

Proving Things from the Bible: The Case of the Anti-Atheists

This article is about when the Bible can be used as an authoritative and persuasive source, and where that authority comes from – but also when it can't be used. One of the consequences of the availability of the vernacular printed Bible in the early modern period is that a much wider range of readers could start to quote the Bible to prove things. When the various lids of censorship and church courts come off in the mid-seventeenth century, so do the restraints on proponents of alternatives to orthodox Christianity – heretics, radicals, prophets – most of them quoting the Bible in their defence. They continue to depend on the authority of scripture, but because much of the Bible is anti-religious, in the sense of established religion, so one ought to expect 'biblical' to mean 'critical'. Think of the prophets, or Jesus against the Pharisees. So is the authority of the Bible intrinsic, authorized by the Holy Spirit, and thus compelling, whatever one's position? Or is it extrinsic, authorized by a church, or authorized by the civil authorities? But what if that authority, wherever it comes from, is not respected? I want to take a particular issue from the early modern period to see how this works out. To put it bluntly, is it worth quoting the Bible to an atheist?

Early modern atheism is a curious phenomenon. It is an accusation, a stick to beat your opponents with, much more than it is (as it would be today) a position that an individual might take and argue for. Under England's constantly renewed blasphemy laws, it is an offence.¹ As a consequence, it survives (rather like early church heresies) mostly in its refutations. There is a substantial anti-atheist literature, refuting a position that few people, if any, appear to publicly endorse.² But they couldn't, without fear of punishment, as the case of Kyd and Marlowe shows.³

There is also a question of definition. Some modern histories of atheism really only begin with the eighteenth century, or the mid-seventeenth century, which I think is far too late.⁴ One might say half-seriously that they should begin in 4004 BCE (Archbishop Ussher's date for the Creation and Fall), and indeed the history of atheism by

Jenkin Thomas Philips (1713) identifies Cain as the first atheist.⁵ In the classical world we could, like many Renaissance commentators, begin with the ideas of Epicurus (d. 270 BCE); but whenever we start, we should remember that the definitions change, mainly in response to which god the atheist does not believe in. Before the conversion of Constantine, the early Christians were charged with atheism, because they refused to acknowledge that the Emperor was a god – one among many.⁶ In other words, you are an atheist if you refuse to acknowledge the god, or one of the gods, I believe in.

The more usual definition of 'atheist' in the early modern period is not concerned so much with whether God exists as whether he does anything now that the act of creation has passed. The earlier arguments for the existence of God deriving from Anselm and Thomas Aquinas continue to be rehearsed, but the more important issue is the continuing activity of God. This usually comes down to two issues: providence and judgment. Providence denotes the day-by-day engagement of God with creation – the conceptual opposite of the divine watchmaker who just winds up the universe and sets it in motion. For Alexandra Walsham, in her indispensable study of the concept in early modern England, 'The particular preoccupation which Protestants displayed with the workings of providence stemmed in large part from their expulsion of all intermediaries between God and the individual soul, from their uncompromising insistence upon mankind's utter impotence and depravity and complete dependence upon the mercy of its maker and Redeemer.'⁷ The sense of God in the Reformation period, then, is intimately bound up with a continuing, day-by-day consciousness of human dependence on God. 'Those that deny the Providence of God', wrote Stephen Charnock, 'do in effect deny the being of God . . . and that principle, of a greedy desire to be uncontroul'd in their Lusts, which induceth men to a denial of Providence, that thereby they might stifle those seeds of fear which infect and embitter their sinful pleasures, may as well lead them to deny that there is any such being as a God.'⁸

In defining the dangers of early modern atheism, however, the threat of God's judgment is even more crucial, because this is how atheism becomes perceived as a moral and political problem for a Christian society. What is it that prevents a person from misbehaving, or rebelling?

Is it the fear of being caught and punished? Or is it the fear of hell? Atheism, it was argued, not only ignores the second threat, but takes away any kind of moral sense:

How spreading and Epidemical the contagion of Atheism is grown of late, there are few so happy to be ignorant[.] That the same not only strikes at the Root of all Religion, but takes away all sense of Good and Evil, all Trust and Obligation amongst Men; and consequently is most destructive to humane Society and Government is no less evident.⁹

But there is more than one difficulty here. If an atheist does not believe in the existence of Hell, or a Last Judgement, the argument goes, they would be more likely to take the chance of resisting authority, if the only sanctions were this-worldly. In the increasingly fragmenting world of Christian belief in the seventeenth century, that is not such a simple choice. What of the Catholic assassin (like Guy Fawkes) driven to kill the Protestant monarch by his Christian faith? John Hull, in *The Unmasking of the Politike Atheist* (1602), dedicated to identifying Catholicism as atheist, remarks on the first page that 'quick-sighted Papisme, can descry Atheism in the true Christian, because he defies the Popes'. Atheism equals heresy, the wrong kind of Christianity. Bacon's essay 'Of Atheism' identifies one cause of atheism as 'divisions in religion, if they be many, for any one main division addeth zeal to both sides, but many divisions introduce atheism'.¹⁰ So the more options there are for Christian belief, the more atheism is likely to flourish – it's no longer simply what people call supposedly 'Christian' opponents. And if it is perceived that the main reason for promoting Christian belief is political stability, then that can also be identified as a cause of scepticism or atheism amongst subjects. There is the route laid out in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, as Richard Tuck has argued, where 'Christianity became in effect the civil religion of modern England'.¹¹ Or there is a more radical option still: if the main function of religion is to instill obedience in subjects, does that not compromise its integrity? Such a critique might sound more like Marxism than an early modern idea; but the pressure that Hobbes is implicitly acknowledging, from principled, religious dissidence, moves the issue of civil obedience, in the later seventeenth century, towards some kind of absolutism, or tolerance, or secularization.¹²

In 1692 Richard Bentley wrote *The Folly of Atheism*, by which time the term 'deism' had been introduced, albeit with significant variations, to describe a belief in the existence of a creator God without the daily intervention or the final judgment that was at the heart of early modern orthodoxy. Peter Harrison characterizes it as 'the extreme manifestation of the rationalizing tendency within the religious thought of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England'.¹³ Bentley sees it as another name for atheism:

There are some Infidels among us, that not only disbelieve the *Christian Religion*; but impugn the assertion of a *Providence*, of the *Immortality* of the Soul, of an Universal *Judgment* to come, and of any *Incorporeal Essence*: and yet to avoid the odious name of *Atheists*, would shelter and skreen themselves under a new one of *Deists*, which is not quite so obnoxious.¹⁴

Notice how Bentley has added two other items to the usual list of things atheists are held to deny – the immortality of the soul and 'incorporeal essence' – though this is not unique to him. Without the belief in an immortal soul, there would be no judgment possible, though there were some Christian materialists, such as Richard Overton, who denied this.¹⁵ Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography* declares that 'We have an Atheistical Sect, who affirme that mens soules sleepe with their bodies untill the day of judgement'.¹⁶

There is no way of estimating the number of atheists, however defined, in England in this period, though Mersenne wrote in 1623 of thousands of atheists in Paris.¹⁷ However many there were, there were a large number of refutations to deal with them. Michael Hunter, who along with David Wootton has done most to explore this area, suggests that some of these may have been simply ways of cutting one's teeth as a young intellectually minded clergyman, rather than responding to actual atheists.¹⁸

What is the role of scripture in such apologetic? There is a division between those who use largely biblical material to refute atheism, and those who use what they see as the common ground of philosophical argument, often derived from classical philosophy or from the reasons for

the existence of God in Christian tradition. And there are those who use both. The question that this raises is this: why quote from a text you believe to be inspired by God in an attempt to persuade someone who doesn't believe that such a God exists? Rather, wouldn't some agreed common ground be a better place to start? There are two answers. One is that the very inspiration of scripture will convince a reader who may not acknowledge it, but cannot help but feel it. The other is that the atheist is not really the intended reader of such treatises – the anti-atheist discourse is either an exercise in refutation for the benefit and comfort of the believers, or a wake-up call to believers not to listen to these newfangled, dangerous atheists, or, more insidiously, the atheist within. Atheism is not just a problem for Christianity; it is a problem, or a temptation, within Christianity. In so far as a Christian thinks he can sin without being found out, for example, he is to that extent an atheist.

Anti-atheist writing is, of course, a way to define true believers, to their comfort as well as their warning. So the anonymous author of *The Touchstone of True Religion* (1600) covers his margins with scriptural references – but he refers to atheists in the third person, and it is as much part of an anti-Catholic as an anti-atheist polemic.

For many of the most thoughtful anti-atheists, it is argued, only reason will do, but it is the kind of reason readers of Milton, say, will be familiar with, the reason that is part of humanity's special kinship with God, rather than anything antagonistic to the Bible. John Weemse, in *A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sonnes*, argues 'nothing will serve against the Atheist, but only to bring him to the bar of Reason, and God hath left this reason within him to convince him and make him inexcusable'.¹⁹ Readers of Paul's letter to the Romans will recognize the biblical source of this line of argument: 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse' (Romans 1:20). For Paul, though, this is not a direct appeal to Reason, because unregenerate minds are not reasonable in this: they 'became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools' (Romans 1:21–2). The pronouns remind us that Paul is not writing to atheists; his engagement with non-Christian opponents, as described in the Acts of the

Apostles, is usually more conciliatory. The importance of Romans 1 in anti-atheist polemic is also seen in Henrie Smith's *Gods Arrow against Atheists* (1611) where a text from it is the first biblical quotation.²⁰

The word 'atheist' doesn't appear in the Bible; but as with the Trinity, that doesn't mean it isn't there. As those verses from Romans suggest, the word to look for is 'fool', and the biblically based attacks on atheism in the early modern period quote Proverbs, where the fool is the antithesis of godly Wisdom, and in particular Psalm 14, which begins 'The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*'. So, for example, Thomas Heywood, in his poem *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells* (1635), takes the notion of fool and extends it into madness:

This Age breeds men so brutish naturall,
As to beleewe there is no God at all.
Such is the Atheist, with whom can be had
No competition; one obtuse or mad,
Who cannot scape Heav'ns most implacable rod.
The *Psalmists* Foole, who saith, There is no God.²¹

A century earlier, John Calvin, in his commentary on Psalm 14, discusses the Hebrew word *nabal*, translated as 'fool', as follows:

Forasmuch as [Nabal] among the Hebrewes signifyeth not only a foole, but also a froward and naughty person, it had not bin amisse to have translated it so in this place. Notwithstanding, I willingly follow that which is more received: namely that all heathnish folk should be taken for brainsick, inasmuch as they cast away the feare of God, and yeld them selves over unto al unrighteousnesse. For David blameth not his enemyes for common folishnesse: but rather he inveyeth against the brainsick and mad hard hartednesse of those whom the world deemeth to be very wise.²²

Calvin is positioning the Psalm as an attack on worldly wisdom. For someone so aware of the power of Renaissance humanism, this is a deliberate warning against too much ready hospitality to classical philosophy. The level of wariness of worldly (read 'classical') learning runs as a counter-narrative through much of the period.

At the same time, we have to note that the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity rather cuts against the argument from nature. George Abbot's paraphrase of Psalm 14:1 goes like this: 'Man by his fall hath lost, and naturally is void of the right understanding of God, believing nothing so of him as he is, and so makes him as if he were not.'²³ The implication is that natural man is atheist because of the Fall.

The playwright and fiction writer John Lyly has an interesting little section in *Euphues and his England* (1580), a dialogue between Euphues and Atheos. For Euphues, by then the epitome of the reformed humanist, faithful and virtuous as well as eloquent, it is an appropriate project to convince Atheos, an atheist with a troubled conscience, of the truth of Christianity. He begins with the testimony of the classical authors, Cicero, Plato and Aristotle, but then remarks 'I have a better opinion of thee, and therefore I mean not to trifle with Philosophy, but to trye this by the touchstone of the Scriptures'.²⁴ So, both/and rather than either/or.

William Dell, on the other hand, Master of Gonville & Caius College Cambridge during the Commonwealth and an early patron of Bunyan, was much more hostile to the dominant role of the classics in university education. He argued that the universities should stop awarding divinity degrees, as they were no guarantee that the recipient was anointed by the Spirit.

For the true *Spiritual Church* is built on the *Foundation* of the *Prophets* and *Apostles*; *Jesus Christ* himself being the chief *corner stone*, and so it is *firmly* founded upon a *Rock*, and can *never fall*; But the *Universities* are built on the *Philosophers* and *Heathen*, *Plato* and *Aristotle* being the chief *corner stones*, and so they are built upon the *sand*, and neither can their *own hands* uphold them, nor the *Secular Arm* establish them, in that day wherein *the Lord alone shall be exalted*. But it is not men of *moral* and *civil Religion* and *Righteousness*, who will do this work, and execute this vengeance; for the *Inchauntments* of the *Universities* are too *strong* and *mighty* for all *Humane Spirits*: But the *called*, *chosen*, and *faithfull* Ones of *Christ*, when he shall *summon* them, and call them to his foot, they shall not stand on *Complements*, *Formalities* and *Niceties*; nor regard *friendship* or *enmity*; but through the *Power of Faith*, shall break through *all* that can be *said* and *objected* by the *Wisdom*, *Policy*, *Prudence*, and *Religion* of man, and shall execute the

*righteous Judgements of the Lord, on these Mothers of Harlots, and Fornications of the Nations.*²⁵

His argument for the reformation of learning is more constructive than this, arguing for universities in the major cities of England, for example, and for the teaching of practical knowledge. But it is clear that Dell's hostility to 'humane learning' is part of a deep suspicion of putting learning before inspiration and scripture. He regards as a great failing that English churches over-value the universities as a training ground for preachers of godliness.

The major anti-atheist treatises of the mid-seventeenth century have a different approach. Many of them come from the Cambridge Platonists, but there is a much wider field of natural theology beginning to open up in dialogue with the growth of a recognizably modern scientific endeavour. An early example is Walter Charleton's *The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature* (1652) which is sub-titled 'a physico-theological treatise' and is an attempt at an intellectual synthesis of modern science with Christian theology as well as apologetic directed towards atheists.

It hath been the positive and settled judgment of most *Divines*, both Ancient and Recent, not onely that the *Existence* of God may be demonstrated, or irresistibly enforced upon the most prævaricate understanding, by the pressure of *Reasons purely Naturall*; but also, that the Cognition of the *Non-principiate* and *Self-dependent Being*, is farre more easily acquired, then the Cognition of any *Created Nature* whatsoever: insomuch as every man brings into the world with him a certain *Proleptical*, or anticipated *Notion* of the *Deity*, indeleibly impressed upon the very substance of his mind.²⁶

That ambition, to show not just the existence of God but also his attributes from Nature, is shared by the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, though for them the existence of spirits is part of that idea of nature. More in particular is aware that the critical spirit of the Reformation might easily go just that one stage further; attacking superstition and credulity in the Catholics might lead to skepticism of the central tenets of Christianity itself. He opens his *Antidote against Atheism* in this way:

The grand Truth which we are now to be employed about and to prove, is *That there is a God*: and I made choice of this Subject as very seasonable for the Times we are in, and are coming on, wherein Divine Providence more universally loosening the minds of men from the awe and tyranny of mere accustomed Superstition, and permitting a freer perusal of matters of Religion then in former Ages, the Tempter would take advantage, where he may carry men captive out of one dark prison into another, out of *Superstition* into *Atheism* it self.²⁷

More is concerned to persuade atheists into belief in the existence of God by natural means – and for his real or projected atheists, the existence of God is an issue, so to that extent we have a figure of modern atheism (the beginnings of enlightenment atheism, maybe?) in his arguments. So, while Dell was a rather unusual Cambridge don, attempting a radical reformation of the university through the seventeenth-century equivalent of a charismatic revival, Henry More over at Christ's was arguing that only a natural theology would persuade the atheists, even if he himself held a very high view of the world of spirit within the natural world.

Michael J. Buckley, S.J., in his study of the origins of modern atheism, takes this a stage further, and comments on the strange absence of Jesus from any Enlightenment defence of God, however much they admired him: 'the fundamental reality of Jesus as the embodied presence and witness of god within human history was never brought into the critical struggle of Christianity'.²⁸ Henry Care, in *The Darkness of Atheism Expelled by the Light of Nature* (1683) has an answer to this. Too many laudable attempts at defeating atheists have failed

by reason of their not proceeding in such a Method of Proof, as the Adversaries (who must be allowed to choose their Weapons, or they will never acknowledge themselves vanquished) have thought fit to expect for their Conviction; The authority of sacred Scriptures, which pious Souls devoutly reverence, They Impudently deny.

But because they still have 'Natures Light', we can proceed to demonstrate God's existence and providence to them.²⁹

The theology of this is interesting, because, as we have seen before, the Lutheran/Calvinist reformed consensus would suggest that even the

light of nature is dimmed in the reprobate. This is the argument of John Wingfield, in *Atheisme Close and Open, Anatomized* (1634), arguing from 1 Corinthians and the rich fool in Luke's gospel:

If the naturall Man be deprived of the power to understand the doctrine of God, (excuse him who can) hee will bee found a foole in the estimation of God . . . the Holy Ghost here calls so many of us Fooles, as remain in the estate of naturall men, not enlightened.

Two pages later he is referring to Paul in Romans 2 – 'that their conscience doth witnesse to them' – and develops a picture of a man who progresses in atheism: 'if he go further in wickednesse . . . he proceedeth further in Atheism'.³⁰

If belief in God is in some way 'natural', then atheism is 'unnatural', and the arguments can proceed under that assumption, and scripture need not be the only road to enlightenment. Does later seventeenth-century apologetic then open up a fissure in post-Reformation Christianity between the work of nature and the work of grace? One writer who seems aware of this is Richard Burthogge, an early supporter of John Locke's work on toleration and empiricism, in his *Tagathon; or, Divine Goodness Explicated and Vindicated from the Exceptions of the Atheist* (1672). His diagnosis of the situation is as follows:

*So much it is the interest of God and True Religion, that Divine Benignity be vindicated; a work as necessary now as ever, when Lucretius is as much consulted as Moses, and when there are almost as many, who blasphemously dispute Divine Goodnesse, as there are that seriously believe it.*³¹

But even with the Epicurean, he feels the need to employ Scripture, not just reason, but he has an interesting way of arguing for the compromise, somewhere between More and Dell, as it were:

The Method I have taken in the following Discourse, is to second the evincements, which I urge from common Reason, or Nature, with the suffrage of the sacred Oracles. Which that the Reader may not mis-

interpret, and accuse of want of judgement, seeing my pretences are against the Atheist, who believes not Scripture; he is to know, that there are *Reasons* for the Atheist, which though to make them more perspicuous, and convincing, I have backed with the verdicts of the gravest *Philosophers*, and to shew them to be also Scriptural, I have confirmed from the *Scriptures*; yet I insist not on them with the Atheist, as they are Scriptural, but as they are Reasons, Scriptural Reasons.³²

Burthogge's argument is pointing in two directions – to Christians, to reassure them that he knows what he's doing when he's talking to atheists, and that he's being faithful to the Scriptures while doing so, and also (of course) to atheists, to appeal to the authority of nature, reason and the philosophers that they would recognize, while reminding them that Scripture, too, has reasons, even if they don't acknowledge them in the way a Christian would. It's a synthesis that has roots in the Bible – Paul quoting Greek writers to the Greeks in Acts 17 – and one that has a distinguished and conflicted history for much of Christian thought. In the realm of physico-theology, it is like so much Christian apologetic from the 1650s to Kant's objections, and afterwards, despite Kant's objections. So seventeenth-century atheism seems to have generated a new style of Christian apologetic based on natural revelation. Indeed, in Alasdair McIntyre's view, the seventeenth-century crisis of faith led to the nineteenth-century one: 'The God in whom the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to disbelieve had been invented only in the nineteenth century.'³³

But Burthogge also gives a rather special spin to the early modern Christian's problem of what to do with the Bible when confronted with an atheist. He recognizes the problem of arguing from a text that his opponents would not regard as inspired. But he still wants to make it present in the argument, to show that arguments from nature are consonant with arguments from Scripture. Burthogge was a learned man with much to contribute to the emergent English philosophical movement. It is interesting to see his strategy echoed in a much less learned pamphlet, *A Preservative against Atheism*, by the Baptist Sabbatarian William Saller. In this short catechetical piece Saller begins with the arguments for God from creation, but then spends longer arguing

for the inspiration and authority of Scripture, before heading into the business of what true religion is.³⁴ Saller, like so many anti-atheists, is apt to merge the 'papistical' with the atheist as the argument proceeds. For him the Law (the Ten Commandments) is the basis of true religion; convincing the atheist that God exists is only the beginning.

The place of the Bible in Christian apologetic is just one issue in the wider rebalancing of the relationship between faith and reason as the early modern period changes into what we might want to call the Enlightenment. As Jonathan Israel has pointed out in his magisterial investigations into this, it is not simply a matter of the development of ideas in isolation. The Civil War in Britain and the Thirty Years War in Europe precipitated a spiritual crisis as much as a political one.³⁵ Alongside the familiar binaries of Protestant and Catholic, conformist and nonconformist, Christian and Turk, reason and revelation, we must put Christian and atheist. And while horror and fear mark the differences more often than respectful disagreement, there is something else at work. The fear of Catholicism in Protestant England, for example, includes a fear of the 'enemy within', so that Laudian reform, for example, is seen as really a return to Catholic superstition. Christian attacks on atheism might choose, as so many of my examples do, to meet opponents on the agreed, neutral ground of reason. But even then, there is an uneasy feeling that atheism is a problem within the Christian congregation as well, not just in some almost unthinkable libertine Other. For Stephen Charnock, in his 'Discourse Upon Practical Atheism', writing from a Calvinist viewpoint, atheism is 'natural', and so 'all sin is founded in a secret Atheism'.³⁶ To the extent that we sin, thinking that God might not notice, to that extent we are all atheist. The question we are posing thus becomes more pointed: is the Bible the right way to persuade this atheist within to return to God? It is a long way from the arguments for the existence of God; but it is a reminder that in the seventeenth century people were probably more worried about the practical effects of atheism than they were about its philosophical justification.

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Notes

- 1 For the prosecution of blasphemy in this period, David Lawton, *Blasphemy* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), chapter four, and Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 196–213.
- 2 For the best survey of this, see Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of "Atheism" in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth series, 35 (1985), 135–157. The historiography is surveyed by David Wootton in 'New Histories of Atheism', the first chapter in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
- 3 Kyd was arrested for having atheist 'papers' in a room he shared with Marlowe, and blamed Marlowe, under interrogation; see Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992). The best summary is still Nicholas Davidson, 'Christopher Marlowe and Atheism', in *Christopher Marlowe and the English Renaissance*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).
- 4 See David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: from Hobbes to Russell* (London: Routledge, 1990), and Gavin Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), who both identify a distinctively modern atheism surfacing in the mid-seventeenth century, and Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), who focuses on France and sees 'a widespread conviction that the atheists were at the gates' at the beginning of the seventeenth century (p. 68).
- 5 See Ienkinio Tomasio [Jenkin Thomas Philips], *Historia Atheismi* (Altorf, 1713), p. 67.
- 6 See, for example, Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 29, and 'Athenagoras' Plea' in *The Early Church Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 303–4.
- 7 Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.
- 8 Stephen Charnock, *Several Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (London, 1682), p. 2.
- 9 J. M., *The Atheist Silenced; or, The Existence of a Deity: and His Creation and Government of the World, Demonstrated from Reason, and the Light of Nature only* (London, 1672), sig. B1^{r-v}.
- 10 Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 110.
- 11 Richard Tuck, 'Hobbes's Christian Atheism', in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 129.
- 12 See, for example, Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity*, trans. J. T. Swann (London: Verso, 2009), p. 48; Lana Cable, 'Secularizing Conscience in Milton's Republican Community', in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 2007), chapter 4, 'Modern Social Imaginaries'.

- 13 Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 65.
- 14 Richard Bentley, *The Folly of Atheism, and (what is now called) Deism; Even with Respect to the Present Life* (London, 1692), p. 6. This was the first of the Boyle Lectures, funded by Boyle's will 'for proving the Christian Religion against notorious Infidels', among whom he listed atheists and deists.
- 15 R[ichard] O[verton], *Mans Mortallitie* (Amsterdam, 1643); the imprint 'Amsterdam' is cancelled by hand and replaced by 'London' in the British Library copy. Overton believed in the final resurrection of the body and soul together. In view of my argument later in this article about scripture and reason, it is interesting that Overton alternates, chapter by chapter, reasons from scripture and arguments from reason for his view. See Nicholas McDowell, 'Dead Souls and Modern Minds? Mortalism and the Early Modern Imagination, from Marlowe to Milton', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 40 (2010), 559–592, and Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chapter 4, 'Mortalists and Materialists'.
- 16 E[phraim] P[agitt], *Heresiography; or, A Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of these Latter Times* (London, 1645), sig. A3^{r-v}.
- 17 See Jean-Robert Armogathe, 'Proofs of the Existence of God', in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), I, 306.
- 18 Hunter, 'The Problem of "Atheism" in Early Modern England'.
- 19 John Weemse, *A Treatise of the Four Degenerate Sonnes, viz., the Atheist, the Magician, the Idolater and the Jew* (London, 1636), p. 8.
- 20 Henrie Smith, *God's Arrow against Atheists* (London, 1611), p. 4.
- 21 Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells* (London, 1635), Book 1, p. 11.
- 22 *The Psalmes of David and Others. With M. Iohn Calvins Commentaries* [trans. Arthur Golding] ([London,] 1571), p. 42^v. Charnock's work, mentioned in note 8 above, takes Psalm 14.1 as its text.
- 23 George Abbot, *Brief Notes upon the Whole Book of Psalms* (London, 1651), p. 39.
- 24 John Lyly, *Euphues the Anatomy of Wit and Euphues and his England*, ed. Leah Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 126.
- 25 William Dell, *A Plain and Necessary Confutation of Divers Gross and Antichristian Errors, Delivered to the University Congregation, the last Commencement, Anno 1653, by Mr. Sydrach Simpson, Master of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge* (London, 1654), p. 48.
- 26 Walter Charleton, *The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature* (London, 1652), 'Advertisement to the Reader', sig. b^r.
- 27 Henry More, *Antidote against Atheism* (third edition, London, 1662), p. 9.
- 28 Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, p. 67.
- 29 Henry Care, *The Darkness of Atheism Expelled by the Light of Nature* (London, 1683), sig. B2^{r-v}. Care is listed on the title page as translator; much of the body of the text is the same as that of the work by J. M. (referred to as 'Morinus' in the preface) mentioned in note 9 above.

- 30 John Wingfield, *Atheism Close and Open, Anatomized* (London, 1634), pp. 14, 16.
- 31 Richard Burthogge, *Tagathon; or, Divine Goodness Explicated and Vindicated from the Exceptions of the Atheist* (London, 1672), the 'Epistle Dedicatory', sig. A4^v.
- 32 Ibid., 'An Advertisement to the Reader', sig. A6^{r-v}.
- 33 Alasdair MacIntyre and Paul Ricoeur, *The Religious Significance of Atheism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 14.
- 34 William Saller, *A Preservative against Atheism and Error* (London, 1664). Pages 6–24 in a twenty-five page pamphlet argue for the authority and witness of scripture.
- 35 See especially Parts I and II of Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 36 Charnock, *Several Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, p. 50.