2

LANGUAGES OF BELIEF

Is the word ever actually used in this way in the language game which is its original home? – What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Something can be incandescently obvious but still utterly unintelligible to us if we lack the conceptual grammar required to interpret it.

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*[1]

2.1 Lost in Translation

In the winter of 1672, the Provincial of the Jesuits in Paris, Pierre Coton, received a despairing letter from a mission in Port Royal, Acadia (now Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia). His correspondent, Pierre Biard, reported that the objects of his missionary endeavours – the Mi'kmaq people – were completely lacking in abstract, internal, and spiritual conceptions. They had no sense of metaphysical notions such as 'substance', and distinctions between the virtues of wisdom, fidelity, justice, mercy, gratitude, and piety were largely incomprehensible to them. Most worrying of all, they were innocent of anything that resembled a conventional notion of belief: 'we are still disputing, after a great deal of research and labor, whether they have any word to correspond directly to the word *Credo*, I believe.' Just imagine, Biard continued, what follows for attempts to school the Mi'kmaq in the Creed and the fundamentals of Christianity.[2] Conversion could not

[1] Epigraphs: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), §116 (p. 48); David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 13, reproduced with permission of Yale University Press through PLSclear.

[2] Pierre Biard, 'Lettre au R.P. Provincial, à Paris. Port Royal, January 31, 1612'. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 73 vols., ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows

be a matter of persuading the Mi'kmaq to relinquish one set of beliefs and replace them with another. They seemed to have neither competing beliefs, nor a notion of what a belief was.

Not all seventeenth-century missionaries to the Americas regarded the translation of basic Western religious conceptions into native vocabularies an intractable problem. Puritan minister Roger Williams (1603–83) was the founder of the colony of Rhode Island, an abolitionist, and a strong advocate for indigenous rights. He was also a talented linguist and produced the first book on the Narragansett language, including a separate chapter on religion. Here he provides Narragansett equivalents of basic theological concepts – 'God', 'the soul', 'prayer', 'hell' – and even offers a kind a catechism rendered into the native tongue.[3] However, Williams's ambitious translation project was informed by his conviction that the American first peoples had descended from Adam and Noah some five-and-a-half thousand years before. On the basis of this contracted genealogy he also imagined that he had discovered in Narragansett vocabulary etymological links to various Hebrew expressions and, in keeping with this, customs that resembled ancient Jewish practices.[4] All of this was consistent with a relatively common view in the seventeenth century that 'heathen religions' were corrupted and degenerate forms of the original monotheism practised

Bros. 1896–1901), vol. 2, pp. 7–11. I am indebted to Ethan H. Shagan for this example and its historical significance. See his informative treatment of this episode in *Birth of Modern Belief*, pp. 195–9. For an account of problems of untranslatability of indigenous American languages, with many further examples, see Sarah Rivett, *Unscripted America: Indigenous Languages and the Origins of a Literary Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. pp. 11–14, 18, 42–5.

[3] Roger Williams, *A Key into the Languages of America* (London, 1643), pp. 114–32. On the different approaches of French Catholics and English Protestants to indigenous American languages see Gordon Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Daniel Wasserman, *Truth in Many Tongues: Religious Conversion and the Languages of the Early Spanish Empire* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

[4] Williams, *A Key into the Languages of America*, To the Reader, p. 131. John Eliot's *The Indian Grammar Begun* (Cambridge, MA, 1666) shares similar assumptions. For other examples of the 'Hebraic hypothesis' see Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions*, pp. 152f., 233f., n. 151; Rivett, *Unscripted America*, pp. 7–8, 12. A related thesis postulated the divine origin of human language, and hence a theoretical unity of languages. This was the prime target of Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Treatise on the Origin of Language* [1772], in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 65–164. Directly relevant to our general thesis, Johann Georg Hamann contended that this debate was predicated on a false dichotomy between natural and supernatural. 'The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross', in *Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 96–110, esp. pp. 99f.

by Adam and the biblical patriarchs.[5] This idea underpinned the earliest forms of comparative religion which, in addition to their acceptance of the universal history set out in the pages of Genesis, also involved the projection onto indigenous cultures of a new early modern conception of religion that focused on beliefs and practices.[6]

These assumptions came under sustained pressure during the eighteenth century with challenges to the authority of the universal history set out in Genesis, along with a growing body of empirical evidence that cast doubt upon the idea of a common origin of all religious beliefs and practices. John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689) makes reference to travel relations that attest to the existence of whole nations – both civilised and 'uncultivated', that 'want the idea and knowledge of God altogether'.[7] Huguenot philosopher Pierre Bayle argued similarly for the existence of nations of atheists.[8] In the following century, in his *Natural History of Religion* (1757), David Hume flatly rejected the idea that all extant religions were to be understood as either degenerate forms of, or elaborations upon, a primeval monotheism. In short, it was Biard's perspective, rather than that of Williams, that became typical of the understandings of subsequent missionaries and field anthropologists, and which reflected a significant body of opinion among philosophers.[9]

[5] Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions*, pp. 131–9.

[6] For a classic example see William Turner, *The history of all religions in the world, from the creation down to this present* (London, 1695). The alternative explanation of primitive monotheism, favoured by many of the deists, was that there was an original, universal, natural religion. Early universal language schemes of the seventeenth century tended to rely on similar assumptions, bolstered by the Aristotelian conception of language according to which words corresponded directly to mental conceptions which in turn mapped the universal forms or essences of things. See Rhodri Lewis, *Language, Mind, and Nature: Artificial Languages in England from Bacon to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[7] Locke, *Essay* 1.4.8 (pp. 87f.). Also Richard Bentley, *The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism*, 4th ed. (London, 1699), pp. 31f. Locke's sources were not entirely reliable, however. For contemporary criticisms of his position see Charles Gildon, 'To Dr R. B– Of a God', in Charles Blount, *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1695), p. 180; Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury, Letter 8 [1709], *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols. (Basel, 1790), vol. 1, pp. 345f.; Henry Lee, *Anti-Scepticism: or, Notes upon each Chapter of Mr. Lock's Essay concerning Humane Understanding* (London, 1702), pp. 33–8. For further discussion see 'The Forgotten Proof', Chapter 4, below.

[8] Pierre Bayle, *Oeuvres Diverses de M. Pierre Bayle*, 4 vols. (The Hague: 1727–31), vol. 3, pp. 109a–110b.

[9] Thus Herder: 'All missionaries in all parts of the world complain about the difficulty of communicating Christian concepts to savages in their own languages …. If one is not willing to believe the missionaries, then let one read the philosophers: de la *Condamine* in *Peru* and on the *Amazon river, Maupertius* in *Lapland,* etc. *Time, duration, space, essence, matter, body, virtue, justice, freedom, gratitude* do not exist in the tongue of the Peruvians ….' *Origin*

Reports from nineteenth-century missions to the Pacific are replete with observations about a 'lack of any expressions for abstract things' in 'barbaric' and 'uncivilized' languages.[10] The first of the German *Neuendettelsau* missionaries to Papua New Guinea, Johann Flierl, wrote of the language of Kâte people that they have virtually 'no words into and with which to be able to express spiritual and religious concepts'.[11] Lutheran missionaries like Flierl had a particular investment in vernacular languages, since they often sought to translate the Bible, or parts of it, Martin Luther's 1534 German translation of the Bible having provided a powerful precedent. Accordingly, their efforts have played a significant role in the preservation of indigenous languages in New Guinea and Australia.[12] But the lack of a familiar religious terminology inevitably generated significant difficulties of translation (along with some spectacular mis-renderings, as when, to the amusement of his

of Language, in *Philosophical Writings*, pp. 118–19. Cf. Paul Broca, early anthropologist and polygenist: 'certain peoples have absolutely no notion of God and the soul and their languages have no point of contact with ours.' *Recherches sur l'hybridité animale en général et sur l'hybridité humaine* (Paris, 1860), p. 656. John Lubbock: 'What Spix and Martius tell us about the Brazilian tribes appears also to be true of many, if not of most, savage races … they are entirely deficient in words for abstract ideas.' It followed that 'those who assert that even the lowest savages believe in a Supreme Deity, affirm that which is entirely contrary to the evidence'. *Prehistoric Times*, 4th ed. (London: Frederick Norgate, 1878), pp. 586f., 594.

[10] 'Auch eine Schwierigkeit bei der Missionsarbeit', *Kirchliche Mitteilungen aus und über Nordamerika, Australien und Neu-Guinea* 10 (1888), 77, quoted in Daniel Midena, 'Wine into Wineskins: The Neuendettelsau Missionaries' Encounter with Language and Myth in New Guinea', in *Savage Worlds: German Encounters Abroad, 1798–1914*, ed. Matthew Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 86–104 (p. 88). I am grateful to Daniel for drawing my attention to these examples. In the nineteenth century these complaints would extend to scientific terminology. See Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Minute on Indian Education' [1835], in *Speeches, with his Minute on Indian Education*, ed. G. M. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 348.

[11] Johann Flierl, 'Vom Sattelberg', *Kirchliche Mitteilung* 11 (1897), 84, quoted in Midena, 'Wine into Wineskins', p. 90. Kâte is spoken in the Morobe Province, located on the north-eastern coast of Papua New Guinea.

[12] For examples, see Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann, *Outlines of a Grammar: Vocabulary and Phraseology of the Aboriginal Language of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1840); Clamor Schürmann, *A Vocabulary of the Parnkalla Language, Spoken by the Natives inhabiting the Western Shores of Spencer's Gulf* [1844], facsimile ed. (Adelaide: Public Library of Australia, 1962). Also Mary-Anne Gale, *Dhangum Djorra'wuy Dhäwu: A History of Writing in Aboriginal Languages* (Adelaide: Aboriginal Research Institute, University of South Australia, 1997); Rob Amery, 'Beyond their Expectations: Teichelmann and Schürmann's Efforts to Preserve the Kaurna Language Continue to Bear Fruit', in *The Struggle for Souls and Science – Constructing the Fifth Continent: German Missionaries and Scientists in Australia*, ed. Walter Veit (Alice Springs: Strehlow Research Centre Occasional Paper, 2004), pp. 9–28. For similar preservation efforts in New Zealand, see Paul Moon, 'Missionaries and Māori Language in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand: A Mixed Inheritance', *Journal of Religious History* 43 (2019), 495–510.

Pitjantjatjara auditors, Ronald Trudinger described the coming of the Holy of Spirit recorded in Acts 2:3 as a 'deluge of wallabies' rather than the more canonical 'tongues of fire').[13] More directly to the point, correspondence from the *Neuendettelsau* missionaries reveals a list a problematic terms that closely match those identified by Biard. Antipodean indigenous languages apparently had no way of accommodating 'spiritual concepts', 'higher concepts', and 'Christian notions'. Specifically, there were no equivalents to 'belief', 'Spirit of God', 'blessed', 'miracle', and the verbs 'to love' and 'to worship'.[14]

Moving to the other side of the Pacific and more recent history, the Wari' (or Pakaa Nova) people of the Amazon basin seem similarly bereft of a terminology of belief. The Wari' first became known to the outside world at the beginning of the twentieth century, owing to their attacks on workers constructing the ill-fated, and now long abandoned Madeira-Mamoré railway, undertaken in the hope of affording Bolivian rubber growers access to the Atlantic. Following this unhappy start, more peaceful contacts were made by Protestant missionaries in the 1950s. Translators found in the native language what they thought was an acceptable expression for belief in God in the word *howa* – 'to accept', 'to agree', or 'to think that something is true'. But for the Wari' themselves, the term used for experience of the other dimension of reality was not cognitive, but visual: 'to see'.[15] Their shamans were the ones who 'saw', while Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries were those who 'believed'. Conversion to Christian belief necessarily meant something quite different to those on the two sides of this linguistic divide. Anthropologist Aparecida Vilaça, attempting to offer an explanation for the apparently odd fluctuations in the religious beliefs of this group, concludes: 'the idea of belief to express a relationship to the "supernatural" is, I think, alien to the Wari'.[16]

[13] Richard Guilliatt, 'How a Bible Translation Is Preserving the Pitjantjatjara Language', http://ourlanguages.org.au/how-a-bible-translation-is-preserving-the-pitjantjatjara-language-2/, accessed 29 March 2019.

[14] '*Glauben*', '*Geist*', '*Gottes*', '*selig*', '*Wunder*', '*lieben*', '*anbeten*'. Examples from Midena, 'Wine into Wineskins', pp. 98–9.

[15] Hans Blumenberg regards the association of knowledge with vision as a transcultural 'absolute metaphor'. *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp. 6–7, 35, 62–3; 'Light as a Metaphor for Truth: At the Preliminary Stage of Philosophical Concept Formation', trans. Joel Anderson, in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 30–86.

[16] Aparecida Vilaça, 'Christians without Faith: Some Aspects of the Conversion of the Wari' (Pakaa Nova)', *Ethnos* 62 (1997), 91–115 (97).

The cattle herding Dinka tribes of South Sudan (or the Jieng, as they refer to themselves) offer yet another example. In his ground-breaking study of the religion of the Dinka, Godfrey Lienhardt informs us that 'it is not a simple matter to divide the Dinka believer … from what he believes in, and to describe the latter then in isolation from him as the object of belief'. This relates to the fact that the Dinka, on Lienhardt's account, lack a concept of mind comparable to that of modern Westerners. Inevitably, then, their experiences of non-human 'powers' are not adequately described as 'beliefs', not least because it is these 'powers' that structure their experience.[17] The Western conception of belief, Lienhardt suggests, calls for a distinctive theory of mind that we cannot assume is widely shared.

The cumulative weight of reports such as these has prompted speculation among some anthropologists about whether absence of a notion of belief is less the exception than the rule. Perhaps the Western notion of 'belief', in the big scheme of things, is the odd one out. Social anthropologist Rodney Needham has maintained that 'there are numerous linguistic traditions which make no provision for the expression of belief and which do not recognise such a condition in their psychological assessments'. Belief, in our sense, he concludes, 'is a relatively modern linguistic invention, and it does not correspond, under any aspect, to a real, constant, and distinct resource of the self'.[18] 'Belief' heads Marshall Sahlins's list of ethnographic

[17] Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 155, 149, 170. Cf. *Social Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 141.

[18] Rodney Needham, *Circumstantial Deliveries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 78. The argument for this thesis is set out in detail in Needham's *Belief, Language and Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972). See also Jean Pouillon, *Le Cru et le Su* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), pp. 17–36; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 'The Relative Native', *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2013), 473–502, esp. 490; Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 1; Malcolm Ruel, 'Christians as Believers', in *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, ed. J. Davis (London: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 9–31; Galina Lindquist and Simon Coleman, 'Introduction: Against Belief?', *Social Analysis* 52 (2008), 1–18; Andrew Buckser, 'Cultural Change and the Meanings of Being Jewish in Copenhagen', *Social Analysis* 52 (2008), 39–55; Catherine Bell, '"The Chinese believe in spirits": Belief and Believing in the Study of Religion', in *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, ed. N. Frankenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 100–28; Jonathan Mair, 'Cultures of Belief', *Anthropological Theory* 12 (2012), 448–66; William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 131f.; Lisa Landoe Hedrick, 'The Ontological Turn's New Animists and the Concept of Belief', *The Journal of Religion* 103 (2023), 257–82. For a recent defence of a more moderate version of Needham's contention about belief see Arif Ahmepp, 'Belief and Religious "Belief"', *Religious Studies* 56 (2020), 80–94.

terms standing in need of 'considerable rectification'.[19] In evolving a sense of belief, understood as assenting to particular propositions, it looks as though the modern West has taken a unique turn.[20]

How does all of this bear upon the issue of 'belief in the supernatural' and the Humean tendency to regard such belief as an irrational holdover from the past? One thing we might say is that it puts pressure on our assumption that belief – understood as agreeing with, or giving assent to, some proposition – is natural and universal, or that it offers the best way of characterising the ways of knowing and being of those who are not modern and Western. This all the more so when 'belief' is dismissively conjoined with 'the supernatural' – another concept that is conspicuously absent from the vocabularies of many non-Western peoples.[21] (Indeed, as we will see in Chapter 5, the term 'supernatural' was also missing from the Western lexicon until the Middle Ages.) Anthropologist Martin Holbraad has accordingly suggested that to speak of the 'irrational beliefs' of other cultures is 'to shirk analytical responsibility for the failures of our own categorical (or more broadly conceptual) repertoire'.[22] We find a similar

[19] Sahlins, *New Science*, p. 12.

[20] Coming at this from a rather different angle, philosopher Martin Heidegger contends that fundamental concepts of Western philosophy – in his specific case, 'Being' – have their own histories and predetermine the kinds of understandings that it is possible for us to arrive at. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), p. 30, and *passim*.

[21] Thus E. E. Evans-Pritchard: 'To us supernatural means very much the same as abnormal or extraordinary. Azande certainly have no such notions of reality. They have no conception of "natural" as we understand it, and therefore neither of the "supernatural" as we understand it. Witchcraft is to Azande an ordinary and not an extraordinary, even though it may in some circumstances be an infrequent, event. It is a normal, and not an abnormal happening.' *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 80. Cf. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 24. For further discussion see 'The Birth of the Supernatural', Chapter 5, below.

[22] Martin Holbraad, 'The Contingency of Concepts', in *Comparative Metaphysics*, ed. Pierre Charbonnier, Gildas Salmon, and Peter Skafish (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 133–58 (p. 139). Historian Seth Schwartz offers a similar observation about the limitations of our contemporary conceptual apparatus in relation to past religious cultures: 'our modern western language is necessarily inadequate to describe the realities of a radically different culture'. 'How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization', *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011), 208–38. On this theme also see Daniel Boyarin, 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in American Religious Studies', *Critical Inquiry* 44 (2017), 17–39. For similar treatments in the anthropology literature see Godfrey Lienhardt, 'Modes of Thought', in *The Institutions of Primitive Society, a Series of Broadcast Talks*, ed. E. E. Evans-Pritchard et al. (Glencoe: Free Press, 1954), pp. 96–7; Michael W. Scott, 'The Anthropology of Ontology (Religious Science?)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological*

sentiment in Marshall Sahlins's characterisation of much of 'received ethnography', said to operate with 'a misleading conceptual apparatus composed of nearly equal parts of transcendentalist equivocation and colonialist condescension'.[23] More directly relevant to Western history, Greg Anderson, in his fascinating account of the beliefs and practices of ancient Athenians, has asked us to consider whether Athenian encounters with the gods might arise not as a consequence of Athenians having a different or distorted perception of the world, but of their world being ontologically different to ours.[24] More generally, he hints that when we dismiss the 'supernatural' experiences of peoples of the past or, by implication, those of other cultures, this is a consequence of uncritically assuming the superiority of our own conceptions of reality.

It follows that the supposedly primitive commitments of others might represent less a systematic failure of their rationality than a symptom of the inadequacy of our own conceptual apparatus. There has been a belated recognition of the parochial and historically contingent nature of Western conceptions of, say, land ownership and private property. Accompanying this has been a growing realisation that the consistency of these conceptions with the relationships to land and country of many indigenous peoples cannot be resolved simply by declaring that modern Western understandings must trump all others. Something similar may well hold true for the repertoire of cherished philosophical concepts that we imagine to be natural and universal but which, no less than our ideas about private property and ownership, have complicated histories of their own. Categories of philosophical analysis such as 'belief', 'natural', and 'supernatural' are neither simply given, nor the unique discoveries of the modern West. The puzzles that we encounter in attempting to understand other cultures – and, indeed, own past – should ideally motivate us to think carefully about the role of our present vocabularies and analytical tools in generating those puzzles. The tendency of modern psychology to concentrate its investigative endeavours almost solely on WEIRD populations (Western, educated, industrialised,

Institute 19 (2013), 859–72; Tim Ingold, 'Dreaming of Dragons: On the Imagination of Real Life', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013), 734–52; Mario Schmidt, 'Godfrey Lienhardt as a Skeptic; or, Anthropology as Conceptual Puzzle-Solving', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (2017), 351–75; and, most recently and relating to the context of Oceania, Anne Ross, 'Challenging Metanarratives: The Past Lives in the Present', *Archaeology in Oceania* 55 (2020), 65–71. Also see other articles in this special issue.

[23] Sahlins, *New Science*, p. 11.

[24] Greg Anderson, *The Realness of Things Past: Ancient Greece and Ontological History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

rich, democratic) does not help, since generalisations based upon this idiosyncratic sample will hardly hold good universally.[25]

As it directly pertains to the issue of 'belief', it turns out that this is not just a straightforward matter of the West versus the rest. Our modern Western understandings of faith and belief have also evolved significantly over time. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that first-century Jews, Christians, and Pagans, like Biard's Mi'kmaq, had no conception of belief either, at least in our modern sense.[26] When we look carefully at the closest Greek and Latin equivalents to our modern English terms 'faith' and 'belief', it becomes clear that they bear different and more wide-ranging meanings than those we presently attach to them. We are more distant from past believers than we think, and the idea that we share with them a common epistemological vocabulary arises out of mistaken assumptions about the stability of meaning of terms like faith' and 'belief'. At the same time, it is possible to engage in a partial reconstruction of the past meanings of these terms. This enables us to identify some of the crucial historical turning points that have contributed to the formation of what I am suggesting is a distinctive conceptual category that decisively shapes how we now view religious phenomena.

2.2 Faith as Trust

This is not the occasion for an exhaustive history of understandings of 'faith' and 'belief' in the Western intellectual tradition.[27] But we can point to specific moments in the evolution of these ideas that reveal just how distinctive and path-dependent our modern conceptions are. Far and away the most important factor in shaping our modern, Western understandings of belief have been the fortunes of this concept in the emergence and development

[25] Literature reviews of the field of experimental psychology reveal that 96 per cent of the research subjects come from Northern Europe, North America, Australia, or Israel. Approximately 70 per cent of this number are American undergraduates. J. Arnett, 'The Neglected 95%: Why American Psychology Needs to Become Less American', *American Psychologist* 63 (2008), 602–14; Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, 'The Weirdest People in the World?', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33 (2010), 1–75.

[26] Wilfred Cantwell Smith proposed that no word in the Christian scriptures should be translated by the English 'believe' or belief'. *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 247, n. 3.

[27] Richard A. Muller's *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), offers some 22 different variants and subsets of *fides*: *fides historica*, *fides temporaria*, *fides miraculosa*, *fides salvifica*, etc. The story is thus a complicated one. See the discussions in Smith, *Faith and Belief*; Shagan, *Birth of Modern Belief*.

of Christianity. The key terms in the first century were the Greek *pistis* and Latin *fides*, which are typically rendered into English as 'faith' or 'belief'.[28] This terminology was central to early Christianity and distinguishes it from both first-century Judaism and the contemporary Graeco-Roman religions. As Teresa Morgan has now established in her magisterial *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* (2015), the primary meanings of the *pistis/fides* lexicon in the first century centre on trust.[29]

[28] It is now generally agreed that *pistis* and *fides* are synonymous. See E. Gruen, 'Greek *pistis* and Roman *fides*', *Athenaeum*, new series, 60 (1982), 50–68. However, an important difference between the Greek and the Latin is that while Latin *fides* translates the noun form of the Greek *pistis*, the unrelated verb *credere* (to believe in, trust in) was used to render *pisteuo* (the verb form of *pistis*). See Charleton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), s.v. *fides* (p. 746). Thus in Latin and English, and in contrast to Greek, there are separate words for 'faith' and 'belief'. German parallels the Greek in having a single root for both forms: *der Glaube*, *glauben*, while the Romance languages follow the Latin: French *croire, Foi*; Italian *credere*, *fede*; Spanish *creer*, *fe*. That said, the English verb 'believe' is a direct cognate of the German *glauben*. See *OED*, s.v. 'believe', v., and Smith, *Faith and Belief*, pp. 103–27. Smith suggests an equivalence between the English 'believe' and the German *belieben* (to love, hold dear), but in spite of the apparent resemblance the connection is not firmly established. *Belief and History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), pp. 41–5. Other Latin terms could lay some claim to be related to 'beliefs', each with its own subtly distinct connotations: *assensio*, *opinio*, *notitia*, *persuasio*, *confidentia*, *fiducia*, *credendum*. These partial synonyms are relevant because of later controversies about whether the Latin Vulgate had correctly conveyed the meaning of the original sense of *pistis*, particularly as it related to the weight to be placed upon trust (*fides* and *fiducia*) as opposed to intellectual assent (*assensio* and *notitia*). For examples see Shagan, *Birth of Modern Belief*, pp. 16–19. I am grateful to Adam Bowles for discussions about these issues and for his gentle reminder that etymology does not determine meaning.

[29] Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). The relevant Greek terms are *pistis* (n. faith, faithfulness trust, confidence); *pistos* (adj. trustworthy); *pisteuo* (v. to trust, have faith in, believe). For lexical and biblical studies see Rudolf Bultmann and Artur Weiser, 'πιστεύω, πίστις, etc.', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), vol. 6, pp. 174–228; Peter Oakes, '*Pistis* as Relational Way of Life in Galatians', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40 (2018), 255–75; Matthew W. Bates, 'The External-Relational Shift in Faith (*Pistis*) in New Testament Research: Romans 1 as Gospel-Allegiance Test Case', *Currents in Biblical Research* 18 (2020), 176–202; James L. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith: An Inquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ruel, 'Christians as Believers'; Olga Weijers, 'Some Notes on *Fides* and Related Words in Medieval Latin', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 40 (1977), 77–192. Historical and theological accounts include G. Freyberger, *Fides: étude sémantique et religieuse depuis les origines jusqu'à l'époque Augustéenne*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 2009); Marie George, 'Aquinas on the Nature of Trust', *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 70 (2006), 103–23, esp. 105; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey Bromiley, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), vol. I/1, pp. 228–47; Paul Tyson, *Faith's Knowledge* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), pp. 59–82; Graham Ward, *Unbelievable: Why We Believe and Why We Don't* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014). Philosophical discussions that focus on these

This recognition of the centrality of trust only gets us so far, however, because our natural tendency is to subject 'trust' to further analysis and ask after the extent to which it might be understood as a cognitive attitude, an emotion, a virtue, or a set of social relations. First-century sources evince no such distinctions. As Morgan puts it, faith is treated as 'simultaneously cognitive and affective, active and relational'.[30] The relational aspect of faith, which is the most central, extended to the trustworthiness of God, to trust or confidence in God, trust in the person of Jesus, and trust among persons in the Christian community. Faith was also understood as a divine gift, and one that demanded a response of obedience. It was linked to a set of behaviours and obligations. There is little evidence that faith was understood primarily as right belief, or as assenting to propositions. Neither, at first, was there a conception of '*the* faith', a body of doctrines to which orthodox Christians subscribed.[31]

All this is reflected in how the earliest Christians thought of themselves – not as a community set apart by the unique set of propositional beliefs to which they subscribed, but as 'those who trust' or 'the faithful'.[32] Second-century Christian self-identifications expand into a range of expressions, but still retain something of this sense. Christians embody a form of 'godliness', a 'mode of worship', a 'new race', 'a new way of life' – self-conceptions that also emphasise the relational and non-cognitive.[33] The descriptor 'Christian',

issues include William Lad Sessions, *The Concept of Faith: A Philosophical Investigation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Michael Pace and Daniel J. McLaughlin, 'Judaeo-Christian Faith as Trust and Loyalty', *Religious Studies* 58 (2022), 30–60; John Bishop; *Believing by Faith: An Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); J. L. Kvanvig, 'The Idea of Faith as Trust: Lessons in Noncognitivist Approaches to Faith', in *Reason and Faith: Themes from Richard Swinburne*, ed. M. Bergmann and J. Brower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 4–26.

[30] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, p. 19.

[31] 'Propositionality', Morgan observes, 'is often less important than has often been assumed' (*Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, p. 30). On the connection of *pistis* to explicit belief, she observes that 'no Greek speaker would have coined the term *hoi pistoi* to mean "those who believe"' (p. 240). Further: 'to interpret *hē pistis* as "the faith" in anything like the modern sense in the New Testament is anachronistic' (p. 504). See also C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 104. For an earlier and opposing view see J. Fitzmeyer, 'The Designations of Christians in Acts and their Significance', in *Unité et Diversité dans l'eglise* (Vatican City: Editrice Vaticana, 1989), pp. 223–36. It may be relevant in this connection, that in the Geneva Bible (1599) and King James Version (1611) the noun 'belief' appears only once (albeit on different occasions in each, respectively Daniel 3:1 and 2 Thess. 2:13). The word 'faith' appears in those translations, respectively, 250 and 160 times.

[32] *Hoi pisteuontes/pistoi*. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, pp. 234–41.

[33] *Epistle to Diognetus* 1.1. Cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Tertullian, *Against the Nations* 1.8; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 5.1; Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 1.2. For discussion of early

we should remind ourselves, was initially an outsider's term and remained so for some time. Extending well into the Middle Ages, and in keeping with the New Testament terminology, the expression that Christian communities most often used for themselves was 'the faithful' (*fideles*) rather than 'Christians' (*christiani*).[34] It is significant in all of this (as I and others have argued at length elsewhere) that there was no concept 'religion' available at this time – or at least not one that equates to our modern conception. The idea of distinct religions, characterised by sets of beliefs and practices, is also a development that is peculiar to the modern West.[35]

While there was undoubtedly something novel in these understandings of faith in early Christianity, there were also important continuities with the usages in classical and Hebrew literature that are worth briefly mentioning. Looking to the closest equivalents of *pistis* in the Hebrew Bible, we encounter the idea of confidence in God based on his past acts, along

Christian identity see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning within Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 23ff.; A. P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' "Praeparatio Evangelica"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Philip Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. pp. 143–8; Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 34–8. See also Christoph Markschies, *Kaiserzeitliche Christliche Theologie und ihre Insitutionen: Prolegomena zur einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[34] Elias J. Bickerman, 'The Name of Christians', *Harvard Theological Review* 42 (1949), 109–24; Simon C. Mimouni, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un "chrétien" aux Ier et IIe siècles? Identité ou conscience?', *Annali di storia dell' esegesi* 267 (2010), 11–34. John Van Engen points out that in Thomas Aquinas the ratio of uses of *christiani* (nominative plural forms), to *fideles* is about 1:4. *Religion in the History of the Medieval West* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 50, n. 7. For changes in the traditional use of the term *fideles* at the time of the Reformation, see Scott H. Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 155–215.

[35] On the question of when Christianity became a religion see Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 34–44, and *passim*; *'Religion' and the Religions*; Edwin Judge, 'Was Christianity a Religion?', in *The First Christians in the Roman World*, ed. James R. Harrison (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 404–9; Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), pp. xi–xiv, 37–44. On the concept of religion more generally, see Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*; Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions*; Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Carlin A. Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Nathan Ristuccia, '*Lex*: A Study on Medieval Terminology for Religion', *Journal of Religious History* 43 (2019), 532–48.

with connotations of trust in God's promises.[36] As already noted, the New Testament references also include an element of obedience, and these are even more prominent in the Hebrew.[37] Again, though, there is little emphasis on 'beliefs' (plural), or the idea of giving assent to doctrinal claims.[38]

Precedents in the classical Greek literature also have affinities with the New Testament references, with *pistis* referring primarily to confidence or trust, and particularly trust between persons.[39] In the philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle, because trust (*pistis*) was sometimes thought to entail a degree of uncertainty, it was occasionally contrasted with certain knowledge or 'science' (*epistēmē*).[40] In the *Republic*, Plato consigns *pistis* to the category of 'opinion' (*doxa*), which has a lower grade of certainty than 'science' (*epistēmē*). These are not understood as forms of knowledge, however, but affections of the soul, and part of Plato's intention is to downplay the significance of the world of the senses, to which belong the less certain affections of conjecture and opinion.[41] The basic thrust of Plato's position, then, is

[36] אמונה (*emunah*) is the term that is rendered '*pistis*' in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible produced in the third and second centuries BCE).

[37] Bultmann and Weiser, 'πιστεύω, πίστις, etc.', pp. 182–96; Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, pp. 176–211; Emilio Di Somma, *Fides and Secularity: Beyond Charles Taylor's Open Faith* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018), pp. 42–8.

[38] Smith, *Belief and History*, ch. 3; Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith*, pp. 6–7; Shagan, *Birth of Modern Belief*, pp. 15–16; Boyarin, 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in American Religious Studies'.

[39] Propositional belief seems not to have played much role in ancient Greek religion, although this claim has been challenged. Simon Price contends that belief was not an operative concept in Greek religion. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 10f. See his *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 126f. on the absence of creed and theology. Morgan provides more detail but also tends in this direction in *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, pp. 75f., 120–2, 172–5. But cf. Henk Versnel, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 544f. For both sides of the case see Thomas Harrison, 'Beyond the Polis? New Approaches to Greek Religion', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 135 (2015), 165–80.

[40] In other contexts, however, *pistis* seems to exclude uncertainty. See Plato, *Republic* 505e; Aristotle, *De anima* 428a23–4. For Plotinus, too, it seems to signify a state of certainty: 'the contemplation, in one so conditioned, remains absorbed within as having acquired certainty [*pisteuein*] to rest upon. The brighter the certainty [*pistis*], the more tranquil is the contemplation.' Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.8.6, trans. Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page (Chicago: William Benton, 1953), pp. 131–2, Greek in LCL 442, p. 378. On translating *epistēmē*, particularly in Aristotle, H. S. Thayer, 'Aristotle on the Meaning of Science', *Philosophical Inquiry* 1 (1979), 87–104; Robert Pasnau, *After Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 5, 142f.

[41] Plato ranks *pistis* as third out of four affections that relate to the truth and reality: science (*epistēmē*), understanding (*dianoia*), belief/trust (*pistis*), conjecture (*eikasia*). The first two are classified as intellection (*noesis*), the last two as opinion (*doxa*). *Republic* 533e–534a. In the *Republic* 511d–e the list is the same, with the exception that it begins with reason (*noesis*).

more or less opposite to what we now tend to hold: for us, it is natural to assume that more certainty is to be found in the material realm and in matters of empirical fact. Although Aristotle's priorities are different, he follows Plato in observing a distinction between knowledge and belief/opinion.[42]

Some of the Church Fathers sought to engage with these philosophical traditions, not least to deflect accusations that Christianity had abandoned any attempt at rational justification of its central claims. Clement of Alexandria (*c.*150–*c.*215), a convert to Christianity who was well versed in Greek philosophy, argued that while Christian faith was distinctively different from anything that had come before, it was not inconsistent with the principles of logic taught in the philosophical schools. Aristotle, for example, had proposed that genuine knowledge or 'science' (*epistēmē*) was based on logical demonstration. But he had also pointed out that the process of demonstration must begin somewhere. If an infinite regress is be avoided, and knowledge/science is possible at all, these must be premises that are themselves certain but undemonstrated.[43] Geometrical and logical axioms, common notions, the consensus of 'the wise', innate ideas or preconceptions (*prolêpseis*), were all proposed as possible first principles. Clement argued that 'faith' occupied a similarly foundational position for Christians, with its reliability guaranteed by its divine origins.[44] It followed that faith

Cf. *Timaeus* 29c. Opinion relates to the physical world, knowledge to the intelligible world. On the danger of equating Plato's *pistis* with the later Christian conception see Paul Shorley's comments in Plato, *The Republic, Books 6–10*, LCL 276, p. 117. See also Ward, *Unbelievable*, pp. 23–6.

[42] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 88a3–89b5. This is a straightforward contrast between *epistēmē* and *doxa*. For a comparison of Plato and Aristotle on this issue see Gail Fine, 'Aristotle's Two Worlds: Knowledge and Belief in "Posterior Analytics" 1.33', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, new series, 110 (2010), 323–46. The terminology of 'belief' in Aristotle is as complicated as that of 'knowledge' and 'science'. Fred D. Miller observes: 'Many of Aristotle's key terms are hard to translate, but the topic of belief presents exceptional challenges especially for Greekless readers, because Aristotle uses a wide variety of terms for belief, each of which is translated in different ways. The problem is compounded by the fact that he wields a panoply of terms for knowledge as well.' 'Aristotle on Belief and Knowledge', in *Reason and Analysis in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos and Fred D. Miller (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), pp. 285–307 (p. 305); cf. Lloyd P. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 2.

[43] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 72b5–7. In *Topics* Aristotle explains that such premises 'command belief through themselves and not through anything else; for regarding the first principles of science it is unnecessary to ask any further question as to "why"'. *Topics* 100b18–19 (LCL 391, p. 273).

[44] 'In point of fact, the philosophers admit that the first principles of all things are indemonstrable. So that if there is demonstration at all, there is an absolute necessity that there be something that is self-evident, which is called primary and indemonstrable. Consequently all demonstration is traced up to indemonstrable faith.' *Stromata* 8.3 (*ANF* 12, 494). The

was not so much a lower grade of knowledge as the necessary foundation for the construction of any 'science'. Faith, for Clement, was the solution to a logical difficulty of which the philosophers had been well aware. At the same time, Clement insisted that knowing God is not simply a matter of reasoning from the correct premises: there are moral impediments that must first be cleared away. It is the 'pure in heart' who see God.[45] This, too, was contiguous with the contemporary understanding of philosophy as primarily a moral enterprise involving spiritual exercises.

It would be a mistake, then, to think that there was an ancient 'philosophical' literature with its own technical epistemological vocabulary that might be placed into a simple relation to a comparable 'religious' terminology. In the first century the philosophical traditions present themselves as competing ways of life. In so far as they have doctrinal content, that content is to be grasped within the mode of living prescribed by the relevant school. Christianity and Stoicism, for example, might seem to be offering rival truth claims about the world, but these are better understood, as C. Kavin Rowe has persuasively argued, not as 'individual statements to be taken as true or false, as just justified or not, case by case' but as 'summoning people to a different pattern of being in the world'.[46] It was not, then, a simple matter of weighing up rival truth claims, along with relevant supporting arguments, since the force of the respective truths becomes apparent only through the adoption of the prescribed way of life. Christian 'faith', then, is not easily translatable into a generic philosophical language, or slotted into

source of faith, in turn was the divine *Logos* (reason) and the scriptures. *Stromata* 7.16.95, 8.3.7. For Clement's views on faith as a first principle see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 38–66; Eric Osborn, 'Arguments for Faith in Clement of Alexandria', *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994), 1–24; Andrei Giulea Dragos, 'Apprehending "Demonstrations" from the First Principle: Clement of Alexandria's Phenomenology of Faith', *The Journal of Religion* 89 (2009), 187–213.

[45] Clement, *Stromata* 1.12; 5.1.11; 5.4.25. Cf. Matthew 5:8.

[46] Rowe, *One True Life*, p. 244. The classic treatment of philosophy as a way of life is Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) and *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Hadot's '*formes de vie*' is also related to Wittgenstein's *Lebensformen*. See *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 17f., 280; *Wittgenstein et les limites du langage* (Paris: Vrin, 2004). Other works on this theme include Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); John Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Beroald Thomassen, *Metaphysik als Lebensform: Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Metaphysik im Metaphysikkommentar Alberts des Grossen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1985); Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, vol. 3 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986), esp. pp. 39–68.

a continuum of epistemological categories, or graded in terms of its relative certainty in relation to other species of knowledge.

That was to change when the full canon of the Aristotelian corpus found its way back into Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But during this later period philosophy presented itself in a different guise. No longer a living tradition able to compete with Christianity as an alternative way of life, it became instead a resource for dialectical reasoning, a toolkit that could assist with the systematic articulation of a new Christian 'theology'. Philosophical doctrines and techniques, detached from their original therapeutic context, were accorded a kind of neutral instrumentality. What look like the epistemological categories of the ancients were thrust into prominence as scholastic thinkers began to grapple with such questions as how Christian faith relates to Aristotelian understandings of 'science' (*epistēmē*, now rendered into the Latin *scientia*).[47] Subsequently, when trust became marginalised in discussions of faith, as in a number of early modern treatments, the prospect for regarding faith and belief as deficient forms of knowledge arose for the first time.[48] From the seventeenth century onwards, then, belief was folded into what we now call epistemology (although the word itself did not make an appearance until the mid-nineteenth century) with genuine knowledge understood as true belief *plus* some justificatory condition.[49] This gave rise to a commonplace

[47] On this category in Aristotle see Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 16–18. In the tenth century, al-Fārābī had already begun to discuss the conditions for certain knowledge, drawing on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. See Deborah L. Black, 'Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Certainty (*Yaqīn*) in al-Fārābī's Epistemology', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2006), 11–45. (The Arabic *'ilm* translates the Greek *epistēmē*.) See also Pasnau, *After Certainty*, pp. 27–8, 176–7.

[48] Precedents for this are already evident in some second-century Pagan critiques of Christian faith. Celsus thus complained that Christians did not support their beliefs with reason: 'Some do not even want to give or to receive a reason for what they believe, and use such expressions as "Do not ask questions: just believe".' Origen of Alexandria, *Contra Celsum* 1.9, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 12. Galen offered a similar remark in Εἰς τὸ πρῶτον κινοῦν ἀκίνητον, quoted in Richard Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 14.

[49] For the coining of the English 'epistemology' see *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art*, vol. 12 (November 1847), p. 317, note, where 'epistemology' is suggested as a translation of Fichte's '*Wissenschaftslehre*'. Earlier, Alexander G. Baumgarten had used another possible contender, '*gnoseologia*' in his *Sciagraphia encyclopaediae philosophicae* (Halle an der Saale, 1769). By 1854, James F. Ferrier could state that epistemology and ontology together constitute the main branches of metaphysics. *Institutes of Metaphysic* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1854), p. 46, and *passim*. Google ngrams suggest a steady rise in frequency of the term from the 1850s, with an exponential increase from 1960, peaking in 1997. 'Ontology', incidentally, is of earlier coinage (seventeenth century), and with the ascendancy of 'epistemology' and experimental natural philosophy is regarded

philosophical definition of knowledge as 'justified true belief' which is then often read back into ancient philosophical texts and indeed frequently attributed to Plato.[50] In fact, for both Plato and Aristotle, knowledge (*epistēmē*) and belief (*doxa*) seem to have different objects, complicating readings that regard one as a subset of the other. (And this, even if we disregard further difficulties of translation.) For now, though, suffice it to say that observing some distance between faith and belief on the one hand, and propositional knowledge on the other, was not peculiar to the canonical documents of the Jewish and Christian traditions. Only much later was faith relocated from a social sphere in which trust was at the centre into an epistemological framework in which it comes to be understood primarily in terms of its relation to generic and disembodied ways of knowing.

There were, however, even in the first century, indications of the potential for this kind of transition. In spite of the dominance of the relational aspects of faith over the cognitive, we encounter instances of what Morgan has termed the 'reification' of *pistis/fides*, in which the trust relationship is objectified or given expression in some tangible form. Examples include oaths of allegiance, letters of credit, and, in the religious context, the idea of the formal covenant.[51] Necessarily, moreover, trust does not exist without something being held to be true about the objects of trust (even if held implicitly or tacitly). To trust in God is to be committed to the view that God is trustworthy: belief *in* implies belief *that*, in modern philosophical parlance. The idea that *pistis/fides* should entail an element of doctrinal commitment became more prominent as divisions arose within early Christian communities. While these were often to do with practices, doctrinal diversity and 'false teaching' also became a matter of increasing concern. Addressing himself to the dangers of schism in the early Church, Ignatius of Antioch (b. *c.* AD 50) insisted that possession of genuine Christian faith entailed the affirmation that Jesus was the Son of God, born of a virgin, crucified by

with increasing suspicion. For discussion of the novelty of the term, and its significance for understanding the history of philosophy, see Pasnau, *After Certainty*, pp. 139–41. See also Jan Woleński, 'History of Epistemology', in *Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. I. Niiniluoto, M. Sintonen, and J. Woleński (Berlin: Springer, 2004), pp. 3–54, esp. p. 3.

[50] Plato, *Theaetetus* 201c–d. For an extended critique of this anachronistic reading of Plato see Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, pp. 27–61. The exact formula 'justified true belief' dates only from the twentieth century, and difficulties with it were definitively set out by Edmund Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?', *Analysis* 23 (1963), 121–3. On the history of the justified true belief condition see Mark Kaplan, 'It's Not What You Know that Counts', *The Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985), 350–63; and Julien Dutant, 'The Legend of the Justified True Belief Analysis', *Philosophical Perspectives* 29 (2015), 95–145.

[51] Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, pp. 120–3, 181, 267, 291–2.

Pontius Pilate and Herod, and resurrected from the dead.[52] This tendency to codify the content of Christian belief, which culminates in the composition of formal creedal statements in the fourth and fifth centuries, is a prominent instance of the reification of *pistis/fides*.

The beginnings of the reification of faith were inseparable from changes in the authority structures of the early Church, which can be understood along the lines of Max Weber's notion of 'the routinization of charisma'.[53] Weber adopted the term 'charisma' directly from the Greek of the Pauline epistles, where it refers to gifts bestowed by God on the Christian community (one of which, incidentally, was the gift of faith). On the Weberian account, personal charismatic authority is inherently unstable on account of the natural lifespan of the individuals in whom it is vested. A successful transition of authority therefore requires a process of 'routinisation' in which personal charisma is transmuted into more enduring structures. Typically, charismatic authority devolves onto traditional leadership structures, legal-rational bureaucracies, or some combination of both. In the case of the Christian Church we witness these two elements in the idea of an apostolic succession and in the development of a hierarchical priesthood that enjoyed an inherited authority and the charisma of office. Ignatius, again, offers an instructive description of these adjustments in the evolving authority structures of the early Church: 'the bishop presiding in the place of God, and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ'.[54] The bureaucratic elements consisted not only in the gradual establishment of the structures of the Church and formalisation of its rituals, but also in the composition of creedal formulations that answer to the rationally established norms, decrees, and rules that for Weber characterise legal-rational bureaucracies. (Looking ahead, we will witness an analogous process in early modern formalisations of 'scientific' knowledge, when *scientia* ceased to be characteristic of an individual mind and became cumulative, corporate, and transgenerational.) These objectifying tendencies converge in the promulgation of the formal creeds and symbols of the fourth and fifth centuries – the Nicene Creed (325, 381) and the Symbol of Chalcedon (451).

[52] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 1. 'Immovable faith' (ἀκινήτῳ πίστει) consists in being 'fully persuaded' (πεπληροφορημένους) of these truths. *Apostolic Fathers* (LCL), 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 296. See also Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, pp. 512–13.

[53] Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. R. Anderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), pp. 363ff. Weber adopted the term 'charisma' from the Greek of the Pauline epistles in which it refers to divinely bestowed 'gifts'.

[54] Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 2, 6 (LCL 24, pp. 246f.).

2.3 Creedal Commitments

In the summer of 325, the first of the Christian emperors, Constantine the Great, convened a council in Nicaea (now Iznik, north-western Turkey) to settle matters of contested doctrine and fix the date of Easter. He invited some 1,800 bishops from across the Roman Empire, with some 300 eventually making the all-expenses-paid journey.[55] On 19 June, after a month of sitting, the council promulgated the original Nicene Creed, consisting of twelve doctrinal articles prefaced by the phrase 'We believe'.[56] While, as the example of Ignatius makes plain, informal creedal statements had been around long before this, the Nicene Creed has come to be regarded as the definitive statement of Christian belief and is typically understood as embodying the propositional essence of Christianity.[57]

Constantine, it must be said, had been less concerned with the precise content of Christian doctrines than with the preservation of social order throughout his empire. In the period leading up to the council he had been troubled by reports of civil unrest in Alexandria occasioned by doctrinal disputes. Writing to the bishops concerned, he expressed his fears of 'tumults' and 'sedition' and chastised them for placing their 'minute investigations' of 'unimportant matters' above the unity of 'one faith, one sentiment, and one covenant of the Godhead'. His own preference was to privilege a unity of worship, with the bishops keeping their potentially divisive theological speculations to themselves.[58] In the end, that did not happen. Constantine

[55] Estimates of attendees vary from 250 to 318. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.9; Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.7; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7. For the history of the council see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 205–30.

[56] 'We believe …' (Gk. Πιστεύομεν, Lat. *Credimus*). For versions of the Nicene Creed, see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*. Greek and Latin texts in Heinrich Denzinger (ed.), *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 34th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), §§125–6 (pp. 52f.). The plural form implies not simply a personal confession, but a statement of communal identity.

[57] For earlier creedal statements see Alastair C. Stewart, 'The Early Alexandrian Baptismal Creed: Interrogative or Declaratory … or Both?', *Questions liturgiques* 95 (2014), 237–53; Wolfram Kinzig, 'The Creed in Liturgy: Prayer or Hymn?', in *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Albert Gerhards and Clemens Leonard (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 229–46; and, more generally, Kelly, *Creeds of the Churches*, chs. 1–6. The original statement produced at Nicaea was subsequently modified at the Council of Constantinople (381) to produce the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed, which is now known simply as 'the Nicene Creed'. It is accepted as authoritative by the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and most Protestant denominations.

[58] 'Let not this diversity of opinion, which has excited dissension among you, by any means cause discord and schism …. Let there be one faith, one sentiment and one covenant of the Godhead: but those minute investigations which ye enter into among yourselves with so much nicety … should remain in the secret recesses of the mind.' Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7 (*NPNF* II, vol. 2, pp. 6–7). Also Photius, *Bibliotheca* 127 (*NPNF* II,

was compelled to convene the historic council and, fatefully, matters that he had deemed minute and unimportant became enshrined in the Christian creeds as core articles of belief. It should be said, parenthetically, that while Constantine is sometimes criticised for his theological naïvety and indifference to the specifics of Christian belief, he represented a long-standing tradition in which state religion was primarily about the promotion of cohesion and unity – typically expressed through ritual acts – rather than doctrinal conformity. 'Religion' in this sense, was rightly directed worship, not correct belief.

It is natural for us to think of these creeds as sets of propositions that constitute the content of the 'Christian faith' or the 'Christian religion'. Belief, understood in this way, is about understanding and agreeing with, or 'assenting' to, the propositions set out in the creed. On the face of it, moreover, the creeds specify precisely what counts as orthodox Christianity and what should be regarded as heretical. The practice of marginalising and persecuting heretics reinforces this perception that at its heart Christianity is about believing a set of propositions. The fact that the North African bishops were prepared to resist the imposition of Constantine's practice-oriented understanding of Christianity also suggests that the conciliar period represents a new phase in Christian understandings of faith and belief.

Yet, while these creedal statements place a premium on the importance of lending intellectual assent to propositions, they also preserve some of the original elements of trust that were associated with faith and belief.[59] The formulaic opening profession 'We believe' can still be taken to mean 'We place our trust in …' rather than 'We believe in the existence of …'.[60]

vol. 1, p. 71). Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.16 (*NPNF* II, vol. 2, p. 252). This was consistent with a traditional view of religion (*religio*) as rightly directed worship, rather than doctrinal conformity.

[59] Consider, also, some theological discussions of creedal formula which suggest that they aim at the preservation of mystery, over against more rationalising heretical formulations. See Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 71; Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2000), p. 101.

[60] Augustine tells us that to 'believe in God' [*credere in*] is 'to love Him, by believing to esteem highly, by believing to go into Him and be incorporated into His members'. '*Quid est ergo credere in eum? Credendo amare, credendo diligere, credendo in eum ire, et eius membris incorporari.*' *PL* 35: 1631. English translation in Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 29, 6 (*NPNF* I, vol. 7, p. 185); *Expositions of the Psalms* 77, 8 in *Works*, vol. III/18, p. 98. See also Augustine, Sermon 14a, 3, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 20 vols., ed. John Rotelle (New York, 1991–), vol. III/11, p. 26. Cf. Faustus of Riez: '*In Deum ergo credere, hoc est fideliter eum quaerere, est lota in eum dilectione transire. Credo ergo in illum, hoc est dicere, confiteor illum, colo illum, adore illum, totum me is jus ejus ac dominum trado alque transfundo.*' Faustus

The additional descriptors, 'maker of heaven and earth', and so on, would then be ways of identifying or otherwise specifying the nature of the primary objects in which trust of confidence is being expressed. This certainly seems to be the sense of the later articles of the creeds. 'We believe in … one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' is clearly not intended to be profession of belief in the existence of the Church, but rather a statement of allegiance to it, confidence in its authority, and commitment to maintaining its unity. Again, recall that the Latin *fides* had no verb form and hence no possibility for the expression 'I faith'.[61] The modern tendency to use the first person singular 'I', along with the use of a separate verb *credo* (I believe) lends itself to the construction 'I believe *that*' in a way that can stress the propositional content, rather than the stance of the believer.[62] Faith/belief can then be understood to have separate subjective and objective components.

It may seem that Augustine of Hippo (354–430) had something like this in mind when he proposed a distinction between 'the faith *by which* it is believed' (*fides qua creduntur*) and 'the faith *which is* believed' (*fides quae creduntur*).[63] This dichotomy was revived in the seventeenth century and invoked to support the idea that faith could be distributed in a binary way on the basis of its supposedly subjective and objective aspects.[64] But this is not what

of Riez, *De spiritu sancto* I.1 (*PL* 62: 10c–d), trans. in Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), p. 35. This sense was still articulated in the seventeenth century. Hence, Walter Franke: 'This is the Creed, whose summe, and sense is this: I doe confide, and put my hope of blisse, In one Christ crucifi'd.' *An Epitome of Divinitie* (London, 1655).

[61] The equivalent term in Buddhism *saddhā* (Sanskrit), *śraddhā* (Pali) is usually rendered 'faith, confidence, trust in'. Robert E. Buswell and Donald Lopez Jr., *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 847–8.

[62] It is interesting that in classical Latin *credo* is typically used with the dative case with persons that are believed in, but with accusative for things. The latter sometimes involves a preposition – *credo in*. In the Latin version of the Nicene Creed, the preposition is used for the persons of the Trinity (possibly translating the Greek article in [εἰς]?) but not for the Church: '*Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*'.

[63] '*sed aliud sunt ea quae creduntur, aliud fides qua creduntur*'. *De Trinitate* 13.2.5, *PL* 42: 1016–17. On this distinction see Denis Villepelet, *L'avenir de la Catéchèse* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2003), pp. 90–2. As far as I know, Augustine makes this distinction on just this one occasion.

[64] For Protestant references Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* [1610–25] 16.66, 9 vols., ed. Eduard Preuss (Berlin, 1863–75), vol. 3, p. 350; Andrew Willet, *Hexapla* (London, 1611), p. 526; William Scott, *The Course of Conformity* (Amsterdam, 1622), p. 109; William Ames, *Medulla S.S. Theologiæ* (London, 1629), pp. 436f.; Edward Leigh, *Annotations upon all the New Testament* (London, 1650), p. 575; James Crawford, *Haereseo-Machea* (London, 1646), p. 8; Francis Fuller, *A Treatise of Faith and Repentance* (London, 1685), p. 1; Christopher Cartwright, *The Doctrine of Faith* (London, 1650), p. 2; Ralph Robinson, *Panoplia. Universa arma. Hieron* (London, 1656), p. 211. Richard Baxter made the distinction equivalent to that between 'subjective' and 'objective' religion, the latter referring to true doctrines. *The Safe*

the phrases connoted for Augustine and this modern interpretation is inconsistent with the general picture of faith that we encounter during this earlier period in which elements of willing, trusting, acting, obedience, commitment, and knowledge in some form, are all closely conjoined.[65] Augustine's position is somewhat analogous to what Plato had argued about the object of love (*eros*) in the *Symposium*: the act of love can be understood only in relation to what is loved; the two cannot be separated.[66] For Augustine the 'faith' that is believed, cannot be considered independently of the 'faith' by which it is believed. This was to change in the early modern period.

The liturgical function of creeds also complicates the idea that they are solely to do with assenting to propositions.[67] Professions of belief had been integral to baptismal rites from very early in the history of the Christian Church.[68] The creeds, as John Henry Newman would later observe, 'are devotional acts, and of the nature of prayers addressed to God'.[69] This ritual

Religion (1657), pp. 6, 18. On Roman Catholic side, see Gaspar do Casal, *De quardripertita iustitia, libri tres* (Venice, 1563), p. 194v. Karl Barth offers an illuminating history of the distinction. That said, he proposed that Gerhard was the first to use the distinction in the modern sense, while several sixteenth-century Catholic theologians, including Casal, refer to it. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, pp. 230–6.

[65] Olivier Riaudel, '*Fides qua creditur et Fides quae creditur*: Retour sur une distinction qui n'est pas chez Augustin', *Revue théologique de Louvain* 43 (2012), 169–94. Like Riaudel, Barth and Rudolf Bultmann caution against identifying *fides quae creditur* with a body of doctrines. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, §63 (p. 741); Bultmann, 'Theology as Science', in *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 45–68 (pp. 52–4). The classic modern account of the belief in/belief that distinction was offered in the 1960 Gifford Lectures of H. H. Price, published as *Belief* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), esp. ch. 9.

[66] Marina Berzins McCoy, 'Eros, Woundedness, and Creativity in Plato's Symposium', in *Wounded Heroes: Vulnerability as a Virtue in Ancient Greek Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 115–39 (p. 116). But cf. Gregory Vlastos, 'The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato', in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 3–42 (p. 39). Rudolf Bultmann offered similar observations about faith: 'faith and its object cannot be seen in their unity from any standpoint outside faith'. 'Theology as Science', p. 54.

[67] For what it is worth, some evidence from recent neuroscience reinforces the idea that liturgical acts, including creedal recitation, entail more than merely the verbal assertion of propositional claims, but are more like formative technologies that 'synchronize affective, perceptual-cognitive, and motor processes within the central nervous system'. Eugene d'Aquili and Charles Laughlin, 'The Biopsychological Determinants of Religious Ritual Behavior', *Zygon* 10 (1975), 32–58 (35). For discussion of this and similar studies, and their implications for an understanding of faith/belief see Sarah Lane Ritchie, 'Integrated Physicality and the Absence of God: Spiritual Technologies in Theological Context', *Modern Theology* 37 (2021), 296–315.

[68] Stewart, 'The Early Alexandrian Baptismal Creed'; Kinzig, 'The Creed in Liturgy'.

[69] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1870), p. 132.

context is suggestive of creedal declarations as what we now refer to as 'speech acts' or 'performative utterances'.[70] J. L. Austin, one of the leading ordinary language philosophers of the last century, contended that philosophical understandings of language and meaning had been distorted by a preoccupation with propositional assertion. One of the more revealing examples he used to contest that tendency was the formulaic declarations of a traditional wedding ceremony: 'I take you to be my lawfully wedded husband/wife …'; 'I now pronounce you man and wife'; and so on. Clearly, these are not so much assertions of some truth about the world as the performance of actions that bring into being a new state of affairs. One way of thinking about how the verb 'to believe' operates within the creedal context, then, is to categorise it with these 'illocutionary' speech acts.[71] Again, this is not to claim that these statements make no reference at all to objective features of the world or historical events. But like wedding vows, creedal recitation assumes, rather than asserts, the existence of the relevant parties.

It is also worth noting that the objects of speech acts such as wedding vows are not fully specified: this is the force of the familiar phrases 'for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health'. What is being committed to is not, and cannot, be definitively established in advance. Complete knowledge of the other person in the relation, or of the various circumstances likely to obtain in the future, are not prerequisites for commitment. On the contrary,

[70] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61; Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 21. For suggestions along similar lines see J. J. Schaller, 'Performative Language Theory: An Exercise in the Analysis of Ritual', *Worship* 62 (1988), 415–32; G. Wainwright, 'The Language of Worship', in *The Study of Liturgy*, 2nd ed., ed. C. Jones, G. Wainwright, and E. Yarnold (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 519–28. More common are applications to biblical interpretation. See Dietmar Neufeld, *Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts: An Analysis of John 1* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Richard S. Briggs, *Words and Actions: Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), esp. pp. 183–215; 'Getting Involved: Speech Acts and Biblical Interpretation', *Anvil* 20 (2003), 25–34; Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 283–311; 'Speech-Act Theory and the Claim that God Speaks', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997), 97–110. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[71] Consider, for example, three of Austin's subdivisions of illocutionary acts: the 'Exercitive' (appointing, dismissing, naming, commanding, praying, enacting, dedicating); the 'Commissive' (committing the speaker to a course of action, such as promising, contracting, pledging, oath taking), and the 'Expositive' (expounding a position and clarifying specific usages and references). J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 155–63. See also Walter H. Beale, 'Rhetorical Performative Discourse: A New Theory of Epideictic', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11 (1978), 221–46. For a direct application of Austin's thought to religious claims see Donald D. Evans, *The Logic of Self Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator* (London: SCM, 1963).

commitment, in a way, becomes a prerequisite for a deeper knowledge.[72] In this sense, marriage, if taken to be a sacrament, parallels the sacrament of infant baptism, in which an infant is initiated into a communal setting which it is envisaged will provide the context for a more fully developed and explicit knowledge. There are also analogies here to the maxims associated respectively with Augustine who repeatedly maintained that 'unless you believe you will not understand', and Anselm of Canterbury whose famous maxim was 'faith seeking understanding'.[73] These assume forms of knowledge that are unattainable without at least some degree of prior commitment, and that these commitments also involve actions and behaviours along with participation in the life of a community.

None of this is to deny that creeds had an exclusionary function and that their articulation made possible formal definitions of heresy and heterodoxy, typically understood as believing – assenting to – erroneous propositions. It is tempting to think that the category of heresy, along with the practice of persecution of heretics, offers a compelling example of why we ought to think of religious faith and belief in terms of individuals giving assent to doctrinal statements.[74] But again it is more complicated than this. Among the perceived dangers of heresy were social instability and rejection of the authority of temporal or ecclesiastical powers. As already observed, what initially prompted a reluctant Constantine to convene the Council of Nicaea was a concern about civil unrest in the Empire rather than a theological interest in promoting a specific version of Trinitarian Christianity. During this period, as J. Rebecca Lyman has observed, heresy 'was increasingly no longer only an ecclesiastical matter or a serious theological challenge, but a problem of public safety, since correct belief and worship ensured the unity and stability of society'. The articulation of heresiological categories was 'often a means to establish or maintain common boundaries'.[75]

[72] Marriage was commonly used as a metaphor of the relation between Christ and the Church, and in the Hebrew Bible, between Yahweh and Israel. David G. Hunter, 'The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine', *Church History* 69 (2000), 281–303; Hans Wolff, *Hosea*, trans. G. Stanswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), esp. p. xxvi; Sebastian Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

[73] Variously, '*Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum*', *PL* 44: 963; '*credo ut intelligam*'; '*fides quaerens intellectum*', etc. See also Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity* 1.1–3. This is similar to Newman's subsequent contesting of the principle that 'Truth is to be approached without homage', and W. H. Auden's poem, 'Leap before you Look'.

[74] Aquinas raises this issue in *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 14, art. 11, sed contra 5.

[75] J. Rebecca Lyman, 'Heresiology: The Invention of "Heresy" and Schism"', in *The Cambridge History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, ed. Augustin Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 296–313.

Accordingly, under the Christian emperors, penal laws effectively classified heresy as a crime against the state.[76] Subsequently, heresy came to be considered an instance of *laesa majestas* (injured majesty), a concept that originates from Roman legal definitions of treason.[77]

The same would be true for heterodox belief in the Middle Ages. Arguably the perceived danger of medieval heresies lay less in individuals believing the wrong things (in our sense) than in the potential for heretical movements to challenge temporal and ecclesiastical authorities. There was certainly no lack of heretical groups during the Middle Ages: the Apostolic Brethren, Arnoldists, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Bogomils, Cathars, Fraticelli, Henricans, Humiliati, Lollards, Neo-Adamites, Paulicians, Petrobrusians, and Waldensians, to name the more prominent. While, on a parallel with our modern understandings of plural religions, such groups are often defined in terms of the heterodox beliefs to which their adherents supposedly subscribed, what they shared was a common concern with perceived ecclesiastical abuses and corruptions, and resistance to aspects of the prevailing social order. The policing of correct propositional belief was often secondary to the need to supress movements imagined to constitute a threat to the legitimacy of both the Church and temporal rulers.[78]

Some historians have gone so far as to contend that the putatively heterodox beliefs of groups such as the Cathars and Bogomils were the construction of committed churchmen, and that the doctrinal deviations of the heretics lay largely in the imaginations of Inquisitors.[79] Medievalist

[76] While religious matters had rarely played a prominent role in Roman legal documents, this did not represent an entirely new, and specifically Christian, intolerance of religious diversity. The preceding persecution of Christians themselves is an obvious counterinstance. Moreover, the legislator of Plato's *Laws* makes provision for the suppression and punishment of blasphemy, heresy, and atheism (X.907d–910d), and this text very likely influenced the framing of the Theodosian and Justinian Codes. Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, 'Plato and the Theodosian Code', *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (2019), 35–60; Cf. J. M. Schott, 'Founding Platonopolis: The Platonic πολιτεία in Eusebius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), 501–31.

[77] See Takashi Shogimen, 'Re-thinking Heresy as a Category of Analysis', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88 (2020), 726–48.

[78] David Stagman, 'Piet Fransen's Research on *Fides et Mores*', *Theological Studies* 64 (2003), 69–77 (73).

[79] See R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (London: Profile Books, 2012); Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also the collection edited by Monique Zerner, *Inventer l'hérésie?* (Nice: Presses Universitaires de Nice, 1998); Uwe Brunn, *Des contestataires aux 'Cathares'* (Paris: Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes, 41, 2006); and Hilbert Chiu's 2009

Mark Pegg tells us that 'there were no pre-existing heresies in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries until the thinking of Latin Christian intellectuals invented them'.[80] According to this account, medieval heresy was constructed by projecting the opinions of historical heretical 'types' and heresiarchs – Marcion, Mani, Arius – onto marginal social groups. As was the case for these earlier emblematic heresies, political considerations were at the fore. Robert Moore proposes that we think of the persecution of medieval heretics as a general social phenomenon and of a piece with the persecution of Jews, lepers, homosexuals, and prostitutes – in short, those perceived to lie on the margins of Christian society. Their suppression was not about 'belief' in our sense at all, but a mechanism to shore up the social cohesion of medieval societies.[81] The medieval 'war on heresy' was thus analogous in some respects to the more recent notion of a 'war on terror' and the idea of an 'axis of evil'. This latter identification had more to do with a domestic US audience than a geopolitical reality.

Even if we are sceptical of the 'invention of medieval heresy' hypothesis it should be clear that heretics, whatever their imagined doctrinal commitments, were guilty by definition of a failure to believe in, in the sense of *trusting* in, 'one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church' in as much as they contested its authority and threatened its unity. They could hardly fail to believe in its existence, without which the exercise of its powers of coercion would be impossible. Their transgression consisted in a stubborn adherence to their own opinions out of mistrust, pride, and obstinacy. Hence the insistence of medieval thinkers that the guilt of heretics arose out of a remediable moral failing rather than sincere but mistaken beliefs. From the twelfth century onwards, medieval thinkers had specifically

University of Sydney MPhil thesis, 'The Intellectual Origins of Medieval Dualism'. For a dissenting view see Peter Biller, review of *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (review no. 1546), https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1546, accessed 28 August 2019. Deborah Shulevitz provides a good overview of the debate in 'Historiography of Heresy: The Debate over "Catharism" in Medieval Languedoc', *History Compass* 17 (2019), e12513, https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12513, accessed 23 November 2023. See also John H. Arnold, 'Voicing Dissent: Heresy Trials in Later Medieval England', *Past and Present* 245 (2019), 3–37.

[80] Mark Gregory Pegg, 'The Paradigm of Catharism: or, the Historians' Illusion', in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio Sennis (York: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 21–54 (p. 44).

[81] R. I. Moore, 'The Cathar Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem', in *Christianity and Culture in the Middle Ages: Essays to Honor John Van Engen*, ed. D. C. Mengel and L. Wolverton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), pp. 58–86, esp. pp. 72–4; and 'The Debate of April 2013 in Retrospect', in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Sennis, pp. 257–73. On heresy as a political crime see David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 211–13.

identified 'pertinacity' as the defining vice of heretics.[82] Aquinas would link this vice back to pride and covetousness, which headed the list of the seven deadly sins.[83] All of this comports with an understanding of *pistis/fides* as not simply an epistemological category, but a broader moral, social, and relational phenomenon.

2.4 Belief without Knowledge?

When Constantine the Great embarked upon his ultimately unsuccessful mission to dissuade the North African bishops from what he regarded as dispute-engendering doctrinal hair-splitting, he had suggested that the subtle distinctions at issue were beyond the comprehension of most of the faithful: 'how few are capable either of adequately expounding, or even accurately understanding the import of matters so vast and profound!'[84] He had a point. The philosophical complexity of the articles of the Christian creeds poses a further problem for the idea of belief as simple knowledge of and assent to propositions. The relational predicates in the Nicene Creed, for example, specify that the Son is 'eternally begotten of the Father' and the Spirit 'proceeds from the Father and the Son'. But what does 'eternally begotten' actually mean, and how is it different to 'proceeding from'? While members of councils responsible for the vocabulary of the creeds may have had some notion of what they were intending to convey – and, importantly, what they were ruling out – this could hardly have been true for the vast bulk of the Christian community many of whom would have lacked the philosophical sophistication necessary to fully comprehend these articles.[85]

[82] Irene Bueno, *Defining Heresy: Inquisition, Theology, and Papal Policy in the Time of Jacques Fournier* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 187–9; Shogimen, 'Re-thinking Heresy as a Category of Analysis'.

[83] Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 11, 1. Compare with the adage commonly attributed to Augustine: *Errare possum, haereticus esse nolo* – 'I may be in error, but I lack the will to be heretical' (Augustine did not use this exact wording, but says something like it in *De Gratia Christi et de Peccato Originali* 2.23.26 (*PL* 44: 397)). The etymology of 'heresy' from the Greek *hairesis* – 'a taking or choosing for oneself' – also points us in this direction, as Aquinas points out.

[84] Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius, in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7 (*NPNF* II, vol. 2, p. 6).

[85] John Locke would draw attention to this problem in his *A Third Letter concerning Toleration* (London, 1692), pp. 232f.: 'If ever you were acquainted with a Country-Parish, you must needs have a strange Opinion of them, if you think all the Plough-Men and Milk-Maids at Church, understood all the Propositions in *Athanasius*'s Creed.' Cf. *Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. John Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 169. As, too, Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 146.

Strictly speaking, moreover, what is being affirmed in the original Greek is not quite the same as what is being affirmed in the Latin. The Father is 'ruler of all' in the Greek, but 'omnipotent' or 'almighty' in the Latin. Jesus is 'of one *being* with the Father' in the Greek, but in Latin, 'of one *substance*'.[86] Arguably, these expressions reflect slightly different ontological commitments – the latter seeming to require, for example, some kind of metaphysics of substance. None of this is intended as a normative judgement on the validity of the creeds, but it does point to the fact that full comprehension and assent to their literal, propositional content could not have been the condition for genuine faith, or membership of the Church, for the simple reason that for most of the faithful this would have practically unachievable.

How then, was belief supposed to work in relation to these creedal formulae? For the bulk of the faithful, belief had to be a matter of trusting in the Church and in those charged with the business of getting the doctrinal details correct.[87] Belief in (that is, *trust* in) the one Holy, catholic, and apostolic church amounts to confidence that the councils of the Church have got the more abstruse propositions right. The third-century maxim that there

[86] 'Ruler of all' (Gk. *Pantocrator*, παντοκράτορα), cf. 'omnipotent' (Lat. *omnipotentem*). 'Of one *being*' (Gk. *homoousion*, ὁμοούσιον], cf. 'of one *substance*' (Lat. *consubstantialum*). Latin and Greek in Denzinger (ed.), *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, §§125–6 (pp. 52f.). See Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 8–34, esp. p. 13. István Pásztori-Kupán argues that the Latin equivalent of *ousia* is not *substantia* but *essentia* and claims that the better translation of *homoousios* is *coessential*. *Theodoret of Cyrus* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 59. The origins of these technical distinctions are well understood and were originally set out in order to oppose formulations thought to be erroneous – the use of *homoousion* (of the same being) as an explicit rejection of the 'semi-Arian' *homoiousion* (of similar being), is one example. But arguably these terms meant different things to Greek and Latin speakers. See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, 'Philosophers and Theologians on the Trinity', *Modern Theology* 2 (1986), 169–81, esp. 176; N. Jacobs, 'On "Not Three Gods"—Again: Can a Primary-Secondary Substance Reading of *ousia* and *hypostasis* Avoid Tritheism?', *Modern Theology* 24 (2008), 331–58; Jean-Yves Lacoste 'Homoousios et homoousios: La substance entre théologie et philosophie', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 98 (2010), 85–100. Also relevant here are fundamental questions about the representational capacities of language and the possibility of translation. For Martin Heidegger's remarks on this theme and his view of the differing capacities of Latin and Greek see Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 62–5, and 'The Onto-Theo-Logical Nature of Metaphysics', in *Essays in Metaphysics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 2015), pp. 18–30.

[87] '… simple souls, even when they are incapable of comprehending deep mysteries, are near to the great, inasmuch as they account the excellencies of their brethren to be their own also by force of charity … duller minds, when joined with the wise, are fed by their understanding'. Thus, Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 2. 49, 3 vols., trans. James Bliss (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus, 2015), vol. 1, pp. 95f. Gregory was later cited by Aquinas in his treatment of implicit faith. *ST* 2a.2ae, 2, 6.

is 'no salvation outside the church' (*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*) reinforces this understanding.[88] Salvation was not a matter, primarily, of explicitly assenting to the right set of propositions, but of being incorporated into the body of the Church through the medium of the sacraments. The specialised task of getting the doctrines right was left to theological authorities. Looking ahead, the most unambiguous statement of this position would be reiterated in the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–63), at precisely the historical moment when this view of faith faced its most serious challenge : 'We believe all "that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, *and which the Church proposes for belief* as divinely revealed".'[89] Of course, if there were two (or more) churches offering competing proposals for belief this option would become problematic. This was the difficulty that became acute following the Protestant Reformation. The predicament generated by competing magisterial contributed to the rise of an instrumental conception of reason intended to provide the criterion for justified belief (where 'belief' is understood to be a form of knowledge). Along with this notion came the insistence that we take personal responsibility for what we affirm and do so in possession of all of the evidential grounds upon which we affirm it. But these epistemic ideals, as we will see, have problems of their own and, arguably, turn out to be impractical and unobtainable.

In the fourth century, an issue related to the conceptual complexity of creedal formulae was the status of biblical patriarchs and prophets who, on the basis of biblical authority, were generally thought to have been saved on account of their 'faith'.[90] Clearly, then, the object of that faith could not have been the articles of the creeds. Indeed, this would also have been true of the disciples and the first generation of Christians who lived before the promulgation of the creeds.[91] Augustine of Hippo (354–430), writing in the period that followed the Council of Nicaea, grappled with this

[88] Originally '*Salus extra Ecclesiam non est*'. Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 72, 21 (*ANF* 5, p. 384; *PL* 3: 1123). The context was a discussion of the efficacy of baptism rites conducted by heretics.

[89] Tridentine Roman Catechism: §182, www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P12.HTM, accessed 23 November 2023. Articles on faith are given in §§166–84 (my emphasis). Newman would rehearse this in *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 150f. Similarly: 'Nothing would be more theoretical and unreal than to suppose the true Faith cannot exist except when moulded upon a Creed.' *Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 3rd ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1872), pp. 253f.

[90] In Romans 4 we are informed that righteousness was imputed to Abraham on account of his faith. Hebrews 11 provides a long list of characters in the Hebrew Bible who acted according to faith.

[91] As James K. A. Smith points out: 'Before Christians had systematic theologies and worldviews, they were singing hymns and psalms, saying prayers, celebrating the Eucharist,

question, concluding that 'true religion' had existed since the beginning of the world. With the coming of Christ, this religion was for the first time called 'Christian religion'.[92] True religion, on this account, had always had adherents, even if explicit assent to fundamental Christian doctrines would have been impossible for them.[93] Augustine thought that there had always been 'one faith', but over historical time a growth in knowledge. Medieval thinkers subsequently drew parallels between the faith of infants and the unlearned, and pre-Christian patriarchs and prophets. While neither would have been able to read the Bible or offer an account of the articles of the creed, they were nonetheless thought to have been capable of saving faith.[94] This faith became known as 'implicit faith'.

We shall return to Augustine shortly to consider his ideas on the status of second-hand knowledge. For now, and looking well ahead, the formal category of implicit faith was developed by successive thinkers at the abbey of St Victor during the high Middle Ages. Founded early in the twelfth century and located at the foot of Montagne Sainte-Geneviève on the outskirts of Paris, the abbey became one of the main centres of intellectual life in medieval Europe. Along with the schools of Ste Geneviève and Notre-Dame de Paris, it provided the foundation for the University of Paris, established around 1150 and generally regarded as the second-oldest university in Europe. Its most influential leader was Hugh of St Victor (*c.*1096–1141) whose *De sacramentis christianae fidei* ('On the Sacraments of Christian Faith') was one of the first systematic theological treatises of the Middle Ages. In his seven questions on faith, Hugh followed Augustine in proposing that 'right faith' had in some sense been in evidence from the beginning of the world. This faith consisted in trust in God along with a diffuse apprehension of a future redemption. In these earlier times, as in the present, 'the faith of the simple minded' consisted in their trust in those whose expectations were more fully formed. All had the same faith, but not the same knowledge.[95]

sharing their property, and becoming a people marked by a desire for God's coming kingdom.' *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), p. 139.

[92] Augustine, *Retractionum* 1.13.3, in *Augustine: Early Writings*, p. 218 (*PL* 32: 603). Cf. Augustine, Letter 102, Augustine to Deogratias 19, *Works*, vol. II/2, p. 30. For the relevance of this to the concept 'religion' see Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 8–10.

[93] 'it was the self-same faith in the Mediator which saved the saints of old'. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, bk. 2, ch. 24, *NPNF* I, vol. 5, p. 292.

[94] Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 22–5.

[95] Hugh of St Victor, *De Sacramentis* 10.7 (*Hugh of St Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1951), p. 178). John Marenbon

Peter Lombard (*c.*1096–1160), whose *Sentences* overtook Hugh's *De sacramentis* to become the standard theological textbook during the high and later Middle Ages, also addressed this issue, concluding similarly that there were those, both before the coming of Christ and in his own time, who 'believe what they do not know'.[96] These individuals had what he calls a 'veiled faith'. Lombard's 'veiled faith' would subsequently evolve into the more formal 'implicit faith' (*fides implicita*), which became a standard category for scholastic philosophers.[97] When Thomas Aquinas came to take up this issue he conceded that there were degrees of knowledge and that it was sufficient for those not in the business of philosophy to assent to 'primary articles of faith' and to have an 'implicit faith' in the rest. This meant, in essence, cultivating an attitude of trust in God and in his earthly representatives.[98] The biblical patriarchs were also included in the number for whom implicit faith was regarded as efficacious.[99] Aquinas deals with implicit faith in a number of

explains Hugh's position in this way: 'People can have faith in what is affirmed by a proposition *p*, without holding or even contemplating *p*, if they accept a general proposition of which *p* is an instantiation, and they also place their trust in people who believe *p*.' *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 161. See also Karein Ganss, 'Affectivity and Knowledge Lead to Devotion to God', in *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, ed. Hugh Feiss and Juliet Mousseau (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 422–68, esp. pp. 439–43.

[96] Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum libri quatuor*, bk. 3, dist. 25, ch. 2, *PL* 192: 810. There was a parallel principle that we must love what we do not know. Hence Gregory the Great: 'the love she [the soul] feels for what she knows, teaches her to love what she does not know', *Homilies on the Gospels* 11 (*PL* 76: 1115); and Aquinas: 'From the things it knows the soul learns to love what it knows not.' *ST* 2a.2ae. 27, 3. This sentiment is repeated by Pascal: 'the saints on the contrary say in speaking of divine things that it is necessary to love them in order to know them, and that we only enter truth through charity'. 'The Art of Persuasion', in *Great Shorter Works of Pascal*, trans. Emile Cailliet and John C. Blankenagel (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018), p. 203.

[97] Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* 3, inq. 2, tr. 2, q. 1, ch. 4, art. 1 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924–48), vol. 4, p. 1120; Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum* 3, d. 25, a. 1, q. 2 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), vol. 3, p. 540; Durandus of St-Pourçain, *Super sententias theologiae Petri Lombardi commentariorum libri quatuor* (Venice, 1571), p. 258.; Richard of Middleton, *Super Quatuor Libros Sententiarum* 3, d. 25, q. 1 (Brescia, 1591), pp. 277–9. For brief historical treatments of this conception see Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers*, esp. pp. 160–3; Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, pp. 23–6. For theological accounts, see Albrecht Ritschl, *Fides implicita: Eine Untersuchung über Köhlerglauben, Wissen und Glauben, Glauben und Kirche* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1890).

[98] Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 2, 5–6.

[99] Aquinas, *Disputed questions on Truth*, q. 14, art. 11, in *Truth*, 3 vols., trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 260–2. Aquinas also pondered the plight of those 'living in the forest', or raised by wild beasts. In the wake of the second Vatican Council (1962–5) and the publication of the conciliar document *Lumen Gentium* (1964) a number of Catholic theologians, most prominently Karl Rahner, adopted broad

his works, offering a more complete treatment than any of his contemporaries. One way in which he imagines implicit faith to work is analogous to the way in which, if we have knowledge of a general principle, we will have implicit knowledge of its specific applications.[100] (For example, we may not ever think explicitly about the prime number 104,729 or contemplate its properties. But if we know what a prime number is, there is a sense in which we know implicitly that 104,729 is divisible by only itself and one.)

Requiring others to believe on our behalf may seem to be a problem that we only get ourselves into when we seek to justify one particular kind of belief – that is, religious belief, or belief that transcends the sensory realm, or is in some sense 'above reason'. Indeed, for some, this encapsulates the whole problem with religious belief. However, reliance on authorities goes beyond the religious sphere, and a moment's reflection will reveal that we rely upon others for much, if not most, of what we think we know. Aristotle had observed that 'some trust/faith [*pisteuein*] is necessary for whoever wants to learn'.[101] But it was not until Augustine that we encounter an extended treatment of this principle, and of how it might be rational to believe on the basis of authority. In the *Confessions*, he offers these reflections on all of the things he knows on the basis of trust:

> I began to consider the countless things I believed in though I could not see them and had not been present when they took place, such as the many events in the history of the nations, so many of them to do with places and cities that I had not seen; and so many things I learned from

definitions of implicit faith, arguing that salvation extended well beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. See, e.g., Geffrey B. Kelly, '"Unconscious Christianity" and the "Anonymous Christian" in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Rahner', *Philosophy and Theology* 9 (1995), 117–49; Lamadrid Lucas, 'Anonymous or Analogous Christians? Rahner and Von Balthasar on Naming the Non-Christian', *Modern Theology* 11 (1995), 363–84; Stephen Bullivant, *The Salvation of Atheists and Catholic Dogmatic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[100] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3, d. 25, q. 2, a. 1. Aquinas is aware that analogies like these are imperfect because implicit faith resides in a person not a principle. But because the articles of faith are not ultimately derived from innate, self-evident principles, but from teaching, he suggests that it is appropriate to have faith in the knowledge of another. These considerations are also relevant to the broader problem of the development of doctrine (how there could be 'one faith' if the Church kept adding to it) for which logical inference provided a model. See Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, p. 35. Aquinas also argues that God has not revealed every implication of the articles of faith, and hence that these can be arrived at through study. *ST* 1a. 1, 6. Thomas Hobbes, while generally opposed to the notion of implicit faith, nevertheless allows that certain doctrines are implicit in others, in the sense that they can be deduced from it. *Leviathan*, 3 vols., ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), vol. 3, ch. 43, p. 948.

[101] Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations* 2, 165b3.

> friends, doctors, all sorts and conditions of people. Unless we believed in them [*quae nisi crederentur*], we would never take action of any kind in this life …. Finally, there was my unshakeable conviction about the parents who had begotten me, which I could not know [*scire*] except by hearing and believing it.[102]

These sentiments amount to a kind of sociology of knowledge in which Augustine sets aside theoretical, epistemological considerations to focus instead on how in practice we come to know things. He points to the fact that reliance upon authorities of various kinds is necessary for much of our knowledge and that leading a normal life would be impossible without it.[103] The warrant for holding such knowledge is twofold: practical necessity and the trustworthiness of our sources. Religious belief, one case of such knowledge, relies upon both.

In *De ordine* (On Order), written towards the end of the fourth century when the Western Empire was on the verge of disintegration, Augustine had already suggested a two-stage path to knowledge, in which authority

[102] Augustine, *Confessions* 6.5.7 (LCL 26, 250–1). A more extended treatment is offered in *De magistro*. The claim for *knowledge* based upon testimony takes Augustine beyond claims in earlier works that require stricter Platonic criteria for knowledge ('grasping something by the sure reason of mind'). In *On the Usefulness of Belief*, 25, e.g., he declares that 'What we understand, we owe to reason; what we believe, to authority; what we have an opinion on, to error …. Every one who understands also believes …', 25 (*NPNF* I, vol. 3, p. 359). Cf. *Retractions* 1.14.3. See Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne, 'Augustine on Testimony', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 39 (2009), 195–214; John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 56–63. Famously, for Augustine, the authority of scripture was dependent upon the authority of the Church: 'I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.' Augustine offers a parallel set of considerations for believing in what cannot be seen in *Concerning Faith of Things not Seen* where he uses the example of other minds, and argues that society could not subsist without belief in invisible realities. *NPNF* I, vol. 3.

[103] More recent philosophical discussions of 'extended epistemology' offer a related perspective. In his classic 1973 paper 'Meaning and Reference' (*The Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), 699–711) Hilary Putnam observed that in spite of his own inability to distinguish an elm from a beech, when he deploys the terms 'elm' and 'beech' he really *means* elm and beech. Those meanings are determined not on account of anything that he knows, but because he is a member of a linguistic community that includes experts who *can* make the relevant distinction. All of us, in innumerable everyday usages, implicitly defer to experts whose knowledge suffices for us to make sense. This linguistic deference is endemic in normal discourse. See also J. Adam Carter, Andy Clark, Jesper Kallestrup, S. Orestis Palermos, and Duncan Pritchard (eds.), *Socially Extended Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), esp. the chapter by Cathal O'Madagain, 'Outsourcing Concepts: Social Externalism, The Extended Mind, and the Expansion of Our Epistemic Capacity' (pp. 24–35); Jennifer Lackey, 'Socially Extended Knowledge', *Philosophical Issues* 24 (2014), 282–98.

comes first, followed by reason. What this transition required, however, was not so much a training in philosophical dialectic as the leading of a good life. Only after individuals live out what they believe, says Augustine, 'do they appreciate how reasonable were the notions they learned before understanding them'.[104] The adoption of a particular form of life is also important for gauging the reliability of human authorities. Here the criterion is whether the lives of authorities are consistent with their teachings.[105] Augustine also acknowledges a difference between 'the uninstructed crowd' and 'the learned', the former being more reliant on authority than the latter. What is more important for those who have no talent for higher learning is that 'they live a clean life of upright desires'. This will be the basis upon they will judged, Augustine surmises, when they leave this present life.[106] In sum, for Augustine, not only do we need to believe things that we cannot understand, but belief (in the sense of trust) is actually a prerequisite for understanding. This brings us back to his dictum that 'unless you believe, you will not understand'.[107]

Augustine's reflections about the distinctiveness of Christian believing were also informed by the contrasting cases of classical philosophy and Judaism. The question of the relation between Christianity and the philosophical schools was a long-standing one. St Paul's identification of philosophy as 'the wisdom of the world', along with his observation that the gospel was folly to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews gives some weight

[104] Augustine, *De ordine*, trans. Silvano Borrusco (South Bend: St Augustine's Press, 2007), bk. 2, ch. 9, p. 87. The notion of lived faith is also implied by the Augustinian phrase '*fides et mores*' (*Epistles* 54, 55). See Piet Fransen, 'A Short History of the Expression "Fides et Mores"', in *Hermeneutics of the Councils and Other Studies*, ed. H. E. Mertens and F. De Graeve (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), pp. 287–318.

[105] Augustine, *De ordine*, bk. 2, ch. 9, p. 87. Cf. *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil* 10.27 (*FC*, vol. 5, pp. 304–5).

[106] Augustine wonders whether such people can be truly happy, but insists that when they leave this life they will judged 'in direct proportion to the effort they have put into living a good life.' Augustine, *De ordine*, bk. 2, ch. 9, p. 87.

[107] Augustine, *Against the Academics* 3.20.43; *De Libero Arbitrio* II.2. Also 'For we believe in order that we may know (*cognoscamus*), we do not know in order that we may believe' (*Tract. in Joh.* XL, n. 9 [*PL* 35: 1690]). 'Believe so that you may understand [plural *you*]. For "unless you believe, you will not understand" (Is. 7:9, Vulgate)' (*Sermons* CCXII, n. 1 [*PL* 38: 1059]). 'But so that we may understand, first let us believe. For "unless you believe, you will not understand" (Is. 7:9, Vulgate)' (*Sermons* LXXXIX, n. 4 [*PL* 38: 556]). 'Therefore since we wish to understand the eternity of the Trinity, we must believe before we may understand' (*De Trin.* l. VIII, c. V, n. 8 [*PL* 42: 952]). No one 'believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed'. *Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum PL* 44, col. 963. *On the Predestination of the Saints* 2.5, *PL* 44: 963. *NPNF* I, vol. 5, p. 499. See discussion in Rist, *Augustine*, pp. 56–63.

to the thesis that the relationship was conceived, on the Christian side at least, as primarily oppositional.[108] But his address to an Athenian audience at the Areopagus, recounted in Acts 17, takes a more conciliatory line – Christianity as the fulfilment of the inchoate aspirations of ancient philosophy. The more eirenic of the Church Fathers adopted a similar perspective, viewing both Judaism and Christianity as, in some sense, a 'preparation' for the Christian gospel.[109] In all of this, the relation to Christianity was not conceived of primarily in terms of competing sets of doctrines: rather, the philosophical schools were seen as offering alternative prescriptions for the attainment of happiness and the leading of a fulfilled life.[110] At the same time, doctrines, teachings, and cosmological assumptions were integral to these ways of life.[111]

In the long prelude to his conversion to Christianity Augustine had explored two philosophical schools in depth – Academic Scepticism and Platonism – and his reflections on these traditions are directly relevant to the question of the role of belief in the Christian life. A core element of Scepticism was the withholding of assent from what could not be known with certainty. This practice of the suspension of belief was supposed to lead to the goal of tranquillity of mind. In our terms it thus had a psychological or moral, rather than an epistemological aim. Because the Sceptics held that little, if anything, could be known with certainty, the ultimate ambition of this school was, quite literally, 'a life without belief'.[112] This was clearly inconsistent with Christianity and Augustine accordingly mounted a number of arguments against Scepticism, some of which René Descartes would later adopt in the seventeenth century.[113] But Augustine was adamant that

[108] I Cor. 1:19–27. Tertullian is usually taken to typify this oppositional stance (although his attitude to Greek learning was considerably nuanced). For the oppositional motifs, see *Ad nationes* 4, *De presciptione haereticorum* 7.

[109] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 46; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.9, 13; *Exhortation to the Heathen* 6.

[110] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*; John Peter Kenney, '"None Come Closer to Us than These": Augustine and the Platonists', *Religions* 7 (2016), 1–16; Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 26–34.

[111] See Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 26–34; Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 41–64.

[112] Katja Vogt, 'Ancient Skepticism', *SEP*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/skepticism-ancient/.

[113] Descartes's contemporary Antoine Arnauld pointed out the similarities, which Descartes seemed reluctant to acknowledge. *Objections and Replies*, CSM 2, p. 139. See discussions in Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 4f.; Gareth B. Matthews, *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), ch. 3; Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 217–19.

there are things that we need to affirm if we are to attain genuine happiness, and we must commit to these things even if we do not fully know or understand them: 'If assent is taken away, faith goes too, for without assent there can be no belief. And there are truths, even if they are not seen, which must be believed if we would attain to a happy life.'[114] In the late nineteenth century, William James would take a similar line in his celebrated lecture, 'The Will to Believe'.[115] The success of the schools of sceptical philosophy in antiquity reflects the goal they shared with Christianity – the attainment of the happy life, or beatitude.

Apart from Augustine and the Church Fathers, the other key philosophical conversation partner for medieval thinkers was Aristotle, although his influence would not be fully felt in the Christian West until the translation projects of the twelfth century.[116] With the eventual appearance in the mid-twelfth century of a Latin version of the *Posterior Analytics* – in which Aristotle discusses the criteria for 'scientific' knowledge – the full complement of Aristotle's logical works, collectively known as the *Organon*,

[114] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 20, *PL* 40: 212. Aquinas will similarly propose that what is known is 'seen', and that the object of faith is something unseen. *ST* 2a2ae 1, 4 and 5. Augustine's stance bears a resemblance to Immanuel Kant's 'postulates of practical reason'; a postulate being 'a *theoretical* proposition, though one not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an a priori unconditionally valid *practical* law' (5:122). In relation to morality, or the question of how we should live, the specific Kantian postulates were immortality and the existence of God. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 5:122–32, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 238–46. Augustine's position even more directly resembles that set out by William James, in *The Will to Believe*.

[115] James writes: 'Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision – just like deciding yes or not – and is attended with the same risk of losing truth.' *The Will to Believe* [1897] *and other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 11.

[116] In late antiquity, John Philoponus had written commentaries on both the *Prior Analytics* and the *Posterior Analytics*, but these were in Greek. Philoponus, *On Aristotle: Prior Analytics 1.1–8*, trans. Richard D. McKirahan (London: Duckworth, 2008), pp. 1–8; Mariska Leunissen and Marije Martijn (eds.), *Interpreting Aristotle's Posterior Analytics in Late Antiquity and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), esp. the chapter by Owen Goldin, 'Two Traditions in the Ancient *Posterior Analytics* Commentaries' (pp. 155–82). And as noted earlier, in the tenth century al-Fārābī had already discussed the Aristotelian understanding of certitude in some depth in a number of writings, including his *Epitome of the Posterior Analytics*. Certainty, in the Aristotelian sense, was also important for subsequent medieval Arabic writers. See Black, 'Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Certainty (*Yaqīn*)'; Michael Marmura, 'The *Fortuna* of the *Posterior Analytics* in the Arabic Middle Ages', in *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy*, 3 vols., ed. M. Asztalos, J. E. Murdoch, and I. Niiniluoto (Helsinki: Acta Philosophica Fennica, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 85–103; Pasnau,

became available to Latin scholars for the first time.[117] The condition for certain knowledge, or science, that the Greek philosopher set out in these logical writings prompted a new conversation about the scientific status of Christian theology and the nature of faith. This took place largely in a new venue that was purpose-built for such discussions – the medieval university.

What Aristotle meant by 'science' is quite different from our present understandings of the term. In fact, the English 'science' did not take on its now familiar meaning until the nineteenth century.[118] As already noted, for Aristotle genuine scientific knowledge was arrived at by means of logical demonstration from incontrovertible principles and it bore the highest degree of certainty.[119] This, at least, was the ideal, since it was recognised that in reality only a deductive mathematical system would fully meet those criteria.[120] Because most Christian doctrines were clearly not arrived at by a process of logical demonstration, this raised the question of their certainty and scientific status. The brilliant logician Peter Abelard (d. 1142), perhaps best known today on account of his ill-fated romantic liaison with Héloïse, was one of the first to bring discussions of the nature of faith into the orbit of Aristotelian classifications of knowledge, concluding that faith was to be located between science and opinion.[121] While some critics found fault with the assessment, worrying that it placed faith too close to opinion, most

After Certainty, pp. 27–8, 176–7; Jon McGinnis, 'Avicenna's Naturalised Epistemology and Scientific Method', in *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Shahid Rahman, Tony Street, and Hassan Tahiri (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), pp. 129–52.

[117] Lat. *Scientia*, Gk. *epistēmē*. Boethius had translated the *Posterior Analytics* in the sixth century as part of his mission to preserve classical philosophy. However, this work was lost. Subsequently James of Venice retranslated the work in mid-twelfth century. See C. H. Lohr, 'The Medieval Interpretation of Aristotle', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 80–98; Robert Pasnau, 'The Latin Aristotle', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 665–89.

[118] 'Science' – Gk. *epistēmē*; Lat. *scientia*.

[119] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 78a22–79a33, cf. Aquinas, *ST* 1a. 1, 2. For the modern idea of 'science', see Harrison, *Territories*, pp. 11–15, 153–70.

[120] Pasnau, *After Certainty*, p. 7, and *passim*.

[121] This comports with the hierarchies of Plato and Aristotle, but Abelard sought to capture the special status of *fides* with the term *existimatio* (judgement, right opinion). Peter Abelard, *Epitome Theologiae Christianae* 1, *PL* 178: 695. On *existimatio* see Constant J. Mews, 'Faith as *Existimatio rerum non apparentium*: Intellect, Imagination and Faith in the Philosophy of Peter Abelard', in *Intellect and Imagination in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. M. C. Pacheco and J. Meirinhos (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 915–26. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, who sought a knowledge of Christian truths that was 'midway between faith and revelation'. *Why God became Man*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian G. Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 260–356 (p. 260).

scholastic thinkers conceded the point that faith was less certain than 'science', as Aristotle had conceived it. Hugh of St Victor agreed with Abelard that 'Faith is a form of certitude of mind concerning things not present, which stands as greater than opinion, but less than science.'[122] Thomas Aquinas followed suit. Citing with approval Augustine's definition of faith as 'thinking with assent', Aquinas maintained that assent, being an act of the will, is required precisely because faith falls short of certainty and lies between science and opinion.[123] And like both science and opinion, faith concerns propositions.[124] As for the scientific status of theological truths, Aquinas squared that circle by proposing that theology (*sacra doctrina* was his expression) was indeed a science for God, but a 'subordinate science' for us, since its principles were not self-evident, but required God (for whom they were self-evident) to reveal them to us.[125]

These developments signal the beginnings of a new dialectical approach to Christian belief. In the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4–1109) had already sought to articulate the logic of ideas long cherished by

[122] Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis* 1, 10, *PL* 176: 330. Aquinas cites this source on a number of occasions. See Appendix 4 to *Summa Theologiae*: Volume 31, Faith: 2a2ae. 1–7.

[123] Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 1, 2; 1, 4. But unlike opinion, faith does not entertain the possibility of the falsity of what is accepted. On Augustine's definition of 'thinking with assent', *credere est assensione cogitarei*, see Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 2, 1. Cf. Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 2.5. But thinking [*cogitare*] means something different for Augustine and requires the activity of God. The scholastics will read this in a more Aristotelian fashion. See G. Verbeke, 'Pensée et discernement chez saint Augustin: Quelques réflexions sur le sens du terme "cogitare"', *Recherche Augustiniennes* 2 (Paris, 1962), 59–80; Emmanuel Bermon, *Le Cogito dans la Pensées de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 2001), pp. 77–80. For summary accounts of Aquinas on faith, see Victor Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God: A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), esp. pp. 179–265, and John Bishop, 'Faith', *SEP*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/faith/.

[124] Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae 1, 2. Cf. *Disputed questions on Truth,* q. 14, art. 12 (trans. McGlynn, vol. 2, p. 265).

[125] Subordinate or subalternate sciences (*scientiae subalternatae*), in the Aristotelian tradition, were sciences in which the premises were derived from another science. Aquinas would sometimes use the term 'middle sciences' (*scientiae mediae*). The principles of optics, for example, were drawn from the deductive science of geometry. *Posterior Analytics* 75b15. See Richard D. McKirahan Jr., 'Aristotle's Subordinate Sciences', *British Journal for the History of Science* 11 (1978), 197–220. Aquinas allows that scientific knowledge of some preambles of faith is possible – the unity of the Godhead, e.g., – but for most individuals revelation of truths of faith is required (*ST* 1a. 1, 1; *ST* 2a2ae. 1, 5). 'Sacred doctrine' in its completeness is self-evident only to God, who reveals its principles to us. For this reason, while it ultimately has scientific status, it is a subordinate or subalternate science for us. See, e.g., Geoffrey Turner, 'Aquinas on the "Scientific" Status of Theology', *New Blackfriars* 78 (1997), 464–76; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 29–32.

the Christian community on the basis of faith and practice. In a practical realisation of his motto, 'faith seeking understanding', he produced works such as *Why God Became Man* which sought to explicate the logic of the Incarnation and the sacrificial nature of Christ's death.[126] Before this, as Jaroslav Pelikan has argued, the idea of Christ's atoning sacrifice was not embedded in doctrinal statements but rather 'was left to the liturgy of the Mass, above all to the interpretation of the Eucharist as sacrifice, to the hymns and prayers, and to the sacramental life of the Church'.[127] Anselm offered instead a step-by-step argument for the Incarnation that, in his own words, was 'logical and incontrovertible' and, in principle, could address even the concerns of Jews, Muslims, and Pagans that taking human form was unfitting for the Deity.[128] With works such as these, we see the beginning of a relocation of the substance of faith from the practices of the Church, including its liturgical performances and contemplation of its sacred texts, to more formal theology.

Increasing use of the term 'theology' is a marker of this trend towards the systematisation of belief. Until the innovations of Peter Abelard, the key expressions for the substance of Christian beliefs were *doctrina*, which reflected the pastoral activities of preaching and teaching, and *lectio divina*, which referred to the practice of the spiritual exegesis of scripture involving prayer and meditation.[129] 'Theology' (*theologia*) had something of a dubious reputation, typically being reserved as a label for Pagan thinking about the gods.[130] Abelard's application of Aristotelian logic to Christian teaching represented further steps towards a formal theology, and he was the first to deploy the term in a positive sense in the titles of some of his writings.

[126] Anselm, *Major Works*, esp. pp. 261f., 355f.

[127] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Medieval Theology* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1985), p. 14. (I am grateful to Willemian Otten for drawing my attention to the significance of Anslem in this context and to Pelikan's assessment of his contribution.)

[128] '*Infideles*' – not really 'unbelievers', as commonly translated, rather those who believe in God but do not share the Christian faith. Anselm, *Libri duo cur deus homo*, 1.1, ed. Hugo Laemmer (Berlin, 1857), p. 1; cf. *Major Works,* p. 355.

[129] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 15–17, and *passim*; Brian Stock, *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), esp. pp. 105–8.

[130] Plato was likely the first to use the term '*theologia*', *Republic* 379a. See Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1948), p. 4. Augustine subsequently used *theologia* to refer to Pagan speculations about divinity. *City of God* 6.5. See also Stephen Brown, 'Key Terms in Medieval Theological Vocabulary', in *Méthodes et instruments du travail intellectuel au moyen âge*, ed. Olga Weijers (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), pp. 82–97.

These innovations were not greeted with universal approbation. Bernard of Clairvaux complained that Abelard was 'an old Master turned theologian', offering some insight into the negative connotations of the latter designation and its reputation for logic chopping.[131] Part of what was at issue here was the desirability of a shift in emphasis away from contemplative practices to dialectical disputation. This transition was accompanied by changes in institutional settings as the locus of doctrinal reflection moved from monasteries to cathedral schools and then to the first universities. Even when general agreement had been reached on the legitimacy of theology as a 'scientific' activity, there remained significant differences over whether it was a practical science oriented towards goodness, or a speculative science oriented towards truth.[132]

Aquinas's insistence on the scientific status of theology was not intended to reduce Christianity to its propositional contents. Faith was not *just* about propositions. Ultimately, the real object of faith was God himself, who is the 'first truth', and not some proposition.[133] Moreover, because an act of the will is involved – Aquinas's 'inner assent' – belief is to some extent under voluntary control. Aquinas explains that this enables us to account for the fact that while two individuals might witness the same miraculous event, or hear the same sermon, only one might believe or have faith as a consequence.[134] At the same time, this assent is not simply a matter of

[131] G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginning of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Turner, 'Aquinas on Theology'.

[132] Franciscans typically opted for the former. Bonaventure argued that theological science was a habit that had as its chief end 'that we become good'. *Commentary on the Sentences* 1.13. Dominicans, such as Aquinas, suggested that theology was primarily a theoretical science, that aimed at truth. For Aquinas the focus of theology is God, rather than human activities. *ST* 1a. 1, 4 cf. 1a. 1, 6. Brian Davies, 'Is "Sacra Doctrina" Theology?', *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990), 141–7.

[133] The 'first truth' (*veritas prima*). Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 1, 1. Cf. *SCG* 1.16.15, and *De veritate* 1.7. On this general notion see William Wood, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Claim that God is Truth', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51 (2013), 21–47. 'Proposition' here rendering *enuntiatio* which, in turn, is Aquinas's translation of Aristotle's ἀπόφανσις (*apophansis*), the technical meaning of which is set out in Aristotle's *On Interpretation*. Arguably, 'assertion' is a better translation of both terms. For discussion of the Aristotelian terminology, see Mika Perälä, 'Affirmation and Denial in Aristotle's *De interpretatione*', *Topoi* 39 (2020), 645–56. In distinguishing between God and propositions about God Aquinas speaks of God as the formal object of faith, and the propositions as the material objects of faith. This distinction also informs accounts of implicit faith, with faith typically having to be explicit in relation to its formal object (God) but potentially implicit in relation to its material objects (propositions about God).

[134] This maps onto Augustine's distinction between *fides historica* (characteristic of 'the Jews') and *fides spiritualis*, which entails a conviction about the significance of some witnessed event.

exercising free will but also calls for the operation of 'a supernatural principle', whereby God moves man inwardly by grace.[135] This was a more technical restatement of the New Testament idea that faith was a divine gift. In yet another apparent complication, however, Aquinas also speaks of faith as a kind of interior 'instinct'.[136] But, of course, our instincts originally come from God, too. While having faith is not something that simply arises from our natures, in the sense that it is a gift from God, it is entirely consistent with the natural operations of the mind. This enables Aquinas to conclude that 'unbelief is contrary to nature'.[137]

For our purposes, the most important thing to note is that the first significant deployment of the term 'supernatural' (*supernaturalis*) occurs in these discussions. What Aquinas meant by 'supernatural' and the long-term consequences of this coinage have been the subject of considerable discussion, and will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5.[138] What is clear, however, is that Aquinas is not setting out a two-tier understanding of reality. Neither does he have in mind the kind of exclusive disjunction between natural and supernatural that is characteristic of modern usages. In a sense, Aquinas is offering a naturalistic account of faith, in so far as he assumes that part of the justification for believing comes from the fact that belief arises out of the proper operations of our natural instincts: we have both a natural orientation towards God and a natural belief-forming propensity.[139] The difference between this position and what presently counts as a naturalised epistemology

[135] By means of a '*supernaturali principio*' man is raised to things which are *above his nature* [*Elevetur in ea quae sunt supra naturam*]. *ST* 2a2ae. 6, 1.

[136] The believer 'is moved … by the inward instinct of Divine invitation [*interior instinctu Dei invitantis*]'. *ST* 2a2ae. 2, 9. See commentary in Max Seckler, *Instinkt und Glaubenswille nach Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1961); Howard P. Kainz, *The Existence of God and the Faith-Instinct* (Cranbury, NJ: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 90–101; Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010).

[137] Aquinas, *ST* 2a2ae. 10, 1.

[138] The classic statement of the problematic comes in Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. For an overview of an extensive literature see Johannes Mayer, 'Man Is Inclined to His Last End by Nature, though He Cannot Reach It by Nature but Only by Grace: The Principle of the Debate about Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas, Thomism and Henri de Lubac', *Angelicum* 88 (2011), 887–939.

[139] 'Though man is naturally inclined to his final end, he cannot attain it naturally, but only by grace.' *Commentary on Boethius: On the Trinity* 1 q. 2, ad. 4. a. 5. For an argument supporting Aquinas as a naturalist in relation to belief see Mark Boespflug, 'Thomistic Faith Naturalized? The Epistemic Significance of Aquinas's Appeal to Doxastic Instinct', *Faith and Philosophy* 38 (2021), 245–61. That said, there has been considerable debate about how Aquinas is to be interpreted on this issue.

hangs crucially on our understanding of 'natural' and 'supernatural', and that is what has changed between the thirteenth century and now.

All of this gives us what appears to be a very complicated picture. These apparent complications were then more manageable because our medieval forebears were operating with a multi-layered understanding of non-competing causes that could make sense of these doctrinal claims. Admittedly, there was an incipient tension between what was to be attributed to divine grace and what to human free will. This would later become the central point of contention in Reformation debates about the nature of justification. The relevant point is that during this period we do not have a disjunction between two separate realms of activity – natural and supernatural. For the scholastics, it was 'natural' for God to work in his creatures, even though his activity went beyond what the creatures could effect through their own natural powers. The term 'supernatural', in these first usages, thus operates within a causal economy that is unfamiliar to modern minds. We might also observe that there was a grain of truth in David Hume's ironic remark at the conclusion of 'Of Miracles' – 'the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one' – at least in terms of medieval understanding of the workings of faith. In faith, the movement of the will to lend its assent calls for something beyond natural human powers.[140] But as we will see, the same could also be said of more mundane mental operations.

These connections between the idea of the supernatural and genuine faith will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5. For now, though, we can sum up the key features of this history. First, we encounter new and distinctive usages of 'faith' (*pistis*) in the New Testament that stress the primacy of trust and focus on its social, relational, and affective dimensions. There follows the emergence of creedal formulae that promote consideration of how faith and belief now relate to doctrines set out in propositional form. We witness the influential attempt, in the writings of Augustine, to formalise the relations between trust, propositional belief, and authority. Finally, in the high Middle Ages, we have attempts to relate Christian faith to Aristotelian ideals of knowledge provided by the newly translated works of Aristotle. This last development is nothing less than the inception of theology. It was accompanied by the compensatory mechanism of implicit faith, which relieved the majority of Christians of the burden of having a full knowledge of theological doctrines. This sketch is hardly exhaustive. But it sets out some of the key aspects of pre-modern understandings of faith/belief, sufficient

[140] Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 131.

to provide a sense of how they begin to take on a new complexion in the modern period, beginning with the Protestant Reformation.

Looking ahead, the sixteenth-century Reformation brought a decisive end to the institutionally mediated trust relations that had been central to early Christian and medieval conceptions of faith. The shattering of the doctrinal monopoly of the medieval Church confounded appeals to ecclesiastical authority since there were now competing authorities offering divergent doctrinal prescriptions. It was no longer possible simply to reside trust in 'the Church' because there were multiple churches each with their own distinctive teachings. As a consequence, faith necessarily became a more personal matter, with individuals assuming for themselves the burden of understanding and assenting to sets of beliefs. The traditional resort to 'implicit faith' became increasingly suspect, and its critics articulated a new understanding of Christianity that required an explicit knowledge of, and agreement with, a set of doctrines.

The loss of a unitary ecclesiastical authority also motivated the quest for alternative, universal criteria for religious truth, now understood in propositional terms. 'Reason' or 'the light of nature' came to assume a much more prominent role in determining what truth claims individuals should assent to. So, too, did experience or 'experiment' (the Latin *experimentum* meaning 'practical experience'). These developments ceded to the increasingly independent enterprises of philosophy and the natural sciences the power to adjudicate matters of belief. While there was some precedent for this in the scholastic positioning of 'faith' within a broader framework of modified Aristotelian understandings of scientific knowledge (*scientia*), this compromise became difficult to sustain when the whole edifice of Aristotelian philosophy came under assault in the early modern period.[141] The new experimental science offered a different epistemic context against which faith was to be calibrated, even though the new science had itself surreptitiously borrowed a conception of experimental testing from the religious sphere and was no less reliant upon networks of trust.[142] At the same time, the general precedent of thinking about faith in relation to Aristotelian

[141] In addition to attempting to calibrate faith in relation to Aristotle's conception of *scientia* (see *ST* 1a. 1) Aquinas's account of faith draws upon Aristotelian formal and material causes, and the idea of a virtue as the 'mean', in this instance between science and opinion. *ST* 2a2ae. 1, 1; 1, 2.

[142] See especially Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Science and Civility in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Peter Harrison, 'Experimental Religion and Experimental Science in Early Modern England', *Intellectual History Review* 21 (2011), 413–33.

thought meant that theological notions of 'faith' continued to be answerable to philosophical conceptions of knowledge and belief, although these were now inflected by the new experimental natural philosophy. 'Reason' and its variants 'natural light', 'natural reason', or 'right reason' would be proposed as either an adjunct to, or replacement for, ecclesiastical authority and the operation of divine grace in moving the faithful to assent to the truths of revelation. Reason had traditionally been understood as a divine gift that naturally disposed the soul to accept legitimate truths of revelation. It was 'natural' in the sense that God had ordained it to be integral to the nature of human beings. Fatefully, reason was destined to become 'natural' in a totally different sense, one that directly opposed it to 'supernatural' and hence placed it in opposition to putatively revealed truths.

Together, these trends are often construed as Christianity's ceding of its epistemic authority to the independent arbiter of philosophy, this being just another exemplification of a general trend of secularisation. More accurately, the religious crisis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries focused attention on the problem of knowledge and its justification in an unprecedented way. This, in turn, enabled the development of a new understanding of philosophy as an independent enterprise that has as one its central concerns what we now call epistemology. It is not a complete exaggeration to suggest that modern epistemology was invented to address the problem of the justification of religious beliefs in early modern Europe.[143] This is because religious belief, along with the social and political implications of religious divisions, was the main intellectual preoccupation of the period. The religious predicament of the Latin West subsequently came to determine the agenda of modern philosophy with its distinctive focus on knowledge and its justification. But the precondition for this new kind of philosophy was a problematic that arose within a divided Christendom in which correct propositional belief emerged as a central concern.

[143] Nicholas Wolterstorff makes a similar suggestion about Locke, whose epistemology is said to have been directly addressed to the cataclysm of the Reformation. *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 227, 246.