3

INVENTING EPISTEMOLOGY

All knowers know God implicitly in all that they know.

Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 22, a. 2, ad. 1

Q. What do you believe?
A. I believe what the Church believes.
Q. What does the Church believe?
A. The Church believes what I believe.
Q. Well, then, what is it that both you and the Church believe?
A. We both believe the very same thing.

The Collier's Catechism

If we compare the changes to which *Religion* has bin always subject, with the present face of things, we may safely conclude, that whatever vicissitude shall happen about it in our time, it will probably neither be to the advantage of *implicit Faith,* nor of *Enthusiasm,* but of *Reason* …. The universal disposition of this *Age* is bent upon a *rational religion.*

Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*[1]

3.1 Making Europe Christian

When Père Biard despaired of converting the Mi'kmaq to Christianity on account of their apparent lack of a basic conception of belief, there was a sense in which he was confronting not one foreign culture, but two. In addition to the alien thought-world of the indigenous Americans he had

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[1] Epigraphs: Collier's Catechism in James Wylie, *The Papacy: Its History, Dogmas, Genius, and Prospects* (Edinburgh, 1851), p. 198; Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667), p. 366.

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also to deal with the residues of medieval notions of implicit faith that had informed the proselytising endeavours of his predecessors in Port Royal. The very first missionaries to Acadia had negotiated the problem of creedal belief by the simple expedient of baptising the willing, rather than inculcating the doctrinal truths of Catholic Christianity. This approach drew upon the idea of implicit faith and reflected the conviction that membership of the Church was bestowed through the rite of baptism. Augustine had maintained that through the sacrament of baptism the infant becomes 'a believer' even though, needless to say, they are unable to assent to any doctrines.[2] A subsequent and explicit affirmation of the truth represented by the sacrament would normally be expected when the 'believer' reached the age of reason, but baptism provided the first step. In keeping with this sentiment, throughout the Middle Ages the verb 'christen', in both its Latin equivalent and in the older European languages, meant 'to Christianise' or 'make someone a Christian'.[3] Biard, however, refused to emulate what he regarded as the lax approach of his predecessors and, to the consternation of many of his charges, withheld baptism from those unable to articulate core Christian doctrines unless they were on death's doorstep.[4] This stance reflected a significant change of attitude within the Catholic Church, as part of the Counter-Reformation response to the challenges issued by Protestants, on the fundamental question of who is counted as a true Christian. At the heart of this change were questions about what had to be explicitly believed, what was entailed by 'believing', and how central believing was to the Christian life.

While there is a widespread popular assumption that the medieval period was pre-eminently an age of Christian faith, historians vary in their assessments of just how Christian medieval Europe was.[5] These assessments are

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[2] '*Itaque parvulum, etsi nondum fides illa quae in credentium voluntate consistit, jam tamen ipsius fidei sacramentum fidelem facit.*' Letter 98.10, *PL* 33: 364; ET *NPNF* I, vol. 1, p. 206. That said, Augustine also observed a distinction between those who were Christians on account of their baptism (*numero*) and those who genuinely merited the designation (*merito*). *Tractates on John* 61.2 [*PL* 35: 1799]. Luther, along with other early modern sources, also made reference to this distinction. Luther, WA 4, 240.6–25; Thomas Grantham: 'some are only *Numero*, some are *Numero & Merito*, some are Numero, *Merito, & Electio*'. *Christianismus Primitivus* (London, 1678), p. 3.

[3] 'christen, v.' *OED* (accessed 13 November 2020). See also Nathan Ristuccia, *Christianization and Commonwealth in Early Medieval Europe: A Ritual Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 13–15.

[4] Roger Williams would adopt a similar position in his *Christenings Make Not Christians* [1645], ed. Henry Martyn Dexter (Providence, 1881).

[5] Jean Delumeau, in particular, has made a strong case that the notion of 'the Christian Middle Ages' is a highly dubious one, particularly if the label was meant to apply to rural

complicated by different criteria for what counts as being a Christian. There is little doubt that in the late Middle Ages the lives of most Europeans were governed by the cultic practices of Catholic Christianity, the divisions of time set out in the liturgical calendar, and notions of sacred and consecrated space. There is also clear evidence of widespread religious devotion and personal piety.[6] It is less obvious that there was a universal and explicit knowledge of core Christian doctrines, and this was true even for many of the clergy. Christianisation in early medieval Europe was not understood in terms of the adoption of a distinctive set of Christian beliefs. Instead, as one historian has recently observed, 'it was primarily, though not exclusively, a ritual performance: the integration of individuals into Church communities through mandatory rituals'.[7] This was entirely consistent with Augustine's

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populations. *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire* (London: Burns and Oates, 1977). See also Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France: 1400–1750*, trans. Lydia Cochcrane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985). For critiques or refinements of Delumeau's thesis see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); John Van Engen, 'The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem', *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 519–52; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); C. J. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Delumeau has since nuanced his original position: 'The Journey of a Historian', *Catholic Historical Review* 96 (2010), 435–48.

[6] Van Engen, 'The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem'; William Montner, 'Popular Piety in Late Medieval Europe', in *Ritual, Myth and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983), pp. 6–22.

[7] Ristuccia, *Christianization and Commonwealth*, p. 2. 'Ritual' admittedly, can be a difficult category, partly because the historian must interpret it largely through texts. See Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). There are important parallels between the original sense of 'Christianise' and 'Judaise' (Gk. *ioudaïzō*), with the latter meaning to adopt Jewish practices and observances. See Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, p. 41. Compare this with some anthropological accounts of conversion in non-Western contexts. 'When a Wari' says of himself that he is a believer or a convert to Protestant Christianity, he is, above all, saying that he is a member of a given community. For this it is necessary for him to perform certain rituals, which does not mean that he had understood or accepted any of the Christian doctrine.' Vilaça, 'Christians without Faith', 112, n. 12. For similar examples, respectively, among the Pitjantjara and Pico, see A. A. Yengoyan, 'Religion, Morality, and Prophetic Traditions: Conversion among the Pitjantjara of Central Australia', in *Conversion to Christianity*, ed. R. W. Hefner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 233–57 (p. 243); Peter Gow, 'Forgetting Conversion: The Summer Institute of Linguistics Mission in the Piro Lived World', in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 211–39. See also R. W. Hefner, 'World-Building and the Rationality of Conversion', in *Conversion to Christianity*, ed. Hefner, pp. 3–46: 'religious conversion always involves [an] authoritative acceptance of as yet unknown or unknowable religious truths' (p. 18).

suggestion that one becomes a 'believer' through baptism. We encounter a related idea in the principle articulated by Augustine's disciple Prosper of Aquitaine (*c.*390–*c.*455 AD) who in the formula *lex orandi, lex credenda* (the law of prayer is the law of belief) suggested that liturgy and worship are, in a sense, constitutive of 'belief'.[8] It is against this background that we are to understand the new consensus, across the spectrum of sixteenth-century religious reformers, that Europe needed to be re-Christianised. Integral to this programme of Christianisation was a mission to inculcate the populace with explicit doctrinal knowledge.[9] But for all the talk of *re*-Christianising, this programme amounted to the implementation of a new idea of what it was to be Christian.

Martin Luther complained in 1520 that 'the Christian life' is 'unknown throughout the world. It is neither preached about nor sought after; we are altogether ignorant of our own name and do not know why we are Christian or bear the name of Christians.'[10] Much of this ignorance was credited to the scourge of implicit faith. Luther insisted that 'every man is responsible for his own faith', pointing out that just as no one can go to heaven or hell for me, neither can anyone believe or disbelieve for me.[11] In a similar vein, John Calvin lamented that his Roman Catholic adversaries 'deem it of little moment what each man believes concerning God and Christ, or disbelieves, provided he submits to the judgment of the Church with what they call implicit faith'. Implicit faith, he maintained, deludes the general populace: it 'not only buries true faith, but entirely destroys it'.[12] These observations bear more than a passing resemblance to Biard's characterisation of the first Christian converts that he had encountered in

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[8] Prosper of Aquitaine, *PL* 51: 209–10. 'Let us consider the sacraments of priestly prayers, which having been passed down by the apostles and celebrated uniformly throughout the whole world and in every Catholic Church so that the law of praying might establish the law of believing.' Cf. John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 134.

[9] Thus Stuart Clark: 'there is scarcely any doubt that "Christianizing" was what reformers of all the major churches *thought* they were doing'. *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 530. See also Scott H. Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), esp. pp. 17–24; Ann Marie Johnson and John A. Maxfield (eds.), *The Reformation as Christianization* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

[10] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, *LW* 31, 368. Cf. 'Receiving both kinds in the Sacrament', *LW* 36, 264.

[11] Luther, *Temporal Authority*, *LW* 45, 108.

[12] Calvin, *Institutes*, Prefatory Address, vol. 1, p. 7. For his more nuanced position see *Institutes* 3.2.2, vol. 1, pp. 470–1. Seen also Richard Muller, '*Fides* and *Cognitio* in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin', *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990), 207–24.

America: their baptism notwithstanding, they knew no prayers or articles of faith, attended services only out of curiosity, and had barely a passing familiarity with the word 'Christian'.[13]

As Biard's observations also make apparent, with the passage of time the insistence of Luther and Calvin that Christians have an explicit knowledge of what they believed came to be shared, at least to some degree, by Catholic reformers. The Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation, in the form of the protracted Council of Trent (1545–63), sought to bring greater attention to doctrinal and disciplinary matters. Historian Brad Gregory writes that the decrees and anathemas of the council represent an 'unprecedented emphasis on interior assent to the propositional content of doctrinal truth claims'.[14] This shift towards doctrinal knowledge was reinforced by a new determination to promote religious literacy, especially among the clergy, and the recognition that sacramental practices should be accompanied by knowledge of Christian doctrines. Europe itself thus became a mission field, with Catholic and Protestant clergy alike seeking to school the laity, particularly rural populations, in the basic teachings of Christianity.[15]

In all of this, faith became a much more individual matter, especially for Protestants. While Luther (like Calvin) strongly maintained that faith amounted to personal trust in God, that trust was less dependent upon communal practices or rituals. Faith was not attained through spiritual exercises – 'Masses, ceremonies, vows, fasts, hair shirts, and the like'.[16] What was required was individual resolve, albeit aided by God's grace. Faith was uprooted from a broader ecclesial and social context, making it more a matter

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[13] *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 3, p. 146.

[14] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 155. In the seventeenth century, Jansenist theologians and philosophers took a hard line against implicit faith. Antoine Arnauld declared implicit faith to be 'chimerical and imaginary'. *De le nécessité de la foi en Jésus-Christ pour être suavéi*, *Oeuvres*, vol. 10 (Paris, 1777), p. 86. Arnauld was contesting the claim of François de La Mothe le Vayer that Pagans who live virtuous lives might merit salvation. La Mothe le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens* (Paris, 1642), esp. pp. 24f. For discussion see Michael Moriarty, *Disguised Vices: Theories of Virtue in Early Modern French Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 211–15; Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers*, pp. 276–9.

[15] Delumeau, 'The Journey of a Historian', p. 444; Louis Châtellier, *Tradition chrétienne et renouveau catholique dans le cadre de l'ancien diocèse de Strasbourg (1650–1724)* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1964); Gregory, *Unintended Reformation*, pp. 155–7. For the Protestant side see Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Raymond A. Mentzer, 'The Persistence of "Superstition and Idolatry" among Rural French Calvinists', *Church History* 65 (1996), 220–33.

[16] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, LW 26, 41, cf. pp. 32, 312, 330.

of the individual's direct relationship to God. Indeed, it has been argued, with some justification, that Luther introduced modern individualism into the West.[17] This resistance to the ecclesiastical governance of all aspects of the religious life would have other, far-reaching consequences.[18] It signalled the beginning of a new relationship between the faithful and the institution that had presided over the ritual performances in which belief was enacted. That same institution had also been the custodian of religious knowledge and guarantor of its truth. The radical rupture of that institution wrought by the Protestant Reformation necessitated new understandings of religious authority and the faith once vested in it. At the same time, and quite independently of the reformers' intentions, it became possible to think of practice and belief as separate aspects of the religious life, even to the point where the relation could be seen as one of opposition – mindless ritual as an inferior substitute

[17] There is an extensive literature on this question. Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1950), pp. 14–25; Martin E. Marty, 'Luther's Living Legacy', *Christian History* 39 (1993), 51–3; Derek Wilson, *Out of the Storm: The Life and Legacy of Martin Luther* (New York: Macmillan, 2008), p. 344; Rob Sorensen, *Martin Luther and the German Reformation* (London: Anthem Press, 2016), pp. 93–4. Famously, Max Weber had made a case for the influence of Calvinism on the emergence of a pessimistic individualism that for him underpinned capitalism. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (London: Routledge, 2012), esp. pp. 58–61. See also Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History*, trans. Guenther Roth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), esp. p. 169. Weber's Heidelberg colleague Ernst Troeltsch also saw in aspects of the Protestant Reformation the seeds of modernity, although these were unintended and again Calvin was given a more prominent role than Luther. *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), esp. pp. 43f. Cf. A. Dakin, *Calvinism* (London: Duckworth, 1940), p. 134. In the nineteenth century Michael Pupin maintained that the religious individualism of the reformers paved the way for a new 'scientific individualism'. *The New Reformation: From Physical to Spiritual Realities* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), pp. 3–4. Charles Taylor gives Descartes a more prominent role. *Secular Age*, p. 26; *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 143–209. Larry Seidentop argues for an earlier, yet intrinsically Christian, emergence of the notion of the individual, *Inventing the Individual* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014) as, too, Karl Weintraub, who traces notions of Christian individualism to Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions*. *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 18–48. Most recently, Joseph Henrich has claimed that Protestantism gave a 'booster shot' to the incipient individualism of medieval Catholicism. *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020), ch. 12.

[18] The flip-side of this, arguably, was the application of monastic disciplines to the secular realm. On this theme see Taylor, *Secular Age*, pp. 90–145; Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Gregory, *Unintended Reformation*, pp. 209–10; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 141, and *passim*.

for genuine religious knowledge. Again, this move was consistent with the appearance of new notions of religion and of plural religions. 'Religion', once understood as a virtue, a form of piety, was reified, enabling the category of plural 'religions' which were understood in terms of their distinctive beliefs and practices.[19] This development is also distantly reflected in the modern sociological distinction between 'believing' and 'belonging'.[20]

Accompanying this dismantling of a central ecclesiastical authority was a sustained attack on the Catholic clergy. The priesthood had been one of the prime targets of Luther's reforming zeal. He denied that priests and monks were different in kind to anyone else. Individuals might be allocated different offices, but all share the same spiritual estate.[21] Calvin agreed that all Christians belong to a royal priesthood, a status conferred not by the Church, but by God.[22] While church organisation was important for Calvin, neither the Church nor its ministers mediated between God and the elect. New forms of Church polity necessarily impacted on practices of believing that had previously been distributed across the institution of the one holy and apostolic Church. These changes were accompanied by a loss of trust in the priestly order, the extreme manifestation of which was the emergence of the early modern idea of 'priestcraft'. For those who subscribed to this notion, priests were regarded as members of a universal 'type' whose signal characteristic was the opposite of trustworthiness. Priestcraft entailed systematic deception and imposition on overly credulous populations.[23]

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[19] Thus Robert Ferguson, 'All that Relates to Religion may be reduced either to faith or obedience; to what we are to *believe,* or what we are to *perform.* Faith and practice engross the whole of mans duty. *Credenda & agenda* constitute the System of Religion.' *A Sober Enquiry into the Nature, Measure, and Principle of Moral Virtue* (London, 1673), p. 169. In the Middle Ages, 'religions' had referred to different monastic orders.

[20] Grace Davie, 'Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?', *Social Compass* 37 (1990), 455–69.

[21] Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), *LW* 44, 127–8. This entailed a rejection of the medieval hierarchical social order premised on three distinct estates: clergy, aristocracy, laity. See Rosemary O'Day, 'The Clergy of the Church of England', in *The Professions in Early Modern England*, ed. Wilfred Prest (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 25–63. For the Catholic position see The Council of Trent, Session 23, ch. 4.

[22] '… we are all through his grace made priests …'. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols., trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), vol. 19, p. 452. See also John R. Crawford, 'Calvin and the Priesthood of all Believers', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968), 145–56.

[23] Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). See also the special issue of *Intellectual History Review* 28/1 (2018), edited by James A. T. Lancaster and Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, on the theme 'Priestcraft: Early Modern Variations on the Theme of Sacerdotal Imposture'.

As a consequence of these linked developments – attacks on implicit faith, denial of the Roman Church's authority in matters of doctrine, the separation of practice and belief, the undermining of the office of the priesthood – the burden for knowing and defending doctrinal details fell increasingly upon the individual rather than being distributed, on the basis of trust relations, across the community of the faithful. Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, who in the late sixteenth century compiled the first systematic catalogue of key differences between Catholics and Protestants, pointed to the novelty of the reformers' stance on this issue. Our present-day heretics (i.e., the Protestants), he charged, permit 'private persons to be judges in matters of faith'.[24] Insistence on the right to make private judgements, as we have seen, was the vice that lay at the heart of heresy. Essayist and philosopher Michel de Montaigne, writing around the same time as Bellarmine, offered a similar appraisal of the aftermath of Protestant attacks on Catholic religion:

> once you have thrown into the balance of doubt and uncertainty any articles of their religion, they soon cast all the rest of their beliefs into similar uncertainty. They had no more authority for them, no more foundation, than for those you have just undermined …. They then take it upon themselves to accept nothing on which they have not pronounced their approval, subjecting it to their individual assent.[25]

In a post-Enlightenment age we typically celebrate this development. For Bellarmine and Montaigne, it was deeply regrettable.[26]

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[24] Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (Ingolstadii, 1586), 1, 1, 3, 3 (cols. 170–2). Bellarmine provided specific examples from the writings of Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Johannes Brenz, John Calvin, and Martin Chemnitz.

[25] Michel de Montaigne, 'Apology for Raymond Sebond' [1576], in *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 439.

[26] This difference would continue to feature in competing confessional histories discussed in Chapter 6. Counter-revolutionary Catholic writer Louis de Bonald declared that the Protestant 'right of examination and interpretation' had led to a succession of social and political catastrophes in Europe. 'De l'unité religieuse en Europe', *Mercure de France* [1806], in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 10 (Geneva, 1982), pp. 229–83 (p. 260). Joseph de Maistre wrote in a similar vein that the Reformation principle of private judgement had caused numerous revolutions and massacres. *Considerations on France* [1796], ed. and trans. R. Lebrun (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 27. Subsequently, Catholic historian Jaime Balmes declared that: 'if there be any thing constant in Protestantism, it is undoubtedly the substitution of private judgment for public and lawful authority'. This principle was 'lamentable and disastrous'. *Protestantism and Catholicism Compared, With Respect to European Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1851), p. 26.

3.2 Implicit Faith and the Ethics of Belief

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1822–30) the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) observes that the 'essential content' of the Protestant Reformation is this: 'man sets himself to be free'.[27] Hegel's historical pronouncements, it must be conceded, need to be treated with a degree of caution. But in this case he has a point. Arguably, one of the most iconic historical instances of the assertion of individual autonomy was Martin Luther's appearance before the Imperial Diet at Worms in April 1521. In June of the previous year, Pope Leo had issued the bull *Exsurge domine*, threatening Luther with excommunication and demanding that he recant his teachings within sixty days. He had also ordered, for good measure, that Luther's offending writings be sought out and burned in public.[28] On the sixtieth day, 10 December 1521, Luther responded in kind, burning the papal bull along with a number of books of canon law. He was duly excommunicated. Under pressure from the German princes to end the standoff, Emperor Charles V called an assembly of the Holy Roman Empire in the Imperial Free city of Worms and invited Luther to attend under promise of safe passage. The emperor and the Church were looking for Luther to recant his teaching and writings; a number of the German princes secretly hoped that he would not, seeing in this occasion the opportunity to establish their independence from Rome. When confronted with his allegedly heretical views Luther was invited to recant. Unconvinced by the arguments against him and, crucially, the criteria that were in play, Luther offered the celebrated response: 'Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone …. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.' Tradition has it that he went on to say: 'Here I stand, I can do no other.'[29]

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[27] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. Ruben Alvarado (Aalten: Wordbridge, 2011), p. 376. Cf. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 vols. in 1, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simpson (Delhi: Lector House, 2020), pp. 614f.; *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* [1795], in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. Richard Kroner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 128, 146; *On the Tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession*, in *Hegel: Political Writings*, ed. Lawrence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 186–96.

[28] '*Exsurge domine*' (Rome, 1520) in Peter Fabisch and Erwin Iserloh (eds.), *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri (1517–1521)*, 2 vols. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1988–91), vol. 2, p. 394.

[29] 'Luther at the Diet of Worms', *LW* 32, 112. Luther argued, partly on the authority of Nicholas of Tudesco (Panormitanus, 1386–1445), that in matters of faith individuals are above the pope, provided that they use better authority and reason. *LW* 31, 365f., cf. *LW*

In this symbolic moment we witness what appears to be a clear rejection of a corporate and institutional understanding of belief. Luther substituted individual conviction for trust in the Church and its councils, and elevated the alternative authorities of individual conscience, scripture, and reason (although he envisaged a carefully circumscribed role for the latter). Subsequently addressing the topic of 'the freedom of the Christian', he would expand membership of this tribunal to include a third authority – experience or, literally, 'experiment'.[30] This episode marks the inauguration of what has become a distinctive characteristic of the modern West – the principle that individuals ought to take responsibility for what they believe. This means not only being able to articulate the precise content of what is believed but, equally importantly, being able to offer a justification for what is held to be true. One of the major drivers of this new attitude to belief, as noted above, was the concerted Protestant campaign against implicit belief.[31] Indeed, the nub of the Protestant/Catholic divide, as one Protestant controversialist expressed it, could be understood in these terms: 'whether they shall follow their own reason and judgment, or give up themselves to follow a Guide with a blind and implicite faith'.[32] In *The*

32, 81, n. 99. Hegel described this event as 'the great foundation of Protestant freedom, the Palladium of the Protestant Church'. *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, in *Early Theological Writings*, p. 121.

[30] Luther's *On the Freedom of the Christian* opens with this statement: 'To many, Christian faith has appeared to be an easy thing; indeed not a few reckon it among the social virtues, as it were, because they have not tested [or proved] it experimentally [*qui nullo experiment eam probauerunt*].' Martin Luther, *De libertate christiana* (n.p., 1520), sig. biiir.

[31] For theological treatments of implicit faith from a Protestant perspective, see Ritschl, *Fides implicita*; Georg Hoffmann, *Die Lehre von der Fides implicita* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906); and, more recently, Ralf K. Wüstenberg, '*Fides implicita* "revisited": Versuch eines evangelischen Zugangs', *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematiche Theologie* 49 (2007), 71–85.

[32] William Sherlock, *A Vindication of both parts of the Preservative against Popery* (London, 1688), p. 8. The discussion above will reference primarily English language critiques of implicit faith, but these were characteristic of the reformed traditions across Europe. German critics include the Reformed theologian and one of the principal authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacharias Ursinus, who declared that 'The Papists' implicit faith is not faith at all, but blind opinion.' *Corpus doctrinae Christianae* (Heidelberg, 1621), p. 143. Hartmann Creide maintained that 'Believing what the Church believes', amounts not to genuine faith but 'blind ignorance'. *Querela medela cautela*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1666), vol. 2, p. 397. See also Andreas Kesler, *Pabsthumb. Gründlicher Bericht, von der Papisten Vrsprung, Lehre vnd Leben* (Coburg, 1630), p. 133. Daniel Toussain, a Huguenot author who wrote in Latin and German, referred to implicit faith as 'a confused belief, a dizziness'. *Warhaffter Bericht von der vorgenommenen Verbesserung in Kirchen* (Utrecht, 1584), p. 71. For other Huguenot critiques of implicit fait see Jean Daillé, *Sermons sur l'epître de l'apôtre saint Pauls aux Colossiens, seconde partie* (Paris, 1648), p. 147; Jean Valleton, *Le Réveille-matin des apostats sur la révolte de Jaques Illaire, ou la reutation des escrits publiez au nom d'icelui sous le faux et fantastique titre de conversion des Huguenots à la Foy Catholique* (Geneva, 1608), p. 529; Pierre Allix, *Douze sermons sur*

Religion of Protestants (1637/1687), a popular seventeenth-century work and favourite of the philosopher John Locke, William Chillingworth had similarly concluded that the Protestant creed called for the rational judgement of the individual rather than a simple acceptance of things on trust:

> Not willing I confess to take anything upon trust, and to believe it without asking myself why; no, nor able to command myself (were I never so willing) to follow, like a sheep, every shepheard that should take upon him to guide me; or every Flock that should chance to go before me; but most apt and most willing to be led by reason.[33]

There were several facets to the early modern critique of implicit faith. A common charge was that the medieval Church had substituted religious practice for the holding of correct beliefs, and that genuine Christianity was impossible without the latter. Preaching in 1684 on the theme of 'rational service' to a congregation of old Etonians, Joseph Layton asked his auditors to 'turn your Eye to the Men of implicit Faith: … you shall see them creeping before Images, adoring of Wafers, paying Pensions for Purgatory, and Traffiquing for the price of Sins. In the midst of all this Pageantry, and this Nonsense, Their comfort is, they believe as the Church believes.'[34] Religious devotion, at least the kind that was evidenced in 'papist' rituals, was said to go hand in hand with religious ignorance. It was a commonplace among Protestant controversialists that their Catholic opponents actively promoted the principle that 'ignorance is the mother of devotion'.[35] This

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    divers textes, 2nd ed. (Rotterdam, 1685), pp. 199–200; J. D., *Le tableau de la nouvelle Jérusalem* (Geneva, 1690), p. 16.

[33] William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* [1737], 6th ed. (London, 1687), p. 2. For Locke's approval see Victor Nuovo, *John Locke: The Philosopher as Christian Virtuoso* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 220.

[34] Joseph Layton, *A sermon preached at the anniversary meeting of the Eaton-scholars* (London, 1684), p. 19.

[35] John Caldwell, *A Sermon preached before the right honorable Earle of Darbie* (London, 1577), sig. C.iiir. For similar remarks see Francis Bunny, *A comparison betweene the auncient fayth of the Romans, and the new Romish religion* (n.p., 1595), p. 10; Thomas Beard, *A retractiue from the Romish religion* (London, 1616), p. 34; Baxter, *The Safe Religion*, p. 25; Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* [1621], 3 vols., ed. Holbrook Jackson (London: Folio, 2005), 3.4.1.2, vol. 3, p. 374; Charles Blount, *A Just Vindication of Learning* (London, 1679), p. 13; Theophilus Gale, *The Anatomie of Infidelitie* (London, 1672), p. 90; Hugh Binning, *The Common Principles of Christian Religion* (Glasgow, 1667), p. 112. It is more difficult to find this principle actually being asserted by Catholic authors. Perhaps, out of context, Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 82, 3: '*scientia … quandoque occaisonaliter devotionem impenduit*' (Science … sometimes occasions a hindrance to devotion), although this was hardly representative. Hume later reprised the maxim in the conclusion of his *Natural History of Religion*, ed. H. E. Root (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 75.

maxim implied an inverse relationship between devotional fervour and religious knowledge, along with the necessity of a proper balance between practice and belief. The *theory* of Roman rites was a related target, and in particular, teachings about transubstantiation. According to Protestant critics, this irrational doctrine could subsist only because it was accepted without question.[36] Huguenot controversialist Moïse Amyraut argued against 'blind, brutal acquiescence', insisting upon the 'necessity of examination' of all doctrines. To accept a dogma without understanding how it was grounded in scripture or rationally implied by some other well-founded doctrine was to fail to believe in it at all. Christians who uncritically receive what is taught, he concluded, are merely Christians by an accident of birth, in the same way that Turks are Mahommedans.[37]

The category of implicit faith was also alleged to have been a device invented by scholastic philosophers to justify their regrettable tolerance for nescience among the general population. Part of the problem with this scholastic version of the doctrine was its reliance upon an Aristotelian distinction between formal and material – specifically the 'formal' and 'material' objects of faith.[38] For those who no longer subscribed to an Aristotelian metaphysics it became more challenging to provide a philosophically plausible account of how implicit faith operated.[39] A more general critique was that it was a fancy label for ignorance: mere 'ignorance garnish'd and set off with a plausible word, that has no meaning'; a pretext for '*simple grosse ignorance*'; synonymous with 'virtual Unbelief'.[40] Protestants were to deploy their own derisory designation for this kind of uncritical belief: the 'faith of the collier' (or charcoal burner). This was the vacuous commitment of the rustic simpleton who knew nothing except the need to reside trust in

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[36] See e.g., Thomas Bedford, *A Treatise of the Sacraments* (London, 1638), pp. 82–3; Robert Nelson, *Transubstantiation contrary to Scripture* (London, 1688), p. 2; Thomas Tenison, *A friendly debate between a Roman Catholick and a Protestant* (London, 1688), p. 29; Sherlock, *A Vindication*, pp. 100–1.

[37] Moïse Amyraut, *De l'élévation de la foi et de l'abaissement de la raison* (Saumur, 1640), pp. 75–6. See also Philippe du Marnix, *Traicte du Sacrement* (Saumur, 1601), p. 25; Michel le Faucheur, *Traitté de la Cène du Seigneur, où est monstré que c'est qu'il faut croire de la nature et de l'usage de ce saint sacrement* (Geneva, 1635), p. 799.

[38] For the formal/material distinction see Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 1, 1. Simply put, the material objects of faith are doctrines, the formal object of faith is God.

[39] See, e.g., Theophilus Gale, *Christ's tears for Jerusalems unbelief and ruine* (London, 1679), p. 122.

[40] Anthony Burgess, *Expository Sermons upon the Whole 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1656), pp. 123, 639. Cf. William Perkins, *A Commentarie or exposition, vpon the fiue first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (London, 1617), p. 142; Sampson Estwick, *A Sermon preached at the Cathedral-Church of St. Paul* (London, 1698), p. 14.

the teachings of the Church.[41] Huguenot writers also spoke dismissively of the '*foi du charbonnier*', an expression that in various European idioms was in continual use until at least the mid-nineteenth century.[42] All of this signals a shift of attention, in conceptions of faith, to the content of belief and its justification, and away from an attitude of trust and the devotional practices that sustained it.

Unquestioning obedience and atrophy of the capacity for rational deliberation were also claimed to be the side-effects of implicit faith. There was a significant political dimension here, since the relevant trust relations and the accompanying demands on obedience ultimately led back to Rome. As one writer put it, implicit faith promotes 'indisputable obedience, & absolute dependence on the Church and Court of *Rome*'.[43] It was a device 'to keep men under their obedience', explained another.[44] Critiques of implicit faith were thus related to both religious and political freedoms. Susceptibility to religious imposture was another undesirable consequence of acquiescent belief. Samuel Estwick contended that implicit faith 'discards all Reasons and Motives of Credibility, closes and seals up the eyes and lips of the Votary, and thereby exposes him to all the fancies and extravagancies that Seducers can suggest to him'.[45] In so far as implicit faith entailed the surrender of rational

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[41] Latin: *fides carbonaria*. See, e.g., Thomas Morton, *A Catholike Appeale for Protestants* (London, 1609), p. 676; Beard, *A retractiue from the Romish religion*, pp. 348–50; Barnaby Rich, *The Irish Hubbub* (London, 1618), p. 52; John White, *A Defence of the Way to the True Church* (London, 1614), pp. 191, 194, 200; Thomas Helveys, *Persecution for religion judg'd and condemned* (London, 1662), pp. 53f.; Thomas Barlow, *Brutum fulmen* (London, 1681), pp. 201f.; John Norris, *An Account of Reason and Faith: in Relation to the Mysteries of Christianity* [1697], 12th ed. (London, 1724), p. 77; Henry Stubbe, *A Censure upon certaine passages contained in the history of the Royal Society* (Oxford, 1670), p. 12; James Dupont, *Three Sermons* (London, 1676), p. 55; Wylie, *The Papacy*, p. 198.

[42] See, e.g., Philippe du Marnix, *Le tableau des différens de la religion* (Leiden, 1603), vol. 1, p. 9; Nicolas Vignier, *Theatre de l'Antichrist* (Geneva, 1613), vol. 1, p. 638; Fleury de Bellingen, *L'etymologie ou Explication des proverbes François* (La Haye, 1656), p. 252; Honoré de Balzac, *La messe de l'athée* (Brussels, 1836), p. 189. For examples of the German 'Köhlerglaube' see Arnold Mengering, *Scrutinium conscientiae catecheticum* (Leipzig, 1687), p. 182; Christian Thomasius, *Vollständige Erläuterung Der Kirchen-Rechts-Gelahrtheit*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1738), vol. 1, p. 268; Carl Vogt, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (Giessen, 1855), a derisive riposte to Rudolph Wagner's *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz* (Göttingen, 1854).

[43] T. A., *Religio Clerici* (London, 1681), p. 92. This connection could also be exploited to argue for religious and political freedoms in England. See William Penn, *England's great interest in the choice of this new Parliament* (London, 1669); Anon., *A Certain Way to Save England* (London, 1681), p. 17; Joseph Pennyman, *A Looking Glass for the Quakers* (London, 1689), p. 5; John Horn, *An Appeal to the Impartial & Judicious Reader* (London, 1660), p. 30.

[44] Anon., *Liberty of Conscience, Explicated and Vindicated* (London, 1689), p. 16. Cf. Richard Baxter, *A Moral Prognostication* (London, 1680), p. 33.

[45] Estwick, *A Sermon*, p. 15.

autonomy – often regarded as the distinguishing feature of human beings – it was said to reduce its adherents to a bestial servility. In his *Antidote against the poyson of popery* (1679), Christopher Ness declared that implicit faith 'is a mere bruitish unreasonable thing; … like the motion of a Beast that is ordered by his Driver, but knows neither whither nor wherefore'.[46]

Common to virtually all critiques of implicit faith was the conviction that individuals had a religious duty to be able to give a reasoned account of what they believed and why. It was argued to be a sin against God-given reason to subcontract to an institution the responsibility for believing.[47] 'God calls upon us to employ our Talent', contended Joseph Layton, 'to Exercise our selves in these things, to *Build up our selves in our most holy Faith*, and to *Stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us Free*'.[48] God requires of us 'a distinct knowledge of the points of our faith', agreed John White, so that we are able 'to expound, & manifest them'. 'Having given us reason', maintained Isaac Barrow, God requires it 'as a matter of duty' to exercise it in matters of faith.[49] It was thus held to be a religious obligation to have ready reasons for holding particular beliefs and this imperative was supported by appeals to a range of biblical passages.[50] In sum, being a true

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[46] Christopher Ness, *A Protestant antidote against the poyson of popery* (London, 1679), p. 171. See also Theophilus Gale, *Christ's tears*, pp. 90f., 122; Layton, *A sermon*, p. 5.

[47] One of the standard proof texts for this argument was reference to 'reasonable service' or 'rational worship' (λογικὴν λατρείαν) in Romans 12:1. See Joseph Glanvill, *Logou thrēskeia, Or, A Seasonable Recommendation and Defence of Reason in the Affairs of Religion* (London, 1670), pp. 28, 33, and *passim*; Layton, *A sermon*, *passim*; John Cook, *What the Independents would Have* (London, 1647), p. 3; Anon., *A Catholic pill to purge Popery* (London, 1677), p. 9; Albert Warren, *An Apology for the Discourse of Humane Reason* (London, 1680), Preface (unpaginated); Charles Wolseley, *The Reasonableness of Scripture-Beleif* [sic] (London, 1672), Preface; John Goodman, *Seven Sermons Preach'd upon Several Occasions* (London, 1697), p. 222; Bentley, *Unreasonableness of Atheism*, p. 26.

[48] Layton, *A sermon*, p. 19; White, *Defence of the Way to the True Church*, p. 202.

[49] Isaac Barrow, 'Of Faith', in *The Theological Works of Isaac Barrow*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1830), vol. 4, p. 267. For further examples see George Rust, *A Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion* (London, 1683), pp. 17, 24, 46f.; William Bramston, *A Sermon preached at the opening of the Lecture at Maldon* (London, 1697), p. 17; Richard Kidder, *The Judgment of Private Discretion in Matters of Religion Defended* (London, 1687), p. 10; Anon., *A Protestant's Resolution: shewing reasons why he will not be a Papist* (London 1679), pp. 7–8; William Durham, *A Serious Exhortation to the Necessary Duties of Family and Person Instruction* (London, 1659), pp. 66–9; Samuel Johnson, *A Sermon Preach'd before the Lord Mayor* (London, 1684), pp. 12–13, 15–16; Warren, *An Apology*, p. 40; Martin Clifford, *Discourse of Humane Reason* (London, 1690), p. 46; James Canaries, *A Discourse representing the Sufficient Manifestation of the Will of God* (Edinburgh, 1684), p. 163.

[50] Most commonly I Peter 3:15: 'and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you'. Also Romans 12:1 on reasonable worship, referenced above, and Acts 17:11.

Christian was now thought to involve not only the explicit profession of certain beliefs, but also being cognizant of their content and capable of providing a justification for holding them.[51]

Since the late nineteenth century this basic principle, stripped of its historical context and original theological justifications, has been known in philosophical circles as 'the ethics of belief' – the idea that we have a moral duty to be able to provide good evidence for holding the beliefs we do. In the 1877 paper that introduced that phrase into the philosophical lexicon the Cambridge philosopher William Kingdon Clifford summed up the basic idea in these words: 'it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence'.[52] It should now be clear that something closely akin to this principle had been fundamental to critiques of implicit faith from the sixteenth century onwards. To the extent that the archaeology of this epistemic imperative has been excavated, John Locke has been proposed as its modern philosophical progenitor.[53] It is certainly true that Locke does articulate something like this principle and seems to have been the first to expound it systematically in a philosophical context. Yet, in effect, he was formalising an impulse that had characterised Protestant critiques of implicit faith for well over a century. For this reason, implicit faith is Locke's stock example of how *not* to arrive at reliable knowledge: 'whilst some (and those the most) taking things upon trust, misemploy their power of assent, by lazily enslaving their minds to the dictates and dominion of others in doctrines, which it is their duty carefully to examine, and

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[51] There remained, however, even in Protestant circles, some concessions to the necessity of relying upon the judgements of others, not least for the same reasons that scholastics had originally proposed the idea – namely, the theological complexity of some key doctrines. See Jeremy Taylor, Θεολογία ἐκλεκτική. *A discourse on freedom of thinking in matters of Religion* [1647] (Oxford, 1763), pp. 77f.; William Bridge, *The truth of the times vindicated* (London, 1643), p. 51; George Keith, *Truth and innocency defended against calumny and defamation* (Philadelphia, 1692), p. 17; Norris, *Reason and Faith*, pp. 90–4. But it was typically stressed that this entailed faith in God, and not in the Church. Catholic writers also charged Protestants with having implicit faith in scripture – asserting its authority without explicit knowledge of the contents of every verse. See W. S. [William Stuart], *Presbyteries Triall* (Paris, 1657), p. 42; Charles Leslie, *The Case Stated between the Church of Rome and the Church of England in a Second Conversation* (n.p., 1721).

[52] William Kingdon Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief' [1877] in W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, 2nd ed., ed. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock (London: Macmillan, 1886), pp. 339–63 (p. 346). Clifford goes on to invoke John Milton's criticism of implicit faith from *Areopagitica*, in *Prose Works of John Milton*, 5 vols. (London: Henry Bohn, 1848), vol. 2, p. 85. In a second essay, 'The Ethics of Religion', Clifford applied to principle directly to religious beliefs: 'Religious beliefs must be founded on evidence; if they are not so founded, it is wrong to hold them.' *Lectures and Essays*, p. 369.

[53] The key work is Wolterstorff, *Locke and the Ethics of Belief*.

not blindly, with an implicit faith, to swallow'.[54] A key problem to which Locke's epistemology had been addressed was the resolution of competing knowledge claims, the most acute form of which, during the period, lay in religious differences.[55] While an 'ethics of belief', as articulated by Clifford, was intended as a critique of religious convictions in general, the idea itself was hardly an innovation of the nineteenth century. It had its origins in confessional disputes of the early modern period when it was first wielded by Protestant controversialists.

Locke's positive prescriptions for combating the evils of implicit belief are similarly to be understood against the background of contemporary theological discussions. Examination of the grounds of one's beliefs was for Locke a divinely mandated duty: 'He that believes, without having any Reason for believing … neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning Faculties he has given him.' The Christian has a 'Duty as a rational creature' to use the faculties with which God has endowed them.[56] Reason, then, was to provide the means by which the holding of particular beliefs could be justified. Our duty is to believe or disbelieve 'as reason directs'. Reason 'must be our

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[54] Locke, *Essay* 1.4.22 (p. 99). Locke begins the *Essay* with an appeal to readers to make use of their own thoughts and not 'to take things on trust from others' (Epistle to the Reader, p. 7). Elsewhere: the way to improve our knowledge is not 'blindly, and with an implicit faith, to receive and swallow principles'. *Essay* 4.12.6 (p. 642). 'For he that takes up the opinions of any Church in the lump, without examining them, has truly neither searched after, nor found truth, but has only found those that he thinks have found truth, and so receives what they say with an implicit faith, and so pays them the homage that is due only to God.' 'Error', from Locke's commonplace book, in *The Life of John Locke, with extracts from his Correspondence, Journals and Common-Place Books*, ed. Peter Lord King (London, 1829), pp. 281f. It is a miscarriage of reason to 'think according to the example of others, whether parents, neighbours, ministers, of who else they are pleased to make choice of to have an implicit faith in, for the saving of themselves the pains and trouble of thinking and examining for themselves'. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, new edition (London, 1801), pp. 9–10. '[E]ach must understand for himself, the best he can.' *Vindications of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), p. 82, cf. pp. 59, 73–4, 123, 127. See also *A Third Letter for Toleration*, in *The Works of John Locke*, 12th ed., 9 vols. (London, 1824), vol. 6, pp. 152, 187, 407. Cf Hobbes: 'our Senses, and Experience; nor (that which is the undoubted Word of God) our Naturall Reason … are not to be folded up in the Napkin of an Implicite Faith'. *Leviathan*, ch. 32 (vol. 3, p. 576), but cf. ch. 43 (vol. 3, p. 948). Locke does find a role for implicit faith, however, one that is necessitated by his minimalist approach to creedal beliefs. See *Third Letter concerning Toleration* (1692), pp. 232f.

[55] As Wolterstorff rightly puts it: 'Locke intended his epistemology as a solution to the crisis of the fracturing of the moral and religious tradition of Europe at the beginnings of modernity.' *Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, p. 227.

[56] Locke, *Essay* 4.17.24 (pp. 687f.).

last judge and guide in everything'. As for faith, it was now understood by Locke to be nothing other than assent 'based on the highest reason'.[57] All of this assumed that reason itself was a divinely sanctioned organ of critical judgement.

It is one thing to propose that the free exercise of the faculty of reason offers the best prospect for resolving dispute-engendering religious differences. It is quite another to establish what 'reason' is, and how it is to be applied. In something of an understatement, the literary historian Douglas Bush has observed that 'the meanings of "reason" in the seventeenth century admit a wide solution'.[58] It would ambitious, in the span of a few pages, to attempt to offer a satisfactory account of the full variety of ways in which 'reason' was conceptualised in the early modern period, far less in the centuries that followed. For now, it suffices to identify two ends of a broad spectrum, along with a gradual shift in one direction. One version of reason retains a strong continuity with preceding traditions that emphasise its divine origins, a scope that encompasses both moral and epistemological concerns, and a substantive content along the lines of 'innate ideas'. At this end of the spectrum, genuine religion was understood as more or less continuous with the cultivation of reason; hence the involvement of reason with matters of faith was imagined to be entirely natural and was justified on theological grounds. At the other end we encounter a narrower and more instrumental conception of reason, one that equates it with a calculative faculty of ratiocination that is capable of analysis but has no substantive content of its own. This established the conditions for a rather different relationship between faith and reason in which reason comes to act as a kind of independent arbiter of religious truth. In this role it could be supportive or critical. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this latter conception becomes increasingly prominent.[59] Paradoxically, though, this

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[57] Locke, *Essay* 4.17.24 (p. 688); *Essay* 4.18.14 (p. 704); *Essay* 4.16.14 (p. 668).

[58] Douglas Bush, 'Two Roads to Truth: Science and Religion in the Early Seventeenth Century', *ELH* 8 (1941), 81–102 (96). Seventeenth-century thinkers were themselves acutely aware of this. See Locke, *Essay* 4.14.1 (p. 668); Robert Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso* 1, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 423; 'Reason', in Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia, or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), vol. 2, pp. 964f.; 'Raison', in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, 28 vols. (Paris, 1765), vol. 13, pp. 773f.

[59] S. L. Bethell spoke in similar terms of 'old' and 'new' reason. *The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London: D. Dobson, 1951), pp. 63f. Immanuel Kant's distinction between pure and practical reason is also relevant. *Critique of Practical Reason* 5:90–3, in *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 212–14. So, too, are Frankfurt School critiques of 'instrumental reason' and Charles Taylor's distinction between 'substantive' and 'procedural' rationality. See

secularisation and instrumentalisation of reason was also initially informed by theological considerations, and hence the gradual shift in emphasis from one conception of reason to the other is the result of competing theological assessments of the proper scope of reason and its post-lapsarian capacities.

In sum, the Protestant critique of implicit faith represents the first articulation of a tightly connected set of principles that are now almost universally endorsed in the West: that individuals should be left to make up their own minds in the spheres of religion, morals, and politics; that claims about important matters of fact should not be taken on the basis of authority alone; that we have an obligation not to hold beliefs without being able to offer some kind of justification for them. This led to new attention being focused on the operations of reason and its role in providing the requisite support for beliefs.

3.3 God and the Light of Nature

In their popular, eleven-volume *Story of Civilization*, Will and Ariel Durant designate the period from 1550–1650 the 'Age of Reason', the period during which Europe set out on 'the bumpy road toward the Enlightenment'.[60] While the Durants did not present it in these terms, this age of reason is sometimes contrasted with a preceding 'age of faith', with the triumph of human reason representing a victory over the forces of darkness and superstition.[61] It is often thought, then, that the rise of philosophical rationalism in the seventeenth century is to be understood primarily as a challenge to traditional authorities. However, the championing of reason did not necessarily amount to a more naturalistic, secular alternative to ecclesiastical authority. For many thinkers, and particularly those influenced by traditions of Christian Platonism, the justification for ceding authority to reason ultimately derived from assumptions about its divine origin. Clearly, this complicates any simple story about an opposition between reason and religious faith.

Max Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (London: Verso, 2014); Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 121–4, 242–7. See also Wolterstorff, *Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, pp. 238–42. More generally on the history of reason see Robert Hoopes, *Right Reason in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Martin Jay, *Reason after Its Eclipse: On Late Critical Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), esp. pp. 34f.

[60] Will Durant and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Reason Begins* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961).

[61] This, e.g., is how John William Draper sets things up in *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, revised ed., 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1875), vol. 1, p. 20.

The individual most often depicted as the quintessential rationalist, René Descartes (1596–1650), offers an instructive example. The standard 'birth of modern philosophy' narrative has him eschewing all preceding philosophical traditions and starting anew solely on the basis of reason – as one wit has recently suggested, a kind of turning philosophy off and then back on again.[62] Until relatively recently it was not uncommon for university courses in the history of philosophy to leap from the ancient Greeks to Descartes as if nothing of philosophical import had been transacted in the intervening eighteen centuries. This state of affairs was based on the identification of philosophy with modern epistemology, along with a mistaken assumption that the ancients shared something like a modern set of philosophical preoccupations. That said, it is significant that Descartes himself presented his programme as revolutionary. His quiet resolution to start afresh, detailed in the *Meditations* (1641), is akin in some respects to Luther's earlier and more public attempt to reconfigure the whole basis of religious authority and in the received version of the history of philosophy was no less momentous.[63] Yet Descartes's reliance on his scholastic forebears remained strong, and when we examine exactly what he understood by 'reason', for example, we find him reasserting what in many respects is a quite conventional religious understanding of this human capacity. He describes reason as 'a sort of spark of the divine, in which the first seeds of useful ways of thinking are sown', employing Augustine's image of 'the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work'.[64] He also consistently refers to reason as a 'natural light', by which he means not so much a capacity that is natural in a sense that opposes it to 'supernatural', but a light that is proper to our natures as human beings because God has bestowed it upon us.

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[62] In Descartes's own words: 'to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations'. *Meditations* 1, CSM 2, p. 12. Hegel expresses it a little differently: 'with Descartes the culture of modern times, the thought of modern philosophy, really begins to appear, after a long and tedious journey'. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 653. Descartes was constructed as the father of modern philosophy by nineteenth-century figures such as Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1852–77). The English translation of the Descartes volume appeared as Kuno Fischer, *Descartes and his School*, ed. Noah Porter, trans. John P. Gordy (London: T. F. Unwin, 1890). For secondary accounts, see Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 5–8.

[63] Contemporaries remarked upon this: 'if some bold Defender, such as *Cartes* and others, had not interpos'd, we had been led by implicit Faith, in all the Objects of Knowledge as well as in all the Objects of Faith'. George Mackenzie, *Reason: An Essay* (London, 1690), pp. 89f.

[64] Descartes, *Rules*, IV, CSM 1, p. 17; *Meditations*, CSM 2, p. 35. See also *Discourse* II, CSM 2, 124; 'Early Writings', CSM 1, p. 4. Cf. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 4:7, *Works* III/15, 89. For Aquinas's references to reason as a natural light see *ST* 1a. 12, 13; 88, 3; 106, 1.

Descartes's self-proclaimed originality notwithstanding, the overlap of human and divine in the processes of understanding, along with the use of the light metaphor for knowledge, had been a philosophical common-place. The rational faculty or capacity to reason, on these understandings, was the divine component of the human being, and the recipient of the 'light' of eternal truths. These ideas had a pedigree that extended back to Presocratic thinkers. Around 500 BCE, Heraclitus had described reason as that 'which is in common and divine, and by participation in which we become rational'.[65] His successors put forward variations on this theme. Plato taught that 'God gave the sovereign part of the human soul to be the divinity of each one.' Accordingly, the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom leads to 'thoughts immortal and divine'. Aristotle declared (in an admit-tedly ambiguous passage) that the active intellect is 'immortal and eternal'. 'The starting point of reason', he tells us in the *Eudemian Ethics*, is God. In the conclusion to *Nicomachean Ethics* he describes the intellect as 'divine' and commends the cultivation of the divine within as the ultimate goal of life.[66] The Stoic philosopher Seneca taught that reason 'is nothing else than a portion of the divine spirit set in a human body', and 'a common attrib-ute of both gods and men'.[67] In the same vein, Epictetus taught that while humans have a body in common with the beasts, they also have reason and intelligence 'in common with the gods'.[68] For Plotinus, the third-century founder of Neoplatonism, the 'higher soul', in which the particular excel-lence of human beings resides, contains 'some effluence from the Divine Reason'.[69] In the periods of late antiquity, and into the Middle Ages and

[65] Heraclitus, R 59, *Early Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3, LCL 526, p. 267 (rendering *logos* as 'reason').

[66] Plato, *Timaeus* 90a–d; Aristotle, *De anima* 430a17–23, cf. *Metaphysics* 12.7–10, 1072a–1076a; *Eudemian Ethics* 1248a21–9 (*logos*); *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b27–34, 1178b20–4. The diffi-cult passage in Aristotle's *De anima* has attracted varying interpretations. See, e.g., Victor Caston, 'Aristotle's Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal', *Phronesis* 44 (1999), 199–227; Octave Hamelin, *La théorie de l'intellect d'après Aristote et ses commentateurs* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), esp. pp. 29–31; Robert Pasnau, 'Divine Illumination', *SEP*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/illumination/. Whatever Aristotle meant by it, the medi-eval Islamic philosopher Averroes was to speak of an 'active intellect' that was shared by all human minds and was, to that extent, immortal. Stephen Gaukroger has alerted us to the similarities between this position and Descartes's idea that the mind is an incorporeal thinking substance (*res cogitans*). *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 646–8.

[67] Seneca, *Epistles* 66.12 (LCL 76, pp. 8–11); 92.27 (LCL 76, p. 465); Diogenes Laertius, VII, 87, 134.

[68] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.3.3 (LCL 131, p. 25). Cf. *Discourses* 1.14.6, 1.14.13–14, 2.8.11–13 (LCL 131, pp. 101, 103, 255–7).

[69] Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.1.5 (p. 37).

Renaissance, Platonic and Aristotelian thinkers, Greek, Latin, and Islamic, built upon these ideas.[70]

A persistent theme in the Platonic tradition was that the goal of life was to cultivate or restore that portion of divinity within, with the goal of becoming god-like. The cultivation of reason would then be identical to leading a religious life. Classicist David Sedley has suggested that were we to enquire of any educated Roman what Plato held as the goal of philosophy they would unhesitatingly cite the *Theaetetus*: 'becoming like a god so far as is possible'.[71] Platonist thinkers of the early Christian era certainly made this the central feature of their philosophy. Plotinus explains that we have fallen away from 'our resemblance to the divine'. This is to be restored through the exercise of 'the reasoning part of [our] nature' which will secure the likeness to God of which Plato spoke.[72] The fourth-century Platonist Hierocles of Alexandria accordingly defined philosophy as 'a purification and perfection of human life: a purification from our irrational, material nature and the mortal form of the body, a perfection by the recovery of our proper happiness, leading to a likeness with the divine'.[73] Full realisation of the potential of reason was thus both the goal of philosophy and a religious

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[70] See, e.g., Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); John Walbridge, *The Science of Mystic Lights: Qutb al-Din Shirazi and the Illuminationist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[71] Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a–b. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 90c–d. David Sedley, 'The Ideal of Godlikeness', in *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 309–28 (p. 309). While the proposal that this passage in the *Theaetetus* dominated the reception of Platonic philosophy in the ancient world is relatively uncontroversial, there has been considerable debate since the nineteenth century that it captures the essence of Plato's philosophy, a common argument being that the *Theaetetus* is just a prolegomenon to later epistemological dialogues (i.e., 'real' philosophy). See, e.g., Rachel Rue, 'The Philosopher in Flight: The Digression in Plato's *Theaetetus*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993), 71–100. Those who share Sedley's emphasis include Julia Annas, 'Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature, and the Divine', in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 52–71; Daniel C. Russell, 'Virtue as "Likeness to God" in Plato and Seneca', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2004), 241–60. For a recent overview of interpretations of the *Theaetetus* passage see Jens Kristian Larson, 'Measuring Humans against Gods: On the Digression of Plato's *Theaetetus*', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 101 (2019), https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/10.1515/agph-2019-1001, accessed 23 November 2023. See also Michelle Jenkins, 'Plato's Godlike Philosopher', *Classical Philology* 111 (2016), 330–52.

[72] *Enneads* 1.6.5, 1.8.10, 2.7.5–6. In spite of Plotinus's hostility towards gnostic thinkers, we encounter a related idea in gnostic literature. See Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, 'A Way of Salvation: Becoming Like God in Nag Hammadi', *Numen* 60 (2013), 71–102.

[73] *Commentary on the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans*, Proem, 1–2, XX, 7, both cited in Hermann S. Schibli, *Hierocles of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 42.

quest. The Aristotelian tradition was consonant with this to a large degree, with Aristotle regarding rational contemplation as the activity most proper to human beings and an emulation of, or participation in, the contemplative activity of the gods.[74]

The notion of deification subsequently became a central aspect of the Greek patristic tradition, and indeed for Greek Orthodoxy thereafter. An oft-repeated description of the purpose of the Incarnation among the Greek Church Fathers was that God became human so that humans might become gods.[75] An important parallel to the philosophical idea of reason as the divine within was provided by the biblical human beings as created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26).[76] The goal of the Christian life could thus be understood as the full realisation (or restoration) of this indwelling likeness to the divine. Maximus the Confessor (580–662) wrote: 'If we are made, as we are, in the image of God (Gen. 1 :27), let us become the image both of ourselves and of God … so that we may consort with God and become gods, receiving from God our existence as gods.'[77] For thinkers of the Latin West, admittedly, this programme was complicated by the fact that while human beings may have originally been created in God's

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[74] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b; *Metaphysics*, 1072b13–30. Commentators differ, however, on whether the divine and human contemplation are the same in kind. See Bryan C. Reese, 'Aristotle on Divine and Human Contemplation', *Ergo* 7/4 (2020), https://doi .org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0007.004, accessed 27 April 2023.

[75] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5. Preface (*ANF* 1, p. 526). Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 1 (*ANF* 2, p. 174); Athanasius, *Incarnation of the Word* 54.3 (*NPNF* II, vol. 4, p. 65). See also Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). The Latin West is typically thought to have emphasised to a much greater extent Fall/Redemption theology as an alternative to the Greek Orthodox *theosis*, although it has been argued that the differences between East and West on this issue have been exaggerated. See., e.g., Carl Mosser, 'The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002), 36–57; Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Joshua Bloor, 'New Directions in Western Soteriology', *Theology* 118 (2015), 179–87.

[76] A direct bridge between philosophical conceptions of divine reason and Jewish and Christian thought was provided by Philo of Alexandria, the Gospel of John, and the Greek fathers. Manuel Alexandre, Jr., 'Twofold Human Logos in Philo of Alexandria', in *Pouvoir et puissances chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, ed. Francesca Calabi, Olivier Munnich, Gretchen Reydams-Schils, and Emmanuele Vimercati (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 37–59; W. E. Helleman, 'Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God, *Studia Philonica Annual* 2 (1990), 51–71.

[77] Maximus the Confessor, 'Various Texts', *Philokalia*, vol. 2, trans. G. E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), p. 171. Cf. Origen: 'Let us, therefore, contemplate that image of God that we can be transformed to his likeness.' *Homilies on Genesis* 1.13 (*FC*, vol. 71, p. 66).

image and likeness, important questions remained about just how much of that image persisted in our present fallen condition. Varying answers to these questions provide a point of difference between Christian and Platonic traditions, and a source of disagreement among Christian thinkers. Yet as it relates to discussions of reason in the early modern period, there are noteworthy convergences of Platonist and Christian understandings of reason as likeness to God, along with the goal of restoring that likeness. These informed discussions about the nature of reason and of its relation to faith. Broadly speaking, reason, in this rich and expansive sense, could never be opposed to true religion, but was in fact integral to its realisation.

Descartes's reference to the '*light* of nature' is also consistent with a tradition of deploying light metaphors in relation to the operations of reason.[78] Again, the key source is Plato who, in the *Republic*, set out the analogy of the sun: 'just as we see objects when they are illuminated by the light of the sun, so the mind sees truths when they are illuminated by the Good'.[79] The most celebrated elaboration of this insight was Augustine's theory of divine illumination. Puzzling in the *Confessions* over how human minds have the capacity to grasp shared truths, Augustine tells the reader how he came to the realisation that his mind 'needed enlightenment from some other light source in order to participate in the truth'. That light was God.[80] While there are Platonic resonances here, Augustine also drew upon various biblical sources, prominent among them the incipit of Psalm 27, 'The Lord is my light', which will be familiar to some as the motto of the University of Oxford – *Dominus illuminatio mea*.[81]

[78] For patristic references linking light, knowledge, and the image of God, see Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen* 10; Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.86. More generally, see Blumenberg, 'Light as a Metaphor for Truth'.

[79] Plato, *Republic*, 500–17, esp. 508b; Cf. *Timaeus* 90a–b. If we take at face value Aristotle's statement in *De anima* that the active intellect is divine, then he can also be construed as advocating some kind of divine illumination (and was so interpreted by medieval commentators such as William of Auvergne and Roger Marston). See Étienne Gilson, 'Pourquoi Saint Thomas a critiqué Saint Augustin', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1927), 5–127; 'Roger Marston: Un cas d'Augustinisme Avicennisant', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 8 (1933), 37–42.

[80] *Confessions*, IV.xv.25 (Loeb ed., vol. 1, p. 175). Cf. X.ii.2, XII.xxv.35; *De Magistro*, 12.40. Lydia Schumacher speaks of five aspects to Augustine's position: divine illumination as cognitive capacity; cognitive content; cognitive process; cognitive certitude; and knowledge of God. *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), pp. 4–7.

[81] On light metaphors in the Psalms, see B. Janowski, 'Das Licht des Lebens: Zur Lichtmetaphorik in den Psalmen', in *Metaphors in the Psalms*, ed. Pierre Van Hecke and Antje Labahn (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 87–113; and more generally, Blumenberg, 'Light as a Metaphor for Truth'.

There have been differing views about the precise nature of Augustine's theory of illumination and about its subsequent fortunes. What is not in doubt is that the language of divine illumination was commonplace up until the thirteenth century and, as we will see, persisted into the seventeenth century.[82] Usually regarded as the chief spokesman for the doctrine in the high Middle Ages, Franciscan friar Bonaventure (1221–74) taught that 'nothing can be understood at all unless God immediately illumines the subject of knowledge by means of the eternal divine truth'.[83] Henry of Ghent (c.1217–93), the leading theologian at the University of Paris in the period following Aquinas's tenure, maintained similarly that 'Pure truth … or perhaps any truth at all, cannot be known without God himself doing the teaching.'[84] Even Thomas Aquinas, who is often regarded as having dispensed with the Augustinian model, retains key elements of the basic idea: 'the intellectual light itself which is in us, is nothing else than a participated likeness of the uncreated light'.[85] These sentiments would continue to inform the epistemology of Renaissance Platonists such as Marcilio Ficino (1433–99), who stresses that the reliability of our knowledge is related to its divine origins: 'our minds bear the same relationship to God as our sight to the light of the Sun, and … therefore they can never understand anything without the light of God'.[86]

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[82] For differing accounts of the history of divine illumination see Steven Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Robert Pasnau, 'Henry of Ghent and the Twilight of Divine Illumination', *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1995), 49–75; Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*.

[83] Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron et Bonaventuriana quaedam selecta* 12.11, quoted in Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, p. 142.

[84] Henry of Ghent, *Summa* 1.7 ad. 1m, quoted in Pasnau, 'Twilight of Divine Illumination', p. 55. Both Bonaventure and Henry go well beyond rehearsal of the Augustinian position, under the influence of both Aristotle and Avicenna.

[85] Aquinas, *ST* 1a. 84, 5. Cf. *ST* 3a. 5, 4; *De veritate* 11.1c. The fortunes of divine illumination are usually thought to have waned in the late Middle Ages, owing to alternative theories of cognition espoused by Thomas Aquinas and others. See Pasnau, 'Twilight of Divine Illumination', who argues for a naturalising move in Aquinas's discussion of divine grace, where he proposes that man 'does not need a new light in addition to his natural light, in order to know the truth in all things' (*ST* 1a2ae. 109, 1). Aquinas insists, nonetheless, that 'for the knowledge of any truth whatsoever, man needs divine help, that the intellect may be moved by God to its act' (ST 1a2ae. 109, 1). This is entirely consistent with his understanding of 'natural' causation, which specifies the necessity of God's involvement in any motion in the universe.

[86] It is important not to forget, in addition, that there were a number of prominent Renaissance Platonists who bridge the gap between the late medieval advocates of divine illumination and the moderns. Chief among them was Marsilio Ficino: 'our minds bear the same relationship to God as our sight to the light of the Sun, and … therefore they can never understand anything without the light of God'. *Platonic Theology*, Proem, 6 vols.,

Modern readers may find this widespread assumption that human knowledge relied upon God's presence, that it was in some sense 'miraculous', rather odd. But part of this puzzlement arises from our present assumption of an exclusive disjunction between 'natural' and 'supernatural'. For Augustine, and indeed many of the ancients, it was perfectly natural (in his sense) for the porous human soul to be a site of divine activity. God, Augustine insists, is 'the first principle *of our nature*'.[87] Our natural desire for truth (and happiness) is simply an indication of this. Augustine pointed out that the Platonists had also held this view: that God is 'the principle of reason, and the rule of life', 'the light by which things become known, and the good for which things are done'.[88] Accordingly, Augustine did not imagine himself to be authoring an idiosyncratic and theologically extravagant theory of knowledge, but adding a Christian refinement to a long-standing philosophical tradition which held that when the mind makes a true judgement it is in contact with something that is eternal and unchanging.[89] The ubiquity of this cluster of ideas – in Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonism, medieval Christianity and Islam – suggests that it was perfectly 'natural' to assume that human knowledge and right living required, at a theoretical level, some transcendental grounding and, at a practical level, a process of mental training (or *askesis*) that would facilitate access to the transcendent. The prominence of this idea of divine illumination in the Western tradition might prompt us to reflect upon how difficult it is to provide an adequate naturalistic (in our modern sense of the term) account of how our minds might come to share common convictions that certain things are true, and that these things are, in fact, true. That problem

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ed. James Hankins, trans. Michael J. B Allen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001–6), vol. 1, p. 9. Cf. 'our mind illuminated by God's ray, understands in that ray the rational principles of all things'. *Platonic Theology* 12.1 (vol. 4, p. 23).

[87] 'quod ab illo nobis sit et principium naturae', City of God 8.9 (my emphasis) (LCL 413, p. 42). This is also echoed in Augustine's celebrated 'interior intimo meo et superior summo meo' (You were deeper within me than the most secret part of me, and greater than the best of me'). *Confessions* 3.6.11 (LCL 86, p. 110). Luther would later generalise this to encompass every creature: 'There can be nothing more present, nothing more intimately connected with every creature than God and his power.' WA 23, 134. Robert Pasnau, in his excellent *SEP* entry on 'Divine Illumination', begins by stating that divine illumination is 'the oldest and most influential alternative to naturalism in the areas of mind and knowledge'. We may see it that way now, but naturalism, in this sense, was not available to proponents of divine illumination and they would not have understood it as breaching any explanatory desideratum. The modern naturalist/non-naturalist distinction is in any case difficult to apply to ancient epistemologies. See Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, pp. 152–65.

[88] Augustine, *City of God* 8.9, 8.4 (LCL 413, pp. 42, 20). See also *Tractates on John* 19.12.

[89] What is explicitly Christian about Augustine's position is his suggestion, set out in *De Trinitate*, that the operations of the mind are to be understood on the basis of analogies to the Trinity. See Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, pp. 62–5.

has never really gone away and neither the neurosciences nor cognitive psychology have made this less puzzling. From the perspective of our predecessors, it would be an astonishing coincidence, verging on the miraculous, that creatures who evolved through blind natural processes might end up being able to access truths that had nothing to do with their mere physical survival.

All of this is by way of pointing to the fact that an early modern appeal to 'reason' does not initially rest on a hard and fast distinction between (natural) reason and (supernatural) revelation, since reason is already deeply theologically inflected. This relates to a more general thesis about the late historical emergence of a natural/supernatural divide. The initial turn towards reason already assumed its divine origin and natural receptivity to revelation. However, there would also be theological challenges to traditional understandings of reason, not least on account of a renewed emphasis on the fallen condition of human minds. In the end, a modern version of 'reason' would be severed from its theological roots and forced into the role of independent arbiter of religious claims. This would be an instrumental reason that passed judgement upon the theological assumptions upon which, paradoxically, its own reliability had originally been grounded.

It is tempting to think that metaphysical talk of an interior 'divine light' would be swept away with the inception of modern philosophy. Older models of the history of philosophy, which jump directly from antiquity to Descartes, tend to assume this, with the options of 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' offering non-theological and relatively unproblematic secular foundations for knowledge. However, as is already evident, Descartes regularly invokes the idea of natural light, along with concomitant notions of innate ideas and the image of God. These, in turn, inform his ontological arguments for the existence of God, with God subsequently acting as a guarantor of the reliability of our knowledge.

The theme of illumination is especially conspicuous in the thought of Descartes's most famous follower – the philosopher and priest Nicholas Malebranche (1638–1715) – who espoused what is an unmistakably Augustinian view of divine illumination, albeit in a Cartesian guise. While now relegated to the second division of philosophical thinkers, Malebranche was highly regarded in his own time. His contemporary Pierre Bayle, who was not easily impressed, lauded him as 'the premier philosopher of our age' and if Malebranche drew upon Augustine and Descartes, he also authored novel and influential solutions to philosophical problems.[90] He is perhaps

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[90] Quoted in Tad Schmaltz, *Early Modern Cartesianisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 154.

best known for his championing of occasionalism, the doctrine that God is the only true cause (although this idea has a much longer history going back to the medieval Ash'arite school of Islamic philosophy and was espoused by medieval Christian thinkers such as Nicholas of Autrecourt).[91] Equally prominent in his philosophy was the related idea that knowledge is possible only because human minds participate in God's knowledge. Malebranche insisted that God must be responsible for our ideas since our immaterial minds could be susceptible only to the influence of some other immaterial substance. He also repeated Augustine's argument that since all minds intuit the same set of necessary truths, they must all be illuminated by the same light.[92] While Malebranche is the best-known representative of this view, he was not the only one. In England, the philosopher John Norris also maintained that in so far as we know anything at all, we do so by participating in ideas in the divine mind.[93] This stance would also inform the idealism of Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753) who, as is well known, argued for the counterintuitive thesis that minds and ideas are the only things to exist.

Thinkers who may have been reluctant to go all the way with Malebranche's version of divine illumination nonetheless endorsed the key principle that reason was reliable on account of its divine origins. Among the most prominent advocates of this idea were the 'Cambridge Platonists' (with whom John Norris was well acquainted).[94] Benjamin Whichcote,

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[91] Nicholas Malebranche, *Search after Truth*, ed. and trans. Thomas Lennon and Paul Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 448; *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion* [1688], ed. Nicholas Jolley, trans. David Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 59f.; D. Perler and U. Rudolph, *Occasionalismus: Theorien der Kausalität in arabisch-islamischen und im europäischen Denken* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Michael Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 137–54. Hume's doctrine of causation looks a lot like Malebranche minus God. See M. Bell, 'Hume and Causal Power: The Influences of Malebranche and Newton', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 5 (1997), 68–86; Peter Kail, 'On Hume's Appropriation of Malebranche: Causation and Self', *European Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2007), 55–80. For Malebranche's medieval sources, see D. Connell, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1967).

[92] Malebranche, *Search after Truth*, p. 232; *Dialogues*, p. 141.

[93] John Norris, *An Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World, Part 1* (London, 1701), p. 451; *Cursory Reflections upon a Book called An Essay concerning Human Understanding* [1690] (London, 1713), p. 31. On John Norris, and the relation between his ideas and those of Malebranche, see William J. Mander, *The Philosophy of John Norris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). William Collier set out similar ideas in his *Clavis Universalis, or A New Inquiry after Truth, being a Demonstration of the Non-Existence or Impossibility of an External World* [1713] (Edinburgh, 1836).

[94] It has been pointed out that 'the Cambridge Platonists' were not all Platonists, and not all based at Cambridge. See, e.g., Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New*

regarded as the intellectual father of the group, had described reason as 'God's mansion', the 'impression of God', 'the image of the Creator, copied out in the creature'.[95] This was the common view of his fellow Platonists who, following Whichcote, repeatedly made the claim that reason was 'the candle of the Lord'.[96]

Reason, understood as the 'light of nature', was thus 'natural' in the way that 'laws of nature' were – at least as the latter were originally conceived. Both notions concern the powers with which God imbues nature, or which he stamps upon it. Reason is natural in the sense that it is proper to our natures, but it was a light given by God and authoritative in proportion to its retention of an original, created integrity.[97] In an Aristotelian framework, which assumed a teleological order to things, reason worked because it was naturally oriented towards the discovery of truth. For Aristotle, that is just how things are. Whichcote defers to this general principle when he remarks that: 'It is natural and proper, for mind and understanding in man, to tend towards God, as for heavy things to tend towards their centre …. All understandings seek after God, and have a sense and feeling of God; and the mind and spirit of man is a candle in man lighted by God and doth

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Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 16, but similar kinds of objections obtain for almost any convenient historical grouping. For a defence of the label see David Leech, 'Some Reflections on the Category "Cambridge Platonism"', *The Cambridge Platonist Research Group*, https://cprg.hypotheses.org/517, accessed 5 March 2020.

[95] Benjamin Whichcote, *Select Sermons of Dr. Whichcot [sic] in two parts* (London, 1698), p. 267.

[96] Based upon Proverbs 20:27: 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord' (KJV). Nathaniel Culverwell uses the expression almost 100 times in his modestly entitled *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* [1652], ed. Robert A. Greene and Hugh MacCallum (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001). See also Henry More, *Ad V.C. epistola altera*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (London, 1679), pp. 600f.; Glanvill, *Logou thrēskeia*, p. 24, and *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (London, 1661), p. 104; Peter Sterry, *The spirit convincing of sinne* (London, 1645), pp. 10–11; Philologus, *A seasonable discourse of the right use and abuse of reason in matters of religion* (London, 1676), p. 7. Similar allusions may be found in Walter Cross, *The Instrumentality of Faith* (London, 1695), pp. 25f.; Ireneus Freeman, *Logikē latreia the reasonablenesse of divine service* (London, 1661), p. 9; Henry Hallywell, *The Excellency of Moral Virtue* (London, 1692), p. 29. Quaker writers had their own, controversial, version of this idea. See e.g., Isaac Penington, *The ancient principle of truth, or, The light within asserted* (London, 1672), p. 19, and *passim*, and Henry More's comments, referenced above, were directed against them. George Rust helpfully sets out some of different senses in which the expression was used in *The remains of that reverend and learned prelate, Dr. George Rust* (London, 1686), pp. 21–43.

[97] Arguments about the extent to which, in a fallen world, reason had retained its integrity were very much at the forefront of discussions of the reliability of reason, and of what kind of balance should be struck between experience and reason. See Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and 'Original Sin and the Problem of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63 (2002), 239–59.

discover God.'[98] Such teleological assumptions, still deeply embedded in much thinking about *human* nature, were reinforced by the biblical idea that persons were created in the image of God. It was the supposition of a natural affinity between revelation and an internal, God-given reason that made it possible for reason to be the judge of supposedly revealed truths. As Whichcote put it: 'reason is the recipient of whatever God declares', reprising Aquinas's contention that because the soul is the image of God, it is *naturally* capable of grace.[99] As the natural intersection of divine and human, then, the mind is the place where 'spirituals and naturals join in and mingle' making it impossible to distinguish between religion and reason.[100] Reason was thus the site of human permeability to the divine.[101]

In view of these considerations we can say that the familiar story about Descartes, the birth of modern philosophy, and the rise of a reason and a foundationalist view of knowledge (the idea that all of our knowledge rests upon some non-inferential knowledge or indubitable belief), has a significant element of truth: it is just that the ultimate foundation of rational knowledge, on this broad conception of reason, turns out to be God. To some degree, then, the transition from implicit beliefs grounded in authority to explicit beliefs grounded in reason amounts to a shift in emphasis from one kind of religious source of knowledge to another.

Acknowledgement of the theistic grounding of knowledge was commonplace in the early modern period. Descartes himself remarked that 'man cannot achieve correct knowledge of natural things so long as he does not know God'.[102] 'It is necessary to know God', Malebranche agreed, 'if we

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[98] Benjamin Whichcote, *The Works of the Learned Benjamin Whichcote, D.D.*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1751), vol. 3, p. 144. Elsewhere he remarks that 'All Mind and Understanding hath Tendency towards God. It was well said by the Philosopher [Simplicius], *God is more Essential to us, than that that is most ourselves; and is Supream to that which is in us Sovereign.*' *Select Sermons*, p. 265 (cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 3.6.11). For similar remarks on the cooperation of God-given reason with the truths of revelation, see John Smith, *Select Discourses* (London, 1660), p. 382; Robert Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso 1*, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 422.

[99] Whichcote, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 163; *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* (London: Matthews and Morrot, 1930), §76. Cf. Aquinas, *ST* 1a2ae. 113, 10.

[100] Whichcote, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 182. '… if a man be once in a true state of religion, he cannot distinguish between religion and the reason of his mind; so that his religion is the reason of his mind, and the reason of his mind is his religion'. *Works*, vol. 4, p. 147.

[101] Robert Boyle took a similar position, stating that reason could be understood in three ways: as a receptable of innate ideas; as a discursive faculty; and as that part of the mind that is the natural recipient of revealed truths. Reason, he says, 'is capable of receiving a higher and more excellent information by supernatural revelations and discoveries'. *Appendix to the first part of the Christian Virtuoso* in *Works*, vol. 12, p. 682.

[102] Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, CSM 2, p. 290. See also *Meditations*, IV, CSM 2, pp. 37–43. In *Meditations* V he states that: 'The certainty and truth of all knowledge [*scientia*]

want to be fully convinced that the most certain sciences … are true sciences'.[103] Leibniz, too, insisted that 'the same God who is the source of all goods is also the principle of all knowledge'.[104] For François Fénelon, 'the superior reason that resides in Man, is God himself'.[105] In England, the physician and natural philosopher Walter Charleton (1620–1707) declared that 'no one thing in Nature can be known, unlesse the Author of Nature be first knowne'.[106] Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth spoke similarly of God as 'the *First Original Knowledge or Mind*, from whence all other *Knowledges* and *Minds* are derived'.[107] On this view, it was less a matter of reason providing grounds for believing in God, than it was God providing grounds for believing in reason.[108]

Others drew the obvious implication that without some faith in a providential Deity we would have no reason to reside confidence in the reliability of our mental faculties. Here the connection between knowledge and the divine was less direct, but equally crucial. According to Isaac Barrow (1630–77), the gifted mathematician, theologian, and classicist who preceded Isaac Newton in the Lucasian Chair at Cambridge, the dependability of the mind's logical operations 'does in some sort suppose the Existence of God'.[109] Anglican divine, Fellow of the Royal Society, and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson agreed that our confidence in the reliability of our clear and distinct ideas is grounded in the conviction that

depends uniquely on my awareness of the true God'. CSM 2, p. 49. It is interesting that one of the last medieval advocates of divine illumination, John of Rodington (1290–1348?), rehearsed a number of sceptical arguments – the senses deceive us, God could make one thing appear to be another – before concluding that such arguments would be valid were it not for divine illumination: 'without a special illumination … no object whatever can be perfectly known'. See Étienne Gilson, *Christian Philosophy: An Introduction*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993), p. 453. So the invocation of God – or at least of the natural order instantiated by God – had long been proposed as a defence against scepticism.

[103] Malebranche, *Search after Truth* 6.2.6 (p. 481).
[104] Leibniz, 'Letter to Countess Elizabeth?', in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), p. 237.
[105] François Fénelon, *Demonstration de l'Existence de Dieu*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1713), p. 203.
[106] Walter Charleton, *The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature. A Physico-theological Treatise* (London, 1652), sig. a2v. For Charleton's praise of Descartes's approach in the *Meditations*, see sigs. B3r–v.
[107] Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), p. 733.
[108] Cf. Aquinas's notion of God as 'first truth' (*ST* 2a2ae. 1, 1), and Bonaventure's assertion that 'All correct understanding proves and concludes to the truth of the divine being.' Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3.1.8.1.1.2 (ET, p. 181); 3.1.8.1.1.1 (ET, p. 102).
[109] Isaac Barrow, *The Usefulness of Mathematical Learning Explained and Demonstrated*, trans. John Kirby (London, 1734), pp. 109f.

God imbued us with trustworthy faculties. God guarantees the trustwor-thiness of 'the frame of our understandings'.[110] Even without subscribing to a fully developed theory of divine illumination, then, many early mod-ern thinkers could still hold that the reliability of reason called for a divine guarantor.

Understood as a portal to the transcendent, reason was also thought to encompass moral considerations and fundamental religious truths.[111] The common early modern expression 'right reason' signals the moral orienta-tion of human rationality. Again, this drew on a long tradition extending back to Plato's insistence on the convergence of knowledge and virtue.[112] The Stoics, in turn, had developed this understanding further, connecting reason to the idea of natural law and introducing the terminology of 'right

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[110] John Tillotson, *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr John Tillotson*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1722), vol. 1, p. 658. For further examples of God as the source of knowledge and guar-antor of the operation of our cognitive faculties see George Rust, *A Discourse on Truth* (London, 1677), pp. 33–4; Matthew Barker, *Natural Theology* (London, 1674), p. 62; Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 4th ed. (London, 1675), p. 232. There is, of course, a difference between God acting as a guarantor for the general reliability of the mind, and consciously acknowledging that God plays such a role. An atheist can thus happily affirm that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles (Descartes's exam-ple). However, this would not be genuinely 'scientific' knowledge, since it can still be rendered doubtful. *Objections and Replies*, CSM 2, p. 101. See discussion in Pasnau, *After Certainty*, pp. 22–6, 153–5. Compare Aristotle's criteria for 'scientific knowledge' which require not simply knowledge of the fact, but knowledge of the reasoned fact, or knowl-edge of its ultimate cause. *Posterior Analytics* 1.13. There are parallel arguments about the foundations of morality, namely, that our moral intuitions are difficult to justify outside of a theistic framework. Kant expressed this most forcefully, but this position has attracted many defenders. See, e.g., David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Again, it does not follow that atheists cannot be moral; just that it is difficult to establish the basis of their moral obligations.

[111] The light within, says Robert South, has 'two grand and principal offices; to wit, one to inform and direct, and the other to command or oblige'. *Sermons preached upon Several Occasions*, 5 vols. (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872), vol. 2, p. 28. These offices comprise *recta ratio*.

[112] Plato, *Meno* 87c; *Timaeus* 47c; *Theaetetus* 176b. On the concept and its history see Hoopes, *Right Reason*; John Spurr, 'Rational Religion in Restoration England', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988), 563–85; Lotte Mulligan, '"Reason," "Right Reason," and "Revelation" in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England', in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 375–401; Anthony J. Lisska, 'Right Reason in Natural Law Moral Theory', in *Reason, Religion, and Natural Law from Plato to Spinoza*, ed. Jonathan A. Jacobs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 155–74. Also see the special issue 'Right Reason in Western Ethics', *The Monist* 66 (1983), 1–163. Dafydd Mills Daniel traces the secularisation of this notion in *Ethical Rationalism and Secularization in the British Enlightenment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

reason'. Cicero, for example, proposed that 'virtue is nothing other than right reason (*recta ratio*)'.[113] Aquinas subsequently linked right reason with God's eternal law. Human beings participated in the eternal law by virtue of the light of nature, which was itself an imprint of the divine light.[114]

In the early modern period, Richard Hooker (1554–1600), one of the most articulate defenders of the use of reason in matters of religion, explained that everyone, excepting children, innocents, and madmen, has the capacity to discern right from wrong though the exercise of right reason.[115] As we will see, in the wake of the Reformation, there was considerable discussion about the reliability of right reason on account of the fallen human condition. But it was usually allowed that right reason continued to function to some degree, especially in a sanctified state and with the assistance of divine grace. Calvinist divine George Hakewill thus spoke of 'the torch of right reason, yet left amongst the remainders of Gods image in man'.[116] John Donne used the expression 'rectified reason', suggesting that it was a natural partner for faith: 'They are not continuall, but they are contiguous, they flow not from one another, but they touch one another, they are not both of a peece, but they enwrap one another, Faith and Reason.' Ultimately, he would conclude that 'rectified Reason is Religion'.[117]

It follows that when many early modern thinkers sought to mobilise reason in the sphere of religion, they did not imagine themselves to be calling upon some 'external' or 'neutral' human capacity that was competent to pass judgement on the validity of various religious propositions. If anything, the appeal to reason was motivated by the assumption that it could provide a more direct channel to the divine than the fallible institutions and councils of the Church. It was not simply a natural (in our sense) cognitive

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[113] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.15.34 (LCL 141, 1945), p. 362. See also Seneca: 'if a man has brought his reason to perfection, he is praiseworthy and has reached the end suited to his nature. This perfect reason is called virtue, and is likewise that which is honourable.' *Epistulae Morales* 76.10 (LCL 76, 152–3).

[114] Aquinas, *ST* 1a2ae. 93, 2; 93, 3; 91, 2. Aquinas also assimilated right reason to the virtue of prudence, the capacity not merely to know the content of the natural law, but the wisdom to know how it applies to specific circumstances. Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 47, 4. Lisska, 'Right Reason in Natural Law Moral Theory'.

[115] Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), vol. 1, p. 222.

[116] George Hakewill, *King Dauids Vow for Reformation of Himselfe* (London, 1621), p. 52. Hakewill's right reason is a component of human wisdom which remains subordinate to a 'divine, holy, and heavenly wisdom'. Right reason was also contrasted with 'carnal reason'. Edward Reynolds, *The Lord's Property in his Redeemed People* (London, 1660), p. 12.

[117] John Donne, *LXXX Sermons* (London, 1640), pp. 448, 178, 729. Donne refers to reason that is 'rectified, refreshed, restored, reestablished by the seales of Gods pardon' (p. 132).

instrument, moreover, but was the bearer of the divine image, a receptable of innate truths, and already attuned to revelation.[118] This amicable partnership between reason and revelation was destined for a troubled future, however, with the emergence of more narrow and instrumentalist understandings of reason. Reason was set to be pried loose from its metaphysical and theological foundations, emptied of substantive content, and forged into a device for rational calculation. This 'secular' understanding of rationality first arose from a competing theological account of human rationality.

3.4 Reason Secularised

Luther's impassioned appeal at the Diet of Worms to scripture *and clear reason* may come as a surprise to some because Luther is commonly depicted as an implacable opponent of reason. For his harshest critics he was an embodiment of irrationality: a 'crass ignoramus' (Heinrich Denifle), a man 'wholly and systematically ruled by his affective and appetitive faculties' (Jacques Maritain), an unintelligent rabble-rouser (Goethe), a philistine (Thomas Arnold), the coarse and foul-mouthed leader of a revolution (Ralph Inge), etc.[119] In recent popular (albeit historically unreliable) writings Luther has been presented as the personification of an opposition between reason and

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[118] It is important in this context to recall the 'objective' and 'subjective' versions of naturalism outlined in the introduction. Non-naturalistic epistemology, on these understandings, does not entail invoking the supernatural, but rather the claim that epistemology can be understood quite independently of empirical matters, and relies on conceptual analysis. Admitting the possibility of a priori knowledge is typically taken as a marker of a non-naturalistic approach (but cf. Philip Kitcher, 'A Priori Knowledge', *The Philosophical Review* 86 (1980), 3–23). See, e.g., the essays by W. V. Quine, Jaegwon Kim, and Hilary Putnam in *Epistemology: An Anthology*, ed. E. Sosa and J. Kim (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). The early modern examples discussed above confound the naturalist/non-naturalist distinction in that they invoke what look like anthropological considerations, including those belonging to theological anthropology, to account for innate ideas, and which in turn provide an account of what it is to hold a justified belief.

[119] Examples taken from Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Belief* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), ch. 4. Further examples in philosophical writings are provided by Oswald Beyer, 'Philosophical Modes of Thought of Luther's Theology as an Object of Inquiry', in *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition*, ed. Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), pp. 13–21 (p. 14). For more nuanced accounts of Luther on reason see Brian Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 64–70; Denis R. Janz, 'Whore or Handmaid? Luther and Aquinas on the Function of Reason in Theology', in *The Devil's Whore*, ed. Dragseth, pp. 47–52; David Andersen, *Martin Luther: The Problem of Faith and Reason* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2009).

religious faith.[120] In his less temperate moments, of which there were more than a few, Luther certainly provides some justification for these assessments. Reason was 'a mangy, leprous whore' and 'the devil's bride', 'the greatest enemy that faith has'.[121] This sceptical outlook was motivated partly by an identification of reason with aspects of Aristotelian philosophy, partly by Luther's emphasis on the fallen condition of humanity and his reckoning of the damage wreaked upon human reason by the Fall. Both Luther and Calvin maintained that the degree of rationality that we now possess is but a pale shadow of the original gift of reason granted to Adam. On the one hand, we retain some of the powers of the original gift of reason, in so far as the divine image was not completely effaced by the Fall. Its residual powers are sufficient for us to govern human affairs and make modest advances in the sciences. On the other hand, and comparatively speaking, these residual powers of reason were deemed to be 'leprous and dull' (Luther) or 'seriously injured' (Calvin).[122]

Luther and Calvin sought to distinguish their assessments of human reason from those of their scholastic predecessors who, in their view, had overestimated the integrity and scope of fallen reason – not least on account of the undue influence of the Pagan philosopher Aristotle.[123] The key implication, for Luther in particular, was diametrically opposed to the quasi-Platonist positions set out above: unaided human reason cannot provide us with direct access to the divine.[124] Its limitations extended even to our knowledge of the natural world. A truly scientific knowledge of nature, as Aristotle had imagined it, was for Luther a lost cause: the operations of

[120] See, e.g., Dawkins, *God Delusion*, p. 221; Jerry Coyne, *Faith versus Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 69.

[121] Luther, *Luther's Last Sermon in Wittenberg … 17 January 1546*, LW 51, 374, 376; *Table Talk*, ed. and trans. William Hazlitt (Fearn: Christian Heritage, 2003), pp. 252f., §353. Cf. *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 120f.; *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, LW 40, 174–5.

[122] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 1, 66, cf. 113f.; Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.4, vol. 1, p. 225.

[123] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 1–5, LW 1, pp. 65, 142, 167; Calvin, *Commentaries on Ezekiel*, I, 375, *Institutes* 1.15.4, vol. 1, p. 164. Cf. Aquinas, SCG I.7. For similar points in subsequent Protestant authors see Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions* (London, 1647), pp. 5, 44, 483; William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles* (Cambridge, 1595), p. 81; Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1.1.1.1, vol. 1, p. 143.

[124] Martin Luther, *Exegetica opera Latina*, vol. 19 (Erlangen, 1847), p. 10. Calvin has a slightly more complicated position, wishing to assert that everyone has an inbuilt 'sense of the Divine' (*sensus divinitatis*). *Institutes* 1.3.1, vol. 1, p. 43. This, however, needs 'the spectacles of scripture' in order to focus the knowledge of God that otherwise lies 'confused in our minds'. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.6.1, vol. 1, p. 64. See, e.g., Paul Helm, 'John Calvin, the *Sensus Divinitatis*, and the Noetic Effects of Sin', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998), 87–107; Edward Adams, 'Calvin's View of Natural Knowledge of God', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3 (2001), 280–92.

nature have become a mystery to us after the Fall of Adam, on account of the 'perversion' of reason.[125] This more sceptical assessment of the powers of reason thus also distinguished Luther, Calvin, and their followers from those early modern Platonists and rationalists who, as we have seen, discounted the impact of original sin and focused more on the traditional connection between human reason and its divine source.[126]

That said, Luther carved out a space for the operations of this attenuated reason. In keeping with virtually all early modern thinkers, Luther understood reason to have originally been a gift from God and he would describe it as 'the most important and the highest in rank among all things … the best and something divine'. As his declaration at Worms illustrates, reason could also serve as a criterion for our judgement, too.[127] Crucially, though, reason was gifted to us in order to assist in our *secular* callings. It was 'the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicine, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess *in this life*'.[128] Reason, in spite of its fallen state, would thus enable us to muddle through in a world that shared its fallen condition.

Calvin adopted a similar stance. While reason was 'weak and immersed in darkness', there remained 'some residue of intelligence and judgement' which made it possible for human beings to establish stable social orders and glean some knowledge of the operations of nature. In delimiting the scope of reason, Calvin made a crucial distinction: 'we have one kind of intelligence of earthly things, and another of heaven things'. Mere reason was deemed largely incompetent in the higher spiritual realm and when applied to matters concerning the future life. When it came to knowledge of God and his favour towards us, even the most ingenious are 'blinder than moles'.[129] But reason could operate tolerably well in the present life – when applied to the spheres of 'policy and economy, all mechanical arts and liberal

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[125] Martin Luther, *Complete Sermons*, 7 vols., ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), vol. 1.1, p. 329.

[126] Harrison, 'Original Sin and the Problem of Knowledge'.

[127] 'If anything is really contrary to reason, it is certainly very much more against God also.' Luther, *Der Kleine Katechismus*, WA, 30/1, 248. Cf. Theodore G. Tappert (ed. and trans.), *Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 345; *Lectures on Genesis, LW* 1, 62–3, 112; Luther, *Disputation concerning Man, LW* 34, 137; *The Judgement of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*, WA 8, 629, *LW* 44, 336. Luther could thus be held up as a champion of reason: 'And if *Luther* had not follow'd his own Reason, the Reformation would not have been, in all humane Probability, brought to pass.' Warren, *An Apology*, p. 46.

[128] Luther, *Disputation concerning Man, LW* 34, 137 (my emphasis). For similar remarks from Philip Melanchthon see *Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusukawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 23.

[129] Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.18, vol. 1, p. 238.

studies'.[130] The secular world was the legitimate sphere of operations for what, in essence, was a natural or secular reason – literally a reason fit for use in the *saeculum*, the imperfect in-between age that occupied the unstable temporal space between the Incarnation and the end of the world. While the original intention of Luther and Calvin had been to *limit* the scope of reason to mere 'earthly things', their efforts would eventually have the opposite effect. Once the domain of the here-and-now took precedence over the more remote region of 'heavenly things', there would be a corresponding expansion in the scope and status of natural reason. If the secular realm is all that there is, then reason tends to become omnipotent.

Attempting to delimit the scope of reason was by no means the sole preserve of Protestant thinkers. Catholic thinkers with strong Augustinian commitments were also inclined to reflect on the consequences of the impact of sin on the operations of reason. The basic strategy of Nicholas Malebranche's *Search after Truth* (1674–5) was thus to reflect upon 'the order found in the faculties and passions of our first father in his original state, as well as the changes and disorder that befell him after his sin'.[131] The Jansenist philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote that 'if man had never been corrupted, he would, in his innocence, confidently enjoy both truth and felicity'. In our present state, however, we are unhappily suspended between 'absolute ignorance and certain knowledge; so obvious is it that we once enjoyed a degree of perfection from which we have unhappily fallen'.[132] Pascal rated the efforts of the ancient philosophers similarly: 'they knew the excellence of man, they were ignorant of his corruption; so that they easily avoided sloth, but fell into pride'.[133] The sanguine assumptions of Plato and Aristotle about the capacities of human reason were thus judged to have been misplaced on account of their ignorance of the fallen state

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[130] Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.12–13, vol. 1, pp. 233, 234.

[131] Malebranche, *Search after Truth*, I.5 (p. 19). For similar observations of Anglophone writers on the need to understand the impact of the Fall in assessing the operations of reason see Thomas Wright, *Passions of the Mind* (London, 1601), pp. 2–3. See also Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1.1.1.1, vol. 1, pp. 143–50; Reynolds, *Treatise of the Passions*, pp. 483, 5–6. This general theme is developed in more detail in Harrison, *Fall of Man*.

[132] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* L 131 (B 434), trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 65. This edition uses the Lafuma (L) numbering. Square bracketed numbers [B] refer to the Brunschvicg numbering for cross-referencing. Cf. L 45, L 199, L 401 [B 84, B 72, B 437], pp. 42, 88–95, 146.

[133] Pascal, *Pensées* L 208 [B 435], p. 96. This avenue of criticism was pursued most enthusiastically by Protestants. See Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 1, 166; Calvin, *Institutes* 2.7.6, vol. 1, p. 355. On characterisations of Aristotelian science as proud and 'puffed up' knowledge see Peter Harrison, 'Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy in Early-Modern England', *Isis* 92 (2001), 257–78.

of humanity. The ancient sceptics had gone to the other extreme, lacking any sense of human beings created in the divine image. Pascal would reach the conclusion that: 'Reason's last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things which are beyond it … and if natural things are beyond it, what are we to say about supernatural things?'[134] Again we see an emphasis on the limits of reason and a key distinction between earthly and heavenly spheres of competence.[135]

Theological anthropology and the narrative of the Fall were not the only sources for early modern efforts to delimit the operations and scope of reason. Metaphysical considerations were also important – especially the far-reaching influence of the nominalism of the late Middle Ages. In essence, nominalism was a denial of the existence of universals – those shared properties of individual things such as 'redness' or 'beauty'. Plato's theory of the forms is the most influential exemplification of the conviction that universals are real. Against this approach, William of Ockham (1285–1347) maintained that universals played a role only in the realm of logic, and should be understood only as abstractions from individual things.[136] Ockham also held the view, later adopted by Locke, that the mind, at birth, was a blank slate or *tabula rasa*.[137] We do not come into the world with eternal truths or intuitions of the forms written into our souls. Cutting a very long story short, on this view of things, the proper business of reason lies in the performance of logical operations, and not participation in eternal truths. Reason did not, indeed could not, be involved in unearthing and giving expression to innate ideas, since these did not exist. There was no necessary connection between this stance on universals and negative views of reason arising out of a particular interpretation of the Fall, although clearly they could be mutually reinforcing.[138]

[134] Pascal, *Penseés*, L 188 [B 267], p. 85.
[135] This will later be echoed in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).
[136] Stephen Tornay, *Ockham: Studies and Selections* (La Salle: Open Court, 1938), p. 5.
[137] Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. 495. Luther also followed Ockham on this point. Andersen, *Martin Luther*, pp. 6f.
[138] Ockham was relatively sanguine about natural human powers. Gregory of Rimini, while also regarded as a nominalist, took a strongly Augustinian view about human capabilities in a fallen world. It is possible that Luther had imbibed the version of nominalism associated with Gregory's *schola Augustiniana moderna* (as it was known) in which the doctrine of original sin combined with nominalism to fuel a powerful set of reservations of the operations of reason. See Heiko A. Oberman, 'Headwaters of the Reformation', in *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), pp. 39–83; Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 78–80; Gordon Leff, 'Gregory of Rimini', *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 7 (1961), 153–70; Andersen, *Martin Luther*, pp. 56–71.

The story of the impact of these considerations on the trajectory of the modern West has been told many times, albeit in different versions, none of which need be rehearsed in detail here.[139] In essence, from the thirteenth century onwards, a strong emphasis on divine omnipotence led to questions about whether God was limited by putatively universal principles of reason and morality. Nominalists responded to this question in the negative. God was radically free to will any state of affairs that he chose, and to legislate what was right and wrong. This provides a link between nominalism and voluntarism, with the latter emphasising the priority of the divine will. It followed that what had once been thought of as eternal and immutable

[139] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 13–18; Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 39–41; Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 160–82. For the related influence of *voluntarism* on the emergence of science, see Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); M. B. Foster, 'The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science', *Mind*, new series, 18 (1934), 446–68; P. M. Heimann, 'Voluntarism and Immanence: Conceptions of Nature in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978), 271–83; Henry Guerlac, 'Theological Voluntarism and Biological Analogies in Newton's Physical Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983) 219–29; Francis Oakley, 'Christian Theology and the Newtonian Science: The Rise of the Concept of Laws of Nature', *Church History* 30 (1961), 433–57; Margaret J. Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); 'Fortune, Fate, and Divination: Gassendi's Voluntarist Theology and the Baptism of Epicureanism', in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. Margaret Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 155–74; John Henry, 'Henry More versus Robert Boyle', in *Henry More (1614–87): Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), pp. 55–76; James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, *Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990); Antoni Malet, 'Isaac Barrow on the Mathematization of Nature: Theological Voluntarism and the Rise of Geometrical Optics', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997), 265–87. My own intervention into this discussion has often been taken to be a rejection of the voluntarism and science thesis, whereas it was mostly intended to correct an unhelpful dichotomy between 'voluntarists' and 'intellectualists' and the identification of Descartes with the latter rather than the former. See Peter Harrison, 'Voluntarism and Early Modern Science', *History of Science* 40 (2002), 63–89; 'Was Newton a Voluntarist?', in *Newton and Newtonianism: New Studies*, ed. James E. Force and Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004), pp. 39–64; 'Voluntarism and the Origins of Modern Science: A Reply to John Henry', *History of Science* 47 (2009), 223–31. Cf. John Henry, 'Voluntarist Theology at the Origins of Modern Science: A Response to Peter Harrison', *History of Science* 47 (2009), 79–113; Francis Oakley, 'Voluntarist Theology and Early-Modern Science: The Matter of the Divine Power, Absolute and Ordained', *History of Science* 56 (2018), 72–96 with both of whom I mostly agree about the importance of voluntarism for the emergence of modern science.

features of the world were to be understood either as arbitrary divine commands, or as human creations that help us navigate the world. Universals have no transcendental status and serve merely as signs. Controversially, the same was often held true for moral universals, too. Expressing the implications of this position simply, if there are no eternal and unchangeable notions of the good and the true, a model of knowledge that has human reason participating in these universals is no longer viable. Nominalism, in combination with voluntarism, was thus destined to leave an indelible mark on subsequent theology, politics, and the natural sciences. It also promoted a revised understanding of human reason.

Thomas Hobbes offers a good indication of how such commitments would play out in early modern philosophy. Perceptively characterised by the polymath philosopher G. W. Leibniz, as 'a super-nominalist', Hobbes proposed in the *Leviathan* (1651) that reason 'is nothing but *Reckoning* (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of the Consequences of general names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts'.[140] Given Hobbes's commitment to mechanistic understandings of the world, this amounted to a view of reason as a straightforward calculating device. The appeal to common consent also received short shrift: 'no mans Reason, nor the Reason of any one number of men, makes the certaintie; no more than an account is there well cast up, because a great many men have unanimously approved it'.[141] Hobbes expressed a similarly deflationary approach to 'right reason'. Right reason was simply 'the act of reasoning, that is, the peculiar and true ratiocination of every man concerning those actions of his, which may either redound to the damage or benefit of his neighbours'.[142] This was a clear anticipation of the hedonistic calculus of later utilitarians who understand moral judgement as a computing of the balance of benefits and harms caused by particular acts, but without any overriding conception of the good (which right reason had traditionally been thought to provide). With

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[140] G. W. Leibniz, 'Preface to an Edition of Nizolius', in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., ed. L. E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1969), pp. 121–30 (p. 128); Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 5, vol. 2, p. 64. Hobbes nonetheless allows that reason is 'the undoubted Word of God'. *Leviathan*, pt. 3, 32.2, vol. 3, p. 576.

[141] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 5, vol. 2, p. 66.

[142] Hobbes, *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society,* [*De Cive*] in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, 11 vols., ed. William Molesworth (London: Bohn, 1851), vol. 2, p. 16, note. In places Hobbes seems to invoke right reason, but his final position is unmistakably negative. See Robert A. Greene, 'Thomas Hobbes and the Term "Right Reason": Participation to Calculation', *History of European Ideas* 41 (2015), 997–1028. Richard Cumberland produced *De legibus naturae* (London, 1672) in large part to refute Hobbes's dismissal of right reason.

substantive matters now lying outside the scope of a merely calculative reason, Hobbes referred issues of morals and religion to the determination of a human judge.[143] This is clearly a step towards the secularisation of reason. For Hobbes, as Peter Dear observes, 'the supernatural has been quietly replaced with civil authority, which provides the absolute criterion for reason'.[144] But all of this was originally motivated by a particular understanding of divine omnipotence.

John Locke represents a further example of the way in which reason came to be reconceptualised. While he retained the traditional descriptions of reason as a 'spark of the divine nature', 'the candle of the Lord', and 'the voice of God', he also took pains to stress 'the weakness of our faculties in this state of mediocrity'.[145] Crucially, for Locke, reason had no substantive content. Against the 'established opinion' that there were innate principles attested to by universal consent, Locke contended that the mind was a blank slate that could be written upon only by experience. This is one of the central messages of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689), a foundational source for modern epistemology. It is significant that a primary target of the book was Herbert of Cherbury's 'common notions' and the tradition that they represented.[146] (This tradition will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.) For Locke, reason is a content-free engine of inference and calculation – the capacity to make deductions and judgements of probability based on ideas that ultimately derived from sensations.[147] Reason in this

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[143] 'And therfore, as when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or their controversie must either come to blowes, or be undecided, for want of a right Reason constituted by Nature; so is it also in all debates of what kind soever.' *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 5, vol. 2, p. 66.

[144] Peter Dear, 'Divine Illumination, Mechanical Calculators, and the Roots of Modern Reason', *Science in Context* 23 (2010), 351–66 (363). See also Gregory S. Kavka, 'Right Reason and Natural Law in Hobbes's Ethics', *The Monist* 66 (1983), 120–33. In a sense, this is Hobbes's version of a new kind of implicit faith.

[145] Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, pp. 139f.; *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 205; *Essay* 4.12.10 (p. 645). In the *Essay* Locke also calls reason 'a natural revelation' (again confounding modern understandings of revelation as essentially supernatural). *Essay* 4.19.4 (p. 698). As Shaftesbury pointed out, it is not clear that the innate ideas that Locke rejects correspond to the connate principles, *koinai ennoiai* and the *prolêpsis* held by the Cambridge Platonists. See Friedrich A. Uehlein, 'Whichcote, Shaftesbury and Locke: Shaftesbury's Critique of Locke's Epistemology and Moral Philosophy', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25 (2017), 1031–48.

[146] Locke, *Essay* 1, 3, 15; 1.4.13 (pp. 77, 92).

[147] Reason involves 'the perception of the connexion there is between the *Ideas* in each step of the deduction, whereby the Mind comes to see, either the certain Agreement or

sense had the potential to act as a kind of arbiter in matters of faith, which was increasingly understood as the act of assenting to propositions. What God reveals is undoubtedly true, Locke allows, but whether it is a true revelation 'Reason must judge.'[148] With Locke, reason moves from being intimately connected to divine revelation to being an independent judge of what actually counts as revelation in the first place.[149]

Again, Locke's intention was to place constraints upon reason. With its modest reach, it was sufficient for our activities in the present world, God having equipped us for 'the conveniences of life and the business we have to do here'.[150] And even our knowledge of the natural world is significantly circumscribed: 'what a darkness we are involved in, how little it is of being, and the things that are, that we are capable to know'. We know nothing of the true nature of the universe and remain ignorant about physical bodies and the causes of events. Our faculties, Locke wrote, 'are not fitted to penetrate into the internal fabric and real essences of bodies' and the knowledge that our senses provide yields 'but judgment and opinion, not knowledge and certainty'. They might allow us to 'draw advantages of ease and health, and increase our stock of conveniences for this life', but fall well short of providing us with genuine science.[151] Again, reason serves well enough for secular purposes in the here and now.

This restrained vision of reason fitted well with an experimental programme of science that had as its primary aim the relief of the human

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Disagreement of any two *Ideas*'. *Essay* 4.17.2 (p. 669). Further on, reason is 'the discovery of the certainty or probability of such propositions or truths, which the mind arrives at by deduction made from such ideas, as it has got by the use of its natural faculties; viz, by the use of sensation or reflection'. Locke, *Essay* 4.8.2 (p. 689).

[148] Locke, *Essay* 4.18.10 (p. 695). Thomas Reid argued similarly in his 'Lectures on Natural Religion', 5.17–18, in *Thomas Reid on Religion*, ed. James J. S. Foster, introduction by Nicholas Wolterstorff (Edinburgh: Library of Scottish Philosophy, 2017), unpaginated.

[149] But Locke does not deny that some matters of faith may be above reason and its authority derives from the fact it is a light that God has given us. *Essay* 4.18.8 (p. 694).

[150] Locke, *Essay* 2.23.12 (p. 302). For Locke's complicated position in relation to the reformers' pessimistic assessments of the capacities of reason, see Harrison, *Fall of Man*, pp. 221–33; W. M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

[151] Locke, *Essay* 4.12.10 (p. 645). 'Science' here in the sense of Aristotelian *scientia* which entailed demonstrative certainty. Locke's position is an interesting echo of Nicholas of Cusa: 'The quiddity of things, which is the truth of beings, is unattainable in its purity; though it is sought by all philosophers, it is found by no one as it is. And the more deeply we are instructed in this ignorance, the closer we approach the truth.' Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, 1.3.10, in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), p. 91. Cf. also Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis Scientifica: Or, Confest Ignorance, the Way to Science* (London, 1665).

condition in the present world. Francis Bacon had earlier outlined how, once human knowledge-making confronted the limitations imposed by the Fall, it might be oriented towards the charitable goal of human welfare: 'knowledge being now discharged of that venom which the serpent infused into it, and which makes the mind of man to swell, we may not be wise above measure and sobriety, but cultivate truth in charity'.[152] This approach informed the mission of the early Royal Society and its programme of experimental natural philosophy. Robert Hooke, the Society's first curator of experiments, thus noted that on account of an innate corruption, human beings were prone to error and misfortune. Experimental science was addressed to a partial rectification of those errors and to ameliorating 'the mischiefs, and imperfection, mankind has drawn upon it self'.[153] On this understanding, which is some distance from later assessments, science (or, more strictly, natural philosophy) was a kind of consolation prize, and the human faculties that enabled it were accorded a status that was correspondingly modest.[154]

In sum, over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, much of the discussion of the powers of reason and its status in comparison to other authorities (experience, tradition, scripture), was linked to specific theological commitments. In relation to human nature, these can be correlated with differing interpretations of the biblical Fall and along varying assessments of the damage to reason that it had wrought. In relation to the divine nature, the question was whether divine omnipotence could be trammelled by human conceptions or was ultimately inscrutable. More generous appraisals of reason, characteristic of the Cambridge Platonists and, before them, many scholastic thinkers, were linked to relatively sanguine readings of the Fall along with the assumption that predicates such as 'goodness' could be reliably applied to the Godhead. But for those who argued that more severe and comprehensive losses had attended Adam's lapse, and who also stressed the inscrutability of the divine will, reason and its operations were thought to be seriously compromised and limited in their reach. It was

[152] Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, in *Works*, vol. 4, p. 20. Bacon's estimation of the potential accomplishments of human knowledge-makers is more optimistic than that of Locke, in part because of the eschatological context in which it was originally articulated and understood. Following the Restoration, however, more exuberant visions of scientific progress were treated with a degree of suspicion.

[153] Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (London, 1665), Preface (unpaginated).

[154] How science moves from this position of relative inferiority to become a central feature of European cultures is addressed in a magisterial series of volumes written by Stephen Gaukroger, beginning with *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

the latter stance that advanced the secularisation of reason, now understood to be a diminished natural power and not a luminous divine presence in the human mind.

3.5 The Eclipse of Trust

The Lockean proposal that instrumental reason, in spite of its limitations, could provide a more reliable guide to religious truths than trust in fallible authorities led to a new understanding of what counted as 'reasonable religion'. As Thomas Sprat declared in 1667: 'The universal disposition of this *Age* is bent upon a *rational religion*.'[155] The vogue for rational religion was of a piece with criticisms of unreflective, implicit faith. But given the range of understandings of reason, what counted as 'rational religion' varied widely. At one end of the scale, those who shared the Cambridge Platonists' generous and broad assessment of human rationality, essentially regarded the perfecting of reason, understood as the image of the divine within, as one of the chief aims of the religious life. Henry Hallywell summed up this approach with his observation that 'Christianity is not only agreeable to, but perfective of our Rational Powers.'[156] Many of his contemporaries endorsed this view.[157] Importantly, the specification of *Christian* religion meant that believing revealed truths and the mysteries of Christianity was included in the package.

At the other end of the scale, however, for those who regarded reason as an instrument of calculation – reason as ratiocination – rational religion might be understood as a minimalist religion consisting only in those truths that were rationally comprehensible and supported by argument. This

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[155] Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 366.

[156] Henry Hallywell, *The Sacred Method of Saving Humane Souls* (London, 1677), p. 78. Cf.: 'For the Christian Religion is a manifestation of the highest Reason that ever the World had any cognizance of, and all its Parts and Doctrines are every way fitted to Rational Capacities' (p. 69).

[157] Joseph Glanvill: '*The belief of our reasons is an exercise of Faith, and Faith is an act of Reason*.' *Logou thrēskeia*, p. 24; Benjamin Whichcote: 'The Perfection of the Happiness of Humane Nature, consists in the right Use of our Rational Faculties; in the vigorous and intense Exercise of them, about their Proper and proportionable Object; which is God.' Aphorism 296, *Select Sermons*, p. 451; Bentley, *Unreasonableness of Atheism*, p. 26; Robert South: 'Reason is that into which all Religion is at last resolved.' 'The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity Asserted', *Sermons*, vol. 2, p. 404; Daniel Nicols: 'True Religion is most rational, answering the Philosophy of Man's Nature, and the Ends of Discourse.' *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral of Lincoln* (London, 1681), p. 14; John Jenny: 'there being nothing in the world more rational then Religion and the Worship of a Deity', *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Lady Frances Padget* (London, 1697), p. 9.

was the position associated with an (admittedly diverse) group of 'deists'.[158] One of the prominent deists, the Irish freethinker John Toland, notoriously insisted that no true religious doctrine could be 'above reason' or 'against reason'. This, he contended, was an implication of the principle, urged by both Locke and the Cambridge Platonists, that reason was 'the candle of the Lord'. For Toland, this reason was the measure of the intrinsic reasonableness of any purported doctrine.[159] As he expressed it: 'For as 'tis by Reason we arrive at the Certainty of God's own Existence, so we cannot otherwise discern his *Revelations* but by their Conformity with our own natural Notices of Him.'[160]

Again, critique of implicit faith and the ethics of belief were central concerns. Toland insisted that if we are to be morally responsible for what we hold to be true, we must fully comprehend its content: 'as long as he conceives not what he believes, he cannot sincerely acquiesce in it'.[161] Arguing that Christianity cannot enjoin belief in things that are above or against reason, Toland pointed to what was at stake: if salvation depends upon belief, then 'the Subject of Faith must be intelligible to all'. But this logic assumed a quite new understanding of faith. Medieval thinkers endorsed the premise, but drew the different conclusion that for many, if not most, faith must be implicit and involve an attitude of trust. Such faith was the precondition for knowledge. Toland demurred: 'I stand by it that Faith *is* knowledg.'[162] A new kind of moral commitment would necessarily attend this reconstrued 'faith': not trust in others, but a capacity on the part of each individual to fully comprehend and provide reasons for holding those propositions that now constituted religious faith.

It may seem that the principle of deploying reason to determine the veracity of revelation seems simply a repetition of Locke's view with echoes of the Cambridge Platonists. But Locke had still been committed to

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[158] On the problem of defining deism see Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions*, p. 62.

[159] 'for *Reason* is not less from God than *Revelation;* 'tis the Candle, the Guide, the Judge he has lodg'd within every Man that cometh into this World'. John Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious* (London, 1696), pp. 140f.

[160] Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 30. Other deistical writers expressed the same sentiment. Thomas Chubb: 'Reason is the judge of the meaning and sense of the divine revelation. Reason ought to be the judge of *every part* of that revelation.' *The Comparative Excellence and Obligation of Moral and Positive Duties* (London, 1730), p. 26; Thomas Morgan: 'The moral Truth, Reason, of Fitness … is the only Mark of Criterion of any Doctrine as coming from God, or as making any Part of true Religion.' *The Moral Philosopher*, vol. 1 (London, 1737), p. viii.

[161] Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 36.

[162] Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, pp. 134, 139 (my emphasis).

the principle that many things exceeded the scope of reason, and that such things might be revealed. It was given to reason to judge the reliability of the *source* of revealed truths rather than judge their intrinsic intelligibility.[163] The tendency of the deists was to omit this key step, which had still allowed for the possibility that reason might judge it necessary to accept things that went beyond its scope. This takes us to the broader question of 'evidences' for Christianity and rational judgements of the trustworthiness of sources of revelation (which will be considered in the next chapter).

For now, it should be clear that the dismantling of implicit faith required a new understanding of faith in which the role of trust was reassessed and diminished, while reason, however conceived, was elevated. The question of the role of trust in relation to belief had been tackled head-on by Thomas Hobbes. In his no-nonsense analysis of 'believing *in*' and how, if at all, it differs from 'believing *that*', Hobbes insisted that 'by *Beleeving in*, as in the Creed, is meant, not trust in the Person; but Confession and acknowledgement of the Doctrine'.[164] In direct opposition to first-century understandings, Hobbes contended that to believe in God is not to put one's trust in God, but rather to give intellectual assent to the proposition 'God exists'. Hobbes's collapse of the distinction between belief-in and belief-that, and his exclusion of the trust relations, became increasingly common in the late seventeenth century, even among those less theologically suspect than Hobbes.

The classicist Meric Casaubon observed that some who had written on belief and unbelief 'have chiefly, under that title, insisted upon *trust*, or *trusting*'. Casaubon was having none of it, making it clear that for him belief was about histories of things done and credited as true.[165] We find comparable assessments among many orthodox religious thinkers. Isaac Barrow maintained that faith and belief are the same thing, referencing Aristotle's *Topics*. To reinforce the point, he offers this definition: 'To believe πιστεύειν [*pisteuein*] is the effect … of a persuasive argument, and the result of ratiocination.' The object of faith, he goes on to say, is not a person or institution but 'a proposition, deduced from others by discourse'. It follows that 'to

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[163] Locke, *Essay* 4.18.8 (pp. 694f.).

[164] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 7, vol. 2, p. 102. Cf. ch. 32, appendix, vol. 3, pp. 576, 1142. As discussed earlier, there is a comparable distinction in Augustine, and subsequently discussed in Aquinas, *ST* 2a.2ae. 2, 2. 'Believing God, believing in a God, believing in God'. For seventeenth-century treatments of Augustine's distinction which oppose Hobbes's interpretation see John Cromp, *Collections out of St Augustine* (London, 1638), p. 29; Christopher Cartwright, *A Brief and Plain Exposition of the Creed* (London, 1649), pp. 8f.

[165] Meric Casaubon, *A TREATISE PROVING Spirits, Witches, AND Supernatural Operations* (London, 1672), p. 6.

believe on a person, or thing' is just a 'figurative manner of speaking' that can be reduced to 'the being persuaded of the truth of some proposition relating in one way, or other, to that person'.[166] We find a similar view of faith and belief being advocated by the Anglican divine and popular preacher Edward Stillingfleet. In his aptly entitled *Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion* (1664) Stillingfleet tells us that faith is 'a *rational* and *discursive act* of the mind … an *assent* upon *evidence*, or *reason* inducing the mind to assent'. Whenever God requires us to believe anything as true, Stillingfleet maintained, 'he gives us *evidence* that it is so'.[167] Matters of faith are not simply a matter of taking someone's word for it. Faith was essentially a form of knowledge in which justificatory reasons played a stronger role than interpersonal trust.[168] John Tillotson was in agreement. Faith, he declared, 'is an assent of the mind to something as revealed by God'. All such assent, he continues, 'must be grounded on evidence; that is, no man can believe anything, unless he have, or think he hath, some reason to do so'.[169] The shift is from trust to an appeal to the evidence. On these new understandings, to believe in God or Christ was not so much to reside trust in them as persons, but to believe their edicts and utterances on the basis of some independent evidence. To the extent that faith might seem to require a degree of trust, determining the trustworthiness of a source was the business of reason.

John Locke set out a similar position on belief and its objects. To 'believe', Locke suggests in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), is to 'assent to the Truth of Propositions'.[170] This assertion effectively repeats a stance already taken in the *Essay*, according to which '*Faith*, as we use the word, has to do with … Propositions … which are supposed to be divinely revealed.'[171]

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166 Isaac Barrow, 'Of Justifying Faith' [*c*.1669], in *Theological Works*, vol. 4, pp. 327, 329, 330. The reference is to Aristotle, *Topics* 4.5 126b29–126a2. In his definition, Barrow gives the present, active infinite form of πιστεύω, which is used five times in the New Testament including one reference to 'believe on him' [εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν] (Philippians 1:29). Barrow goes on to annex obedience to this faith, attempting to show that faith is not mere intellectual assent. Yet he concedes that this extension is 'beyond its [i.e., faith's] natural and primary force' (p. 341). He also explicitly rejects Calvin's understanding of faith as a 'firm and certain knowledge of God's eternal good-will toward us' (p. 350).

167 Edward Stillingfleet, *A Rational account of the grounds of Protestant Religion* (London, 1665), pp. 203, 139. Stillingfleet's repute as a preacher was such that Samuel Pepys records on one occasion not being able get into the parish church at Westminster to hear him, and having to settle instead for a meal of herring at a nearby pub: Entry for Wednesday, 10 October 1666, www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1666/10/10/, accessed 23 November 2023.

168 'There is no *contrariety* between the *foundation* of *faith* and *knowledge*, as the *schoolmen* have perswaded the *world*; we see both of them *proceed* on the same *foundation* ….' Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 4th ed., p. 232.

169 Tillotson, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 18.   170 Locke, *Third Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 233.

171 Locke, *Essay* 4.18.6 (p. 693).

Specifically, to become a Christian one need only assent to the proposition that 'Jesus is the Messiah'.[172] Locke, admittedly, holds that other things must be believed after one has become a Christian, and in other contexts would admit that faith was also in some sense a gift that required obedience.[173] But he could easily be construed as proposing that what faith consisted in was an objective belief in a single article.[174] Locke thus shared with Herbert of Cherbury a concern to identify the fundamental propositional beliefs necessary for salvation, but rather than turning to innate ideas he looked instead to the doctrinal content of the gospels.

The demise of implicit faith and the accompanying emphasis on rational determination of the content of belief on the part of the individual will be parsed differently depending on the extent to which reason is itself evacuated of theological significance. But the direction of travel is clear, as narrower, more secular conceptions of reason gained currency. The theological origins of these new conceptions of reason notwithstanding, increasingly they will no longer mesh neatly with revelation but will rather stand over against it. If we move to the middle decades of the eighteenth century we get a good sense of where these developments are headed by considering the definitions of reason set out in the *Encyclopédie* (1765) of Diderot and d'Alembert.[175] The relevant entry in this monument of Enlightenment scholarship offers us four meanings of 'reason' which fortuitously divide

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[172] Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, pp. 23, 30, 168f. Cf. p. xvii. Whether intentional or not, this comes interestingly close to Hobbes's own formulation in the *Leviathan*: 'The (*Vnam Necessarium*) Onely article of Faith, which the Scripture maketh simply Necessary to Salvation, is this, that JESUS IS THE CHRIST' (pt. 3, ch. 43, vol. 3, p. 938). The editor of this Hobbes edition, Noel Malcolm, points out that *Unam Necessarium* appears to be a reference to Luke 11:42 (Vulgate). Intriguingly Hobbes goes on to say that other articles of the creed are 'contained in this one' and held 'implicitly' by those not skilled enough to discern its full implications (vol. 3, p. 948).

[173] Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, pp. xvii–xviii; *A Second Letter concerning Toleration* (London, 1690), pp. 18, 22; *Third Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 221.

[174] Even Locke's supporters conceded this. Samuel Bold thus admitted that Locke's 'enquiry and search was not concerning *Christian Faith*, considered *Subjectively*, but *Objectively*'. *Some Passages in the Reasonableness of Christianity* (London, 1697), p. 31.

[175] 'Raison', in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 13, pp. 773–4. I have been unable to determine the author of this article, but the treatment is well informed by theological considerations. In definition (3), for example, processes of instrumental reason are said to be fallible on account of the depravity of reason. In definition (4) the difference between a priori and a posteriori is explained in terms of God's choices. A priori truths could not have been otherwise, and their contradiction implies absurdity. But a posteriori truths are the consequence of God's freely choosing to create particular states of affairs. Hence, 'the general laws that God established when creating the universe' could have been otherwise, and can be known only through experience.

neatly along the lines of the two conceptions of reason under consideration. The first two refer to the more expansive understandings: (1) 'natural faculty with which God endowed us to know the truth', followed by (2) 'notions which we have from birth, and common to all men of the world'. The next two, however, suggest a more restrictive, calculative reason: (3) reason as a faculty or reasoning process; and (4) sequences of truths that can be known 'without being assisted by the light of faith'. Reason, in these latter senses, is divorced from faith and invested with the authority to render judgement on putative truths of faith, now understood in propositional terms. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we witness the ascendancy of the last two, secular, instrumental conceptions of reason. Today, the first two senses of reason are now almost virtually unrecognisable except as historical relics. Reason in the two new senses might either challenge religious beliefs or lend support to them. But either way, reason is separated out from religious convictions that are now understood as consisting in knowledge claims of the kind that stand in need of the external confirmation that reason might provide.

The ensuing discussion in the *Encyclopédie* makes the implications of these developments plain. Reason is now 'the true competent judge' of all things of which we have clear and distinct ideas. It must exercise 'jurisdiction over religion'.[176] Even for those who cherished religious commitments, plural religions could be regarded as one of the most common manifestations of irrationality, excepting only one's own religion, which was typically imagined to uniquely enjoy the support of rational judgement. For critics of religion in general, however, the accusation of irrationality could be extended to all manifestations of religion without exception. Such critique became a common feature of one strand of the Enlightenment and emerges as an implication of the first position. But across the board, reason was understood less as a participatory act or sharing in the ideas in the divine mind. Neither did it consist in a set of common notions that attracted universal assent. Reason was now a natural faculty that enabled individual judgement – albeit judgement that supposedly drew upon universally held principles.[177] The putative universality of the judgement of reason was the

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[176] This becomes the common refrain of the British deists. See, e.g., Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 230; Chubb, *Excellence and Obligation of Moral and Positive Duties*, pp. 15, 26; Morgan, *Moral Philosopher*, p. 8.

[177] This is not to say that broader conceptions of reason were completely eclipsed by instrumental or 'Enlightenment' versions of reason. Gotthold Lessing, for example, persisted with the notion of reason as a kind of receptacle for divine revelation, the latter being necessary for the 'education' of the human race (discussed further in Chapter 7).

one thing that carried over into these understandings, even as the original theological justifications for that universality silently fell away. This now made possible an opposition between faith and reason that would have been largely incomprehensible before.

Immanuel Kant would later nuance the sharp divide between reason and faith with his distinction between speculative and practical reason, stressing the limitations of the former when it came to moral and religious matters. To some degree, this is a continuation of the long-standing Protestant restriction of reason to the secular sphere. But in the meantime, considerable effort was also expended in exercises that sought show why instrumental reason was not necessarily hostile to traditional Christianity. One of the more conspicuous consequences of the ascendancy of instrumental reason and an ethics of belief was the development of new forms of natural theology. This consisted in rational proofs for God's existence, developed in response to demands that core theistic commitments be embraced on the basis of evidence and not authority. These transitions will be the subject of the next chapter. Before turning to these proofs and their new role in providing foundations for religious belief, it is important to consider, albeit briefly, the place of early modern science in relation to these new understandings of rationality and evidence-based knowledge.

3.6 Slogans of Modernity

There is a sense in which religion was the main game in town for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. But it was not the only one. Another emerging cultural phenomenon also raised acute questions about the foundations of knowledge. This was the new science or, as the historical actors referred to it, 'experimental natural philosophy'. Just as the Reformation had thrown open the question of the nature of religious commitment and its foundations, so the scientific revolution necessitated a re-examination of how scientific knowledge is acquired and justified, paralleling the challenges to implicit faith and trust in traditions that had taken place in the religious sphere. This is not the occasion for a full account of the rise of modern science or even of the religious factors involved in its emergence

Lessing's reason remains 'religiously grounded'. See Arno Schilson, *Geschichte im Horizont der Vorsehung: G. E. Lessings Beitrag zu einer Theologie der Geschichte* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1974), p. 124; Günter Rohrmoser, *Emanzipation und Freiheit* (Munich: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1970), p. 50; Toshimasa Yasukata, *Lessing's Philosophy of Religion and the German Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 142.

and consolidation.[178] But there are intriguing parallels between the treatments of implicit faith and appeals to reason and experience in the two spheres and these cast a long shadow over subsequent developments.

One parallel lies in the appeal to first-hand experience or experimental knowledge. 'Experiment' is a term that we naturally associate with the methods of the sciences. However, when we examine the use of the expressions 'experiment' and 'experimental' in seventeenth-century English sources, it is striking that by a significant margin the most frequent references occur not in connection with scientific matters but in various genres of religious literature. Most common is the phrase 'experimental knowledge of God', but we also regularly encounter 'experimental apprehension of God', 'inward experimental feeling', 'experimental prayer', 'experimental reading of scripture', 'experimental witnesses', and 'experimental divines'.[179] This terminology has its origin in the Latin *experimentum*, which denoted 'experience', 'trial', or 'test'. A simple translation of '*experimental* knowledge of God' would thus be '*experiential* knowledge of God', but the connotations of 'trial' and 'test' were also present, as was a contrast with 'speculative' knowledge.

In the context of the epistemic crisis precipitated by the Reformation, this emphasis on experimental religion emerged as an alternative to reliance upon authority, tradition, book learning, and speculative metaphysics.[180] Martin Luther maintained that only those with 'experimental proof' of Christian faith were qualified to know what it is and speak authoritatively about it.[181] Seventeenth-century Puritan writers also emphasised the priority of experiment in the religious life. John Downame would propose that 'experimental divinity needeth not so much reading and studying … as conference, observation and experience'.[182] First-hand 'experimental'

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[178] For accounts of religious factors, see Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Fall of Man*; and, more generally, Gaukroger, *Emergence of a Scientific Culture*.

[179] Harrison, 'Experimental Religion', on which the argument that follows is based.

[180] That said, the distinction between speculative and experimental goes back to medieval sources. Aquinas, e.g., distinguished between speculative and experiment knowledge of God's will. *ST* 2a2ae. 97, 2. Jean Gerson spoke of the division between speculative and experimental theology, 'Sermon on Saint Bernard', in *Early Works*, trans. Brian McGuire (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 132.

[181] '*Facilis res multis est uisa, Christiana fides, quam & non pauci inter uirtutes ceu socias numerant, quod faciunt, qui nullo experiment eam probauerunt …*' (To many, Christian faith has appeared to be an easy thing; indeed not a few reckon it among the social virtues, as it were, because they have not tested [or proved] it experimentally …). *De libertate christiana*, sig. biiir.

[182] John Downame, *The Christian Warfare* (London, 1634), p. 15.

knowledge of God, according to another Puritan divine, Francis Roberts, contrasts with 'speculative' knowledge which is 'remote, general, confused, consisting in certain empty, comfortlesse, swimming notions, arising from natural or artificial abilities'. Roberts went on to explain, in what were standard tropes in this literature, that the distinction is akin to what physicians learn from books as opposed to direct experience with their patients, or what scholars know of distant lands from maps as opposed to what travellers encounter when they get there.[183] Anthony Burgess linked the distinction to his critique of implicit faith, contrasting 'dogmatical assent' to speculative knowledge with 'a *practical, and experimental receiving of holy Truths*'.[184]

The religious literature has abundant examples of these usages and the significance of parallel usages in the scientific context did not go unnoticed. Johnathan Edwards observed that 'as that is called experimental philosophy, which brings opinions and notions to the test of fact; so is that properly called experimental religion, which brings religious affections and intentions to the like test'.[185] More generally, it seems clear that the speculative/experimental distinction, borrowed from the religious context, was the way in which seventeenth-century thinkers conceptualised what we now think of as the rationalist/empiricist divide, a distinction that was retrospectively applied to the early modern period by later Kantian historians of philosophy.[186]

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[183] Francis Roberts, *A Communicant Instructed* (London, 1659), p. 100.

[184] Anthony Burgess, *A Treatise of original sin* (London, 1658), p. 212.

[185] Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise concerning Religion Affections* [1746], in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), vol. 1, p. 333.

[186] See especially Peter Anstey, 'Experimental Versus Speculative Natural Philosophy', in *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Peter Anstey and J. A. Schuster (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), pp. 215–42. Cf. Harrison, 'Experimental Religion', 422–5. The construction of the common rationalist vs. empiricist divide was largely the work of Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, author of *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Barth, 1816) (ET, *A Manual of the History of Philosophy*, trans. Arthur Johnson (Oxford: Talboys, 1832), rev. J. R. Morell (London: Bohn, 1852)) and Johann Gottlieb Buhle, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1796–1804). The histories of philosophy of Kuno Fischer and Friedrich Ueberweg then helped introduce this story into the English-speaking world, where it became the dominant narrative. See, e.g., Ueberweg, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. G. S. Morris (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872–3). For secondary discussions see Alberto Vanza, 'Empiricism and Rationalism in Nineteenth-Century Histories of Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 (2016), 253–82; 'Kant on Empiricism and Rationalism', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 30 (2013), 53–74; Peter Anstey and Alberto Vanza, 'The Origins of Early Modern Experimental Philosophy', *Intellectual History Review* 22 (2012), 499–518; K. Walsh and A. Currie, 'Caricatures, Myths and White Lies', *Metaphilosophy* 46 (2015), 414–35; David Fate Norton, 'The Myth of British Empiricism', *History of European Ideas* 1 (1981), 331–44.

The sentiment that one should discover things for oneself and seek assurances for what one held to be true thus became part of the self-understanding and rhetoric of the new experimental philosophy. In keeping with this sentiment, the motto adopted by the Royal Society, founded in 1660, was *nullius in verba* – 'take no one's word for it' or, expanding on its original context, 'I pledge allegiance to the authority of no master'.[187] Leaving aside the irony that the advice to take no one's word for it is borrowed from an ancient authority (the Roman poet Horace), this is a clear articulation of a principle that runs directly parallel to Protestant critiques of implicit faith and reliance on authority. In this case, like advocacies of experimental knowledge, the injunction is to ignore the voice of authority and satisfy oneself about knowledge claims on the basis of first-hand evidence. The parallel becomes even more conspicuous when we consider the fact that the epigram from Horace had already been deployed in a religious context to support the rejection of implicit faith.[188] This again suggests the temporal priority of religious discussions of knowledge and its justification.

An even deeper irony than the borrowing of the epigram from Horace and previous religious sources is that the new scientific enterprise was just as dependent on a version of implicit faith as medieval Christianity. The corporate and cumulative character of the new natural and experimental philosophy meant that reliance upon the testimony of others and acceptance of 'historical' records of observations and experiments was foundational to the whole enterprise. Even today, and notwithstanding popular misconceptions about 'the scientific method', virtually everything we know about the natural world comes to us second-hand. Given an increasing specialisation of knowledge and division of labour this is true even, and perhaps especially, for natural scientists themselves. Wittgenstein has remarked in this context that justification is a *social* practice.[189] Speaking more specifically about the public acceptance of the science of climate change, Bruno Latour

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[187] Horace, *Epistles* 1.1.14. The Society's website informs us that the motto is 'an expression of the determination of Fellows to withstand the domination of authority and to verify all statements by an appeal to facts determined by experiment'. https://royalsociety.org/about-us/history/, accessed 3 February 2022.

[188] See, e.g., Clement Walker, *The Mystery of the two ivntos, Presbyterian and Independent* (n.p., 1647), p. 4. On the other side, Robert Burton, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, cites this principle as characteristic of heretics: 'Common as madness, folly, pride, insolency, arrogancy, singularity, peevishness, obstinacy, impudence, scorn and contempt of all other sects: *Nullius addicti jurare in verba magistri*; they will approve of naught but what they invent themselves.' 3.4.1.3, vol. 3, p. 401.

[189] On the congruity between Sellars and Wittgenstein on this point, see Richard Rorty's introduction to Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 1–12.

has similarly insisted that scientific facts remain robust only when they are supported by 'a common culture' and 'by institutions that can be trusted'.[190]

In the seventeenth century, with knowledge acquisition becoming a corporate and collaborative affair, natural historians and natural philosophers had to determine whose observations and experimental reports they would regard as reliable. Then as now, scientific knowledge, as Steven Shapin has demonstrated, had an ineradicable social dimension, resting upon protocols about which individuals and groups could be regarded as trustworthy. Shapin rightly points out that 'no practice has accomplished the rejection of testimony and authority and that no cultural practice recognizable as such could do so'.[191] Augustine had said as much in the fifth century, and de Tocqueville repeated it in the nineteenth: 'There is in this world no philosopher so great that he does not believe a million things on the faith of others, and who does not assume more truths than he establishes.'[192] There is a largely unacknowledged disparity, then, between the ostensibly unmediated rational and empirical foundations of natural science that is part of its public image, and the on-the-ground reality of needing to trust in others, especially when what is reported is counterintuitive and contrary to mundane experience.

On occasion, and despite a motto that suggested otherwise, this was acknowledged by the relevant parties, especially those concerned to show affinities between scientific and religious forms of knowing. Robert Boyle pointed out that when Galileo described the craters on the moon it was received by others in the astronomical community 'upon an implicit faith, upon his authority'.[193] Because this was a scientifically heterodox claim, based on the unsubstantiated observations of a single individual, Galileo's status as a reliable observer was a key factor in determining the credibility of his reports. Boyle also pointed out that an ordinary seaman travelling with Columbus could have furnished the learned of Europe with knowledge of the new world capable of rectifying 'divers Erroneous Presumptions and Mistakes, which till then they thought very agreeable to … Sciences, and so to Reason'.[194] In a third example, Boyle compared experimental reports to the information conveyed by a deep sea diver who has unique access to objects that 'lye conceal'd from other men's Sight and Reach'. Boyle

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[190] Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p. 23.

[191] Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, p. xxv.

[192] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.1.2, ed. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 408.

[193] Boyle, *Reflections on a Theological Distinction*, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 339f.

[194] Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso, I*, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 314.

admitted that he had revised his own views about 'submarine parts' on the basis of such reports. He went on to suggest that the depths of God are similar to the depths of the ocean in that our opinions on divine matters need to be informed and rectified by 'preachers of the Gospel'.[195]

Boyle also conceded that he relied heavily upon his assistant Denis Papin to conduct and record the outcomes of experiments because 'I had cause enough to *trust* his skill and diligence'.[196] Papin's contributions were rarely acknowledged in the official accounts of experiments (which themselves were typically written by amanuenses who were equally invisible). These parallels between complex scientific networks of authority and trust, and a medieval epistemic ecosystem that relied upon implicit faith, are to some extent obscured by the rhetoric of modern science and official versions of its history.[197] The nineteenth-century emergence of the idea of 'the scientific method' has tended to make scientific practitioners invisible – with the exception of the rare celebrity scientist – with an apparently impersonal set of procedures providing science with the requisite epistemic legitimacy.[198]

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[195] Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso I*, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 314f. Similar observations in *Some Considerations about the Reconcileableness of Reason and Religion*, *Works*, vol. 8, p. 293, and in Norris, *Reason and Faith*, pp. 106–8.

[196] Boyle, *Spring of the Air: Second Continuation*, *Works*, vol. 9, p. 125 (my emphasis). On the invisibility of certain forms of scientific labour see Steven Shapin, 'The Invisible Technician', *American Scientist* 77 (1989), 554–63.

[197] A good example of such idealisation is the notion of the individual scientist as a kind of systematic sceptic, exemplified in Karl Popper's notion of falsifiability. For Popper, a genuine scientific claim must be one that is, in principle, empirically falsifiable. Science progresses, on this view, not by verifying favoured scientific hypotheses, but by falsifying the alternatives. See *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963). This attempt at demarcating genuine science from pseudoscience (which indirectly owes its origins to positivist notions of verification) has not found much favour among historians and philosophers of science. But it continues to play a role in the self-conception of many scientists and popularisers of science. One deeply misleading aspect of this notion is its failure to grasp the degree to which scientific knowledge is dependent upon networks of trust and credibility. The image of science that we often presented with – as an exemplary rational activity driven by systematic scepticism – is an unrealistic as the rational-calculator model assumed by neoclassical economics. This is relevant to the historical parallels between two quite similar notions of implicit faith because the contrast that is sometimes drawn between a rational, self-correcting, and sceptical science on the one hand, and a credulous and irrational religion on the other overlooks the hidden role played by trust and authority in both of these communities.

[198] There is extensive literature, relevant to this point, on how modern scientists come to accept new theories and knowledge claims. It has been argued that these are akin to faith (or 'acceptance') in important respects. Just a few examples: Thomas Kuhn controversially suggested that choices between competing paradigms 'can only be made on faith'. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 157; Bas Van Fraassen defends 'the traditional epistemological view in the philosophy

Yet another parallel between religious and scientific modes of know-ing concerns the comprehensibility of what is being assented to. Again, it was Boyle who pointed to the fact that even naturalists must 'admit several things, wherof they cannot clearly explicate'.[199] A case in point was the hidden mechanical operations postulated as explanations of natural effects. These remained hypothetical because similar effects could be produced by different underlying mechanisms, as the contemporary example of mechan-ical clocks with their diverse modes of operation demonstrated.[200] (This situation falls under what philosophers of science refer to as the problem of underdetermination: incompatible explanations of phenomena are often empirically equivalent.[201]) Boyle also thought that the precise nature of certain laws – such as those determining mind–body interactions – were unknown and perhaps ultimately unknowable.[202] Gravity offered another example of a phenomenon whose effects could be described with consid-erable mathematical precision, but whose ultimate nature remained a mys-tery. Newton offered (largely private) speculations about what gravity was, but this was never settled definitively.[203] His successors eventually came to be comfortable with ignorance about the nature of gravity and how it

of science' that we may rationally believe theories that are not entailed by the evidence. 'Belief and the Will', *Journal of Philosophy* 81 (1984), 235–56 (255). Margaret Gilbert speaks of 'collective beliefs'. 'Modelling Collective Beliefs', *Synthese* 73 (1987), 185–204; W. Brad Wray describes these in terms of 'acceptance' rather than 'belief'. 'Collective Belief and Acceptance', *Synthese* 129 (2001), 319–33.

[199] Boyle, *Reason and Religion*, *Works*, vol. 8, p. 264.

[200] J. J. Macintosh (ed.), *Boyle on Atheism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), §3.5.19, p. 255. Cf. Boyle, *Disquisition about the Final Causes*, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 111f.

[201] First formulated by Pierre Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* [1914], trans. P. W. Wiener (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), there is now an extensive literature on this issue. See, e.g., P. Kyle Stanford, *Exceeding Our Grasp: Science, History, and the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Thomas Bonk, *Underdetermination: An Essay on Evidence and the Limits of Natural Knowledge* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008).

[202] Macintosh, *Boyle on Atheism*, §3.5.1, pp. 247f. For Boyle's discussion of believing what is 'not fully intelligible to the assenting faculty' in both scientific and religious spheres, see *The Christian Virtuoso I, Appendix*, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 380–3. In the following century Abbé Pluche would make the same point: 'God obliges me to believe certain Doctrines in Nature, as well as Religion, of which he has not thought fit to impart me an adequate Comprehension.' Noël Antoine Pluche, *Spectacle de le Nature: Or, Nature Display'd*, 8th ed., 4 vols. (London, 1757), vol. 1, p. 226. The contemporary philosophical stance pos-iting that the nature of mind–body interactions might be, in principle, unknowable, is known as 'mysterianism', and is associated with the philosopher Colin McGinn, 'Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?', *Mind* 98 (1989), 349–66. See also Owen Flanagan, *The Science of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 313.

[203] Eugenia Torrance, 'God of the Gaps, or the "God of Design and Dominion": Revisiting Newton's Theology', *Zygon* 58 (2023), 64–79.

worked, and this again exemplifies the little commented upon contraction of explanatory ambitions that characterised the new natural philosophy. The insistence that we must fully understand the things to which we lend intellectual assent, which seems quite reasonable at first sight, has never been a realistic aspiration for those within the experimental sciences, far less those outside the scientific community. Boyle was fully aware of this as, too, was the astute Jonathan Swift, who observed that while God might command us to believe things that we do not understand: 'this is no more than what we do every day in the works of nature, upon the credit of men of learning'.[204] Swift's judgement notwithstanding, reliance on the much-derided implicit faith became one of modern science's best-kept secrets.

It is not unreasonable to conclude, then, that while suspicion of implicit faith radically altered the religious landscape, it continued to play a covert role in the one context where we might least expect it. Knowledge did not cease to be embedded in networks of trust. It was just that the networks were different ones, established outside fractured ecclesiastical structures in the newly formed institutions of the experimental sciences.[205] Scientific societies strived to establish universal criteria for making knowledge claims while at the same time avoiding religious controversies that seemed to militate against consensus.[206] It was gentlemanly virtue, especially that of the Christian virtuoso, rather than ecclesiastical office, that conferred the necessary authority and grounded the new trust relations. Robert Boyle's remarks on the topic of the 'scientist as priest' are revealing in this context. The activity of the natural philosopher, he proposed, 'is a more acceptable act of religion, than the burning of sacrifices or perfumes upon his altars'.[207]

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[204] Swift, 'On the Trinity', in *The Works of Dr Jonathan Swift*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1761), vol. 1, p. 264. See also Norris, *Reason and Faith*, p. 259.

[205] According to Shapin: 'The justifications changed, but the outcome was recognizably the same: the distribution of imputed credit and reliability followed the contours of authority and power.' *A Social History of Truth*, p. 69.

[206] Thomas Sprat: 'The Royal Society is abundantly cautious not to intermeddle in *Spiritual things*' and its members 'meddle no otherwise with divine things'. *History of the Royal Society*, pp. 347, 82; Robert Moray, Letter to Christiaan Huygens, 1665, quoted in Henry Lyons, *The Royal Society, 1660–1940: A History of Its Administration under Its Charters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), p. 56; Michael Hunter, *Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), p. 171. Sprat's caveat pertained to controversial doctrinal matters and was consistent with the broader religious goals of exploring 'the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the Creator [as] display'd in the admirable order, and workman-ship of the Creatures'. Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 82.

[207] Boyle, *Some Considerations touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy*, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 279. For more on the scientist/priest trope see H. Fisch, 'The Scientist as Priest: A Note on Robert Boyle's Natural Theology', *Isis* 44 (1953), 252–65.

Christian natural philosophers could be trusted as theological authorities; the priestly class, not so much. Yet all of this was disguised beneath a rhetoric that stressed reason, experience, and liberation from authority – a rhetoric necessitated by the tainted associations of implicit faith with the early modern travails of faith-based religion.

Historical amnesia about the borrowings of the new sciences from the sphere of religion is paralleled in the subsequent sloganising of Enlightenment thinkers. As we will see in more detail in Chapter 6, Enlightenment *philosophes* appropriated for themselves what was originally a Reformation image of an age of light after darkness. The same is true for the famous Enlightenment slogan that appears in Immanuel Kant's celebrated essay 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784): *Sapere aude* ('dare to know' or 'have the courage to use your own reason'). Again, this is taken from Horace, who seems to have been the first port of call for moderns in search of mottoes.[208] Kant's usage turns out to have been doubly unoriginal. In 1518, on the eve of the Protestant Reformation, Philip Melanchthon alluded to the maxim in his inaugural address to the University of Wittenberg, implying that the principle 'dare to know' accurately characterised the mood of both Renaissance humanism and the impending religious reformation.[209] Subsequently in the seventeenth century, Catholic priest and early advocate of Epicureanism Pierre Gassendi adopted the phrase as his personal motto, imprinting it on his published works. Gassendi's rejection of scholastic Aristotelianism and his championing of empiricism and atomism make him a seminal figure in the development of early modern science.[210] It is likely that Kant first encountered the phrase in one of these writers. But the larger point concerns what these earlier usages signal, namely that the slogans adopted by Enlightenment thinkers had already been deployed in characterisations of the earlier movements of the Reformation and scientific revolution. Much Enlightenment rhetoric thus consists in 'a transformed appropriation of Christian-reformatory insights' as Edgar Thaidigsmann has put it.[211]

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[208] Horace, *Epistulae* 2.1.40, in a context recommending eclecticism rather than rejection of all authority.

[209] Edgar Thaidigsmann, '"Sapere aude": Auflärung und Theologie bei Melanchthon und Kant', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 111 (2014), 389–415.

[210] Franco Venturi, 'Sapere Aude!', *Revista storica italiana* 71 (1959), 119–28; Barry Brundell, *Pierre Gassendi: From Aristotelianism to a New Natural Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987); Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy*.

[211] Thaidigsmann, '"Sapere aude"', 415. Jean-Claude Vuillemin maintains that the motto characterises the Baroque period just as well as the Enlightenment. *Épistémè baroque. Le mot et la chose* (Paris: Hermann, 2013). On the connection between Luther's theological

Some nineteenth-century thinkers, in closer proximity than us to both the Reformation and the Enlightenment, also drew this conclusion. On numerous occasions Hegel identified the Protestant Reformation as a decisive moment in the evolution of human freedom. Gotthold Lessing also maintained that the true spirit of Lutheranism 'requires that *no* man may be prevented from advancing in knowledge of the truth according to his own judgment'.[212] Theologian and philosopher of religion Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) would agree that Protestantism is 'the religion of conscience and conviction, without dogmatic compulsion'.[213] These were not merely expressions of the nationalistic pride of German authors. Scottish essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle announced that Luther's declaration at the Diet of Worms was 'the greatest scene in Modern European History … from which the whole subsequent history of civilization takes its rise'.[214] In his influential and widely read *History of Civilization in Europe*, the brilliant French historian François Guizot described the Protestant Reformation as 'a great movement of the liberty of the human mind, a new necessity for freely thinking and judging its own account, and with its own power'.[215] While in more recent times 'the Enlightenment' would lay sole claim to this impulse, and (in its French manifestations in particular) set itself over and against religion, it is not unreasonable to argue that the first and decisive move towards the principle of thinking for oneself (for better or worse) came with the Protestant rejection of implicit faith.

If those in the early modern period thought in terms of 'grand challenges' and 'wicked problems', as many do today, at the top of their list would have been the problem of religious pluralism and confessional conflict. At a personal level, the eternal destiny of the individual soul came to be understood as vitally dependent upon the adoption of correct beliefs and practices. But which beliefs and practices? As Herbert of Cherbury had poignantly

conception of freedom and subsequent secular conceptions of religious freedom see Martin Heckel, 'Luthers Traktat "Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen" als Markstein des Kirchen- und Staatskirchenrechts', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109 (2012), 122–52; Marius Timmann Mjaaland (ed.), *The Reformation of Philosophy* (Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

[212] Lessing, *Anti-Goetze*, in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Sämmtliche Schriften*, vol. 10, ed. Karl Lachman (Leipzig, 1856), p. 161.

[213] '*die Religion des Gewissens und der Überzeugung ohne dogmatischen Zwang*'. Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1911; reprint, Aalen: Otto Zeller, 1963), p. 97, trans. and quoted in Yasakuta, *Lessing's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 141.

[214] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1910), p. 99.

[215] François Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe*, ed. George Wells Knight (New York: Appleton, 1896), p. 225.

expressed it: 'What … shall the layman, encompassed by the terrors of divers churches militant throughout the world, decide as to the best religion? For there is … none almost that does not deny possibility of salvation outside its own pale.'[216] At the political level, moreover, religious uniformity had long underpinned social stability. Not only did post-Reformation religious diversity generate psychological uncertainty and distress, it was also accompanied by warfare, bloodshed, and suffering.[217]

Looking well ahead to the nineteenth century (and to Chapter 6), the fledgling social sciences would eventually seek to articulate rational, scientific principles that could compensate for the loss of the cohesive power of a single, unifying religion. In the interim, however, there emerged pragmatic, juridical procedures to manage the anomic political consequences of religious pluralism. These involved setting aside the truth claims of the competing traditions and seeking legislative solutions to secure a compromised but peaceful coexistence.[218] On one account, these solutions amount to nothing less than the formation of the modern nation-state.[219] Arguably, this de facto side-lining of religious truth claims promoted secularisation, allowing a pluralism of partly incompatible beliefs to quietly foster a scepticism about whether any of them might be true. At the same time, it had the practical consequence of quarantining religious differences by consigning them to the private sphere, again facilitating the emergence of a putatively neutral, public, secular space. This solution represented the importation into the political and legal sphere of a form of methodological naturalism. While initially a kind of legal heuristic that attracted the support of the religiously

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[216] Herbert of Cherbury, *De religione laici* [1645], ed. and trans. Harold R. Hutcheson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 87. Cf. Jean Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomores de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis* [1588], ed. L. Noack (Schwerin, 1857), p. 56.

[217] This is not necessarily to endorse the common view that religion caused the so-called 'wars of religion'. See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). If anything, the modern concept 'religion' was one of the products of these conflicts rather than a root cause.

[218] Martin Heckel, *Vom Religionskonflikt zur Ausgleichsordnung: Der Sonderweg des deutschen Staatskirchenrechts vom Augsburger Religionsfrieden 1555 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007); Cf. Wolterstorff, *Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, p. 246.

[219] This view has been especially prevalent in the field of International Relations. For an overview and critical discussions of this thesis see Jason Farr, 'Point: Westphalia Legacy and the Modern Nation-State', *International Social Science Review* 80 (2005), 156–9; Stephen D. Krasner, 'Westphalia and All That', in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 235–64; Andreas Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth', *International Organization* 55 (2001), 251–87.

committed, it had longer-term practical implications for the status of the religious truth claims to which they all subscribed.[220]

Whatever their political benefits, legal–procedural solutions were the wrong instrument for the alleviation of intense personal anxieties about what needed to be explicitly believed in order to secure salvation. In this new context, implicit faith offered little comfort, either. On the contrary, rather than providing a solution, it was often regarded as central to the problem. As a consequence, systematic approaches to propositional belief and its justification – what we now call epistemology – arose in tandem with a new understanding of Christianity in which a kind of evidence-based belief came to be elevated over a communal, trust-based, faith. Religious truths were now rendered into propositional form and defended or critiqued outside of the ecclesial and ritual contexts that had been their native environment. Early modern discussions about the ethics of belief thus first appear in the context of debates about implicit faith. An unintended consequence of thinking about religious faith in this way was the distillation of the modern idea of religion (and plural 'religions') understood as constituted by propositional beliefs, the holding of which required some form of rational justification. At the same time, this contributed to the birth of a modern version of philosophy in which questions to do with the foundations and justification of knowledge became a central preoccupation. This development is especially evident in the trajectory of Anglophone philosophy from Herbert to Locke. While on opposite sides of what we now call the rationalist-empiricist divide, both were responding to a new problem of religious pluralism precipitated by the perceived limitations of implicit faith.[221]

It must be said, in all of this, that while the overall trend is clear, the traffic was not one-way. Some Catholic thinkers continued to defend implicit faith, especially during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The doctrine even found qualified support among a few Protestant thinkers, not least because the difficulties to which implicit faith had originally been addressed had not gone away.[222] The element of trust originally attached to

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[220] Wolterstorff, *Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, p. 246.

[221] Thomas Hobbes can also be placed into this trajectory, as a representative of the alternative that sought refuge less in epistemology than in temporal authority, with a sovereign (or sovereign body) making determinations on matters of public religion. His focus on social stability thus led him in the direction of political philosophy, as opposed to Hebert who had been more preoccupied with the issue of truth, as the title of his *De veritate* suggests.

[222] For Catholic defences see, e.g., Stanislaus Hortius, *Confutatio prolegomenon Brentii, quae primum scripsit adversus* (Antverpiae, 1561), p. 62v; Robert Persons, *The Warn-word to Sir Francis Hastinges Wast-word* (n.p., 1602), pp. 49r–53r; Francisci Toleti, *Summa casuum*

faith was also strongly defended in certain quarters, not least by the reform-
ers themselves.[223] In the eighteenth century, John Wesley was a conspicu-
ous example, reacting against what he considered to be over-intellectualised
versions of Christianity. Wesley invoked the authority of Luther to define
faith as 'a lively and a steadfast trust in the favour of God, wherewith we
commit ourselves altogether unto God'. Genuine faith, he protested, 'is not
barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in
the head; but also a disposition of the heart'.[224] It is crucial, then, to observe
a distinction between the teachings of the Protestant reformers on the one
hand, and the epistemic crisis engendered by the Reformation on the other.
The understanding of faith preached by the reformers, in combination with
their rejection of implicit faith, turned out to be unable to bear the weight
of the justificatory demands now placed upon it in the new context of reli-
gious pluralism. There was a mismatch, in other words, between the central
thrust of some Reformation doctrines and the social and epistemic condi-
tions to which the Reformation gave rise.

Overall, the Reformation and its aftermath represent a key stage in the
evolution of a distinctively modern and Western notion of belief and,
indeed, of religion. The older conception of faith/belief was to become
isolated from its social and institutional context and the role played by trust
diminished and derided. This placed a new moral burden on the individ-
ual believer – to be in a position to articulate evidential support, typically
on the basis of reason and experience, for what was believed. At the same
time, the increasingly differentiated enterprises of philosophy and science

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conscientiæ absolutissima (Duaci, 1622), pp. 555–6; Laurenz Forer, *Indifferentismvs: Oder
Allerley Gattung Kyrch* (Ingolstadt, 1656), p. 56. Some Protestants also supported versions
of implicit faith. See, e.g., Norris, *Reason and Faith*, pp. 90–3.

[223] Thus Luther, faith is 'a living, daring confidence in God's grace', a 'kind of trust in and
knowledge of God's grace'. *Prefaces to the New Testament*, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (St
Louis: Concordia, 2010), p. 18. See also Lancelot Andrewes *The pattern of catechistical doc-
trine at large* (London, 1650), pp. 13f.; John Baker, *Lectures of I.B. vpon the xii. Articles of
our Christian faith* (London, 1581), sig. Ciiiiv; Jeremy Taylor, *The Righteousness Evangelicall
Describ'd* (Dublin, 1663), p. 205.

[224] John Wesley, 'Salvation by Faith: Sermon Preached at Saint Mary's, Oxford, before the
University, 18 June 1738', in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 7 vols., ed. John
Emory (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856), vol. 1, p. 14. The Wesleys had been
strongly influenced by William Law's works, especially *A Serious Call to a Devout and
Holy Life* (London, 1729). For Law's rejection of faith as intellectual assent see *The Way to
Divine Knowledge* (London, 1752), pp. 169–76. More generally on the eighteenth-century
reaction against over-intellectualised faith see Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British
Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and David Hempton,
Methodism: Empire of the Spirit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

came to assume authority in these respective domains, making religious beliefs answerable to external authorities. These would come to be regarded as neutral epistemic spaces, paralleling the creation of a religiously neutral political sphere. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, this rarely constituted a problem for the legitimacy of religious belief as such, since the core propositions of Christianity were widely held to be consistent with the demands of reason and experience, and hence of philosophy and science. But all of this represented a momentous shift in the nature of belief and a key stage in the evolution of this distinctively Western, modern conception.

One way of tracking the significance of these transitions is to consider the changing nature and status of proofs for the existence of God upon which, for some accounts at least, the evidential basis of religious belief rests. Standard treatments of proofs tend to assume a set repertoire of arguments and that these arguments are to be understood against a uniform background of fixed evidentiary expectations. However, if the demise of implicit faith and accompanying rise of ethics of belief is an early modern phenomenon, and one that placed entirely new evidential demands on religious believers, 'proofs' must have served different functions in the premodern period. Along the same lines, if it were impossible not to believe in God in the medieval period, proving God's existence would seem to be a rather pointless exercise. The next chapter explores traditional arguments for the existence of God with a view to showing how their significance radically changes in the post-Reformation period.