800', in J. E. Crimmins, ed., *Religion, secularization and political thought: Thomas Hobbes to J. S. Mill* (London, 1989), pp. 68–89, on p. 73: 'Pitcairne's beliefs are difficult to unravel, but he was hardly an ordinary or orthodox Episcopalian.' On the nature of Episcopalianism in the period, see Alasdair Raffe, *The culture of controversy: religious arguments in Scotland, 1660–1714* (Woodbridge, 2012). It is perhaps worth noting that Guerrini's view of the *Epistola Archimedis* in *ODNB* is that it is 'a satire ostensibly of medical sects but in reality of presbyterianism' (in Guerrini, 'Archibald Pitcairne', p. 73, it is described as 'a savage satire of the Scots Presbyterians and medical methodists'); for the MacQueens' evaluation, see *Latin poems*, pp. 30–1.

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particularly Episcopalian, festivals, though this was arguably more a sign of ideological allegiance than belief.

Now, a new source has come to light in a rather unexpected location, which has completely escaped the attention of Pitcairne scholars. This is a manuscript entitled 'Pitcairneana; Or Papers found in the Study of the late famous Physician, Doctor Archibald Pitcairn, and inscribed to the Preachers of the Boylean Lecture, but left out of his printed Works'. It is to be found in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, where its shelfmark is MS Eng 1114 (until recently it was classified in the library's 'Amer' manuscript series, which may partly explain why it was long overlooked[18]). The manuscript was presented to Harvard on 18 January 1841 by Henry Swasey McKean (1810–57), who had gained his AB at Harvard in 1828 and was tutor in Latin there from 1830 to 1835 before moving on to a career in civil engineering.[19] McKean was the son of Joseph McKean (1776–1818), who succeeded John Quincy Adams to become the second Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard in 1809; he himself was the son of William McKean, born in Glasgow in 1739, a tobacconist who emigrated to the United States in 1763 and died in 1820.[20] This means that the *Pitcairneana* manuscript or its exemplar could have come from Scotland with William McKean, though obviously its Scottish links would have given it interest both for Joseph, who was quite a book collector, to judge from the catalogue of his library printed in 1818, or his son; both men might also have been interested in Pitcairne as a Latin stylist.[21]

What, then, of the manuscript itself? The extant text is in a hand that seems to be of mid- to late eighteenth-century date, but there is no obvious reason why it should not derive from an earlier original, nor why this should not go back to Pitcairne's own time. As we will see, the most recent books cited in the work date from 1704–5 and there is nothing in it that is incompatible with a date of composition in Pitcairne's later years. Indeed, it shares various features with Pitcairne's known writings. Like many of them, it is short and pithy and, though it is in English whereas the bulk of Pitcairne's published writings were

[18] I am grateful to Susan Halpert for this point.

[19] See Joseph Palmer, *Necrology of alumni of Harvard College, 1851/1852–1862/1863* (Boston, MA, 1864), pp. 141–3. There are various other manuscripts by McKean or associated with him at the Houghton or in the Harvard archives, including an annotated copy of George Ticknor's lectures on Spanish literature which includes a photograph of McKean and a biographical note on him based on that in Palmer's *Necrology* (HUC 8831.382.53).

[20] See Levi Hedge, *Eulogy on the Rev. Joseph McKean DD LlD, Boylston professor of rhetorick and oratory* (Cambridge, MA, 1818); William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American pulpit* (2 vols., New York, NY, 1857), II, pp. 414ff. For a modern study that includes information on Joseph McKean's lectures see Paul E. Ried, 'Joseph McKean: the second Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 46 (1960), pp. 419–24. On William McKean, see also Joseph T. Buckingham, *Annals of the Massachusetts charitable mechanic association, 1795–1892* (Boston, MA, 1853), p. 173n.

[21] See *Catalogue of the select library of the late Rev. Joseph McKean DD, LlD* (Boston, MA, 1818): not surprisingly, *Pitcairneana* does not appear in this.

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in Latin, it is worth noting that Pitcairne had himself earlier used the vernacular for the ecclesiastical polemics that he circulated in manuscript form. In any case, since the works cited are mainly in English, especially Samuel Clarke's Boyle Lectures, which form its principal target, it might have seemed strange not to write the text in the same language. As we will see, in its invocation of 'Axioms' at the end *Pitcairneana* partakes of the strongly Newtonian flavour of Pitcairne's medical writings, while its stress on 'bigotry' and 'superstition' echoes both his anti-Presbyterian satires and his *Epistola Archimedis*.

It is, of course, presented as a work found in Pitcairne's study at his death, but this, too, is perfectly feasible: the loyalty towards Pitcairne felt by many when he died is indicated by the numerous verse eulogies of him that appeared at that point.[22] A further sense of the kind of coterie in which a text like this would have been valued and preserved is given by the edition of Pitcairne's *Dissertationes medicæ* that his protégé, Robert Freebairn, brought out in 1713, with his 'Dissertatio de legibus historiæ naturalis' and his 'Poemata selecta' appended (the edition contains a dedication by Pitcairne himself, who died on 23 October that year; it is dated 10 June, a special date for him as it was the Old Pretender's birthday).[23] This context would itself make sense of the claim that the document was found in Pitcairne's study, while the reference to its being 'left out of his printed Works' could allude to Freebairn's 1713 collection, the content of which was more than once reprinted in Latin and English.[24] Its title, ending in '-ana', alludes to a genre of books that had come to the fore in the seventeenth century, consisting of extracts from the conversation and writings of famous scholars like J.J. Scaliger, the subject of *Scaligeriana* (1666); though the content of *Pitcairneana* is rather different from such books, this reinforces the sense of its close linkage with Pitcairne.[25] It is, of course, possible that one of his followers might have written the work and fathered it on the great man, but none of them is a very strong candidate for this.[26] It therefore seems likelier, considering its philosophical

[22] See Foxon, *English verse*, entries D55, E214–15, K24, K40–2, O18, R78, R329, W521.

[23] See Archibald Pitcairne, *Dissertationes medicæ* (Edinburgh, 1713). There are two issues of this edition, one containing the 'Dissertatio de legibus historiæ naturalis' and 'Poemata selecta', the other without them. For the significance of the date, see MacQueen, *Latin poems*, pp. 248–9.

[24] See *The works of Dr Archibald Pitcairne* (London, 1715), and his *Opera omnia* (The Hague, 1722, and subsequent editions). The latter also includes his *Elementa medicinæ physico-mathematica* (1717; Eng. trans., 1718), which represents his Leiden lectures of 1692–3, and the *Epistola Archimedis*, though not the 'Dissertatio'.

[25] See Paul Korshin, 'The development of intellectual biography in the eighteenth century', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 73 (1974), pp. 513–23, on pp. 519–22.

[26] For instance, on the identifiable authors of the eulogies listed in n. 22, John Ker, Thomas Kincaid, Allan Ramsay, and Thomas Ruddiman, as also Robert Hepburn, author of the rather deferential *Dissertatio de scriptis Pitcarnianis* (London, [1715]), see *ODNB*, MacQueen, *Latin poems*, pp. 32, 41, 294–9, 371–2, and 454, and Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman*, passim. George Davidson (another poem by whom was published in 1717: Foxon, *English verse*, entry D54) has not been identified, while John Wilson was perhaps the figure referred to in Charles

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sophistication and Pitcairne's own track record earlier in his career, that he wrote it himself.[27] Indeed, one wonders whether his disciples might have been slightly shocked by the text, treasuring it as a memento of the great man but seeing it as suitable only for manuscript transmission rather than for print publication, and the same may also have been true of the McKeans in the godly environment of early nineteenth-century New England.

For what is extraordinary about the text is how overtly irreligious it is. When I first encountered it in September 2014 it struck me as one of the most explicitly atheistic texts from the early eighteenth century that I had come across. This makes it significant regardless of its link or otherwise with Pitcairne. Its tone is apparent even from the witty and half-mocking opening address to the organizers of the well-known series of apologetic sermons founded under a provision in the will of the eminent scientist, Robert Boyle, offering them information on the privately expressed views of atheists that might otherwise be overlooked so that these could be confronted in the Boyle Lectures; it is equally evident from the remainder of the text, which is presented as a dialogue between *Incredulous*, a spokesman for an atheistic viewpoint, and his orthodox opponent, *Credulous*, in which the sceptical spokesman might throughout be seen as holding the upper hand. Indeed, from time to time he even adopts a rather disdainful approach towards his orthodox antagonist, as at one point where he says: 'You should have proved there was a God before you talked of his creating Power.'[28]

In its dialogue format, the text belongs to a well-established tradition going back to classical authors like Plato and Cicero, which had experienced a revival during the Renaissance. More specifically, it bears a resemblance to the confrontation between an atheist and a believer in George Berkeley's *Alciphron; or the minute philosopher* (1732) which has often been seen as a revealing source of atheist views in the period, and which similarly claims access to private conversation as the key to understanding free-thinking opinion. Largely for this reason, David Berman has gone so far as to describe Berkeley's treatment as 'perhaps the most searching contemporary account

Withers, 'Situating practical reason', in Charles Withers and Paul Wood, eds., *Science and medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment* (East Linton, 2002), pp. 54–78, on p. 64. Another unlikely candidate is David Gregory, who had died in 1708: for his religious views, see especially Friesen, 'Archibald Pitcairne', pp. 173–5.

[27] It is perhaps worth noting that *Pitcairneana* might be seen to echo Pitcairne's statement in a letter to David Gregory of 25 Feb. 1706 that 'I am clear that metaphysics can never prove a Deity, and therefor think our churchmen here have no ground not to be Atheists' (Johnston, *Best of our owne*, p. 43). See also his letter to Adriaan Verwer of June 1706 (copy by David Gregory in Royal Society MS 247, fol. 73(1)v), in which he attributed comparable views to Newton ('præter alia demonstrat Atheos esse eos omnes qui Metaphysicis argùmentis ostendere conantur esse Deum…Sed jam quid dicemus de Sacerdotibus (non dico cujus Religionis aut Sectæ) et hominibus qui Mathematica nesciunt? An non Neutono multi sunt Athei? Atheos ut puta vocat eos qui non afferunt indoneam rationem').

[28] Since the text is quite brief, references for quotations from it will not be given in this commentary.

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we have of free-thought in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century'.[29] Yet, though the opening address to *Pitcairneana* echoes *Alciphron* in claiming to present 'those Arguments…lately urged in Defence of his Opinions' by 'one, who calls himself a Free-thinker', the two works are quite different. This is because, whereas in Berkeley's book the atheist starts confidently but is ultimately comprehensively refuted by his orthodox antagonist, in *Pitcairneana* it is *Incredulous* who ends triumphant, effectively responding to his antagonist's promise of further arguments on behalf of orthodoxy by saying: 'Bring them on!' Indeed, one's suspicions that the opening address is to be read as tongue in cheek are aroused by its claim to have 'mentioned every Thing of Moment our Divines say on this Occasion' and thus to 'take away all Pretence of Cavilling', since the final phrase might be read as ambiguous as to which arguments are the most compelling; it might also be felt that the labelling of the orthodox interlocutor in the dialogue as *Credulous* is loaded in itself.

Moving to the dialogue proper, at the start we learn that the free-thinker has become a sceptic while travelling abroad – which could, of course, be an autobiographical statement on Pitcairne's part, if it is really he that *Incredulous* represents – and this provides an opportunity for some telling relativist comments on his part, including a dismissal of the 'bigotry' that characterized traditional religions, with an aside on the encroachments of 'the most cunning Impostors' which echoes the writings by Pitcairne that have already been cited.[30] Such incisive comments recur throughout the dialogue, as where *Incredulous* complains about the baleful effects of 'Superstition', and perhaps reaching a climax when he refers to 'that inexhaustible Magazine of Inconsistencies, the Trinity'; it is also striking how *Incredulous* throughout distances himself from the Christian tradition that *Credulous* represents, speaking of 'your Divines' and 'your God', and complaining about the intolerance with which views like his were received (the perhaps surprising reference to 'our Divines' in the opening address could be seen as a kind of back-formation from this). Also notable is the outrage with which *Credulous* greets *Incredulous*'s opinions throughout, particularly near the start of the dialogue, as when he states: 'I hope your Inclination to Atheism will not carry you so far as to deny that there may be Beings of which we have no Ideas', or 'I can't bear your talking thus Blasphemously.'

In general, however, the debate is conducted at a high level of philosophical sophistication, and it seems appropriate here to give an account of the main topics covered and the authors invoked in connection with them, though this has been kept reasonably concise since readers can themselves relish the arguments from the transcript of the document that appears at the end of this

[29] David Berman, *George Berkeley: idealism and the man* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 164–5. Cf. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, eds., *The works of George Berkeley, bishop of Cloyne* (9 vols., London, 1948–57), III, pp. 23–4, 32–3, and passim.

[30] The theme of a returning traveller is also to be found at the start of Pitcairne's play: MacQueen, *Phanaticks*, pp. 6ff.

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article. The first set of issues that is addressed concern space, matter, and impenetrability, and particularly the question of whether it was possible for spiritual and non-spiritual bodies to occupy the same place: this had obvious implications for the existence or otherwise of God, which are debated at length by the orthodox and heterodox spokesmen. At this point, explicit reference is made to two thinkers, the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, whose *Enchiridion metaphysicum* (1671) had explicitly addressed the issue of the nature of spiritual beings, and Samuel Clarke, whose well-known Boyle Lectures of 1704, published the following year as *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, had dealt at length with this and related matters.[31] In addition, *Incredulous* is critical of doctrines of God and the soul which he saw as of scholastic origin and which he associated with 'Immaterialists' – evidently meaning people like Clarke – whose conception of God he saw as framed 'out of the inconsistent Ideas of unextension and unsolidity'.[32]

The discussion then moves to the concept of eternity and the implication of this for ideas about the nature of God and the likelihood that he did indeed create the world at a finite point. Here, both *Credulous* and *Incredulous* quote passages from Clarke's *Demonstration of the being and attributes of God* in support of their position, while *Incredulous* alludes rather more archly to 'the Men he pretends to confute', a reference to Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza, who are specifically named as Clarke's chief adversaries on the title page of his book. At this stage in the argument, *Incredulous* puts forward a strong argument for eternalism, citing Cicero and other ancient philosophers to the effect that the perfection of the world was better explained by this than by a divine act of creation, though agreeing that the design argument at least had the advantage of exposing 'that absurd Notion of the Worlds being made by Chance', an evident allusion to Epicurean ideas.[33] This then leads to a discussion of the issue of whether motion was intrinsic to matter, on which a footnote invokes the Deist John Toland and his *Letters to Serena* (1704), which Samuel Clarke had sought to refute in his Boyle Lectures on the basis of Newtonian views. *Incredulous* implicitly aligns himself with views like Toland's, on the grounds that those who

[31] Insofar as works referred to in the text are documented in footnotes there, this will not be repeated here. However, it is perhaps worth noting that none of the works by Clarke, Hooke, More, or Toland that are cited are to be found in Pitcairne's library (though other works by all four authors *are*; for other surprising lacunae, see Appleby and Cunningham, 'Robert Erskine and Archibald Pitcairne', p. 11); it may or may not be significant that a copy of Hooke's *Posthumous works* was bought by the University of Edinburgh in 1712: see EUL MS Da.1.34, fo. 36.

[32] For a discussion of Clarke and others as 'immaterialists', see Wayne Hudson, *Enlightenment and modernity: the English Deists and reform* (London, 2009), ch. 5.

[33] For a concern about eternalism on the part of more orthodox spokesmen, see George MacKenzie, earl of Cromarty, *A bundle of positions* (London, 1705), especially the section comprising sig. D; George Cheyne, *Philosophical principles of natural religion* (London, 1705), ch. 2 and passim.

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saw the Newtonian principles of gravitation and attraction as intrinsic to matter could hardly see motion as separable from it.

This then leads to a final section in which the orthodox spokesman invokes as an argument against eternalism 'the late Progress of Arts and Sciences, and the small part of Time our Histories take in'. As ever, *Incredulous* has an answer, in this case concerning the challenge presented to a biblical timescale for the world by geological evidence like that invoked by Robert Hooke in his 'Discourse of earthquakes', published in his *Posthumous works* of 1705; he also refers to the great age of China.[34] *Incredulous* rather interestingly took such evidence to support a catastrophist view of the history of a nonetheless eternal world, which he combined with an essentially cyclical view of human development: eras of great intellectual and other progress were succeeded by ages of barbarism. Claiming that 'Superstition has very much contributed to the Destruction of all true Knowledge', he blamed Christians as much as Mahometans for destroying the legacy of classical antiquity, while he also balanced the extraordinary civility of the Chinese against the primitiveness of savages still in the state of nature to suggest an almost random element in human development, rather than any inexorable law of progress.[35]

At the end, *Incredulous* has a peroration in which he recapitulates a number of his arguments, describing them as 'Axioms' in essentially Newtonian mode, as we have seen. *Credulous*, needless to say, replies: 'You triumph before Victory', promising to raise further arguments 'from Providence, from the Government of the World, and from the Impossibility of Matters thinking'.[36] One could well imagine much space being devoted to such themes, as was the case in other orthodox polemics of the period, but it might be felt that *Incredulous*'s views were by this time pretty clear, and that little needed to be added to the position that he had already established. In any case, at this point the text ends with the word 'Finis'.

So where does this treatise stand within the philosophical traditions of the day, and particularly how is one to place the position of *Incredulous*, since that of *Credulous* is clearly intended to echo the views of orthodox thinkers, here reflected above all by Samuel Clarke? *Incredulous* is a Newtonian, but a Tolandian rather than a Clarkean one: Jeffrey Wigelsworth has recently

[34] For the issues involved, see Rhoda Rappaport, *When geologists were historians, 1665–1750* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), esp. pp. 189ff. On China, see also Paolo Rossi, *The great abyss of time: the history of the earth and the history of nations from Hooke to Vico* (English trans., Chicago, IL, 1984), part 2. For Pitcairne's view on contemporary geological debates, see Johnston, *Best of our owne*, pp. 56–7.

[35] There is a possible parallel with the disdain for the Hottentots shown at this point in a manuscript by Pitcairne in EUL MS Dc.4.101, in which he attributed the greater proneness to disease of 'barbarous' countries, where 'the people are not polite', compared with northern nations, to their inferior personal hygiene.

[36] On the last topic, which is not discussed in *Pitcairneana*, see specifically John W. Yolton, *Thinking matter: materialism in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 1984). The other matters referred to were commonplaces of contemporary apologetic.

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helpfully reminded us that Toland's adaptation of Newtonianism to make motion intrinsic to matter was intended to enhance it rather than to subvert it, and the view that is being expressed here is if anything a more radical version of this.[37] Though it is perhaps surprising that the two philosophers who were seen as the chief exponents of the explicitly or implicitly materialist systems that apologists like Clarke spent so much time refuting, Hobbes and Spinoza, are here alluded to only as Clarke's antagonists, *Incredulous* is clearly in sympathy with an essentially materialist view of the world; no less central to his viewpoint is eternalism and the claim that the perfection of nature was better explained in terms of that than of an act of divine creation. Possibly most interesting is the rejection of the idea of progress on the basis of catastrophist ideas taken from contemporary notions about the geological history of the world, since historians have noted the apologetic use to which progressivist arguments were beginning to be put at this time, which *Incredulous* fiercely rejects.[38] Moreover, associated with this is a regret about the damage done during the Dark Ages to the cultural richness of classical antiquity which aligns *Incredulous* with the stance of a kind of 'ancient' in the Ancients and Moderns controversy, though in general Pitcairne is a figure who is more difficult to place in relation to that than some commentators have realized.[39]

How, therefore, is this remarkable text to be interpreted? It is certainly striking how overtly atheistic it is, using the dialogue form to allow its sceptical interlocutor repeatedly to out-argue his orthodox opponent. But what are we to make of its title and its claimed link with Pitcairne? The fact that we only have a later copy makes it possible that it is not by Pitcairne at all, though (as we have seen) both its terms of reference and its content are coherent with its being written in the later years of Pitcairne's life. On the other hand, in interpreting it, we need to be aware of Pitcairne's artfulness as an author, the man who wrote *Babell*, his burlesque of Presbyterianism, or the *Epistola Archimedis*, purporting to be an ancient discussion of religious truth, and who showed a

[37] J. R. Wigelsworth, *Deism in Enlightenment England: theology, politics and Newtonian public science* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 78–81 and ch. 3 passim. Wigelsworth thus rejects the view of Toland as anti-Newtonian espoused by Margaret Jacob and others. See also Reink Vermij, 'Matter and motion: Toland and Spinoza', in Wiep van Bunge and Wim Klever, eds., *Disguised and overt Spinozism around 1700* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 275–88.

[38] See especially R. S. Crane, 'Anglican apologetics and the idea of progress, 1699–1745', in his *The idea of the humanities and other essays critical and historical* (2 vols., Chicago, IL, 1967), I, pp. 214–87 (originally published in *Modern Philology*, 31 (1933–4)).

[39] For a recent account of Pitcairne which places him in the context of the dated conceptual structure of R. F. Jones's *Ancients and moderns* (2nd edn, St Louis, MS, 1961), see MacQueen, *Latin poems*, p. 363 (where Jones is cited) and passim. It is unfortunate that, for all their erudition concerning the Latin culture of the period, the MacQueens seem unaware of recent critiques of Jones's views, e.g. in Michael Hunter, *Science and society in Restoration England* (Cambridge, 1981), especially ch. 6, and above all in J. M. Levine, 'Ancients and moderns reconsidered', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15 (1981), pp. 72–89, and *The battle of the books: history and literature in the Augustan age* (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

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comparable virtuosity in his Latin poems and the ingeniously subversive ways in which these were published. Indeed, the clandestine milieu in which Pitcairne's *Epistola Archimedis* circulated also offers a significant context. All this means that, though it is possible that, through *Incredulous*, the new text presents Pitcairne's own views, it is equally likely that we are intended to remain unsure about this – that the objective of presenting what a true 'atheist' might say was rather intended primarily as a means of shocking the pious, and that Pitcairne's own position was a rationalist but essentially theistic one, as certain of his comments elsewhere suggest.[40] Either way, *Pitcairneana* provides a fascinating new insight into Pitcairne and his milieu. It also represents a striking contribution to the debates about the most fundamental philosophical issues that were exercising thinkers in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and deserves attention accordingly.

HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD, MS ENG 1114[41]

Pitcairneana;

Or Papers found in the Study of the late famous Physician, Doctor Archibald Pitcairn, and inscribed to the Preachers of the Boylean Lecture, but left out of his printed Works.

[40] See, for instance, his letter to Verwer, cited in n. 27 above, where the sentences there quoted are interspersed by the statement: 'Id ego jam dudum credo, Deumque igitur esse demonstravi Circulatione Sanguinis intellectâ.' See also Raffe, 'Archibald Pitcairne', and, for the views on related subjects of a one-time associate of Pitcairne's, Cheyne, *Philosophical principles*, passim.

[41] For a digital version, see http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.HOUGH:12939560. The MS comprises a formerly stitched paper book, like an exercise book, with coarse paper wrappers. The stitching now only survives at the inside of the central gathering, having come loose so that the folded leaves that make up the book are separate from one another. On the outside front cover, it is inscribed: 'Rec[eived] January 18 1841 / Gift of / H. S. McKean Esq.' This is repeated at the top of the first page of the text. It is preserved in a slipcase, inside which is the bookplate: 'Harvard College Library the gift of H. S. McKean'. The MS is in a neat italic hand of mid- to late eighteenth-century date. It has a modern foliation at the bottom of the inner margin. Catchwords illustrate the continuity of the text. Each page has a pencil margin, within which 'C' or 'I' is written to denote the contributions to the dialogue. Before fo. 1, there is a leaf that is blank except for the old classmarks, 'MS Amer 721' (this also appears to be deleted on the cover) and 'Cal. E. Dr. 4', on its verso. At the end, one page has been marked up with pencil margins after 'Finis'; there are then five wholly blank pages (i.e., verso of leaf with marked-up recto and two completely blank leaves, one conjugate with opening blank leaf), the other with the preface leaf. In the transcription that follows, page breaks have been denoted within soliduses; insertions above the line are denoted ‹thus› (these all appear to be trivial copying errors); and editorial interventions are enclosed in square brackets. Occasional flourishes at the end of words, especially at line-ends, have been ignored; the usage of inverted commas on fo. 6 has been modernized. Throughout the text, the word 'tis' has apostrophes at both the start and the end; here, the opening one has been silently ignored.

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Reverend Sirs,

The Reason, as I humbly conceive, why the Lecture founded by Mr Boyle against Atheism has not all the Success pious Christians could wish, is that the Arguments with which Atheists in private attack the Being of a God, are unknown to You, whose Province it is to combat every Thing, which strikes at the Foundation of Religion. For which Reason I think I can't do greater Service to Religion in general, and to your Founders godly Design in particular, than to communicate to you those Arguments one, who calls himself a Free-thinker, lately urged in Defence of his Opinions. I must own I had some Scruples of sending you the Discourse in so public a Manner, tho' the only Way I had of applying to You, 'till I considered that You, by being obliged to print Your Sermons against Atheism, are obliged, to print those very Arguments, tho' never so secretly conveyed, as soon as they come to Your Knowledge. And there is no Divine but would take it as a high Reflection to be thought so disingenuous as either to conceal, or misrepresent, the least Part of any of the /1v/ Arguments of the Atheists he writes against; since he knows that no Arguments except fully and fairly stated can be fully and fairly confuted. But, however, to take away all Pretence of Cavilling I have, in the following Conference, mentioned every Thing of Moment our Divines say on this Occasion; which, if not sufficient to answer all the Objections of this Free-thinker, plainly show how necessary it is that they should be communicated to such learned Persons as I have the Honour to write to. /2/

The following Dialogue, between one I call Credulous, and the other Incredulous, began after this Manner.

Credulous. I am glad, Sir, to see you after so long an Absence return to us in Health, and likewise to understand that you have improved your Fortunes; but yet I should be extremely sorry you had stirred from Home, if it has been, as I am told, at the Expence of your Religion.

Incredulous. You know, Sir, that before I left you I was as great a Bigot as my Neighbours; but observing through the many Countries I have travelled that the People of all Religions are alike confident of their being in the Right, and that they alike build their Confidence on their Ancestors being supposed too knowing to be imposed on themselves, and too honest to impose on their Children, therefore they concluded what they taught them of their own Knowledge must be true; and that after the Truth was once received, there could be no Danger of losing it, because they could not but ‹at› all Times be able to distinguish between those Doctrines, Rites & Ceremonies that were handed down to them from Age to Age by their immediate Predecessors, and such Innovations as the most cunning Impostors would endeavour to obtrude on them as the Tradition of their Ancestors. This being the sole Motive of my

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embracing the Religion of my native Country, I found I could no longer rely on what served for the Support of all other Religions, and that I am now unavoidably obliged to examine all Points afresh, and should be extremely pleased if you, who have bent your Studies this Way, would be so charitable as to assist me in this grand Design. /2v/

C. With all my Heart. But what is it that sticks with You?

I. I can't doubt of the Existence of myself or of other Bodies, or that there is an infinity of Void or Room; (for that is the Idea I have of Space) for Bodies to move in; but, to speak Truth, I want Proof for the Existence of any other Beings.

C. This is very strange, since if you will but attend to the Dictates of your own Reason you may be as sure of the Existence of an infinite supreme Being as of your own. But the better to convince you, I would know what it is which makes you doubt of a Truth so universally received.

I. If your infinite, supreme Being exists every where, there can be no Room for any Thing else to exist; if he exists only somewhere, he cannot be infinite.

C. There are two sorts of Beings; one that is extended, and solid or impenetrable, which we call Body or Matter. The other unextended, unsolid or penetrable; which we call Spirit or immaterial Being. Now tho' we allow that neither of these two sorts of Beings can be in the same Place with a Being of the same Kind, yet we contend that they may be in the same Place with a Being of a different Kind; and consequently that God, tho' an infinite Spirit, may be in the same Part of Space with Body.

I. That we may understand one another, I ask you whether by an extended Being you do not mean a Being which is in some Part of Space; by solid and impenetrable, a Being which can't get into the Place of another Being without driving that out first; and by unextended a Being which is in no Part of /3/ Space; and by unsolid or penetrable, a Being which can exist in the same Place with another Being.

C. I must own I have no other Idea of those Words; nor do I find that any one has explained them otherwise.

I. If so, you then suppose God to be in no Place by making him unextended; and then by saying, he is unsolid you suppose him to be in the same Place with Body; which is making him extended and unextended, in a Place and in no Place at the same Time.

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C. The learned Doctor Moore leaves unextension out of his Definition of Spirit whether finite or infinite; as carrying a manifest Repugnancy to all Being: But then he says a Spirit has a different Extension from Body.[42]

I. But since he can mean nothing by Extension either of Body or Spirit, but occupying some Part of Space, his saying Spirit has a different Extension from Body, and yet is in the same Place with Body, is saying Spirit is in and not in the same Place with Body. So that to save one Contradiction he runs into another. But is he the only Divine who makes Extension necessary to all Being?

C. Doctor Samuel Clark, who has wrote the best for the Existence of an infinite unsolid Being, supposes Extension to belong to all Beings whatever.[43]

I. Those two then must think that all besides themselves do, in Effect, deny the Being of God; and that the Idol they worship is in a literal Sense truely Nothing.

C. I desire you to give us your Reasons why ‹you› suppose that no /3v/ two Beings can exist in the same Place or Space.

I. It is as much repugnant to our Notion of Being that two Things can be in the same Place at the same Time, as that one Thing can be in two Places at once. Two Things can no more have one Extension, than one Thing can have two Extensions. The same Reason which makes it evident that whatever exists must exist in some Space, must likewise convince us that no two Things can exist in the same Space. All our Notions of Identity and Diversity depend on the Impossibility of two Things being in the same Place; and consequently by conceiving Body and Spirit in the same Place, we, as having Nothing to distinguish them by, can't but conceive them to be the same Thing.

C. I grant you that if they were Beings of the same Sort we could not conceive them but as one and the same Being; but here we distinguish by one being solid or impenetrable and the other unsolid or penetrable.

I. How can you say that Body is impenetrable, when you suppose it penetrable by Spirit? If we can't suppose Spirit can be in the same Place with Body except Body

[42] For Henry More's definition of spirit, see his *Enchiridion metaphysicum* (London, 1671), partially translated in Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp. 97ff. For a modern edition and translation, see Alexander Jacob, ed., *Henry More's manual of metaphysics: a translation of the Enchiridion metaphysicum (1679) with an introduction and notes* (Hildesheim, 1995).

[43] A reference to Samuel Clarke's *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God* (London, 1705), especially pp. 27ff. A modern edition of this and other writings by Clarke with a commentary by Ezio Vailati was published in the Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy in 1998.

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be in the same Place with Spirit, we must own they are both unsolid or penetrable. To say that Spirit is unsolid or penetrable but that Body is not, is to say that Spirit can be in the same Place with Body, but that Body can't be in the same Place with Spirit. But if they own they are alike unsolid or penetrable since that is all we mean by these Words, so that we can't suppose them in the same Place without /4/ supposing them Beings of the same Sort, or alike penetrable to one another, and yet at the same Time we own that none but Beings of a different Kind can be in the same Place, how can you say that Spirit is not solid and impenetrable as Body; since you suppose every Spirit is so to Beings of it's own Kind, and Body you make to be penetrable to Beings of a different Kind.

C. Why may not Body and Spirit exist together as well as Body and Space?

I. The Idea we have of Space is that it is a Void or Room infinitely extended for Body to move in, and Body could not exist at all if it did not exist where there was Room for it to exist. But if you do not consider Spirit as the Void or Room in which Body exists, but a Being which itself exists in Space you cannot but allow it to take up some Part of Space. Now if two Beings, each of which when separate take up two Feet of Space, can so penetrate each other as that both shall take up but the same Space, either one of the Beings by this Penetration must be annihilated; or else the Parts of Space must penetrate each other, which, I suppose, you will grant to be an Opinion infinitely absurd.

If God and Body could exist together because one is unsolid and the other solid, yet God could not be infinite, or every where, because he could not be in the same Place with other unsolid Beings, as Angels, Souls, &c. So that upon your own Supposition you must give up all your finite unsolid /4v/ Beings, or else your single infinite one.

C. I hope your Inclination to Atheism will not carry you as far as to deny that there may be Beings of which we have no Ideas, and consequently unextended as well as unsolid Beings.

I. There may be, no doubt, many finite Beings of which we have no particular Ideas, but only the general Ideas of Being extended and solid; but this can be no ground to affirm that a Being can exist without Extension; or that two Beings can have but one Extension; or that there can be more than one infinite Being of the same Kind.

The Immaterialists frame a God out of the inconsistent Ideas of unextension and unsolidity and then charge those with very gross Thoughts who will not come into these contradictory Notions. So, (since a Contradiction is Nothing,) they first frame a God out of Nothing in order to make him afterwards frame all Things so.

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C. I can't bear your talking thus Blasphemously.

I. I thought you charitably designed my Conversion; but can that be done except you permit me to put my Objections as strongly as I can: This your Love of Truth obliges me to do, but if you are angry I am silent.

C. Go on; and let me hear what you have further to say.

I. With Submission then, if the Doctrine of the Schools of the Souls being all in the Whole, and all in this, and all in that Part of the Body be a Contradiction, why is it not so to suppose the Godhead to be fully and compleatly in every Part of Space? Why should you, who not only /5/ suppose that two Beings may be in the same Place, but that one Being may be in a million of Places at once, boggle at Transubstantiation, or any other Absurdity?

C. We can't say that God is partly in this, and partly in that Place, because an infinite Being has no Parts.

I. On the contrary an infinite Being must have an infinity of Parts; tho' those Parts, there being no Room to divide them in, must be indivisible. Space has an infinity of Parts, but we can't seperate them even in Imagination. These Difficulties, you know, extremely perplex your Divines, and therefore they are forced to say God, tho' he acts every where, yet himself is no where; at least no where included and no where excluded. That his Center is no where, and his Circumference every where, and an hundred such like Expressions. And the Schools, to avoid what they apprehended to be greater Difficulties, say that God is *purus actus, mera forma* [pure action, mere form]; that his Immensity is a Point, his Eternity an Instant. And tho' they all affirm that the Idea of God is so clear that they have Reason to conclude it innate (which if it was it must be the same in all Men) yet no two of them are consistent with one another or with themselves, even when they do not mention that inexhaustible Magazine of Inconsistencies, the Trinity. And when they have run the Round of Contradictions then they gravely tell us, with the Fathers, that a true Knowledge of God is a perfect Ignorance of him.[44]

C. There may be Difficulties relating to the Essence of God /5v/ which cant be perfectly cleared, tho' his Existence is most manifest.

I. I am so ignorant as not to be able to distinguish between the Essence and the Existence of God; and those Difficulties relating to his Essence, which you own

[44] In fact, this is a quotation from Pierre Charron, *Les trois veritez* (1594). See R. H. Popkin, *The history of scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1979), p. 58.

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can't be perfectly cleared, are, in a great Measure, the Reason of my doubting of his Existence.

C. Tis impossible to account for the Existence of Things without having recourse to a self-existent Being, who created all Things out of Nothing.

I. That Things were created ought not to be admitted without Proof; because the Presumption is that Things have always existed after the manner they do at present; or, in other Words, that there has been a perpetual Succession of Causes & Effects.

They, therefore, who maintain that there has been but one Being from Eternity, ought to prove it. And this admits of no other Proof but that it is a Contradiction; or repugnant to the Nature of all but one unsolid Being to have always existed. If Things may continue to Eternity I can't see how it is repugnant to their Nature to suppose they have existed from Eternity. In the Idea of Substance is contained subsisting by itself; and what can now subsist by itself (since the Nature of Substance is always the same) might have always ‹so› subsisted. I am to learn from you how it comes to be natural for one Substance so to subsist, and unnatural to all others.

C. I'll prove it to you from your own Confession: For if Things, as you say, have always existed as they do at present, they must always have a Beginning; and Things /6/ which have had a Beginning could not be from Eternity.

I. If Things always were and always had a Beginning there must be an infinity of Beginnings, which Infinity had no Beginning. A Reason which proves too much, proves Nothing at all. And this of yours were it conclusive would destroy eternal Duration; because every Period of Duration must have a Beginning, and what had a Beginning could not be from Eternity.

C. If every particular Man had a Beginning, must not the whole Species made up of those Particulars have a Beginning? Can the Whole have endured longer than all it's Parts?

I. This Sophistry strikes likewise at eternal Duration, since every Part or Period of it must have a Beginning, and if every Part has a Beginning, must not the Whole, made up of Parts, have a Beginning? By the same Argument you may destroy Eternity, *a parte post* ['for the part after', i.e. that part of time following a given instant]; for if every Part of Duration must have an End, how can the Whole be Endless?[45]

[45] For a discussion of eternity using the same commonplace tag, see John Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding*, II.xvii.10.

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And by the same Reasoning it is impossible any Thing can be infinite, since all the Parts of it are every one of them finite.

Your Argument in Truth only holds, where the Parts are finite in Number; but where there is an infinity of Parts the Thing must be infinite, because there is no coming to an End of its Parts, tho' each Part be finite. An Author whose Boylean Lectures are esteemed to contain the best Proofs for the Being of God to be infinite says that "all the mataphysical [sic] Difficulties which arise from applying the Measures and Relations of Things finite to what is infinite, and from supposing /6v/ Things finite to be the Parts of Things infinite (when they really are not so, but only as mathematical Points to Quantity which have no Proportion at all) ought to be esteemed vain and of no Force".[46] If so, did not all who wrote on this Subject before him attack the Eternity of Things from such Arguments as ought to be esteemed vain and of no force?

C. "Either there has", says he, "always existed one unchangeable and independent Being from whom all other Beings have received their Original, or else there has been an infinite Succession of dependent Beings produced from one another in an endless Progression, without any original Cause at all."

"If we consider such an infinite Progression as one entire endless Series of dependent Beings it is plain the whole Series can have no Cause from without of its Existence, because in it are supposed to be included all Things which ever were: And 'tis plain it can have no Reason within of it's Existence, because no one Being in this infinite Succession is supposed to be self-existent or necessary. An infinite Succession of meerly dependent Beings without any original independent Cause is a Series of Things which have no Cause of Existence either within itself or without. It's an express Contradiction and Impossibility: It's supposing something to be caused, and yet in the whole, it's absolutely caused by Nothing."[47] Can you refuse to assent to so plain a Demonstration?

I. Tho' your Author says he does not argue from the supposed Impossibility of an infinite Succession clearely considered in itself, yet his Arguments alike destroy all infinite Succession, because /7/ all such Succession not only supposes eternal Changes, but that in every Change the Effect, tho' ever so necessary, depends for it's Existence on it's Cause. And the Men he pretends to confute[48] maintain that the Matter of the Universe is self-existent, and that there is no Room for Causes and Effects but in the Changes which are made, and, as they say, necessarily in the Position of Matter. Besides he not only owns the Infinity of Time, but likewise asserts that an eternal Duration, notwithstanding the Difficulties of conceiving it, is actually past. Now, if Omnipotency

[46] This is a quotation from Clarke's *Demonstration*, p. 22.

[47] Ibid, pp. 23–6.

[48] On the title page of his book, Clarke states that it is written 'More Particularly in Answer to Mr Hobbs, Spinoza, And their Followers'.

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itself can't hinder the former Minute, or any other Period of Time from perishing before the present begins, your Author must, in spite of his boasted Demonstration, own an infinite Succession of what he can't but allow to be changeable, dependent, and perishable. And since all that can be said against an eternal Succession of Causes and Effects is included in this Argument, I shall show you that it is made up of Nothing but inconsistent Expressions; since I can no more join the Ideas of Endless and Entire than coming and not coming to an End. One completes the Idea of the Thing I am thinking of and the other supposes that impossible. So the Idea of the Whole supposes Nothing can be added, and the Idea of infinite Progression is a continual Addition without a Possibility of coming to the Whole; or to conclude in my Mind all the Beings that ever were this is fixing a standing Rule to a growing Measure. Nor can I consider whether an infinite Progression has an original Cause without considering it as finite, or having a Beginning. So that the Strength of this Demonstration lies in joining such Terms to /7v/ infinite Progression as makes it finite, and then arguing against it as such.

C. But tho' this Argument should not amount to a Demonstration, I hope you will not deny the Possibility of God's creating the Universe out of Nothing.

I. You should have proved there was a God before you talked of his creating Power. But letting that pass I am content to examine with you the Possibility of Creation. And you can't suppose the Universe to be created, except you suppose Space, as well as the Things in it, to be created. But Space having no Bounds, or Ends, cannot be created, since Creation supposes a Thing must have an End, otherwise there is no coming to an End of Creating it; and consequently whatever is created must come infinitely short of being Infinite or Boundless.

Besides we are so far from being able to conceive Space to be made by any Being whatever, that we must conceive it in [the] Order of Nature before all other Beings, since we must suppose a Space for them to exist in before we can suppose them to exist. And consequently Space must be supposed necessary to the Existence of all other Things, tho' no other Thing be necessary to it's Existence, since that could not but always exist tho' nothing else existed. And if, as your Writers pretend to prove, there could be but one necessary Being, it could not be your supposed Deity, since there is another Being necessary to his Existence. Nor could he be Omnipotent, since there is another infinite Being over which he has no manner of Power. Nor could he be All-sufficient for his Creatures or Himself, since /8/ without Space neither He nor They could exist. And it is in It that all Things live, move, and have their Being.

C. Tho' Space be an uncreated, eternal, and absolute independent Being, yet, sure, the Things that exist in Space may be made out of Nothing.

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I. This is wholly inconceivable; because making supposes Something in being out of which another Thing is made, and all Operation supposes Something to operate upon.

Our Idea of Nothing consists in the Negation of all Being, Faculty, and Capability whatsoever, and consequently we can never suppose Nothing to become Something; that would be to suppose it Nothing and Something at the same Time. And if of Nothing, Nothing can be predicated, we can't so much as predicate of it a Possibility of becoming Something. If there is no Medium between Something and Nothing, and Nothing can't be the Subject out of which any Thing is made, whatever is made must be made out of some pre-existent Thing. *Ex Nihilo, Nihil fit* [nothing comes from nothing] was an undisputed Axiom with all the antient Philosophers; and even your own Bible is not so absurd as to say any Thing was made out of Nothing; but affirms a Chaos, upon which your God, in new modelling of Things worked very hard for six Days together.

C. The true Notion of Creation is not forming Something out of Nothing, as out of a material Cause, but only bringing some Being into Being.

I. But notwithstanding you vary your Phrase the same Difficulties occur; since this must be bringing some Being into /8v/ Being out of Something or out of Nothing; but out of Nothing, Nothing can be taken. Besides does not bringing a Being into Being first suppose a Being, and after that suppose it brought into Being. Which is the same Blunder as in a certain Play, where Adam is brought upon the Stage going in great Hast to be created.[49]

C. Why may not a Being be brought into Being as well as the Figure of a Being be brought into Being?

I. Whoever expresses himself after that odd manner can only mean, Figure being nothing but the Extremity of the Parts of a Being, changing the Position of those Parts, and consequently here is Nothing produced but Motion.

C. Why may not Being begin to be as well as Motion?

I. In one Case not only the Mover and Moved, but the Medium for Body to move in are in Being. But in the other Case, as there is an infinite Distance between the two Extremes of Being and no Being, so there is no Medium, (tho' the infinite Distance could be got over) to pass from one Extreme to another. There is Nothing distinct from Being or not Being; and consequently no Beginning to be, or Beginning not to be: Or, in other Words, no Creation or Annihilation. Since there is a greater Distance between Something and

[49] The reference is obscure, though it could be to Georgius Macropedius's *Adamus* (1552), which Pitcairne might have encountered when at Leiden in the early 1690s.

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Nothing, than between any two Beings or Modes of Being, is it not very odd that those who affirm God can't give Matter a Power of Thinking, nor divide an immaterial Being should yet contend that he can make Nothing become Something? Can there be so much greater Opposition between twice Two and Five than between Being and no /9/ Being, as should oblige them to say that God, tho' he can't make twice Two to be Five, yet he can make no Number Five?

C. That twice Two should be Five is a Contradiction; and 'tis allowed on all Hands that God can't do a Contradiction.

I. Why can't God do a Contradiction?

C. Because a Contradiction is Nothing, and Nothing cant be the Subject of Divine Power. For which Reason he can neither make a Contradiction true or false, or build any Thing upon it, or draw any Thing from it.

I. Had you owned this at first you had saved me the Trouble of proving the Impossibility of drawing all Things from Nothing. And after this Concession I shall only add that if God and Body so infinitely differ, that there is not, according to the general Opinion, so much as Extension in common between them, how can one be the Cause and the other the Effect? Is it not saying Body is uncaused since there is Nothing in the Effect that is in the Cause? Can any Thing be more evident than that a Being cant give what it has not to give? And which it has not at all it can't have to give, and consequently that God having no Solidity could not give it.

C. Tho' God has it not really, yet he has it virtually.

I. That is saying God has a Virtue to bestow on another, which he has not Himself. Contrary to that self-evident Axiom *Nil dat quod non habet* [nothing can give what it does not have]. Is Solidity a Perfection or an Imperfection?

C. It's an Imperfection. Because God who is without it would /9v/ otherwise want a Perfection which Body has.

I. If it be an Imperfection then Space, which is an infinite unsolid Being would be infinitely more perfect than Body. Besides if Solidity were an Imperfection how could you suppose it produced by an all-perfect Being? Or an all-good Being be at infinite Pains to add Imperfection to Being?

They who are against the Eternity of the Universe must yet be obliged to suppose that the Images of Things have been eternally in the Mind of that unsolid Being who framed them according to those Patterns. But is it not more natural to believe the Things themselves always to have existed than

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that the Images of the Things were before, nay eternally before the Things themselves? And if the common Notion is true that whatever is in God is God, these Images by being eternally and necessarily in God must be God Himself. Which is making God to be composed of the Images of Things; a great Part of which you must own to be solid, since what is unsolid can't be the Image or bear any Resemblance to that which is solid. And if this be not setting up Image worship I know not what is.

C. If these Arguments prove Creation impossible I grant it must [be] that Body or Matter, as well as Space has eternally and necessarily existed; yet even then we must suppose a God to put Things in such Order and Disposition as they are at present.

I. This without good Proof will not be admitted, since it is more natural to suppose that all the Parts of the Universe have always existed after the same Manner as at present /10/ than that one unsolid Part of it (for it can't be pretended your God is the Whole) should not only so exist, but have such Power over the rest as to destroy that natural Manner of Existence they had from Eternity and model them anew. But this can't be true as to Space, which all allow to be immutable.

C. If we had no other Proof of a God yet the admirable Order the material World is in sufficiently demonstrates it was put into that Order by an all-wise, all-powerful Being.

I. Whatever necessarily exists, could not but be from Eternity in the most perfect Manner its Nature is capable of, and putting it out of this proper and natural State must be putting it into an improper and unnatural State, which we can't conceive any other than a State of Confusion and Disorder. And therefore the antient Philosophers, particularly Cicero, thought the Perfection of the World was a Proof of its Eternity.[50] And consequently all the Arguments of your Divines on this Head, tho' they must be allowed to expose that absurd Notion of the Worlds being made by Chance, don't in the least affect it's Eternity. And they who suppose a Being which they make to be infinitely more perfect than the World to have existed from Eternity, one would think could not maintain that the Perfection of the World was an Argument against it's Eternity.

They who affirm that one Part of the Universe (which they call God) has infinite Perfections above the others, build their Opinion on his self-existence; but if that be common to the whole it can give no one Part any Advantage over the rest. And where there are several Beings independent of one another /10v/ in respect of their Existence there is no Reason to suppose one should be able to

[50] The reference is to Cicero's *De natura deorum*, and perhaps particularly the arguments of Cotta: see Cicero, *The nature of the Gods*, trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford, 1997).

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do every Thing on the other; without being reciprocally submitted to their Actions. And this even your Divines take to be so evident that they conclude their Cause desperate if they do not, tho' in direct Opposition to their Scriptures suppose all Things made out of Nothing.

C. If Matter was eternal yet Motion could not be so, because Matter is not capable of moving itself, and consequently there must be a Being distinct from Matter to give it that Order and Disposition it has at present, infinitely different from what it was when it was an inanimate Lump.

I. Since Matter is allowed to be indifferent as to Motion or Rest, is it not as easy to conceive it to have been from Eternity in Motion as in Rest? And Men are hard put to it when they suppose an immoveable Being to be the Mover of all Things. The same Reason which proves Space to be incapable of giving Motion to, or stopping the Motion of Body, must likewise prove any other (could there be any other) infinite unsolid Body to be so.

C. But may not God, tho' like Space, an infinite unsolid, or immaterial Being, have Perfections that Space has not?

I. Space being an uncaused, independent, infinite, unsolid Being, must have all the Perfections belonging to the Nature of such a Being; and yet That, for want of Solidity can only be an infinite Void for Body to move in, without being able anywise to affect it. So that could we suppose any other infinite Being of the same Nature, unsolid and immaterial, we could only suppose it another infinite Void for Body to move in. /11/

C. Is it not more easy to conceive that God may be the Cause of the Motion of Matter; than that Matter may be the Cause of it's own Motion?

I. They are both alike inconceivable. Because we can no more conceive that Matter can be moved by an unsolid Being, call it God or what you please; than that Matter can be the Cause of it's own Motion. If Motion is eternal as well as Matter,[51] it can no more be said that Matter caused Motion than that it caused itself, but both would be alike uncaused. If Motion was an unnatural State of Matter, there must be some Being distinct from Matter continually

[51] At this point an asterisk in the text keys to a footnote at the bottom of the page:

The ingenious Mr Toland, in his "Letters to Serena" has indeavoured to prove that *Motion* is an *essential* Property of all Matter; and if it be allowed that Matter exists *necessarily*, it will follow that *Motion* must have been *eternal*.

The reference is to Toland's *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704), which Clarke had attacked in his *Demonstration*, pp. 46–7 (incorrectly citing his target as Letter 3 when it is fact Letter 5).

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pushing it, because without it Matter would necessarily revert to its primitive State. But since it is allowed that Matter in Motion will continue in that State 'till put out of it, this shows that Motion is no unnatural State of Matter. And there is good Reason to think that no Part of Matter is perfectly at rest. And I can't see how they who suppose Gravitation and Attraction to be inseperable from Matter can suppose Motion, or at least a Tendency to it, to be seperable from any Part of it. And the Presumption is that those vast Bodies which have been for so many Thousand Years in Motion, without any but periodical Changes, have moved thus from Eternity. /11v/

If there is no Creator, or first Mover, all Things could not but exist in the Manner they do; since there could have been Nothing to have hindered their Existence, or make them exist otherwise than they do. They must then exist as necessarily as your imagined First Cause is supposed to do.

C. If the Earth had been eternal those Mountains which now rear their Heads so high would by Degrees have been washed down. Nor would such Inequalities have appeared on the Face of our Globe. Besides the late Progress of Arts and Sciences, and the small Part of Time our Histories take in seem to conclude against the Eternity of the Earth.

I. Were this Matter doubtful such Arguments would scarce turn the Scale; since there may have been many great Changes in this Globe of which we know Nothing. And, Mr Hook, not to mention others, in his Posthumous Works, takes Notice of several of these Changes; how some Places have risen and others subsided; and makes it highly probable that Mountains owe their Origin to Earthquakes.[52] And he, and others, give us undeniable Proofs of Shells of Fishes, and sometimes such as belong to very distant Countries, being found deep under Ground, in high Places, and at a great Distance from the Sea. And they tell us of Ships and Anchors so found. That Quantity of Earth which is daily carried into the Rivers, must, in length of Time, cause very great Changes; and consequently there can be no Argument drawn from the Inequality of the Surface of the Earth against it's Eternity. And if by such Changes as these, or by War, Famine, Pestilence, or any /12/ other Accidents, the Men in any Country are reduced to a very small Number, Arts and Sciences, Learning and Books are lost, and the few Inhabitants, who then must be upon an Equality, have enough to do to get Food for themselves by digging the Earth or hunting Wild Beasts. If in a great Part of the West Indies the Inhabitants are but few and barbarously ignorant; while in other Places, as in China for Instance, the People are numerous and Arts, and Sciences have there flourished; as appears by their undoubted Histories, even before Moses's Deluge, this, in all probability can't be owing to the different Nature of the People, since Mankind are every where

[52] The reference is to Robert Hooke's *Posthumous works*, ed. Richard Waller (London, 1705), especially pp. 279ff.

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alike, but to some such Accidents. Not but that Superstition has very much contributed to the Destruction of all true Knowledge, and Christians, as well as Mahometans, out of their great Zeal, have destroyed an Infinity of Old Authors; so that it is a very great Accident that we have any Remains of Antiquity; and that those few Greek and Roman Authors which are still extant had not been destroyed by that Bigottry which confounded the Rest. Tho' by your Reasoning there is no way to account for the Ignorance of the Inhabitants of Soldania,[53] and many other such Countries, but by supposing they were created a very long Time after the more polite Nations.

By this Time I hope you see my Scruples are not so ill founded as you imagined, but built on such Axioms as, did they not clash with your Superstition would be incontestable. – As, No two Beings can be in the same Place, nor the same Being in different Places at once. – That there can be no more than one infinite Being of the same Sort. – That out of Nothing, Nothing can /12v/ be produced. – That no Being can give to another neither Motion, nor Solidity, or any Thing else which itself has not. – That the Images of Things do not exist before the Things whose Images they are – Tho' you have omitted Nothing that can be said for your Cause, your Notions are so sophistical that the very explaining the Terms under which they are couched sufficiently shows their Inconsistency; and therefore it is no Wonder you have Recourse to the grand Support of all Absurdities, Force, and make it almost every where Death to speak against your Opinion. Tho' of all the Arguments urged for the support of it, there is not one, except that lately written which I have considered, but what is given up by some of your own Writers.[54]

C. You triumph before Victory; and tho' you have artfully enough evaded what I have already urged for your Information, yet I do not doubt to produce such Arguments to you from Providence, from the Government of the World, and from the Impossibility of Matters thinking as shall make you ashamed of your Superstition.

I. You know I have an Ear always open to Reason; and as I heartily thank you for the Favour of this Conference, so I shall be very glad to hear what you have to say toMorrow on these Heads.

Finis.

[53] At the point an asterisk in the text keys to a footnote at the bottom of the page:

Soldania is in the Hottentot's Country.

This refers to a passage in Locke's *Essay*, I.iv.8, in which the inhabitants of 'Soldania' (Saldanha Bay in South Africa) were seen as exemplifying the state of nature.

[54] The meaning of the text is slightly obscure at this point, but it evidently alludes back to matters already dealt with.

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