

# **The Alliance of Christianity and Mechanistic Philosophy in 17th-Century England**

by

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## **Abstract**

While scholars have paid much attention to the Darwinian controversies of 19th century England, the roots of the robust and long-standing synthesis of theology and mechanistic science which Darwin's theory of evolution challenged has received much less attention. The second half of the seventeenth century saw the seminal development of this synthesis, during which monumental philosophical efforts were made by Robert Boyle, Walter Charleton and other English natural philosophers to accommodate Christian theology within a framework of mechanistic and empirical science based partly on the atomistic principles of the Greek materialist philosopher Epicurus. These efforts gave birth to a close alliance between English theology and experimental science which would largely hold throughout most of the eighteenth century, albeit in a modified form. I discuss this peculiarly English phenomenon, which brought together strange bedfellows: Christian theology and the most uncompromisingly materialistic antifinalist philosophy of antiquity.