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Enlightenment and Faith: Debates among Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Eighteenth-Century Europe

Prof. David Sorkin

Royal Holloway History Department is delighted to add another distinguished contribution to the Hayes Robinson History Lecture series, inaugurated in 1992. The lectures are funded from a benefaction from the estate of Margaret Hayes Robinson - a much-loved head of Royal Holloway's History Department (1899-1911) in the days when higher education for women was still being pioneered. Publication of the lecture series was launched in 1997 with Natalie Zemon Davis's zestful account of Remaking Impostors: From Martin Guerre to Sommersby; and the entire set of published lectures are now being made available as web-publications.

The 2008 lecture, by Prof. David Sorkin of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a challenging analysis that calls upon philosophers and historians to rethink their accounts of Enlightenment attitudes to religion. He argues that, contrary to the simple myth, modern European and American culture was not based upon a 'secularised' or systematically non-religious view of the world. Instead, eighteenth-century Catholics, Protestants and Jews generated their own 'Enlightened' models of religion, avoiding fanaticism and embracing a degree of toleration. David Sorkin thus provides a new account of a pluralist and religious Enlightenment, in an analysis that has clear cultural resonances for the plentiful religionists and non-religionists of today. Other studies by David Sorkin are: *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (1996); *The Berlin Haskalan and German Religious Thought, Orphans of Knowledge* (2000); and (as co-editor) *What History Tells* (2003).

In the academic as well as the popular imagination, the Enlightenment figures as a quintessentially secular phenomenon, indeed, as the very source of modern secular culture. Historical scholarship of the 1960s successfully disseminated this image by propagating the master narrative of a secular European culture that commenced with the Enlightenment.[1] This master narrative was the counterpart to "modernization theory" in the social sciences. The two shared a triumphalist linear teleology: in the social sciences the destination was urban, industrial, democratic society; in intellectual history, secularization and the ascendancy of reason.[2] A wide range of philosophers, working from diverse and often conflicting positions, reinforced this image. The Frankfurt School and Alasdair MacIntyre, Foucault and the Post-modernists, all spoke of a unitary Enlightenment "project" which, for better or worse, was the unquestionable seed-bed of secular culture.[3] Open the pages of virtually any academic journal in the Humanities today and you will find writers routinely invoking the cliché of a unitary Enlightenment, sometimes as a pejorative, sometimes as an ideal, yet invariably as the starting point of secular modernity and rationality.

In recent decades this image of a unitary, secular Enlightenment project has become a foundational myth of the United States: it has converged with the idea of America's "exceptionalism" or singular place in the world. One

influential historian argued that while Europe only "imagined" the Enlightenment, the United States "realized" it: in America "it not only survived but triumphed" and that indeed "was the American Revolution." Moreover, this was an Enlightenment of "secularism and rationalism," of "Faith in Reason, in Progress, in a common Humanity."[4] Another historian has reinforced this view by asserting that America's "exceptionalism" consists in its embodying the Enlightenment's pragmatic "politics of liberty" hostile to rationalist utopias.[5]

This image of a secular Enlightenment has become integral to America's response to twenty-first century fundamentalism. At home a secularist vs. fundamentalist conflict allegedly threatens to divide Americans into implacably hostile camps. At the same time, there are serious concerns about creeping "national disenlightenment," America's renunciation of science and rationality in favor of a "theologization" of politics and a "theological correctness" grounded in millenarian Christianity.[6] Abroad, resurgent fundamentalisms are thought to presage seemingly unbridgeable chasms between adherents of different religions or religiously-based "civilizations."[7]

My aim this evening is to offer an alternative understanding of the Enlightenment. My method is "an exercise in retrieval": by augmenting the canon of Enlightenment thinkers, I hope to re-conceive the historical Enlightenment and understand "modernity aright."[8] My contention is that contrary to the secular master narrative, the Enlightenment was not only compatible with religious belief but conducive to it. The Enlightenment made possible new iterations of faith. With the Enlightenment's advent religion lost neither its place nor authority in European society and culture. If we trace modern culture to the Enlightenment, then it had decidedly religious foundations.

Enlightenment or Enlightenments?

In the last three decades historians have begun to question the image of a unitary secular Enlightenment project, asserting that it was neither unambiguously secular nor religion's polar adversary.[9] Rather, in the words of J.G.A. Pocock, the Enlightenment was, "a product of religious debate and not merely a rebellion against it."[10] The same scholars further argued that the Enlightenment included a range of positions - from the most thoroughly secular to the most thoroughly religious. For example, Pocock spoke of a "family" or a "plurality" of Enlightenments whose intellectual means, varied and multiple, extended from the genuinely religious to the genuinely anti-religious.[11] Jonathan Israel confirmed this notion with his bipartite view of a "radical Enlightenment" derived largely from Spinoza alongside a "moderate," "mainstream," "providential" Enlightenment that inhabited the middle ground.12 While scholars first applied these ideas to Protestant countries, they have since started to extend them to Catholic ones as well. Jonathan Israel identified both Protestant and Catholic versions of the "moderate" Enlightenment. In their introduction to a collection of articles, James Bradley and Dale Van Kley portrayed two geographical "crescents": a "distinctively Protestant Enlightenment" that "stretched like a crescent from England and Scotland through the Protestant Netherlands and western Germanies only to end in the Swiss cities like Geneva and Lausanne;" and a "distinctively Catholic Enlightenment" that "formed another and southern crescent from the Catholic Germanies in the southeast through the north-central Italies, including Rome in the centre, and on through the Iberian peninsula in the West."[13]

These views are to be applauded for providing a fuller account of the Enlightenment's relationship to religion. Yet they do not go far enough. To understand the full scope of what I would call the religious Enlightenment, we need

to consider not just Protestantism and Catholicism but also Judaism as well as dissenting Protestant and Catholic sects. It would be fundamentally misleading to speak of a "Christian Enlightenment" since we would thereby reinstate the Peace of Westphalia's terms (which in 1648 recognized only Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Catholicism) as if they accurately represented Europe's religious composition.[14]

Moreover, it is imperative to compare the various manifestations of the religious Enlightenment. We need to be able to ascertain in what ways they constituted an identifiable entity, in which ways they were disparate, and how they functioned in various settings. This has not been possible since individual scholars have usually confined themselves to analyzing a single tradition (whether Protestant or Catholic) in one country or two. To take a broad view we need to cross confessional and national boundaries. We need a multinational and comparative history of the religious Enlightenment that emphasizes similarities while recognizing, and explicating, differences.[15]

Finally, we need to expand the canon of Enlightenment thinkers and literature to include theologians and theology. Only by reclaiming these heretofore ostracized thinkers can we begin to replace the master narrative of a secular Enlightenment with a more historically accurate notion - complex, differentiated, and plural.

The Religious Enlightenment

The immediate background to the religious Enlightenment was the century of warfare following the Reformation which, by inflicting unprecedented devastation and misery, discredited all belligerent, militant and intolerant forms of religion. As one of Montesquieu's Persian travellers put it (1714): "I can assure you that no kingdom has ever had as many civil wars as the kingdom of Christ."[16] Those wars also produced a religious stalemate that undermined the confessional state ideal i.e., the territorial coincidence of church and state. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) recognized the existence of polities with virtual parity between religious groups, polities in which the ruler professed a different creed than the majority of his subjects and polities which contained a substantial religious minority. The burning issue was how to establish the toleration, common morality and shared political allegiance needed to sustain a multi-confessional polity. Finally, those developments coincided with the intellectual revolutions of Newtonian science and post-Aristotelian philosophy: Locke's empiricism and the rationalisms of Descartes, Leibniz and Wolff.

The religious Enlightenment addressed this situation. In the century from the Glorious Revolution to the French revolution, from the Act of Toleration (1689) to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790), religious Enlighteners attempted to renew and re-articulate their faith using the new science and philosophy in order to promote a tolerant, irenic understanding of belief that could serve a shared morality and politics. Aiming to harmonize faith and reason, and thinking themselves engaged in a common enterprise with all but the most radical enlighteners, the religious enlighteners enlisted some of the seventeenth century's most audacious, heterodox ideas for the mainstream of eighteenth-century orthodox belief. For Christians, the religious Enlightenment represented a renunciation of Reformation and Counter-reformation militancy, an express alternative to two centuries of dogmatism and fanaticism, intolerance and religious warfare. For Jews, it represented an effort to overcome the uncharacteristic cultural isolation of the post-Reformation period through re-appropriation of neglected elements of their own heritage and engagement with the larger culture.

The religious Enlightenment spread across Western and Central Europe in a sequence of cross-confessional and cross-national influence and filiation. Many of its fundamental ideas, Protestant and Catholic, first appeared in the Dutch Republic, which maintained a precarious toleration. The Republic, a confessional state with a "public Church" and a dominant clergy whose religious plurality (Mennonites, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, Socinians, Quakers) was the "unforeseen and unfortunate result of the Reformation and the Dutch Revolt," prioritized social "concord," preventing either the Reformed or Catholic Churches from imposing confessional unity.17 In this setting, revisions of militant Calvinism and baroque Catholicism flourished while Judaism engaged with the larger culture.

Among Protestants Jacobus Arminus (1560-1609) emphasized free will, questioned predestination of the elect, and denied confessional creeds divine authority, initiating Protestantism's central reform theology, Arminianism. Writers such as Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) and Christopher Wittich (1625-87) disputed the literalist Biblical exegesis underpinning Calvinist confessionalism. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) and Philip van Limborch (1633-1712) championed versions of toleration, while the radical sect of Collegiants went furthest in recognizing freedom of belief by envisaging the Church as a voluntary society.18

Catholics championed a new theology and controversial ecclesiology. Cornelis Jansen (1585-1638), Bishop of Ypres, by proposing an austere notion of grace, morality, and inward piety opposed to excessive external devotion (baroque Catholicism), launched the movement that eventually bore his name (Jansenism). In response to Dutch circumstances, Catholics advocated local or national (Gallicanism) as opposed to papal control of the Church. The University of Louvain became a stronghold of Jansenism and Zeger Bernard Van Espen (1646-1728), one of its most renowned professors, a proponent of Gallicanism.19

Jews in the Dutch Republic, many of them conversos from the Iberian peninsula, enjoyed toleration and even, in some cases, municipal citizenship. The school in Amsterdam (Ets Hayyim) represented an ideal in integrating secular subjects into a well-ordered religious curriculum. Amsterdam became a centre of Hebrew book publishing and early Jewish enlighteners (maskilim) assembled there. Baruch Spinoza (1632-77), the descendant of a converso family, was educated in Amsterdam and, later associating with Collegiants and other radical Protestants, developed his materialist naturalism and critique of Scripture that haunted Europe's religious imagination.20

Dutch developments were so influential as to comprise the first matrix of religious Enlightenment ideas. Dutch books circulated in the original and in translation throughout Northern and Central Europe.21 Catholics and Protestants from across Europe came to the Netherlands to study the new theology and natural law. Political refugees from England (Locke) and France (Descartes, Bayle) found a safe haven replete with, and receptive to, new ideas. The Dutch Republic, and particularly Amsterdam, served as a model of religious toleration and prosperity.22

Nevertheless, neither Armininians and Collegiants, nor Jansenist Catholics, let alone Jewish maskilim, became the dominant version of their respective religion and gained state sponsorship - essential features of religious Enlightenment. The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) banned Arminian theology; an anti-Trinitarian scare resulted as

late as 1653 in a prohibition of Collegiants; and Arminians and Collegiants continually lost members to the Reformed Church during the eighteenth century. The Dutch Catholic Church remained sorely divided until the schism of 1723 formally separated an "Old Catholic" Jansenist Church of Utrecht from the Pope's Vicar-Apostolic, and in subsequent decades the former shrank dramatically.23 Maskilic Jews were a tiny portion of a minority eager to display its adherence to rabbinic Judaism.24

The first fully realized example of religious Enlightenment, and its second matrix of ideas, was the Church of England's "moderation". Moderation emerged in the wake of the Glorious Revolution as a broadly Arminian alternative to Catholicism and inner light enthusiasm. As one historian has put it, "If Popery was the epitome of despotism, imposed from above, Puritanism was anarchy incarnate, breaking out from below."25 Founded on Locke's philosophy and Newton's science, moderation was not a fixed set of ideas but an ethos or disposition, ranging from the low church to high, that concerned all aspects of religious life.

English moderation became a model for "enlightened Orthodoxy" in Calvinist Geneva. Enlightened Orthodoxy emerged over two generations as theologians endeavoured to replace Calvinist rigorism with a tolerant doctrine of reason, natural religion and revelation.

The English model and Dutch precedents also influenced the "theological Enlightenment" among German Lutherans, which was poised between militant orthodoxy and enthusiastic Pietism. Its first phase (c. 1700-40) consisted of disparate attempts to use the new science and philosophy to renew Lutheranism. In the most important of those efforts theologians used Christian Wolff's rationalist method to reformulate Lutheran belief ("theological Wolffianism").

The German Protestant "theological Enlightenment" influenced the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), which presented a middle way between Judaism's dominant intellectual traditions in early modern Europe: monolithic Talmudism buttressed by mysticism (Kabbalah), and Maimonidean rationalism. The early Haskalah (c. 1700-70) was a cultural tendency of individuals who attempted to expand the curriculum of Ashkenazic (or Central and East European) Jewry by reviving the disciplines of Biblical exegesis and philosophy in Hebrew and Hebrew language study as well as by introducing contemporary science and philosophy. Becoming a public movement of societies centered around a journal in the 1770s and 1780s, the Haskalah politicized the earlier effort to broaden Judaism's curriculum.

Reform Catholicism in the south German states and Habsburg lands was an indigenous effort at intellectual and religious renewal. Drawing inspiration from Catholic humanism and especially the works of the Italian theologian and historian Ludovico Muratori (1672-1750), it was a "counter-counter Reformation" that navigated between Jesuit baroque piety and the controversial Jansenist movement. Reform Catholicism proffered an alternative to the Jesuit curriculum by altering not the content but the method of expounding belief, employing science (Copernicus, Newton), philosophy (Leibniz-Wolff, Locke, and eventually Kant) and historical study (Scripture, patristics, church history). At first (c. 1720-50) attempting to renew rather than replace the scholastic method, it eventually (c. 1750-80) embraced an eclectic version of Wolff's philosophy.

Finally, France. In Roy Porter's words France was "the great anomaly", whose peculiar configuration of politics, religion and culture long precluded Reform Catholicism.26 The French monarchy, by choosing to suppress rather than sponsor Jansenism, the key movement for religious reform, generated a concatenation of momentous developments. It pushed some Jansenists into the arms of enthusiasm. It fostered a dispute between Jansenists and Jesuits which, from mid-century, the philosophes made three-sided, and that three-sided dispute introduced a polarization between enlightenment and religion.27 Dominating Louis XV's reign (1715-74), this situation thwarted Reform Catholicism. In the 1780s there were various attempts to devise a Reform Catholic theology and the early Revolution offered what would have been Reform Catholicism's greatest triumph, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

These six examples allow us to define the religious Enlightenment according to four characteristics. The first two are clusters of ideas. First, religious enlighteners searched for the middle way of "reasonable" belief, grounded in the idea of "natural religion" and the exegetical principle of accommodation. Second, they embraced toleration based on the idea of "natural law." The last two are social and political attributes. Third, the public sphere was central: the religious Enlightenment was an important component of it, while religious enlighteners engaged in multiple pursuits in it. Fourth, the religious Enlightenment gained the sponsorship of states and, using natural law theory, advocated a "state church."

Reasonableness

The religious Enlightenment constituted a conscious search for a middle way between the extremes. The religious enlighteners identified the middle way with "reasonableness" or "reasonable" belief. The terms "reasonable" or "reasonableness" were already current when Locke popularized them in his 1695 treatise, The Reasonableness of Christianity. Reasonable should be distinguished from "rational", the term scholars commonly employ to assert the Enlightenment's primary if not exclusive reliance on reason. We should follow contemporaries by thinking of "reasonable" in relationship to "unreasonable." To religious enlighteners, unreasonable meant an exclusive embrace of either reason or faith. Faith untempered by knowledge, or combined with excessively partisan forms, produced intolerant, dogmatic or enthusiastic religion. They had in mind "inner light" Puritanism, Pietism or convulsionary Jansenism: the polemical, scholastic theology of the major Christian denominations (Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics) in the seventeenth century; or, in the case of Judaism, an exclusivist and casuistic [pilpul] method of studying the Talmud.28 At the same time, religious enlighteners thought that unaided reason engendered immoral scepticism and unbelief. They were certain that morality without belief was neither desirable nor even possible.

Reasonable, in contrast, signified a balance between reason and faith. Reasonable belief meant the coordination of reason and revelation; they did not contradict because by definition, as the two God-given "lights," they could not. Reasonable or reasonableness meant acknowledging reason as a criterion of judgment in the narrow sense derived from the respective philosophical culture: in England Locke, in French-speaking Europe Descartes or Malebranche, in the German lands Leibniz or Christian Wolff. Yet it also meant reason in the sense of admitting criteria such as testimony, the credibility of tradition or miracles that were indispensable to recognizing the authority of Scripture. In other words, reason was defined broadly to maintain the common ground of philosophy and theology.29

This broad understanding of reason had two important consequences. It became common practice among the religious enlighteners first to show what reason could teach about a particular doctrine, then to draw on Scripture to certify, augment and refine that knowledge. In addition, the religious enlighteners endorsed the distinction that revelation could not contain truths contrary to reason (contra rationem) yet did include truths above reason (supra rationem), namely, the truths of revelation not accessible to, but in harmony with, reason.

The idea of "natural religion" epitomized this coordination of reason and faith. Natural religion consisted of the truths accessible to unassisted reason, which usually meant a belief in God, his Providence, and rewards and punishments of a future life. Libertines and deists (notably Herbert of Cherbury, 1583-1648) had first promoted the idea of "natural religion" in the seventeenth century in opposition to revealed religion. Most Enlightenment thinkers adopted it since, by transcending confession, it could guarantee a common morality and be the foundation of a multi-religious polity. Natural religion emphasized not dogma or precise formulations of belief as represented in creeds or symbolic books, but practice and morality.30

Religious enlighteners coopted the idea of natural religion to revealed religion - making a radical idea of the seventeenth century entirely conventional in the eighteenth. They treated natural religion as a necessary but insufficient foundation for belief. Natural religion alone was incapable of teaching morality and true belief. Only reason and revelation in tandem were equal to the task.

This sort of argument was so common that it structured religious Enlightenment tracts. They typically began with a consideration of natural religion, proceeded to Judaism as the first revealed religion and Christianity as its successor, and concluded with a consideration of the author's particular Christian creed.

Since reasonableness confirmed revelation it also entailed a defense of exegetical methods. Religious enlighteners renewed inherited forms of exegesis, asserting their ability to derive revelation from Scripture's inspired texts. An understanding of revelation rested on an awareness of history. Most of the religious enlighteners employed the exegetical principle of accommodation: that in dealing with humankind God "accommodated" or "condescended" to time, place and particular mentalities. This principle enabled them to contend that, while aspects of Scripture were historically bound, its true content transcended history. The religious enlighteners thus acknowledged history but rejected any attempt to relativize revelation or deny its universal validity by limiting it to a particular time or place. They were historical but not historicist, insisting on the capacity of reason to apprehend revelation through the medium of the text.

Whereas the idea of reasonableness rested heavily on Scripture, the religious enlighteners argued that Scripture was not the supreme source of all knowledge. They did not expect the Bible to serve as a textbook of science or politics. They understood its "scope" to be limited to salvation and man's relationship to God: science was not in its purview, as expressed in the saying Galileo made famous, "the Bible tells us how to go to heaven and not how the heavens go."31 These were intellectual strategies, drawing on the principle of accommodation as well as the historical approach, that aimed to defend revelation's authority without relativizing it.

Toleration

The religious Enlightenment was distinguished by its commitment to toleration of competing religions and dissenting sects. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the idea of toleration had largely been the preserve of heterodox sects, humanists and proponents of raison d'etat. By trying to transform the militant and intolerant orthodoxies of the Reformation and Counter-reformation era into tolerant forms of belief, the religious enlighteners brought the idea of toleration to the center of the established religions. Some English-language accounts present toleration as primarily a creation of Protestants in England, the Netherlands (especially Huguenots) and Switzerland. n fact, it was neither exclusively Protestant nor concentrated in Western Europe. Catholics, Jews and German-speaking Europe also had a hand in creating it.32

The religious enlighteners used ecclesiastical versions of natural law theory known as collegialism, derived from the dissenting Dutch Calvinist sect, and territorialism, which put more emphasis on the "territorial" state's authority, both of which were based on the individual's autonomy and freedom of conscience. Their common point of departure was the individual's relationship to the church or synagogue. Religious enlighteners first defined the church or synagogue as a separate society [college or collegium] of equal individuals and then used that same criterion to define state and society. They linked these notions to the idea of natural religion. Religious opponents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries claimed that toleration would promote indifference and scepticism. Religious enlighteners addressed that fear by using collegialism or territorialism to justify toleration on the basis of belief.33

This toleration was decidedly selective: all thinkers and denominations had their respective limits. Such selectivity was characteristic of virtually all theories of toleration at the time. Locke, it should be remembered, would not tolerate atheists because their oaths were not credible and Catholics because of their loyalty to the Pope.34 While most religious Enlighteners shared Locke's attitude to atheists, they also had other limits. Gevenan "orthodox Enlighteners" (Vernet) would extend toleration to other Protestants but not to Catholics, let alone to Jews. Reform Catholic advocates of toleration maintained the crucial distinction between "civil" and "theological" toleration: they granted only the former, hoping for reunification with Protestants and the Jews' conversion. Despite these limitations, we should not underestimate the achievement: here were representatives of established religions advocating toleration as essential to faith.

The Public Sphere

There has been a strong tendency among scholars to see the eighteenth-century public sphere as increasingly if not distinctly secular. This was not the case. The religious Enlightenment and the religious enlighteners were an integral part of the emerging public sphere, indeed, without the public sphere the religious Enlightenment was inconceivable. The public sphere made it possible for the religious Enlightenment to arise among multiple religions in a number of countries and become the first common development of Western and Central Europe's religions. This could not have occurred a century earlier.35

The religious Enlightenment was a functioning aspect of the public sphere. The absolute number of religious works published in the eighteenth century increased, even if their percentage of overall book production declined. There were established networks of travel, correspondence and book production to transmit and propagate the religious Enlightenment. Many religious enlighteners studied or visited in its two original matrices, Holland and

England, and also met kindred spirits in other countries. There was a republic of letters that enabled scholars to exchange ideas through correspondence within and between confessions. Finally, there was a library of the religious Enlightenment. In the course of the eighteenth century a collection of books emerged - consisting of Anglican Moderates and Dutch collegiants and Arminians, German Protestant and Gallican church historians and theorists, and works of ecclesiastical natural law - from which readers could absorb the religious Enlightenment.[36]

Furthermore, religious enlighteners participated in the apparently secular aspects of the public sphere. They wrote history, geography, philosophy, belles-lettres and/or political tracts because they discerned no barriers between these pursuits and their religious beliefs. In fact, they were convinced of the opposite: they thought the two contributed equally to what they believed were the compatible if not identical goals of Enlightenment and faith. Since the religious enlighteners recognized no unmistakable let alone unpassable boundaries between the secular and the religious, being both a man of letters and a man of belief was an entirely consistent position. It was therefore common to find religious enlighteners who were as well known, if not better known for their "secular" than their religious works.

The religious enlighteners were not opportunists or "trimmers" who, by engaging in seemingly secular pursuits, were philosophes in disguise or only doing the philosophes'work.[37] Then and now, this view invoked the metaphor of a slippery slope, asserting that once these figures repudiated "orthodoxy" they inevitably slid through a series of compromised positions into deism or unbelief. The slippery slope metaphor is fundamentally mistaken in its point of departure, by erroneously investing one formulation or period of religious thinking with normative status, and in its destination, by supporting a linear notion of secularization. It assumes that, aside from "orthodoxy," there were no viable theological positions. In this view the repudiation of Orthodoxy results, among Protestants, in an unavoidable slide through Arminianism to Socinianism and onto deism; or among Catholics, that aside from Tridentine doctrine there was no other legitimate standard for practice and belief; or among Jews, the rejection of monolithic Talmudism was tantamount to antinomianism. This view is patently false: Arminianism was a tenable Protestant theology, not a way station; Jansenism, conciliarism and the ideal of the early church were an alternative to, or indeed an alternative realization of, Trent; and in Judaism there were alternative textual traditions available primarily from Sephardi Jewry.[38]

The religious enlighteners were not trimmers but sincere believers and apologists, who mounted an energetic attack in the public sphere on deists and unbelievers in order to defend the faith, and that defence included their writings in other fields. They had an extensive knowledge of history and were aware of the competing versions of their respective traditions. They understood the repudiation of "orthodoxy" as enabling them to restore or fashion true belief.

State Nexus

The state nexus defined the politics of the religious Enlightenment. The state and the resources at its disposal were a crucial factor in the Enlightenment's genesis and the religious Enightenment's character: the growth of the state mechanism in large part made possible the public sphere in which the Enlightenment took root and

flourished. That public sphere comprised a broad coalition of elites whose differences prevented it from being monolithic, affording significant freedom.[39]

The religious Enlighteners belonged to those elites, and in the course of the eighteenth century they gained the sponsorship of states seeking political stability (England, Geneva) or pursuing reform from above (Prussia, Habsburg empire). The rulers of these polities saw a "reasonable" interpretation of religion as a means to further their own efforts to promote the irenicism and toleration that allowed politics and state building to replace theological controversies and the ideal of the confessional state.

Religious enlighteners recognized constituted authority, whatever its form, yet wanted to change the terms of state-church relations. In opposition to the confessional state's extremes of state (erastian) or Church (theocratic) rule -including papal monarchy (curialism), they sought a middle way in the idea of a state church based on ecclesiastical natural law theory (collegialism, territorialism). They envisaged the church shedding its corporate characteristics in order to integrate into the state's growing administrative mechanism. They envisaged the state guaranteeing individual freedom of conscience and the church's institutional independence by limiting its jurisdiction to those religious matters that impinged on the civil order. Religious enlighteners did not advocate radical alternatives to the confessional state such as separation of church and state or civil religion. Rather, they devised a moderate reform by making autonomy in matters of faith, for the individual and the church, the price of accepting the bureaucratic state's authority.[40]

It was no accident that the religious Enlightenment coincided with the Whig supremacy in England and patrician rule in Geneva, both of which attempted to refine existing state churches, or with enlightened absolutism in Prussia and the Habsburg empire, both of which aimed to create state churches. The religious Enlightenment was an integral element of those political constellations. Similarly, the mature Haskalah aimed to turn the Jewish community into a voluntary society that could exist alongside a state church, thereby qualifying the Jews for emancipation. And the French revolution designed a model state church in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

The Enlightenment Spectrum

What are the implications of the existence of a transnational and multi-confessional religious Enlightenment? We should replace the notion of a unitary, secular Enlightenment project with the concept of an Enlightenment spectrum. We should resist the impulse to hypostatize the religious Enlightenment as a separate entity, and rather see it as one position on that spectrum.

Following Jonathan Israel's account, the conventional figures of the Enlightenment, Newton and Locke, Descartes and Montesquieu, Leibniz and Wolff constituted a moderate version at the spectrum's centre, which espoused a sort of providential deism that included "belief in Creation, divine Providence, the divine origin and absolute validity of morality, the special role of Christ, and the immortality of the soul." This moderate mainstream "was overwhelmingly dominant in terms of support, official approval, and prestige practically everywhere except for a few decades in France from the 1740s onwards." It had "three rival versions": "Neo-Cartesianism, Newtonianism (reinforced with Locke) and Leibnizian-Wolffianism". All three relied on "physico-theology" or the "argument from design" which, as the "strongest single intellectual pillar buttressing the moderate mainstream

Enlightenment", was often combined with a defense of miracles. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the neo-Cartesian version had largely exhausted itself, leaving the field to the rival Newtonian-Lockean and Lebinizian-Wolffian versions.[41]

The moderate Enlightenment was flanked on one side, Israel further contends, by a "radical" enlightenment - whose "three principal architects" were Spinoza, Bayle and Diderot - which was materialist, democratic, egalitarian, anti-theological, and favored absolute freedom of thought. Although "a tiny fringe in terms of numbers, status and approval ratings," it was "remarkably successful not just in continually unsettling the middle ground ... but also in infiltrating popular culture and opinion." In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, socialists and Marxists claimed this materialist tradition, guaranteeing that liberal and conservative scholars disdainfully neglected it. The historians who have recently focused on it wish to reclaim Spinoza's hitherto unrecognized importance as well as the Enlightenment's anti-imperialism.[42]

If we follow this argument, then flanking the moderate Enlightenment on the other side, and significantly overlapping with it, was the religious Enlightenment. It consisted of multiple movements across Europe that found institutional expression and state patronage. In a variety of philosophical idioms -Cartesian, Lockean or Wolffian - religious enlighteners championed ideas of reasonableness and natural religion, toleration and natural law that aimed to inform, and in some cases reform, established religion. Religious enlighteners were theologians, clergy and religious thinkers who were fully committed partisans and reformers of their own tradition. The religious Enlightenment developed largely within the institutional confines of the respective religious tradition even as its members were active participants in the public sphere.[43]

The Enlightenment consisted of its radical, moderate and religious versions as they developed across Europe from the mid-seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. We must renounce the temptation, however intellectually seductive or politically expedient, to designate any one version, either in any one place at any one time, or in any one cultural or religious tradition, the Enlightenment.[44] The entire spectrum across Europe during the entire period constituted the Enlightenment.

We should discard the facile yet tenacious notion that as a result of the Enlightenment, religion lost its power and influence in eighteenth-century society. The religious Enlightenment gained state sponsorship. It was at the heart of the eighteenth century: it may have had more influential adherents and exerted more power in its day than either the "moderate" or "radical" versions of the Enlightenment. The religious Enlightenment represented the last attempt by European states to use reasonable religion - as opposed to romantic, mystical or nationalist interpretations - as the cement of society.

We need to imagine our way back into a world in which the secular and religious were not distinct and fixed categories but so fundamentally intertwined as to be inseparable. The Enlightenment spectrum boasted a constant interaction and intersection between the religious and secular. Alongside the philosophe and the Aufklärer, the Enlightenment's personnel included the religious enlightener -the Anglican moderate, the Genevan enlightened Orthodox, the Prussian Lutheran theological Enlightener, the Jewish maskil, the reform Catholic in the Habsburg empire and, for a short time, in France - who propagated the Enlightenment on their own terms, the

terms of faith. The religious-secular dichotomy first became dominant with the French Revolution and in fact destroyed the religious Enlightenment.

Contrary to the secular master narrative of the Enlightenment, modern culture also has religious roots. Since religious enlighteners argued on religious grounds for such ideas as reasonableness and natural religion, natural law and toleration, the eighteenth-century roots of political liberalism are also as much within organized religion as in opposition to it. The Enlightenment origins of modern culture were neither secular nor religious but a complex amalgam.

ENDNOTES

1. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment* 2 vols. (New York, 1966-9). A recent restatement is Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (New Haven, 2004). For an early critique see Sheridan Gilley, "Christianity and Enlightenment: An Historical Survey," *History of European Ideas* 1 (1981) no. 2, 103-121. For an effort to restore the Enlightenment's theological origins and a more complex notion of secularization, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA, 1989). For non-teleological secularization theory, see David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, UK, 2005).

2. Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York, 1966).

3. MacIntrye coined the term "enlightenment project" in *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1981). Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* trs. John Cumming (New York, 1972); Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), pp. 32-50. For postmodernism, see Daniel Gordon ed., *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment* (New York, 2001). Useful is James Schmitt, *What is Enlightenment? eighteenth-century answers and twentieth-century questions* (Berkeley, 1996).

4. Henry Steele Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (New York, 1977) xi-xii, 41, 71. Commager acknowledged that American "philosophers" conformed publicly to Christianity and that some were true believers (see pp. 242-3).

5. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York, 2004). For American exceptionalism, see p. 232. For a differentiated notion of the Enlightenment, see Henry May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976). For the distinction between the historical Enlightenment and its legacy, see Donald H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York, 1976). A recent literary synthesis is Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (Cambridge, 1997).

6. Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York, 2006), pp. 103, 217, 226, 236. Cf. Gary Wills, "The Day the Enlightenment Went Out," *New York Times* (November 4, 2004) OP-ED.

7. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of a New World Order* (New York, 1997), presumes the "resurgence" of religion and "la Revanche de Dieu."

8. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. xi.

9. Roy Porter & Mikulás Teich eds., *The Enlightenment in National context* (Cambridge, UK, 1981) stimulated such studies.

10. J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-64* (Cambridge, UK, 1999), p. 5.

11. Ibid., pp. 9, 138. For "plurality", see Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* 2nd ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2001), p. 9. For multiple perspectives, see Fania Oz-Salzberger, "New Approaches towards a History of the Enlightenment: Can Disparate Perspectives Make a General Picture," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* XXIX (2000), pp. 171-82.

12. Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 445-562. Margaret C. Jacob distinguished between a "radical" (materialist, republican, anti-clerical) and a "moderate" (Newtonian, Christian) Enlightenment in England and Holland. See *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, 1981). Taylor distinguished between a providential Christian deism (Locke, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson) and a radical materialist, utilitarian non-Christian Enlightenment (Helvétius, Bentham, Holbach, Condorcet): see *Sources of the Self*.

13. James E. Bradley & Dale K. Van Kley, *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001), p. 15.

14. For attempts to include Judaism, see Samuel J. Miller, *Portugal and Rome c. 1748-1830: An Aspect of the Catholic Enlightenment* (Rome, 1978) (Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae, vol. 44), pp. 1-2; Bernard Plongeron, "Was ist katholische Aufklärung," in Elisabeth Kovács ed., *Katholische Aufklärung und Josephinismus* (Munich, 1979), pp. 39-45; Horst Möller, *Vernunft und Kritik: Deutsche Aufklärung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 100-7; David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought* (London, 2000).

15. Nancy Green, "Forms of Comparison," in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor eds., *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York, 2004), pp. 41-56.

16. *Lettres persanes* (1721), letter 29.

17. Joris Van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces: Religious Toleration and the Public in the eighteenth-century Netherlands* (Leiden, 2003), p. 3.

18. Andrew Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: the Dutch Collegiants in the early Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1991); and idem., *Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1999) (International Archives of the History of Ideas, 165); Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary*

Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe (Chicago, 2003), pp. 39-77; Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1998) and idem., *The Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 27ff.; Wiep van Bunge ed., *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) .

19. Michel Nuttinck, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Zeger-Bernard van Espen; un canoniste janséniste, gallican et régalien a l'Université de Louvain, 1646-1728* (Louvain, 1969); Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 125-58.

20. Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 26, 78; Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge, 1999); Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in early modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); and Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: the Portuguese Jews of seventeenth-century Amsterdam* (London, 2000).

21. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 29ff. Cf. also G.C. Gibbs, "The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectual entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 86 (1971), pp. 323-49. For the Netherlands and England as the Enlightenment's two sources, see Eduard Winter, *Frühaufklärung: Der Kampf gegen den Konfessionalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa und die deutsch-slawische Begegnung* (Berlin, 1966), p. 17.

22. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 29-30.

23. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, pp. 460-64, 911-13; 653-58; 1034-37. See Mordechai Feingold, "Reversal of Fortunes: The Displacement of Cultural Hegemony from the Netherlands to England in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," in Dale Hoak and Mordechai Feingold eds., *The World of William and Mary: Anglo-Dutch Perspectives on the Revolution of 1688-89* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 234-61.

24. Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000).

25. Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*, p. 51.

26. *The Enlightenment*, p. 55. See also Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1951), p. 134; Lester G. Crocker, "The Enlightenment: Problems of Interpretation," in *L'eta dei Lumi. Studi Storici sul Settecento Europeo in onore di Franco Venturi* (Naples, 1985), p. 23; W.R. Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime, 1648-1789* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 171; and MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 37. For France's centrality, see Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: an unconventional guide to the eighteenth century* (New York, 2003); and Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth, UK, 1968).

27. See Lamourette: "... in the eighteenth century Philosophy has become the opposite of Christianity, and [philosophy] needed to be impious and blasphemous to merit the honor of figuring in the [mental] picture of the wise." *Les Délices de la Religion, ou le pouvoir de l'Évangile pour nous rendre heureux* (Paris, 1788), p. ix; cf.

Pensées sur la Philosophie de l'Incrédulité, ou Reflexions sur l'esprit et le dessein des philosophes irréligieux de ce Siecle (Paris, 1786), pp. 253, 263.

28. William Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640* (New Haven, 2000), pp. 232-45. For enthusiasm, see Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable." The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995) and Lawrence Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (San Marino, CA, 1998).

29. Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 34-40, 54-55, 140-41. For changing notions of reason vis-a-vis Scripture, see Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable"*, pp. 165-90.

30. Christoph Link, "Christentum und moderner Staat: Zur Grundlegung eines freiheitlichen Staatskirchenrechts im Aufklärungszeitalter," in Luigi Lombardi Vallauri and Gerhard Dilcher eds., *Christentum, Säkularisation und modernes Recht* (Baden-Baden, 1981), pp. 859-61.

31. Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1990) 57-61. Galileo was quoting Cardinal Baronius.

32. For a recent example, see Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton, 2003). Important accounts are Wilbur K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1932-40); Joseph Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation* 2 vols. (New York, 1960) and Henry Kamen, *The Rise of Toleration* (New York, 1967). For revisionist views see John Laursen and Cary Nederman eds., *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 1998); and Ole Peter Grell & Roy Porter eds., *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2000). For a survey, see also *Michael Walzer, On Toleration* (New Haven, 1997).

33. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*; Klaus Schlaich, *Kollegialtheorie: Kirche, Recht und Staat in der Aufklärung* (Munich, 1969).

34. John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and `Early Enlightenment' Europe* (Cambridge, 2006); and Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 135-63.

35. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* trs. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, 1989). On Habermas' neglect of religion, see James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 48, 87-88.

36. On the clergy's participation in German periodicals (Berlinische Monatsschrift; Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek), see Horst Möller, *Aufklärung in Preußen: Der Verleger, Publizist und Geschichtsschreiber Friedrich Nicolai* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 252-3, 266-7. From 1695 to 1785 the production of religious books in France multiplied by a factor of 3.6 yet dropped as a percentage of total output (44% to 30%). See J. Quéniart, *Culture et société*

urbaines dans la France de l'Ouest au XVIIIe siecle (Paris, 1978), pp. 319-24. Theological works constituted at least 18.2% (perhaps as high as 24.4%) of books published between 1780-82 in the German states. See Helmuth Kiesel and Paul Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert: Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des literarischen Markts in Deutschland* (Munich, 1977), pp. 186-7. For a religious Enlightenment library, see *Verzeichniß der auserlesenen Büchersammlung des seeligen Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1786).

37. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, Vol. 1, p. 359f.

38. Pocock criticized the "slippery slope" theory as "Whiggish" and "Catholic" (inevitable secularization). See "Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment," in *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850*, p. 12.

39. Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and European Socialism* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 160-4, 178.

40. Link, "Christentum und moderner Staat"; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*; Schlaich, *Kollegialtheorie*; T.J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 24-9; Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2001).

41. Israel, *The Enlightenment Contested*, p. 11; and idem., *The Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 471, 477, 456-61, 556.

42. Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment* and *The Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 11-12, 42; Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment; Sankar Muthu, Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, 2003); Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, "Enlightenment Studies," in Alan Charles Kors ed., *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* 4 vols. (New York, 2003), Vol. l, p. 426.

43. For the Counter-Enlightenment, see Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York, 2001); and Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2003).

44. This was the point of Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich's seminal *The Enlightenment in National Context*. Peter Gay idealized Voltaire and Hume, Robert Darnton the Parisian Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel Spinoza, Bayle and Diderot.