



Henrique Laitenberger, St John's College, University of Oxford

# Protestant Enlightenment(s)?

The Origins and Dissemination of Enlightenment Theology in  
Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism

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*To my grandfather, Georg Laitenberger, who left this world before I embarked on my academic journey to explore the history of the Protestant religion that he devoted his life to.*

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## Short Abstract

Since the early 2000s, intellectual historians have increasingly emphasised that Enlightenment and revealed religion could be reconciled, contradicting traditional depictions. A growing body of scholarship on the so-called 'religious Enlightenment' – spanning Catholicism, Judaism, and Protestantism – has developed as a result of this shift. However, the attempts to subsume the enlightened representatives of all faiths into one supra-confessional Enlightenment has gradually confused the understanding of 'enlightened religion', especially in the Protestant context. To counter this development, this thesis seeks to re-establish the existence of a particular and uniform Protestant Enlightenment that spanned Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism during the 'Long Eighteenth Century'. To this end, it presents an intellectual and cultural history of enlightened theology within these Churches, based on the existing historiography and its foundational texts and figures: first, it offers a comparative analysis of the theologies of Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Joseph Butler, and Johann Joachim Spalding. It thereupon examines the reception of their theologies in Swedish Lutheranism through the correspondences of Eric Benzelius the Younger and Jacob Axelsson Lindblom's periodical *Journal för Prester*. Based on this, the thesis argues that – certain differences notwithstanding – there was a recognisable single Protestant Enlightenment whose quintessential hallmark was an intellectualist natural theology that emphasised the fundamental benevolence of God and the harmony of the universe, as well as the fundamental freedom and reasonableness of humanity. Mostly emerging as a result of 'crises of orthodoxy' that made stringent confessional uniformity untenable, this creed built on Platonic-Erasmian foundations and the seventeenth century's scientifico-philosophical advances. While rejecting much of the Reformation's Augustinian ideas, it was nonetheless distinctly

Protestant in character by professing an individualistic, emancipatory faith that appealed to Anglicans and Lutherans alike. Indeed, by the eighteenth century's close, it had in parts morphed into a self-conscious movement.

## Long Abstract

Since the beginning of the millennium, historians of the Enlightenment have moved away from traditional conceptions that considered (organised) religion and Enlightenment as broadly antagonistic phenomena. Drawing on Hugh Trevor-Roper's writings on the Erasmian origins of enlightened thinking and the Pockockian notion of a multi-faceted rather than monolithic Enlightenment, scholars are emphasising that established churches did actively partake in Enlightenment from the late seventeenth century onwards. In this course, historians such as David Sorkin and Helena Rosenblatt have forged a vision of a moderate, irenic, and reasonable 'Religious Enlightenment' or 'Christian Enlightenment' that spanned Europe in the long eighteenth century. This has been accompanied by ever greater enquiry into the particular expressions of enlightened religiosity, most notably in Catholicism and Judaism – with one notable exception: little historical writing of late has been comfortable in speaking of a unified 'Protestant Enlightenment'. This is especially bewildering given the widespread acknowledgement that Protestant Christians were among those most eagerly involved in the endeavours to forge and promote enlightened religion.

The primary aim of this thesis is to determine if there are grounds to conceive of a distinctive and uniform 'Protestant Enlightenment' spanning England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden from the late seventeenth century onwards. Further, it seeks to give greater exposure to the Lutheran and Swedish experience of enlightened religion within the canon of English-language Enlightenment historiography that has yet to fully reflect the growing literature on the subject in German and Swedish.

To achieve its intended aims, the thesis will pursue two ends: first, to retrace the historical and intellectual origins of Protestant Enlightenment. Secondly, to outline its dissemination and development in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. In this

endeavour, it will focus on the experiences of Enlightenment within Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism between approximately 1600 and 1800. This selection enables both a comparison between and within major Protestant denominations, as well as between centres and the periphery of Enlightenment. Whilst the scope of the thesis does not permit for a holistic assessment of Protestant Europe, the three Churches chosen ought to cover sufficient ground to allow reasonable hypotheses whether it is viable to speak of a broadly uniform 'Protestant Enlightenment' within the period studied.

The thesis makes use of a variety of sources and methodological approaches: whereas the first two chapters principally rely on a historiographical review of the literature produced in all three contexts, the remaining chapters examine the state of scholarship in light of a textual analysis of printed and a limited number of manuscript sources from roughly the mid-seventeenth century onwards. In the analysis of its primary material, the thesis seeks to embed the sources within their wider societal, intellectual, and cultural environment. The division of the thesis into two parts – with the first one dedicated to capturing broader historiographical, political, and intellectual trends within Protestant Europe, whereas the second part intends to extrapolate from smaller-scale case-studies – permits to obtain both a macro- and micro-perspective on its central research questions, whilst placing it on an equally strong theoretical footing.

The introductory chapter reviews the historiography on 'Protestant Enlightenment', with a specific reference to scholarship on Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism. It concludes that the comparative neglect of 'Protestant Enlightenment' is rooted in several factors: for one, much of the research on enlightened Protestantism has principally occurred within the context of national and confessional Church histories, allowing for little transnational and cross-denominational comparison. Yet even recent

Anglo-American scholarship of the 'religious Enlightenment' has not succeeded in fully compensating for this, as it suffers in part from methodological flaws: first, it has hitherto been often marred by a certain Anglo- and Calvino-centrism, understating some of the unique features of Lutheran Enlightenment. Equally, it has insufficiently engaged with the peripheries of Christian Enlightenment, such as Sweden. Most significantly, however, defenders of the 'religious Enlightenment' have often aimed at downplaying the differences between individual confessional Enlightenments. This has led to understandings of enlightened theology to become blurred, as the label has come to be applied to figures and movements traditionally excluded from this narrative. Based on these conclusions, the chapter argues that a renewed enquiry into the Protestant expression of Enlightenment is necessary to establish whether it constitutes a distinctive phenomenon to which cross-confessional scholarship may not have done sufficient justice. It thereupon sets out how the thesis intends to achieve these aims by presenting an intellectual and a cultural history of Protestant Enlightenment within Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism.

Beginning with its treatment of the origins of Protestant Enlightenment, the second chapter seeks to establish whether the Protestant Churches of England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden experienced a systemic 'crisis of orthodoxy' in the seventeenth century, that is a fundamental threat to their established ecclesiology, theology, and following, that could have instigated a momentum for religious renewal. To this end, it reviews the existing historiography of these states and their Protestant churches. Based on this, it argues that such a crisis did occur within the Anglican and German Lutheran Churches which were exposed to significant external strains and internal divisions (e.g. breakdown of religious settlement, war, collapse of secular authority) that almost subverted their orders. Sweden, on the other hand, succeeded in maintaining confessional stability and uniformity throughout the seventeenth century, despite facing

similar political and religious pressures. Further, by building on Thomas Kaufmann's notion of 'confessional cultures' and extending it to an English context, the chapter concludes that the crisis created greater inner-confessional plurality within Anglicanism and German Lutheranism that enabled opportunities for theological reform. Such incentives were not evident in Sweden where the local Lutheran Church indeed became less diverse in its theological outlook by the turn of the century.

Complementing these findings, the third chapter is dedicated to identifying the intellectual foundations of Protestant Enlightenment theology in Anglicanism and German Lutheranism, focusing on the writings of the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, as well as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Its ultimate aim is the establishment of a robust definition of 'Protestant Enlightenment'. The chapter begins with a brief outline of their doctrinal positions, before linking these beliefs to the thinkers' wider metaphysical systems. Building on this analysis and scholarship by especially Christia Mercer, John Henry, Peter Harrison, and Ursula Goldenbaum, it will be concluded that the enlightened theology of the three thinkers was first and foremost defined by a dual attempt to refute the visions of a largely arbitrary world that orthodox Protestants and materialist philosophers defended. Inspired by Platonic-Erasmanian humanism and the discoveries of the 'modern philosophers' of the scientific revolution, the Anglican and Lutheran thinkers instead offered an irenic conception of Christianity, defined by a fundamentally benevolent deity who created a harmonic universe and granted Christians agency through the exercise of reason and free will. Crucially, method and metaphysics were inseparable from the substance of Protestant Enlightenment theology as its objectives.

Having established the origins and definition of Protestant Enlightenment, the thesis proceeds to examine the diffusion and reception of early enlightened Protestant

theology in Sweden. To this end, the life of Eric Benzelius the Younger and his correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Johann Andreas Schmidt, Ernst Salomon Cyprian, and his brother Gustaf Benzelstierna are analysed in the fourth chapter. In the course of this study, it is established that the paramount need for political and social stability caused the Swedish clergy to strongly resist incursions by early Enlightenment theology. This resistance was, however, also predicated upon a limited access to the Republic of Letters by Swedish scholars, exacerbating the absolutist pretensions of Lutheran orthodoxy.

The fifth chapter fulfils a dual purpose: first, it seeks to explore whether enlightened Protestant theology had undergone substantive changes by the mid-eighteenth century, as a new generation of religious thinkers emerged. Further, the importance of the importation and translation of books to the development of Protestant Enlightenment theology is examined. To this end, the theologies of Joseph Butler and Johann Joachim Spalding are contrasted with the definition of Protestant enlightened theology established in the third chapter. The review concludes that although Butler and Spalding spurned the rationalism of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz for an empiricist philosophy inspired by John Locke, Isaac Newton, and particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, they built on sufficiently similar metaphysical and theological premises for the definition of Protestant Enlightenment theology established in the third chapter to hold true for the second generation of enlightened Anglicans and Lutherans as well.

The last chapter studies the review and dissemination of Enlightenment theology in late eighteenth-century Sweden through the work of Jacob Axelsson Lindblom and his *Journal för Prester*. Again, it pursues a two-fold aim: beyond examining the mechanisms that enabled the emergence and propagation of enlightened Protestantism in Sweden, the chapter seeks to examine how the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment of Lindblom

and his periodical chime with and expand existing understandings of enlightened Protestantism. In the course of this analysis, it is shown, in line with research by Jakob Christensson, that Swedish Lutherans championed an explicitly 'Protestant' Enlightenment which they saw as a continuation of the Reformation and its emphasis on autonomy in faith, mirroring especially developments in Germany outlined by Albrecht Beutel.

Ultimately, the thesis concludes that it is broadly possible to recognise a uniform 'Protestant Enlightenment' spanning England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden during the long eighteenth century. Though occasionally differing in its expression, method, and timeline, this Protestant Enlightenment rested on a common belief in an absolute divine benevolence, cosmological harmony, and human free will inspired by Erasmian theology and intellectualist metaphysics, yielding the irenicist, essentialist, and practical faith so commonly associated with definitions of 'religious Enlightenment'. In light of this, the integration of conservative and enthusiastic Protestants into the canon of enlightened religion can be precluded, since these often rested on metaphysical and theological beliefs that were diametrically at odds with the natural theology espoused by the examined Anglicans and Lutherans. Beyond a common set of beliefs, however, the Protestant Enlightenment in England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden was underpinned by shared networks and a distinctive Protestant understanding of faith: its emergence was thus in great part dependent on the experience of severe political and religious crises during the seventeenth century that were not inherent to, but likelier to occur within Protestant Churches on account of their doctrine and constitution. These crises enabled a critical momentum for the rise of theological pluralism and reform in late seventeenth-century England and Lutheran Germany, yet not Sweden which had managed to avoid domestic turmoil at the time and consequently did not see its theological Enlightenment proper until the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Throughout the period, practitioners of Protestant Enlightenment across the three churches formed part of an (at times imbalanced) ‘Theological Republic of Letters’ that saw thinkers exchange ideas through personal visits, correspondence, book translations, and journals. Most significantly, it is possible to ascertain that most enlightened Anglicans and Lutherans were guided by a distinctively Protestant understanding of Christianity in their efforts that was, as shown by Beutel, rooted in an interpretation of the Reformation as an act of religious emancipation. This perception arguably accounted for the most innovative and unique features of Protestant Enlightenment theology. Towards the end of the period, this phenomenon culminated among especially Lutherans in the belief to be engaged in a uniquely Protestant effort of ‘Christian Enlightenment’, as Swedish theologians explicitly put it. Despite its partly severe criticism of Augustinian beliefs that had been central to Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxy, it is therefore still possible to conceive of this Enlightenment as inherently ‘Protestant’.

Based on these findings, the thesis contends that the existing notion of a unitary ‘Religious Enlightenment’ must be reviewed since enlightened Anglicans and Lutherans rooted their theologies in a pronounced Protestant identity and method that set them apart from proponents of Catholic and Jewish Enlightenment. It is instead suggested, answering a question by Simon Grote, to think of the Religious Enlightenment as an umbrella term, linking together different confessional Enlightenments.

# I. What is Protestant Enlightenment? A

## Historiographical Problem

Ever since the dawn of modern academic history, the Enlightenment as an historical phenomenon has been subject to fierce contestation among its practitioners: was it a movement or a project, monolithic or multifaceted, multinational or transnational, universal or relativist, liberal or in the ultimate instance authoritarian? On all these questions, received academic consensus has shifted over the past one hundred years in particular.<sup>1</sup> One essential idea has, however, arguably persisted for longer than others: the antithesis of revealed religion and Enlightenment. While the Deism of many *philosophes* was acknowledged rather early, there was widespread agreement on the Enlightenment's pronounced anti-ecclesiastical and quintessentially secular character. In this classical reading – rooted in nineteenth-century Christian polemics before being championed in wider historical scholarship by Paul Hazard, Peter Gay, as well as more recently in a revised narrative, by Jonathan Israel and Margaret Jacob – the Enlightenment (or at least its 'purist' proponents) heralded the beginning of a process of secularisation that prompted the gradual and ongoing retreat of Christianity and the institutional Church from European political and social life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the arguably authoritative overview of Enlightenment historiography, see: John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment – Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1-44.

<sup>2</sup> See: Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680-1715*, tr. J. Lewis May (New York, 2013). Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism* (2 vols., New York and London, 1995). Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001). Margaret Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment* (Princeton, 2019). For background on the Christian anti-Enlightenment polemic of the nineteenth century see: Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), pp. 28-30. Walter Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit – Theologische Aufsätze II: Protestantisches Christentum und die Herausforderung 'Aufklärung'* (2 vols., Leipzig, 2016), pp. 1-2. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

However, at the close of the twentieth century, many historians began to argue for a more differentiated consideration of the relationship between Enlightenment and particularly Christianity. Already in 1981, Joachim Whaley and Tim Blanning outlined an early vision of ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic Enlightenment’.<sup>3</sup> John Robertson has attributed these cautious forays to John Pocock’s potent challenge to the notion of the Enlightenment’s conceptual and particularly philosophical unity that Gay defended.<sup>4</sup> Instead, thus Robertson contends, Pocock highlighted the Enlightenment’s quintessential diversity: it was able to assume many differing guises – even Christian ones.<sup>5</sup> Research into the Jewish Enlightenment – the *Haskalah* – has buttressed this affirmation of the harmony between faith and Enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> This ‘religious turn’ in Enlightenment historiography has since then resulted in an exponential rise in historical inquiry into the so-called ‘Religious’ and ‘Christian Enlightenment’, as put forth by David Sorkin and Helena Rosenblatt.<sup>7</sup> Of late, a heightened focus has been placed on Catholic currents of Enlightenment, with historians such as Michael Printy and Ulrich Lehner spearheading a remarkably systematic examination of enlightened Catholicism in France, Austria, certain Italian provinces, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, they fundamentally reshaped scholarly understanding of an Enlightenment often seen as steadfastly opposed to the Roman Church.

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<sup>3</sup> See: Joachim Whaley, ‘The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 106-117. Tim Blanning, ‘The Enlightenment in Catholic Germany’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 118-126.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. x. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, p. 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, p. 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>6</sup> See: David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment – Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 9-10. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-213.

<sup>7</sup> See: Helena Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’ in Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660–1815* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2006), p. 283. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*. David Sorkin, ‘A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety’ – *The Religious Enlightenment in Central and Western Europe, 1689-1789* (Southampton, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> See: Michael Printy and Ulrich Lehner (eds.), *Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* (Leiden, 2012). Ulrich Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (New York, 2016).

While a coherent narrative of a distinctive and transnational Catholic Enlightenment has thus gradually grown, this has not been mirrored to the same extent on the Protestant side. Whilst individual Protestant expressions of Enlightenment have been extensively researched, these studies rarely venture beyond confessional and national boundaries. Bar a few exceptions such as Jonathan Sheehan's work, comparative studies on Protestant enlightened thinking have been few and far between.<sup>9</sup> This trend is not least reflected in Ritchie Robertson's recent *magnum opus* on the Enlightenment: while identifying unified Catholic, Jewish, and even Orthodox Enlightenments, Protestant Enlightenment in Britain and Germany are discussed as separate phenomena.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the few fledgling 'master narratives' of a transnational Protestant Enlightenment are already hotly contested, as historians seek to establish a wider 'Christian' or even 'Religious Enlightenment'.<sup>11</sup>

Why is the history of a transnational 'Protestant Enlightenment' in Europe not commanding the same scholarly attention as its Catholic equivalent? Is this rooted in the diversity of Protestantism or self-imposed limitations by historians? Can the term denote any one particular movement and perhaps just as importantly, what has it come to denote over the course of its history? Is there a case to examine a singular or broader 'Protestant Enlightenment' (again) or is this moot in the context of scholarship focused on unravelling the history of a wider cross-confessional 'Religious Enlightenment'?

This chapter seeks to answer these questions by reviewing the historiography of Protestant Enlightenment theology in England, Sweden, and Lutheran Germany. The selection of the Anglican and Lutheran Churches in these places is based on a two-fold consideration: England and the German states, as two juggernauts of the Reformation

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<sup>9</sup> See: Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> See: Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), p. 136. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-182.

<sup>11</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5.

and Protestant Europe, lend themselves logically to an in-depth investigation. Sweden, with its strong Lutheran tradition and perceived fringe position in eighteenth-century Europe will help to nuance the narrative by including the ‘periphery’ of Enlightenment. Further, throughout the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’, these regions experienced significant cultural, political, and philosophical exchanges, rendering the idea of a ‘Protestant network’ spanning all three plausible. Although scholars such as Sorkin, Rosenblatt, and Ritchie Robertson have rightly highlighted the prominence of enlightened theology in other Reformation Churches, most notably in Switzerland, the Low Countries, and Scotland, including these in this thesis would be beyond its scope.<sup>12</sup> The chapter will first offer a semantic definition of and an outline of changed historiographical understandings of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’, identifying three problems in particular: first, the reduction of Protestantism to a structural enabler of Enlightenment, rather than a self-contained force within this process, due to the dominance exercised by the ‘secularisation thesis’ in post-war intellectual historiography. This in turn led to a second problem: until the eve of the millennium, the study of enlightened theology was in Germany and Sweden largely left to Church historians who approached the subject from a distinct disciplinary angle not suited to the examination of a broader European ‘Protestant Enlightenment’. The neglect of Christian Enlightenment thought by Anglo-American and Swedish intellectual historians likewise caused a need to recover national Protestant Enlightenment(s) in the wake of the ‘religious turn’, making transnational approaches less viable. Thirdly, emerging narratives of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ since the 2000s have often been informed by a distinct Anglo- and Calvino-centric perspective and based on contested conceptions of Enlightenment and enlightened theology. Together with the heightened

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<sup>12</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 67-111. Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 285-287. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 162-166.

focus on a holistic ‘Christian Enlightenment’ or even ‘Religious Enlightenment’, this risks entrenching an understanding of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ that is in need of review.

## The Origins of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’

Before embarking on a dissection of the historiography of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’, it must be stated with emphasis that this concept is a retrospective classification that operates in a similar framework of reference as the ‘national Enlightenments’ presented by Mikulaš Teich and Roy Porter.<sup>13</sup> The unity suggested by the term ‘Protestant’ was not a reality for most of the early modern period, as is evidenced by the fact that most religious toleration debates of enlightened Europe centred around the connivance of other ‘Protestants’ who had previously been marginalised and persecuted. This does not signify that there was no common sense of ‘Protestant’ identity whatsoever, if only in opposition to the Catholic ‘Other’. It equally does not exclude the possibility of a self-conscious religious reform effort among eighteenth-century Protestant thinkers. It should, however, urge caution not to use the term too liberally. Further, there is the well-documented history of the inconsistent use of the term ‘Enlightenment’ across eighteenth-century Europe: while evidently in currency among contemporary German and Swedish thinkers, the English equivalent only emerged much later.<sup>14</sup> If the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’, ‘*Protestantische Aufklärung*’, ‘*Protestantiska Upplysningen*’ or ‘*Lumières Protestantes*’ is to denote a coherent and coordinated phenomenon in

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<sup>13</sup> See: Roy Porter, ‘Preface’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. vii-viii.

<sup>14</sup> See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 21. Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment*, p. 10. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 16-17. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 779. Patrik Lundell, ‘Upplysningen i provinserna: Om lärostandet i Linköping på 1790-talet’, *Scandia*, Vol. 63 (1997), p. 49. Alexander Kraus, ‘Nordlichter der Vernunft oder die Aufklärung in Skandinavien’ in Alexander Kraus and Andreas Renner (eds.), *Orte eigener Vernunft – Europäische Aufklärung jenseits der Zentren* (Frankfurt and New York, 2008), p. 92.

which practitioners of multiple national and linguistic backgrounds shared during the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’, it must fundamentally be understood as an organisational umbrella term coined for the benefit of present-day historical observers. Indeed, past and present historians have used it in this understanding, though its meaning has undergone significant change over the past decades. This shift occurred in line with changing perceptions of the role of Protestant faith(s) in the Enlightenment, as well as established conceptions of ‘Enlightenment’ itself.

Within intellectual history, Protestantism was traditionally depicted as a catalyst of Enlightenment, as Hugh Trevor-Roper pointed out: according to this view, the sixteenth-century Reformers had sown the socio-political seeds out of which Enlightenment could eventually grow.<sup>15</sup> However, especially in Germany, there was from very early on also an understanding that theology might have influenced the substance of Enlightenment *philosophie*: already in 1897, Ernst Troeltsch acknowledged that ‘theology [had] at least during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in England and in the second half in Germany gained a positive significance for the Enlightenment’.<sup>16</sup> Thirty-five years later, Ernst Cassirer seconded this view by contending that it was misguided to ‘consider the Enlightenment as an age basically irreligious and inimical to religion’ and stressing the importance that established Protestant religion played among Enlightenment thinkers in Germany and England.<sup>17</sup> The rediscovery of Renaissance Christianity by Dutch, English, and German theologians in the wake of confessional warfare was thus to him crucial in ensuring that ‘Protestantism became the religion of

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<sup>15</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (Indianapolis, 2001), p. 179.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band: Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, ed. Hans Baron (4 vols., Darmstadt, 2016), p. 370. See also: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, tr. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 2009), p. 135. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 135-196.

freedom'.<sup>18</sup> However, this acceptance of the possible 'compromise of Enlightenment and theology'<sup>19</sup> (Troeltsch) came with a very heavy caveat: both Troeltsch and Cassirer believed that this process ultimately required an emancipation from, if not outright rejection, of the core beliefs of Protestantism and Christianity in general.<sup>20</sup> Truly enlightened religiosity thus still demanded embarking on a path of (if only *de facto*) secularisation, since Christianity and Enlightenment pursued ultimately contradictory ends.<sup>21</sup>

These tentative initiatives at reconciling Christian faith and enlightened philosophy within the German academy were not matched by historians elsewhere. Far from it, the ideal of the 'secular(ising) Enlightenment' only rose in prominence from 1945 onwards, as most historians have highlighted.<sup>22</sup> The first cautious challenge to this view within Anglo-American historiography came from Trevor-Roper who rooted the Enlightenment in the 'Erasmian' offshoots of Arminianism and Socinianism that gained momentum within Dutch and English Protestant Churches in the seventeenth century, proclaiming a more conciliatory and open-minded Christianity.<sup>23</sup> This was a process Trevor-Roper believed to be mirrored in Lutheran Germany by the rise of the Pietist movement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>19</sup> Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, p. 371.

<sup>20</sup> Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, pp. 371-372. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-177.

<sup>21</sup> Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, p. 372. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-177. This belief was later echoed by Gay. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 17-18. *Ibid.*, p. 22. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314. *Ibid.*, p. 280. *Ibid.*, pp. 322-326. *Ibid.*, pp. 338-342. *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359. *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>22</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 311-312. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 136. Jakob Christensson, 'På spaning efter den svenska upplysningen', *Häften för Kritiska Studier*, Vol. 25 (1992), pp. 34-35. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 283. Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind*. Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise – Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg and Munich, 2013). Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*.

<sup>23</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 191. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-205. Troeltsch and Cassirer had also identified Arminianism as a significant influence on the religious Enlightenment. See: Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, p. 347. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 140-141. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 214-215.

Reformation Christianity was thus no longer seen to have merely ‘accidentally’ caused the Enlightenment but actively spurred it on in its early stages.

Naturally, there was nuance to this argument: Trevor-Roper recognised just as Cassirer had done that Protestantism was not naturally inclined towards Enlightenment and was often a barrier to it.<sup>25</sup> This was an objection echoed by other intellectual historians: Peter Gay thus argued that the advocates of ‘liberal theology’ in England and Protestant Germany failed to grasp the antithetical character of their mission and accused them of committing a ‘treason of the clerks’ that actively undermined Christianity.<sup>26</sup> A similar anti-clerical reading of Enlightenment gained prominence in Sweden where Tore Frängsmyr argued that a resolutely orthodox Lutheran Church all but prevented the ascendancy of a ‘proper’ Swedish Enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> These attitudes sustained, as Anton Jansson and Hjalmar Falk recently observed, a wider trend within Swedish *idéhistoria* that all but denied Christianity any major agency in modern Swedish thought.<sup>28</sup>

Although established religion was thus increasingly seen to have been on some level reconcilable with Enlightenment, the idea of an Enlightenment *within* Protestantism as a whole was far from being fully appraised. The consensus in Anglo-American and German intellectual history broadly continued to be that Protestantism was principally a catalyst of Enlightenment – while many Swedish historians did not even attribute this enabling role to it. The continuing belief in the Enlightenment as the cradle of Western secularisation meant that research into religious expressions of Enlightenment continued to attract little interest from mainstream intellectual history. Jansson’s and

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<sup>25</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 181. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-190. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207. *Ibid.*, p. 211. *Ibid.*, p. 213-218.

<sup>26</sup> Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 331. *Ibid.*, p. 22. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314. *Ibid.*, pp. 322-331. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-351. *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>27</sup> Tore Frängsmyr, ‘The Enlightenment in Sweden’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> Anton Jansson and Hjalmar Falk, ‘Religion i det svenska idéhistorieämnet – Översikt och reflektion’, *Lychnos: Lärdomshistoriska samfundets årsbok* (2017), pp. 75-76. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-89.

Falk's verdict that 'religion was traditionally not considered to be the favourite subject of *idéhistoriker*' was thus largely true of intellectual historians outside the Scandinavian kingdom too.<sup>29</sup> Only towards the end of the twentieth century, was a greater role attributed to theology in discussions of Enlightenment.

## The Theology of the Enlightenment

However restricted the consensus on the Enlightenment's 'Protestant frame of mind' within post-war intellectual history, this did not equate to a holistic neglect of enlightened Protestant theology: especially within Church history, theologians and theologies marked by an 'enlightened frame of mind' did rouse the interest of scholars – with implications for the development of historiography in all three cases.

The perhaps most systematic strides were made in Germany: already in 1929, Karl Aner published in *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* a seminal study on enlightened Protestant thought that had an impact on wider histories of the Enlightenment, most notably on Cassirer and Gay.<sup>30</sup> After the Second World War, Church historians such as Karl Barth, Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, Klaus Scholder, and Wolfgang Gericke continued this line of research into the history of Lutheran and Reformed *Aufklärungstheologie* in the German states.<sup>31</sup> This was mirrored in Sweden by the scholarship of Gottfrid Westling, Carl Arvid Hessler, and Bertil Rehnberg whose work similarly stressed the inroads made by Swedish Enlightenment theology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

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<sup>29</sup> Jansson and Falk, 'Religion i det svenska idéhistorieämnet', p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle, 1929). Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 160. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 440.

<sup>31</sup> See: Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert – Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zurich, 1981). Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1965). Klaus Scholder, 'Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland' in Heinz Liebing and Klaus Scholder (eds.), *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation – Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 460-486. Wolfgang Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1989).

century.<sup>32</sup> However, acknowledgement of the existence of enlightened Protestantism was again not always tantamount to a belief in the fundamental compatibility of Enlightenment and Protestantism: whilst acknowledging the existence of a ‘Christian Enlightenment’ (*christliche Aufklärung*), Barth thus ultimately concluded that, however sincere the faith of its proponents, eighteenth-century enlightened theology ultimately represented an attempt to subject divinity to humanity, that is to secularise and thus corrode the foundations of Christianity.<sup>33</sup> The ‘secularisation thesis’ thus held considerable sway in the theological faculties too – perpetuating narratives of nineteenth-century Protestant theologians who had emphasised the essential antithesis of Reformation Christianity and Enlightenment in the wake of the French Revolution.<sup>34</sup> Even scholarship that judged enlightened theology less negatively struggled to make a wider impact due to the general limitations associated with ecclesiastical history. Most Church historians sought to principally retrace the doctrinal and institutional history of the established Protestant churches in Germany and Sweden respectively: as a result, their scholarship occurred within strict national, state, and sometimes even regional boundaries. A wider interest in comparative theological history of European Protestantism during the Enlightenment was rather limited, if not fairly non-existent. Still, the work of Church historians in Germany and Sweden stood in marked contrast to its English-speaking post-war counterpart that appeared to have little interest in exploring a meaningful link between Anglican doctrine and Enlightenment.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See: Gottfrid Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka med särskildt afseende på Linköpings stift’, *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, Vol. 17 (1916), pp. 115-237. Carl Arvid Hessler, *Stat och Religion i Upplysningstidens Sverige* (Uppsala and Stockholm, 1956). Bertil Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och religionsdebatten 1786-1800* (Uppsala and Stockholm, 1966).

<sup>33</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 101. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-92. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-118. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 28-29. Scholder, ‘Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland’, pp. 476-477. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 22. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 145. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 771.

<sup>35</sup> Among the few works exploring this nexus were: Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment – A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge, 1957). Gerald R. Cragg, *From Puritanism*

There is thus much to say for the contention that it was the arrival of John Pocock on the scene of Anglo-American intellectual history that shifted perceptions: not only did he revive interest in the Christian Enlightenment in England, but his rejection of a monolithic Enlightenment in favour of a pluralist one ended the view that the concept of a 'Christian Enlightenment' was a misunderstanding, if not an outright oxymoron.<sup>36</sup> This gradual weakening of the academic consensus helped to pave the way for a new line of enquiry into the relationship of Protestantism and the Enlightenment within intellectual history: Reformation theology and theologians were no longer seen to play a passive or tragic, but rather an active and constructive role in the eighteenth century's intellectual upheavals. This was especially true of England, where publications by Pocock, Knud Haakonssen, and Brian Young significantly altered the perception of English Protestantism's role in the Enlightenment.<sup>37</sup> By the beginning of the new millennium, it had become possible for Pocock to identify 'a Protestant Enlightenment which took shape among the Dutch, Swiss, and emigré Huguenot clergy' that gained traction across Reformation Europe.<sup>38</sup> This was extended by other historians to include the Lutheran and Reformed territories of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>39</sup> All these authors attributed a

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*to the Age of Reason – A Study of the Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 1950). Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789* (Bristol, 1966). As seen, Gay briefly discussed the enlightened tendencies among Anglican clergy, while excluding them from the Enlightenment proper. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 322-327. *Ibid.*, pp. 342-347.

<sup>36</sup> See: Simon Grote, 'Review-Essay: Religion and Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 75 (2014), p. 145. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27. John Pocock, 'Post-Puritan England and the Problem of Enlightenment' in Perez Zagorin (ed.), *Culture and Politics – From Puritanism to the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 93-94. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103. John Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce: The Conservative Enlightenment in England' in Lester G. Crocker (ed.), *L'Età dei Lumi: studi storici sul Settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi, Vol. I* (2 vols., Naples, 1985), pp. 528-534. See also: Roy Porter, 'The Enlightenment in England' in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 6-10.

<sup>37</sup> See: Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996). Brian Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998). John Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion – Vol. 1: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon 1737-1764* (6 vols., Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce', p. 530.

<sup>39</sup> James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley, 'Introduction' in James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley (eds.), *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre Dame, 2001), p. 15.

previously uncommon role of protagonists of Enlightenment to Protestant theologians, thereby setting the groundwork for a ‘religious turn’ in Enlightenment historiography at the beginning of the twenty-first century: in 2003, Sheehan was thus able to declare in the *American Historical Review* that ‘religion has returned to the Enlightenment’.<sup>40</sup> Since then, scholars such as David Sorkin, Paul Avis, and William J. Bulman have continued to examine Protestant forms of Enlightenment in greater depth.<sup>41</sup> This Anglo-American ‘religious turn’ of the early 2000s saw intellectual historians taking the lead in the examination of the links between Christianity and Enlightenment. Its impact on scholarship outside of the Anglosphere has varied, however. While enlightened Protestantism and its significance to the *Aufklärung* has – as seen with Troeltsch and Cassirer – long been recognised by German intellectual historians, the in-depth study of enlightened Lutheran thought has within German academia largely continued to be the preserve of Church historians. This is not to say that German scholarship on *Aufklärungstheologie* from the late 1990s onwards has been marginal, far from it: around the time of the ‘religious turn’ in Anglo-American intellectual historiography, German ecclesiastical historians too gained a renewed interest in enlightened expressions of theology. Especially Albrecht Beutel has proved to be of pivotal importance in this respect: his seminal *Aufklärung in Deutschland* (later re-issued under the more apt heading *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*), published in 2006, constituted a thus far unrivalled synthesis of the German Protestant ‘ecclesiastical Enlightenment’ (*kirchliche Aufklärung*) and its theology.<sup>42</sup> Since then, Beutel has published and edited a

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<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Sheehan, ‘Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108 (2003), p. 1062.

<sup>41</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 23-66. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-112. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-163. Paul Avis, *In Search of Authority: Anglican Theological Method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (London, 2014). William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> See: Albrecht Beutel, *Aufklärung in Deutschland – Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte* (Göttingen, 2006). Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*.

plethora of volumes and monographs, making the field of Protestant Enlightenment theology one of the most active ones in present-day German Church history.<sup>43</sup> German scholarship has thus arguably provided a more systematic narrative of Protestant manifestations of Enlightenment than essentially any other historical guild. However, since Beutel and other historians involved in the analysis of Protestant *Aufklärungstheologie* still operate within the disciplinary framework of Church history, their analysis has struggled to make a larger impact on wider transnational scholarship of the Enlightenment.

Swedish scholarship, by contrast appears, to have followed the footsteps of Anglophone historians, seeing a similar trend of increasing interest from intellectual historians in religious expressions of Enlightenment from the 1990s onwards. This coincided with a wider challenge to Frängsmyr's perception of *upplysningen* by scholars such as Arne Jarrick, Bo Lindberg, Gunnar Broberg, and Jakob Christensson who were far more willing to assent to the existence of a Swedish Enlightenment.<sup>44</sup> At the forefront of the 'Protestant Enlightenment' in Sweden was a doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Lund by Christensson: his *Lyckoriket* proved a watershed, fundamentally subverting scholarly consensus in the Scandinavian country.<sup>45</sup> Christensson not only directly contradicted Frängsmyr's contention that eighteenth-century Sweden-Finland had, bar pockets of cosmopolitan imitators of French-style *Lumières*, not seen any

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<sup>43</sup> To cite but a few: Albrecht Beutel and Volker Leppin (eds.), *Religion und Aufklärung: Studien zur neuzeitlichen "Umformung des Christlichen"* (Leipzig, 2004). Albrecht Beutel (ed.), *Reflektierte Religion: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Protestantismus* (Tübingen, 2007). Albrecht Beutel and Angelika Dörfler-Dierken (eds.), *Glaube und Vernunft: Studien zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 2014). Albrecht Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding – Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> See: 'Hur upplyst var Sverige på 1700-talet?', *Svenska Dagbladet* (26 August 2003), p. 4 (Kultur). Marie-Christine Skuncke, 'Was There A Swedish Enlightenment' in Svavar Sigmundsson (ed.), *Norden och Europa 1700-1830 – Synvinklar på ömsesidigt kulturellt inflytande* (Reykjavik, 2003), pp. 25-41. Arne Jarrick, 'Visst fans det en upplysning i Sverige!' in Ronny Ambjörnsson, Pär Eliasson, and Björn Olsson (eds.), *Upplysningen i periferin* (Umeå, 1998), pp. 13-28. Christensson, 'På spaning efter den svenska upplysningen', pp. 33-57.

<sup>45</sup> See: Jakob Christensson, *Lyckoriket – Studier i Svensk Upplysning* (Stockholm, 1996).

Enlightenment but posited that one of the primary characteristics of the Swedish Enlightenment was its harmonious coexistence with Lutheran religiosity.<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, he concluded, that the Swedes ‘more or less overtly equated enlightenment with Lutheranism’.<sup>47</sup> His ground-breaking study, strongly echoing Pocock’s findings on the English Enlightenment, encouraged many Swedish historians to reassess the idea of *upplysningen* and the role of religion in this phenomenon. As of late, the interest in the relationship of Enlightenment and Swedish Lutheranism has not least grown since Swedish historians have taken note of the Anglo-American ‘religious turn’.<sup>48</sup> The structural state of the historiography on Protestant Enlightenment theology is thus anything but a straightforward one: whereas intellectual historians are leading the charge of the ‘religious’ and specifically the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ in Anglo-American and Swedish academia, this field is still largely dominated by Church historians in Germany. The consequences of this constellation are quite significant, with Germany finding itself in the odd position of having the most well-documented history of Protestant Enlightenment which however mostly occurred within the confines of Church history – a wider problem of the historical treatment of religion, as Jeremy Gregory has highlighted.<sup>49</sup> In England, on the other hand, a decade-long neglect of the English Enlightenment and its religious expressions, both within Church and intellectual history, has led to the ‘religious turn’ coinciding with a holistic reconstruction and

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<sup>46</sup> Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, p. 399. Christensson had previously expounded his ideas on a religious Swedish Enlightenment in a journal article in 1992. See: Christensson, ‘Den svenska upplysningen’, pp. 41-42. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>47</sup> Jakob Christensson, ‘Scandinavia’ in Charles Kors (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* (4 vols., Oxford, 2005) – <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2518/view/10.1093/acref/9780195104301.001.0001/acref-9780195104301-e-644?rskey=5vfYht&result=644> (18 Apr 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Carola Nordbäck, *Lycksalighetens källa – Kontextuella närläsningar av Anders Chydenius budordspredikningar* (Åbo, 2009), p. 15. See also: Jansson and Falk, ‘Religion i det svenska idéhistorieämnet’, pp. 86-89.

<sup>49</sup> Jeremy Gregory, ‘Introduction: Transforming the “Age of Reason” into “an Age of Faiths”: or Putting Religions and Beliefs (Back) into the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 32/3 (2009), pp. 293-294.

reassessment of the Anglican Enlightenment that is ongoing. Sweden constitutes an odd case in point: whilst it has seen its fair share of enquiry in Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theology in the realm of Church history, this has not been as systematic and far-reaching as in Germany. With the academic consensus surrounding the perceived lack of a proper *upplysningen*, much research into the intricacies of enlightened Lutheranism was precluded. When Christensson reasserted the role of enlightened Christianity in Sweden, he not only resurrected the Swedish Protestant Enlightenment, but the Swedish Enlightenment itself. Whatever the state of play within the individual academies, one point is clear: a transnational discourse of the kind established by Printy and Lehner on enlightened Catholicism is yet to be forged among historians of eighteenth-century Protestantism. Scholarship on the ‘theological Enlightenment’ within European Protestantism continues to be fragmented into denominational, institutional, and national categories without a major coordinated dialogue within an overarching superstructure – as if in reflection of Protestantism itself. This has had significant impact on the nascent conceptions of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ since the new millennium.

## The Protestant Enlightenment Contested

While it would be tempting to conclude this review on the last point, there is an additional layer of complexity to the question of why there has thus far not been a convincing overall narrative of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’: the ongoing uncertainty as to what qualifies as ‘enlightened Christian thought’. The attentive reader may have noticed that throughout this introduction, the term ‘Enlightenment theology’ has been employed without any adequate clarification of what it entailed. This was not due to sloppiness or the existence of a clearly defined notion of what ‘Enlightenment theology’

constitutes. Indeed, rather the opposite is true: while the ‘religious turn’ in the early 2000s definitively re-established the role of organised religion in the Enlightenment, there has been ongoing disagreement as to what falls under this category.

At the outset of the original narrative of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ established in the wake of the ‘religious turn’ stood an enlightened Anglican tradition inspired by Remonstrant ideas from the Netherlands which then spread into Calvinist Switzerland and Protestant Germany.<sup>50</sup> According to the currently dominant interpretation, neatly summarised by Helena Rosenblatt, the impetus for enlightened religion was provided by a dual quest to establish a moderate and ethical Christianity based upon the belief that ‘[r]eason and revelation could be reconciled’.<sup>51</sup> As such, she argues in keeping with Sorkin’s scholarship, the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ treaded a *via media* opposed to religious and irreligious bigotry alike.<sup>52</sup> Within English Protestantism, historians have traditionally considered the so-called Latitudinarians, associated with the Cambridge Platonists and Whigs, as the principal proponents of this enlightened religion.<sup>53</sup> In Germany, their efforts were, according to Rosenblatt, mirrored by Wolffianism which ultimately culminated in the Neology movement.<sup>54</sup>

However, this traditional narrative contains flaws that need to be addressed. For one, it is informed by a distinct Anglo- and Calvino-centrism: historians have thus often identified Churches and communities that were predominantly Calvinist as both the cradle and most important centres of the Protestant Enlightenment, at the expense of

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<sup>50</sup> See: Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 284-285. Sorkin, ‘A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety’, pp. 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, p. 285. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-288.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>53</sup> See: Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 25. John Gascoigne, ‘Anglican latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and political radicalism in the late eighteenth-century’ in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion – Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 221-225. Richard Ashcraft, ‘Latitudinarianism and toleration: historical myth versus political history’ in Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England 1640-1700* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 153.

<sup>54</sup> Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 287-288.

Lutheranism.<sup>55</sup> This marginalisation of Lutheranism as an instigator of Protestant Enlightenment proper can be directly traced back to Trevor-Roper who considered Calvinism to be the principal, albeit reluctant, host of Erasmian theology, even if he did acknowledge that German *Aufklärung* too had theological roots.<sup>56</sup> This may in turn be explained at least in part by linguistic barriers, as is most obvious in the case of Scandinavia: largely neglected in English-language scholarship, it is arguably one region to wholly defy the Anglo- and Calvino-centric narrative. For, as might be expected, Sweden's path as a Lutheran country strongly resembled the German one, albeit with a few twists: with the Swedish kingdom lacking the religious liberty of German states such as Prussia and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel for much of the eighteenth century, most theological developments arrived only with significant delay in Sweden. For most of the period, according to Christensson's landmark study, a conservative Lutheran Enlightenment dominated within the kingdom, with religious censorship and other constraints imposed by the Swedish Church hamstringing more radical theological innovation in the Scandinavian country.<sup>57</sup> Neology and other more radical offshoots of enlightened theological thinking did not become a strong theological influence in the kingdom prior to the 1790s, when they were already essentially fading into oblivion in Germany.<sup>58</sup>

Aside from the Scandinavian dimension, the current interpretation of enlightened Lutheran theology in Germany may likewise deserve differentiation: first, one may question whether Lutheran *Aufklärung* was indeed spawned by Dutch and English Calvinism to the degree that is often suggested. Secondly, the focus upon Wolffianism as

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<sup>55</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 182-183. *Ibid.*, p. 189-199. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215. Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce', pp. 553-554. *Ibid.*, pp. 557-558. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', pp. 284-285. Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety', pp. 9-10. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 6-9. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. 145. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205.

<sup>56</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 199. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-206. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-218.

<sup>57</sup> Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, p. 399.

<sup>58</sup> See: Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, p. 219.

the beginning of enlightened Lutheranism could be shifted to carve out a greater space for Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz whose role has been slightly marginalised in light of an increasing scholarly emphasis on the originality and popularity of Christian Wolff.<sup>59</sup> This tendency notwithstanding, German historians have in fact conceived a periodisation of the German Lutheran Enlightenment that is in line with the above theses, dividing it into three principal schools: the first, emerging towards the late seventeenth-century, was initiated by Leibniz who provided the initial impetus for an *Aufklärungstheologie* within German Lutheranism.<sup>60</sup> This tendency found its erstwhile culmination in Christian Wolff and his 'systematic theology'.<sup>61</sup> Wolffianism was in turn succeeded from the 1740s onwards by Neology ('New Teachings').<sup>62</sup> This phase has generally come to be equated with the high point of Lutheran Enlightenment in Germany, when a genuine attempt was undertaken to merge luminary thinking with Lutheran (and Reformed) doctrine.<sup>63</sup> The third school of Lutheran Enlightenment theology has generally been identified in a theological Rationalism that, according to scholars such as Beutel, developed in parallel to Wolffianism and Neology before finding its ultimate expression in theological Kantianism.<sup>64</sup> This periodisation would thus both suggest a greater

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<sup>59</sup> See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 301. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 9. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 104. *Ibid.*, p. 106. Ian Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenments – Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle, 1690-1730' in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 582.

<sup>60</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-59. *Ibid.*, p. 65. *Ibid.*, p. 144. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Reformation und Neuzeit, Bd.2* (2 vols., Gütersloh, 1999), pp. 459-461. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 70. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 116. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-142. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Reformation und Neuzeit, Bd.2*, pp. 466-468. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 104-109.

<sup>62</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 116. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-152. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Reformation und Neuzeit, Bd.2*, pp. 468-470. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 112-151.

<sup>63</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 142-146. *Ibid.*, p. 152. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Reformation und Neuzeit, Bd.2*, p. 469. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 112-115. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-246.

<sup>64</sup> Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 151-152. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 152-169. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 116.

autonomy, if not originality, of the German Lutheran Enlightenment from the Anglo-Calvinist Enlightenments, whilst (re)establishing Leibniz rather than Wolff as its founding father.

More pertinently, however, the classical interpretation of 'Protestant Enlightenment' has come under criticism from other corners too. This concerns first the conception of the Anglican Enlightenment, as John Spurr, Richard Ashcraft, and Bulman have cast aspersions on the enlightened credentials of Latitudinarianism: on the issue of toleration, as is especially Ashcraft's and Bulman's argument, the clerical Whigs were increasingly seen as simple competitors in a wider dispute for political dominance within the Anglican Church.<sup>65</sup> Particularly Bulman has consequently denied the Latitudinarians' status as the principal 'enlightened party' within the English Church.<sup>66</sup> Instead, he has painted a vision of a conservative early Anglican Enlightenment that included Tory divines such as Lancelot Addison among its prominent figures.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Avis has begun to claim more conservative clerics such as William Law for the Anglican Enlightenment as well, further blurring the lines.<sup>68</sup>

Bulman's argument has instilled one of the most controversial questions surrounding the Protestant Enlightenment with new life: whether it could accommodate orthodox and revivalist movements. In German scholarship, there is thus a continuous debate over the status of the more conservative yet still innovative 'transition theology' (*Übergangstheologie*) propounded by theologians such as Johann Franz Buddeus (1667-1729) and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693-1755) who saw the need for a reformed

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<sup>65</sup> Ashcraft, 'Latitudinarianism and toleration', p. 151. *Ibid.*, p. 155. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-165. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 4-8. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-40. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-117. *Ibid.*, p. 260. William J. Bulman, 'Enlightenment and Religious Politics in Restoration England', *History Compass*, Vol. 10/10 (2012), p. 754.

<sup>66</sup> Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. xi. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-8. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145. *Ibid.*, p. 149. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-174. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211. *Ibid.*, p. 260. Bulman, 'Enlightenment and Religious Politics in Restoration England', pp. 752-753. *Ibid.*, pp. 757-758.

<sup>67</sup> Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. xi-xiv. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-13. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-205.

<sup>68</sup> Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 289.

Lutheran orthodoxy whilst remaining hesitant of abandoning too many of its core elements.<sup>69</sup> Even more controversially discussed is the status of ‘enthusiastic’ movements, as historians have long been strongly divided on the enlightened credentials of Pietism and Methodism. Especially in the early stages of research into the *kirchliche Aufklärung*, certain German Church historians echoed Trevor-Roper’s belief that Pietism and (ecclesiastical) Enlightenment went hand-in-hand: foremost among them was Barth who highlighted the overlap between Pietist and enlightened theology.<sup>70</sup> Scholder echoed this view, going as far as to claim that Lutheran Enlightenment theology derived its most innovative features from the enthusiastic movement and highlighted the connections of many enlightened theologians to Pietism as evidence of this.<sup>71</sup> Though scholarship has become more nuanced in this assessment, Barth’s and Scholder’s essential belief that Pietism showed a strong compatibility with the Enlightenment has since been sustained by historians such as Martin Schmidt and more recently, Martin Gierl and Ian Hunter who have pointed amongst others to the movement’s belief in the powers of human betterment.<sup>72</sup> This is echoed on the Swedish side, as questions could be raised whether reformist Swedish clergymen such as Anders Chydenius should be classified as Pietist or (proto-)Neologian.<sup>73</sup> On the Anglican side, Avis and Ritchie Robertson have recently made a significant point of the enlightened influences of John Wesley and his followers, whilst Andrew Murphy, Ashcraft, and Bulman have credited

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<sup>69</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 120-135. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Reformation und Neuzeit, Bd.2*, pp. 467-468. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 96-104. Beutel points out that the concept of ‘Übergangstheologie’ has been subject to criticism in German church historiography. He is correct, however, that it remains the most useful designation to date. See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>70</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 64-65. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-103. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>71</sup> Scholder, ‘Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland’, pp. 484-485. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>72</sup> Martin Gierl, ‘Pietism, Enlightenment, and Modernity’ in Douglas Shantz (ed.), *A Companion to German Pietism* (Leiden, 2015), p. 350. *Ibid.*, pp. 348-392. Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, p. 579. *Ibid.*, p. 582. *Ibid.*, pp. 588-589. *Ibid.*, p. 591.

<sup>73</sup> Nordbäck, *Lycksalighetens källa*, p. 17.

English enthusiastic and dissenting movements with spearheading many late seventeenth-century campaigns for religious toleration.<sup>74</sup> On the other side, Pocock, Rosenblatt, and Sorkin have deemed Pietism and other mystic movements largely incompatible with their conceptions of Protestant Enlightenment.<sup>75</sup> However, even Rosenblatt has conceded that there was significant overlap, if only rhetorically, between Enlightenment and enthusiastic theologians from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>76</sup>

The debates surrounding the status of orthodox and especially enthusiastic Protestantism(s) in the Enlightenment pose a substantive challenge to the classical interpretation of the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ as a phenomenon rooted in an ‘Erasmian’ Christianity and characterised by an affirmation of the seventeenth-century philosophies that emphasised the faculties of human reason. Yet it is not the only one: on the other end of the spectrum, one may wonder whether the influence of especially Socinian theology could have been overstated in scholarship. Whilst it is undeniable that orthodox Protestants of any denomination were quick to label dissident theologians with these terms, it is not certain that this does justice to their theologies. This becomes particularly apparent when seeing the suspicion with which figures such as Leibniz, Latitudinarians, and even Neologians viewed Socinianism themselves.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, Gierl has highlighted how especially in Germany, early Enlightenment thought stemmed from a complicated process of communication and academic debate that was not clearly

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<sup>74</sup> Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 295. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 158-159. *Ibid.*, p. 161. Bulman, ‘Enlightenment and Religious Politics in Restoration England’, p. 753. Ashcraft, ‘Latitudinarianism and toleration’, pp. 162-163.

<sup>75</sup> See: Pocock, ‘Clergy and Commerce’, p. 531. Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, p. 285. *Ibid.*, p. 286. *Ibid.*, pp. 287-288. *Ibid.*, p. 297. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, p. 120-122. *Ibid.*, p. 127. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>76</sup> Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, p. 297.

<sup>77</sup> See: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy – Essays on the Goodness of God, Freedom of Man, and the Origins of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer and tr. E.M. Huggard (Peru, 2005), p. 162. *Ibid.*, p. 343. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 55. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 262-271. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 80.

driven by a single school of ideas.<sup>78</sup> In English-language scholarship, Noel Malcolm has similarly critically scrutinised Trevor-Roper's idea of an ascendancy of a belief in religious toleration rooted in Erasmianism.<sup>79</sup>

The above questions, however, all culminate in a common systemic challenge – one that is rooted in the very nature of the 'religious turn' itself: it is too broad in its objective. Over the course of the past two decades, scholars have thus mainly debated whether enlightened Protestantism ought to be judged in its own right or considered part of a wider 'Christian Enlightenment' (Rosenblatt) or indeed a 'Religious Enlightenment' (Sorkin).<sup>80</sup> This has significantly blurred any timeline and coherent programme of a 'Protestant Enlightenment'. This can be seen in Sorkin's vision of a 'Religious Enlightenment' which builds on four characteristics that broadly overlap with Rosenblatt's notion of a 'Christian Enlightenment': apart from a theological commitment to religious moderation and tolerance based on a 'balance of reason and revelation', this includes in particular the membership of the learned upper tier of the clergy and close links to the secular(ising) state, whose primacy in worldly affairs they strongly supported.<sup>81</sup> Most importantly, he suggested to conceive of the Enlightenment as an open-ended 'spectrum'.<sup>82</sup> It is possible to argue that such an expansion was necessary in light of concerns – as voiced by Sheehan and John Robertson – that the Enlightenment was facing an excessive fragmentation as a result of Pocock's conceptualisation of its

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<sup>78</sup> Martin Gierl, 'Befleckte Empfängnis: Pietistische Hermeneutik, Indifferentismus, Eklektik, und die Konsolidierung pietistischer, orthodoxer und frühaufklärerischer Ansprüche und Ideen' in Hans-Erich Bödeker (ed.), *Strukturen der deutschen Frühaufklärung, 1680-1720* (Göttingen, 2008), pp. 142-143.

<sup>79</sup> Noel Malcolm, 'Ecumenism and Erasmianism: The Wiles Lectures, 1975' in Blair Worden (ed.), *Hugh-Trevor Roper – The Historian* (London, 2016), pp. 114-115.

<sup>80</sup> See: Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', pp. 283-284. Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety'. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>81</sup> Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety', p. 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-20. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 11-19.

<sup>82</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 19.

pluralist nature.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, they may even be justified by the fact, already acknowledged by Trevor-Roper, that the Erasmian theological principles central to the genesis of the Enlightenment did not have their origin in Protestantism, even if they were more readily absorbed by it.<sup>84</sup> Yet Sorkin's and Rosenblatt's conceptions, if reduced to these principles, still may be seen to cast their nets too widely, allowing potentially for the inclusion of a variety of thinkers and movements one may consider to fit the description of 'enlightened' only with a lot of goodwill.<sup>85</sup> Especially the idea of an 'Enlightenment spectrum' has aided scholars such as Bulman, Dan Edelstein, and Anton Matytsin in carving out a greater role for orthodox, mystic, and enthusiastic religiosity within the Enlightenment.<sup>86</sup> The quest for a 'Religious Enlightenment' that transcends creeds and confessions may thus potentially omit crucial systemic differences that could help to achieve a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. Otherwise, it risks enabling defenders of a 'secular Enlightenment' such as Margaret Jacob to re-assert the primacy of the non-religious in this process again.<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

A 'Protestant Enlightenment' may have taken many different forms and occurred on a variety of levels: first and foremost, it self-evidently would have had an ecclesiastical

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<sup>83</sup> Sheehan, 'Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization', p. 1068. *Ibid.*, p. 1075. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, p. 16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 205-206. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211. *Ibid.*, p. 213. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>85</sup> John Robertson in fact explicitly warned against this risk. See: Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 16.

<sup>86</sup> See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. xi. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205. Bulman, 'Enlightenment and Religious Politics in Restoration England', pp. 752-764. Anton M. Matytsin and Dan Edelstein, 'Introduction' in Anton M. Matytsin and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Let There Be Enlightenment – The Religious and Mystical Sources of Rationality* (Baltimore, 2018), pp. 5-17. Bulman has in fact himself invoked the idea of an 'Enlightenment spectrum'. See: William J. Bulman, 'Secular Sacerdotalism in the Anglican Enlightenment, 1660-1740' in Anton M. Matytsin and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Let There Be Enlightenment – The Religious and Mystical Sources of Rationality* (Baltimore, 2018), p. 206.

<sup>87</sup> Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment*, pp. 1-5.

expression. Likewise, it could have assumed a political, social, cultural, and gender dimension. It may have been isolated or part of a wider 'religious Enlightenment' in Europe. Before examining this, however, it is necessary to establish its primary character: since it is part of the wider process of Enlightenment, that means to assess it as an intellectual phenomenon. As John Robertson rightly stresses, no history of Enlightenment can afford to neglect this foundational aspect.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, any 'Protestant Enlightenment' needs a coherent body of (religious) ideas, that is a distinctive theology.

However evident this may seem at first sight, historians of ideas did not approach the 'Protestant Enlightenment' from this angle for a long time. Well until the Anglo-American 'religious turn', Protestantism was mostly perceived as an enabler, not a protagonist of Enlightenment. At best, the involvement of churchmen in enlightened endeavours was seen to be evidence of a basic propensity of Reformation Christianity and the new thinking of the Long Eighteenth Century. Few however believed that a (genuine) Enlightenment, *Aufklärung* or *upplysningen* occurred within the realm of Anglican and Lutheran theology. Particularly in Anglo-American historiography, studies focused for long on the 'Protestant frame of mind of the Enlightenment', rather than *vice-versa*. Yet the negligence of strands of Enlightenment theology by intellectual historians did not signify that the field was wholly overlooked: however, if it did occur, it often remained limited to Church historians confined to national and denominational categories. This prevented a more thoroughgoing transnational and supra-confessional study of Protestant Enlightenment thought, as well as an assessment of its significance for the wider process of Enlightenment. The consequences of this fragmentation of scholarship have to a significant extent outlasted the Anglo-American 'religious turn' of

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<sup>88</sup> Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 21. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

intellectual history which appears not to have fully tapped into the wealth of German ecclesiastical historical scholarship on the *kirchliche Aufklärung*. Consequently, comparative research has thus far been limited and often conducted in reference to English and Calvinist currents of Enlightenment. This has led to an insufficient appreciation of the originality of the German Lutheran *Aufklärung* and most crucially, its impact on the Scandinavian Lutheran Enlightenment, more likely to have been influenced by Germany than England. Albeit understandable given the only recently contested consensus of the absence of a proper *upplysningen*, let alone one accommodating of religion, the role of Lutheranism in the wider 'Protestant Enlightenment' must be examined more meticulously in order to be embedded into a more holistic European narrative. This could further help to clarify whether orthodox and enthusiastic Protestant movements may be included in any religious Enlightenment. However, to ascertain whether there truly is a place for these types of Protestantisms within the Enlightenment, one needs to further refine the still overly broad definitions of Rosenblatt and Sorkin. This especially involves going beyond the question of what Protestant Enlightenment figures thought by dedicating greater attention to how they arrived at their theologies. Rather than asking *whether* theologians pursued a moderate 'third way', it must be asked *why* they did so. Whilst Barth, Sorkin, Bulman, Hunter, Ritchie Robertson, and Sarah Mortimer have already pointed to the importance of method and metaphysics in their studies and definitions, a systematic, cross-border examination of what inspired religious Enlightenment in Protestant Europe is still needed.<sup>89</sup> The task for any historian attempting to forge a narrative of the 'Protestant

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<sup>89</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 20-23. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92. *Ibid.*, p. 114. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-139. Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety', p. 10. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. xi-xiv. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-80. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-117. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-145. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151. Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenments', pp. 582-589. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 137-157. *Ibid.*, p. 190. Sarah Mortimer, 'Religion and Enlightenment' in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (eds.), *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Chichester, 2016), p. 350. *Ibid.*, pp. 354-356.

Enlightenment' therefore remains to identify the broad theological and philosophical strands uniting it, in conscious memory of the fundamental revision of what counts as 'Enlightenment', *Aufklärung* or *upplysningen*.

Yet the 'religious turn' may indeed have made such an enquiry more difficult, than easier. While it has seen a number of stellar comparative histories of enlightened religiosity, this has broadly occurred in service of a particular aim, namely the establishment of a wider uniform 'Christian' or indeed 'Religious Enlightenment': Rosenblatt's account of the 'Protestant Enlightenment' was merely a sub-heading in her chapter on the 'Christian Enlightenment', whereas Sorkin has been very explicit about the fact that he sees little merit in researching a stand-alone 'Christian', let alone 'Protestant' or 'Catholic Enlightenment'.<sup>90</sup> This is understandable in light of concerns that the pursuit of separate Enlightenments along confessional and national lines could lead to an excessive fragmentation of 'the Enlightenment' within scholarship generally. However, as the above analysis has shown, it is still a problematic approach. To begin with, their methodology unfortunately opens Rosenblatt and Sorkin up to the same problem as Hugh Trevor-Roper: to cite Malcolm, when asking "what do these people have really in common?", the most truthful may be ... their actual or imputed opposition to religious bigotry'.<sup>91</sup> Yet most crucially, such an unsteady foundation for religious Enlightenment has created an opportunity for alternative conceptions of Enlightenment to emerge – with Bulman and Jacob now capable of reaffirming a secular mindset as the Enlightenment's defining feature.<sup>92</sup>

There consequently certainly is a need for a greater in-depth analysis of the intersection of Christian theology and Enlightenment philosophy across Protestant Europe, as well as

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<sup>90</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>91</sup> Malcolm, 'Ecumenism and Erasmianism', p. 115. Robertson has voiced similar concerns regarding the Enlightenment as a whole. See: Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. xii-xiii. Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment*, pp. 1-5.

its internal dynamics and connections. Only then will it be feasible to recount the conclusive tale of a wider Enlightenment of Christianity or even organised religion as a whole in Europe. In other words, one must pose the question asked by Simon Grote whether ‘to accept multiple distinct Religious Enlightenments, multiple religious Enlightenments related by “family resemblance”, or a single intuitively recognizable but undefined religious Enlightenment’.<sup>93</sup> This may in fact help to establish a *via media* of its own by establishing a distinctive Protestant Enlightenment that could still be seen to fit into a wider tendency of new religious thinking. Spawned by Cassirer and Trevor-Roper, refined by Pocock and Porter, matured under Rosenblatt, Sorkin, Mortimer, and Ritchie Robertson, the story of European Protestantism – and thereby religion – within Enlightenment has not fully been told yet.

This thesis is intended to contribute towards this endeavour by examining the utility of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ as a separate and distinctive category in present-day scholarship, both in itself and in relation to other forms of enlightened religion, based on a broad analysis of the inception, development, and dissemination of enlightened Protestantism within and across Anglicanism, German Lutheranism, and Swedish Lutheranism from 1600 to 1800. Briefly put, it seeks to answer the question: what, if anything, was ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ and what made it either ‘Protestant’ or ‘enlightened’?

This is to be achieved by two means: first, through offering an intellectual history of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’, that is to establish an understanding of the ideas and intellectual systems underpinning an enlightened Protestant theology throughout the

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<sup>93</sup> Grote, ‘Review Essay: Religion and Enlightenment’, p. 150.

Long Eighteenth Century. To this end, the thesis will review the merits of the dominant scholarly narrative of a Protestant Enlightenment that was marked by a distinctly Erasmian theology and had its genesis within Calvinist Churches of Europe by analysing some of the seminal texts of enlightened theology, with a particular focus being placed on the methods and metaphysics influencing the natural theologies of senior and influential figures of luminary theology. This ought to enable the establishment of a coherent definition of what qualifies as 'Protestant Enlightenment theology' in Anglicanism and Lutheranism which is pivotal to determine whether there was any peculiar and unique set of ideas and approaches that enlightened theologians and religious thinkers of established Reformation Churches adhered to and promoted. The second line of analysis will involve the writing of a cultural history of the 'Protestant Enlightenment' within and between the three churches in question, that is whether there was a network and media culture of Protestant theologians and thinkers commonly engaging in a self-conscious endeavour of promoting enlightened Reformation Christianity. Accordingly, the media through which 'Protestant Enlightenment' was communicated – grand tours, correspondences, book translations, and journals – will be analysed in order to establish the influence they exercised in shaping ideas of religious Enlightenment in Protestant Europe. This permits one to ascertain the existence of a common identity of 'enlightened Protestantism' emerging in the course of the eighteenth century. These two lines of enquiry – which will be combined throughout the thesis – into the origins and dissemination of enlightened Anglicanism and Lutheranism ought to make it possible to fulfil the ambition of offering a conclusive picture of a distinctive Protestant Enlightenment spanning England, the German Lutheran territories, and Sweden.

## II. The Crisis of Orthodoxy: English, German, and Swedish Protestantism in the Seventeenth Century

The State of the Protestant Churches is a Concernment which we are all bound to lay deeply to heart at this time, having been engaged many years ago to procure their Peace and Welfare: for if all things be duly considered, we shall perceive that the enemies of the Churches had never so great an advantage against them as now they have.<sup>1</sup>

Thus sombrely commenced a pamphlet printed in London in 1659 that sought to illustrate the state of Protestantism on the European continent. It is not clear who its author was, yet their message was unequivocal: Protestantism was in crisis, potentially even on the verge of extinction.

The impression that Europe was experiencing a period of profound upheaval during the seventeenth century was not exclusive to them: not least due to the wealth of material indicating a sense of permanent instability and uncertainty during this time, there has been a long-standing tendency within post-war historiography, spearheaded by Rudolf Vierhaus, Eric Hobsbawm, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, to regard the seventeenth century as an era of 'crisis' for the European continent as a whole.<sup>2</sup> This '(General) Crisis of the Seventeenth Century' occurred in the view of its scholarly proponents on manifold levels in many local variants, yet was ultimately marked by the general impression that, as Trevor-Roper phrased it, 'the various countries of Europe seemed merely the separate theatres upon which the same great tragedy was being played out' – the tragedy of states

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, *A Representation Of the State of the Protestant Churches in Europe: Tending to awaken the Spirits of those only who will lay to heart the Afflictions of Joseph*. (London, 1659), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See: Heinz Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges – Die Krisendekade 1608-1618* (München, 2017), p. 12. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (Indianapolis, 2001), pp. 43-44. Michael Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History* (London, 1967), pp. 111-112. J.H. Elliott, *Spain, Europe, and the Wider World, 1500-1800* (Yale, 2009), pp. 52-53. Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century – Abridged and Revised Edition* (Yale, 2017), pp. xv-xviii. *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xxvii. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-48

and societies disintegrating under the pressures of economic, political, military, climatic, and social change.<sup>3</sup> Although it has come under increasing scrutiny, many historians still believe the term carries sufficient potency to remain in currency.<sup>4</sup> What has arguably often been missing from the debates surrounding the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’ is a distinctive religious dimension: whilst the era’s religious conflicts are well-documented in their own right, the question of a general crisis of faith and the church seems to have often been secondary to scholarship which has primarily focused on economic, social, and political turmoil. The exception to this is Germany: whilst, as Sheilagh Ogilvie points out, almost wholly excluded from the wider ‘General Crisis’ narrative for a long time, religious historians such as Hartmut Lehmann, Udo Sträter, and Johannes Wallmann have thus explored the idea of a seventeenth-century ‘crisis of piety’ (*Frömmigkeitskrise*) within especially German Lutheranism.<sup>5</sup> This notion indeed precedes the debate on the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’ as it was coined by Winfried Zeller as early as 1952 – two years before Eric Hobsbawm devised the latter term.<sup>6</sup> This debate has, however, focused on German Lutheran and Reformed Christianity without impinging on other European Protestantisms.

However, it is of great relevance to ascertain if there was existence of a systemic ‘Crisis of Seventeenth-Century Protestantism’: if there was, it could prove pivotal in explaining the origins and development of a Protestant Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

Historians of the Enlightenment, both secular and religious, have generally rooted its emergence in a disillusionment with organised religion and the (dis)order it had

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<sup>3</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> See amongst others: Sheilagh C. Ogilvie, ‘Historiographical Review – Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 35/2 (1992), p. 420. Elliott, *Spain, Europe, and the Wider World*, pp. 52-53. *Ibid.*, p. 67. *Ibid.*, p. 73. Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, p. 22. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. xv-xviii. *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xxvii. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-48.

<sup>5</sup> Ogilvie, ‘Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis’, pp. 417-418. Johannes Wallmann, *Pietismus-Studien – Gesammelte Aufsätze II* (4 vols., Tübingen, 2008), pp. 118-120.

<sup>6</sup> Wallmann, *Pietismus-Studien*, p. 118. Ogilvie, ‘Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis’, p. 418.

imposed on Europe while rarely examining the problems experienced by particular confessions in greater depth or linking them to one another.<sup>7</sup> Trevor-Roper, one of the great theorists of the 'Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', on the other hand, took care to emphasise that the advent of the Enlightenment was made possible by the subversion of the prevailing Calvinist and Lutheran orthodoxies in the Low Countries, England, and Protestant Germany by Arminianism and Pietism.<sup>8</sup> Curiously, however, he equally believed that the period's religious conflicts were more a hindrance to this rise of an enlightened spirit in religion.<sup>9</sup> This belief in peace as a precondition for religious Enlightenment seems to clash with the paths taken by the polities from the latter half of the century onwards: whereas the Anglican and German Lutheran Churches would thus see the emergence of an enlightened Protestantism, this development was not replicated in Sweden, arguably one of the most stable seventeenth-century polities.

Bearing in mind the complexities surrounding the concept, the question thus beckons: is it possible to contend that, as the anonymous pamphleteer claimed, Protestantism in England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden was facing an existential challenge? And

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<sup>7</sup> See: Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680-1715*, tr. J. Lewis May (New York, 2012), pp. xiii-xviii. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism* (2 vols., New York and London, 1995), pp. x-xii. *Ibid.*, p. 18. *Ibid.*, pp. 279-283. *Ibid.*, pp. 296-298. *Ibid.*, pp. 342-351. Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert – Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zurich, 1981), pp. 24-36. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-79. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-88. Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise – Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg and Munich, 2013), pp. 1-5. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-17. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-34. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89. *Ibid.*, p. 102. *Ibid.*, p. 154. Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1965), pp. 37-41. Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006), p. 64. David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 5-9. *Ibid.*, p. 25. *Ibid.*, p. 28-30. *Ibid.*, 115-119. Sarah Mortimer, 'Religion and Enlightenment', in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (eds.), *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Chichester, 2016), p. 345. William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. xii-xiv. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-12. *Ibid.*, p. 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205. Albrecht Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding – Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2014), pp. 10-13. Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), pp. 84-86. Bulman is in fact a notable exception in that he closely examined the impact of England's religious conflicts on the Restoration Anglican Church and its influence on its reform agenda. See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 115-145. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-203. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>8</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 190-199. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

if so why and how? Were they experiencing similar troubles, justifying the conception of a wider notion of a 'Crisis of Seventeenth-Century Orthodoxy' or did each Church experience a 'crisis of its own'? Lastly, how may this account for the rise or absence of a Protestant Enlightenment within these churches?

To answer these questions, this chapter will first review the 'Seventeenth-Century Crisis' notion in relation to England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden before retracing the evolutions and revolutions undergone by the Church of England, as well as the established Lutheran Churches in the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden over the course of the seventeenth century. To begin with, it will be analysed whether England, the Empire, and Sweden experienced a crisis of state and society that, in keeping with scholarly presupposition, occurred along similar lines in each polity. Thereupon, each individual Church will be scrutinised with a view to changes and disruptions in its governance, theology, and popular standing during this period to ascertain their state at the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century and the justification for speaking of a 'crisis of orthodoxy' linked to the wider upheaval experienced by their polities. It will conclude that both the Holy Roman Empire and England experienced severe crises rooted in a steady erosion of political and religious consensus, exacerbated by weak central leadership, that in turn caused an existential predicament for Anglicanism and German Lutheranism that persisted for much of the seventeenth century, bringing both to the edge of collapse. Sweden, on the other hand, whilst more than once on the verge of crisis and undergoing significant change, succeeded in averting overt internal conflict and consolidating both political and religious unity, be it through a maintenance or adaptation of general consensus. Yet upheaval also bred change and novelty: as many began to believe their religion threatened, ever more stepped forward to defend and instil new life in it. Within the seventeenth century's

turmoil resided the seed for a renewal of Protestantism that would have otherwise been barely thinkable.

## Revisiting the Idea of a 'Seventeenth-Century Crisis' in England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden

The perhaps most pivotal problem in the enquiry into a 'Seventeenth-Century Crisis' is the heavy scholarly baggage one encounters: consensus around this idea has long carried only as far as that Europe experienced a series of conflicts and changes resulting from grievances rooted in structural factors common to the entire continent.<sup>10</sup> *Which* factors was and remains a hotly debated question.<sup>11</sup> Since the 1990s, the concept of a 'general crisis' has come under more fundamental scrutiny, however, as historians fear that it does not do the many specific crises sufficient justice or dismiss the very idea as an anachronism.<sup>12</sup> Whilst not outrightly rejecting the 'crisis of the seventeenth century' in itself, Lehmann too has expressed doubts over its practical feasibility as a category of scholarship and suggested to prioritise individually reviewing 'the many crises of this epoch' instead.<sup>13</sup> However, the concept was only recently instilled with new life by Geoffrey Parker who not only believes in the existence of a Seventeenth-Century Crisis, but has argued that it engulfed great shares of the globe, rather than merely Europe.<sup>14</sup> This needs to be borne in mind when examining the notion of a 'seventeenth-century crisis' within Protestant Europe: it highlights that this present analysis can but constitute

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<sup>10</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 43-44. Ann Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War – The Second Edition* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 10-12.

<sup>11</sup> See: Elliott, *Spain, Europe, and the Wider World*, pp. 52-53. *Ibid.*, p. 60-61. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. xi-xviii. *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xxvii. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-48. There indeed remain many disagreements over the definition of the term 'crisis' too. See: Ogilvie, 'Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis', pp. 418-420.

<sup>12</sup> See: Ogilvie, 'Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis', p. 420. Jan de Vries, 'The Economic Crisis of the Seventeenth Century After Fifty Years', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 40/2 (2009), pp. 151-153.

<sup>13</sup> Hartmut Lehmann, *Transformationen der Religion der Neuzeit – Beispiele aus der Geschichte des Protestantismus* (Göttingen, 2007), pp. 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> See: Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. xi-xviii. *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xxvii. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-48.

an attempt to make a broader judgment, rather than to definitively settle an ongoing and minute scholarly debate. However, the uncertainty surrounding the ‘crisis paradigm’ renders it worthwhile to test its applicability in England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden more generally before delving into the finer points of a religious crisis. This requires a careful definition of terminology and criteria: in consideration of the historiography, a ‘crisis’ shall henceforth be defined as a period or prolonged moment of upheaval that subverts or at least poses (or is widely perceived by contemporaries as such) an existential threat to the existing order – be that social, economic, political, or religious. Naturally, for many polities to live through a crisis is not in itself sufficient proof of a ‘general crisis’: only if they experienced a crisis for broadly the same overarching reasons may it reasonably be called ‘general’.

Traditionally, historians of the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’ paradigm have discussed it within the context of escalating internal conflicts.<sup>15</sup> This is a plausible approach: the outbreak of open hostilities within a polity would suggest a dissatisfaction with the existing order or fear of its subversion, legitimising the *ultima ratio* of violence to defend one’s position. That England has conventionally served as the prime model for the ‘crisis paradigm’ is hence not coincidental: during the seventeenth century, England faced a bloody civil war, the shift from absolutism to republican rule (for the only time in its history) and back before concluding with a coup and the establishment of a broadly ‘constitutional’ monarchy. A subversion of the established order there certainly was. By contrast, Germany’s case has – as seen – been far more neglected.<sup>16</sup> This is likely due to its political circumstances: with its division into a multiplicity of polities united within the superstructure of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany does not naturally fit

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<sup>15</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 47-48. Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 10-12. Elliott, *Spain, Europe, and the Wider World*, pp. 60-61. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65. Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44. *Ibid.*, pp. 412-413.

<sup>16</sup> See: Ogilvie, ‘Germany and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis’, pp. 417-418.

into the analytical categories of the ‘seventeenth-century crisis’ paradigm. Historians must choose whether to restrict themselves to examining the Empire’s governance or to delve deeper into the politics of its principalities. Many have shied away from this endeavour. Yet few would deny that the Holy Roman Empire experienced a seminal crisis in the Thirty Years’ War: it saw Germany losing roughly a third of its population, as estimates continue to posit, and concluded with the Peace of Westphalia that radically altered the Empire’s political and religious map.<sup>17</sup> If any polity did experience a crisis in the seventeenth century, it certainly was the Holy Roman Empire. Indeed, in recent years, historians such as Parker have begun to examine the Seventeenth-Century Crisis from a pan-German perspective.<sup>18</sup> Sweden, in turn, fits less neatly into the crisis paradigm at first sight: it was during the seventeenth century after all that Sweden rose to become one of the Europe’s key geopolitical players. Similarly, the Scandinavian country waged war almost exclusively outside of its heartlands and against external adversaries. Notwithstanding this seemingly remarkable internal stability, historians such as Michael Roberts have studied the kingdom in the context of the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth-Century’, identifying critical moments during the *stormaktstiden* (Great Power Era) which threatened the fledgling empire’s order.<sup>19</sup> However, none of these moments caused (large-scale) rebellion or revolution in Sweden. Where did it then all go wrong for England and the Holy Roman Empire? And why did it not in the Swedish case?

Most histories of the ‘seventeenth-century crisis’ focus on the emergence of a conflict within the ruling elite: notwithstanding occasional popular rebellions, the greatest destabilising factor in any polity was in this reading a breakdown of the realm’s power-

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<sup>17</sup> See: Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Vol I: Maximilian I to the Peace of Westphalia, 1493-1648* (2 vols., Oxford, 2012), p. 653.

<sup>18</sup> See: Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-172. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-182. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-197.

<sup>19</sup> Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, pp. 111-137.

sharing agreement, as monarchs either clashed with the nobility or were unable to mediate conflicts within aristocracies.<sup>20</sup> This strikes one as inherently logical: violent conflict and the breakdown of order is mostly, especially when domestic strife is concerned, in essence the last stage of a growing polarisation between different parties that no longer find any common ground on the constitutive settlements defining their relations. They begin to develop diametrically opposed, irreconcilable interpretations of the state of affairs that put their side in a benign light whilst depicting the other as inherently wicked. Towards the end, almost any action by the other side is seen to confirm the perceived threat to order and the common good. At that point, one event or deed that would be resolvable under less strained circumstances can trigger conflict. If there is one universal trait common to all the three polities in question, it is that these settlements were considerably strained during the seventeenth century.

This was certainly true of England, where the growing resentment between King Charles I (1600-1649) and Parliament over the limits of royal power (or lack thereof) created a mutual distrust that ultimately escalated into conflict in 1642.<sup>21</sup> This breakdown of the essential governing consensus was replicated, albeit with different actors, in the Holy Roman Empire where the Imperial monarchy experienced a devastating loss of authority, leaving it unable to reconcile a growing number of conflicts among the

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<sup>20</sup> See: Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 47-48. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81. Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 10-12. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78. Elliott, *Spain, Europe, and the Wider World*, pp. 71-72. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 394-396. *Ibid.*, pp. 427-428. *Ibid.*, p. 504. Tim Harris, 'Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 78/4 (2015), pp. 631-633. Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, p. 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-108. *Ibid.*, p. 125. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Peter H. Wilson, 'Dynasty, constitution, and confession: The role of religion in the thirty years war', *The International History Review*, Vol. 30/3 (2008), p. 474. *Ibid.*, p. 499. *Ibid.*, pp. 503-505. *Ibid.*, p. 509. Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, pp. 111-113. Michael Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History, 1520-1720* (London, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> See: Peter Wende, 'Karl I.' in Peter Wende (ed.), *Englische Könige und Königinnen der Neuzeit* (Munich, 2017), pp. 115-120. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-124. Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 72-79. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 76-80. Harris, 'Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War', pp. 620-621. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 46-47. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-273.

German princes.<sup>22</sup> These conflicts centred mostly around the 1555 Peace of Augsburg that secured religious parity and equal rights for the Empire's constituent rulers: from the early 1600s onwards, factions on both sides of the confessional divide sought to redraw the Empire's constitutional structures to their advantage.<sup>23</sup> As in England, the differing stances culminated in war once they could no longer be overcome. Even in the seemingly peaceful realm of Sweden, such a conflict could be observed: for historians of Sweden, most notably Roberts, the seventeenth century was consistently marked by a fierce power struggle between the aristocracy and monarchy – a conflict made more delicate by a societally diverse parliamentary diet, the *Riksdag*, that wielded much power itself.<sup>24</sup> As in England, this dispute centred on the limits of monarchical powers and resulted in no less than three moments of acute crisis: in 1611 under Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) when the nobility sought to reassert its prerogatives after the absolutist rule of Charles IX (1550-1611); in 1650 under Christina (1626-1689) when peasant discontent coincided with a succession dispute; and lastly, in the 1680s, when Charles XI (1655-1697) decided the conflict in his favour by establishing an absolutist regime that became known as 'the Caroline autocracy' (*karolinska enväldet*).<sup>25</sup> That these never translated

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<sup>22</sup> See: Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, pp. 64-68. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71. *Ibid.*, p. 106. *Ibid.*, p. 125. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Vol. I*, p. 478. *Ibid.*, p. 564. Wilson, 'Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession', pp. 504-505. Robert Bireley, 'The Thirty Years' War as Germany's Religious War' in Konrad Repgen (ed.), *Krieg und Politik 1618-1648 – Europäische Probleme und Perspektiven* (Munich, 1988), pp. 87-88. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>23</sup> See: Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, p. 108. *Ibid.*, p. 110. *Ibid.*, p. 113-114. Wilson, 'Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession', p. 478. According to Martin Heckel, the root for many of these divisions lay in the provisions of the Augsburg Peace itself, as it had not been conceived as a permanent legal order but a first step towards a confessionally re-united Empire. See: Martin Heckel, 'Die Wiedervereinigung der Konfessionen als Ziel und Auftrag der Reichsverfassung im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation' in Hans Otte and Richard Schenk (eds.), *Die Reunionsgespräche im Niedersachsen des 17. Jahrhunderts – Rojas y Spinola, Molan, Leibniz* (Göttingen, 1999), p. 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29. *Ibid.*, p. 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>24</sup> In English-language scholarship, Roberts's 1965 Creighton Lecture still constitutes the most succinct summary of the conflict. See: Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History*, pp. 1-8. See also: Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, p. 40. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-186. Anthony Upton, 'Absolutism and the Rule of Law: The Case of Karl XI of Sweden', *Parliaments, Estates and Representations*, Vol. 8/1 (1988), p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief description of the events in 1611, see: Hjalmar Holmquist, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia, del IV.1 – Svenska Kyrkan under Gustav II Adolf* (6 vols., Stockholm, 1938), p. 26. Paul Douglas Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 23. For those of 1650, see: Roberts, *Essays in*

into the kind of bloodshed experienced by England and the Empire may – and indeed has been by many historians – be credited to the exceptional ability of Sweden’s monarchs of the period and the integration of the clerical, middling, and peasant Estates in Sweden’s governance structures which prevented the rise of a bipolar antagonism between (certain members of) the aristocracy and the monarchy.<sup>26</sup>

Though it would be presumptuous to draw definite conclusions on the validity of a ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’ paradigm based on these case studies, a certain parallelism is undeniable: peace and established order unravelled in England and the Holy Roman Empire for similar reasons. Even Sweden, arguably one of the seventeenth century’s most stable polities, was not spared significant internal tensions that went to the core of the political consensus and was arguably mostly saved by its unique political system and dynastic fortune.

## The Crises and Protestantism

What role, if any, did religion play in these crises? Often, a quite central one, given how intimately politics and religion were interwoven in the seventeenth century. Religious affiliation and inclination were often indicative of, if not identical with, a political side one took in the constitutional conflict. In both England and the Empire, Protestants feared that the established order, rooted in the achievements of the Reformation, was to be overturned, leading to a fierce backlash and polarisation that escalated in warfare.

While scholars such as Parker are right to highlight the crucial influence that Scottish

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*Swedish History*, pp. 111-113. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119. *Ibid.*, p. 131. For the events of the 1680s, see: Ingvar Andersson, *A History of Sweden* (London, 1956), pp. 213-215. Upton, ‘Absolutism and the Rule of Law’, pp. 31-46.

<sup>26</sup> See: Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 24-25. Andersson, *A History of Sweden*, p. 180. *Ibid.*, p. 185. *Ibid.*, p. 194. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 184-186. Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, pp. 118-119. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127. Upton, ‘Absolutism and the Rule of Law’, pp. 44-46. Ralph Tuchtenhagen, *Kleine Geschichte Schwedens* (Munich, 2008), pp. 64-66.

Presbyterians and the Irish Catholic Confederation played in exacerbating the conflict especially in its later stages, England principally faced an inner-denominational struggle fought between ‘Laudians’ and ‘Puritans’ who later often neatly aligned on the royalist and parliamentarian side of the Civil War.<sup>27</sup> Thus, just as the parliamentarians feared a subversion of England’s political settlement, many of them were concerned that its religious settlement would be overturned. John Pym (1583/84-1643) thus not only lamented the violated rights of Parliament, but voiced alarm at the monarch’s attacks on faith: ‘[t]he greatest liberty of the kingdom is religion; ... no impositions are so grievous as those that are laid upon the soul.’<sup>28</sup> – and many were these impositions in the eyes of the parliamentarians. The promotion of the anti-Puritan faction led by William Laud (1573-1645), the Archbishop of Canterbury, within the Church of England and the Privy Council embodied these concerns: his policies intended to remodel the English Church along theological lines that seemed to many a straightforward repudiation of the broadly Calvinist consensus established under Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and dangerously close to ‘popery’ – a charge that Julian Davies has conclusively shown to be false yet did not prevent the Archbishop from becoming the nemesis of zealous English Protestants.<sup>29</sup> However, as Conrad Russell has highlighted, Charles and his supporters had no interest in changing the ecclesiastical order either, quoting the king as saying: ‘The Devil take him, whomsoever he be, that had a design to change religion’.<sup>30</sup> What thus triggered conflict was, as Russell again points out, the break-up of the established consensus on

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<sup>27</sup> See: Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 42-44. *Ibid.*, 249-250. *Ibid.*, 263-273. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-280. *Ibid.*, p. 284. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-289.

<sup>28</sup> John Pym, *On the Grievances in the Reign of Charles I* (1640) - <http://www.bartleby.com/268/3/8.html> (23 Oct. 2017).

<sup>29</sup> See: John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1603-1714* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 72-81. Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625-1641* (Oxford, 1992), p. 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258. Davies study in particular offers a most comprehensive and thorough review of the religious thought that inspired both Charles I and Laud.

<sup>30</sup> As cited in: Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990), p. 83. See also: Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 276.

what the religious order to be saved was.<sup>31</sup>

Whereas the English religious feuds largely originated within one established Church, German Lutherans principally faced an onslaught from the outside, as historians have signed the process of ‘confessionalization’ responsible with undoing consensus in the Holy Roman Empire: in keeping with the Peace of Augsburg’s principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, rulers and clerics engaged in what Heinz Schilling described as an ever more proactive effort of local church- and faith-building to forge a religiously homogenous society.<sup>32</sup> This was seen to have in turn fomented tensions among German princes: especially Lutheran rulers felt their power within the Imperial Diet steadily diminish as territories were either annexed by Catholic princes or lost to potentates converting to the Reformed faith.<sup>33</sup> An oft-cited example in this context is the occupation and re-Catholicisation of the predominantly Protestant town of Donauwörth in 1606/07 by Bavaria, a move sanctioned by the Emperor yet in contravention of imperial law.<sup>34</sup> According to Heinz Duchhardt, the events of Donauwörth proved to many Protestants

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<sup>31</sup> Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, p. 84.

<sup>32</sup> Heinz Schilling, ‘Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich – Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 246/1 (1988), p. 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-45. For a historiographic review of the scholarly debate surrounding the terms of ‘Second Reformation’ and ‘Confessionalisation’, especially within German academia, see: Harm Klüeting, ‘“Zweite Reformation“ – Konfessionsbildung – Konfessionalisierung – Zwanzig Jahre Kontroversen und Ergebnisse nach zwanzig Jahren’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 277/2 (2003), pp. 309-341. Johannes Wallmann, ‘Lutherische Konfessionalisierung – Ein Überblick’ in Hans-Christoph Rublack (ed.), *Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland* (Gütersloh, 1992), pp. 33-39. Thomas Kaufmann, ‘Konfessionalisierung’ in Friedrich Jaeger (ed.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit, Bd. 6 – Jenseits-Konvikt* (16 vols., Darmstadt, 2007) pp. 1053-1070.

<sup>33</sup> See: Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, pp. 36-53. *Ibid.*, 70-71. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-108. *Ibid.*, p. 113. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120. Bireley, ‘The Thirty Years’ War as Germany’s Religious War’, p. 87. Wilson, ‘Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession’, p. 484. *Ibid.*, p. 487. *Ibid.*, p. 499. *Ibid.*, p. 505. Martin Brecht, ‘Das Aufkommen der neuen Frömmigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland’ in Martin Brecht (ed.), *Die Geschichte des Pietismus – Das 17. bis frühe 18. Jahrhundert* (4 vols., Göttingen, 1993), p. 115. Thomas Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte – Eine Geschichte der Reformation* (Munich, 2016), pp. 302-303. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation – Europe’s House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2003), pp. 356-358.

<sup>34</sup> See: Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, pp. 118-120. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Vol. I*, p. 421. Bireley, ‘The Thirty Years’ War as Germany’s Religious War’, p. 88-89

that the imperial constitution and the Peace of Augsburg were dead letters.<sup>35</sup> Germany's 'Triconfessionality' (Schilling) was thus central to the breakdown of the constitutional and religious settlement of 1555, as Calvinist and Catholic princes repudiated it for their own reasons: the former to obtain recognition and the latter to eliminate Protestantism altogether.<sup>36</sup> This was a pressure German Lutheran princes could not resist, even if one accepts Peter Wilson's argument that religion was secondary in ultimately triggering the conflict.<sup>37</sup>

Only the Swedish constitutional dispute appears to have been barely affected by religion. This was arguably precisely due to the immense role the Lutheran faith assumed within the kingdom's constitution: after Charles IX toppled the Catholic incumbent Sigismund (1566-1632) around the turn of the century, a constitutional principle was established that only a Lutheran could become the King of Sweden.<sup>38</sup> Charles IX's religion was therefore his principal source of legitimacy and this did not change for his successors: as amongst others Paul Douglas Lockhart has emphasised, the spectre of the Catholic Vasa line returning to seize the Swedish Crown became a similarly potent threat in the seventeenth-century Swedish political imagination as Jacobitism would in the English after 1688.<sup>39</sup> As Roberts stressed, the Swedish monarchy's reliance upon Lutheranism likewise meant that the clergy consistently took the Crown's side against the aristocratic magnates of the imperial Council (*riksråd* or short: *råd*) – unless their own power was

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<sup>35</sup> Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>36</sup> Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich', p. 38. See also: Bireley, 'The Thirty Years' War as Germany's Religious War', pp. 87-88. Duchhardt, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, p. 108. Heckel, 'Die Wiedervereinigung der Konfessionen als Ziel und Auftrag', p. 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34. Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte*, p. 302. Wilson, 'Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession', p. 504.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, 'Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession', p. 483. *Ibid.*, pp. 494-496. *Ibid.*, pp. 498-500. *Ibid.*, pp. 503-505. *Ibid.*, pp. 508-509. *Ibid.*, pp. 513-514.

<sup>38</sup> See: Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 12. Michael Roberts, 'The Swedish Church' in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Sweden's Age of Greatness, 1632-1718* (London, 1973), p. 144.

<sup>39</sup> Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 12.

threatened.<sup>40</sup> Yet despite this potential source for severe tension, the centrality of Lutheranism for the stability of the realm appears to have prevented any theological disagreements from escalating into partisan conflict.

If religion did play a great part in the English and German seventeenth-century crises, this does not signify *per se* that Protestantism was in a deep state of turmoil. Indeed, the general irrelevance of religion to Sweden's constitutional disputes and the triconfessional situation in Germany might suggest that any crisis of Lutheranism was driven by external factors. However, as their respective crises progressed, both Anglican and German Lutheran orthodoxy saw their sway extraordinarily diminished. Not even Swedish Lutheranism was spared a period of fundamental internal strife, albeit under different circumstances. Part of this development was the collateral damage of political and military events. However, much would indeed come to be through internal divisions that undermined the legitimacy of orthodoxy within the churches. Concretely, this 'Crisis of Orthodoxy' centred around three clusters: a crisis of ecclesiology, a crisis of theology, and a crisis of piety.

### The Crisis of Ecclesiology

The question of governance was one all of the churches examined here faced during the seventeenth century. Mostly, it centred on the role of secular rulers in ecclesiastical and theological matters: universally, seventeenth-century Protestantism saw fiercely contested conflicts over the relationship between church and state. This was perhaps most evident in England: whereas the Puritans wished for a self-governing Church, the Laudians staunchly defended the established episcopacy.<sup>41</sup> However, as many historians

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<sup>40</sup> Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 165-167. For more on the imperial Council, see: Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History*, pp. 1-8.

<sup>41</sup> See: Jeremy Black, *A New History of England* (Stroud, 2008), p. 138. John Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution' in John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*

have pointed out, this conflict was at least initially not a straightforward clash of two visions of church government but gravely exacerbated by a peculiar interpretation of episcopacy by Charles I and Laud that would grant the monarch and bishops unprecedented powers in church affairs.<sup>42</sup> These nuances notwithstanding, political and ecclesiastical polarisation increasingly went hand in hand, as fronts hardened between the Stuart king's supporters and opponents. This feud spilled over into and deteriorated during the Civil War, by the end of which episcopacy appeared to be doomed as the Parliamentary forces, buoyed (at first) by their Scottish allies, triumphed.<sup>43</sup> However, their calamitous failure to instate a Genevan church meant that upon the Stuart monarchy's restoration in 1660, the Presbyterian cause was so discredited that the episcopacy was reinstated in full honours and would experience no challenge from within again.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, whilst undergoing a serious crisis, the orthodox consensus of the Elizabethan settlement eventually managed to survive – though Laud had arguably set such a drastic warning example of the consequences of episcopal overreach that it would ultimately aid the Church's subordination to secular authority. This is perhaps best seen in the Restoration clergy's ultimate failure to enforce its pre-war power, culminating in the Glorious Revolution and the 1689 *Toleration Act*, ending any illusion of universal conformity.<sup>45</sup>

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(Cambridge, 1998), pp. 69-71. Ann Hughes, 'Religion, 1640-1660' in Barry Coward (ed.), *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Oxford and Malden, 2002), pp. 351-355.

<sup>42</sup> See: Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 83-84. Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, pp. 11-18. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-58. Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 280. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> See: Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', pp. 69-71. Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 159-166. Hughes, 'Religion, 1640-1660', pp. 352-353. *Ibid.*, p. 354. *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356. Black, *A New History of England*, p. 138. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 268-269. *Ibid.*, p. 277. *Ibid.*, p. 280. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-288.

<sup>44</sup> See: Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', pp. 72-76. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. Hughes, 'Religion, 1640-1660', p. 352. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

<sup>45</sup> See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 343. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 186-190. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 209-210. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-254. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-281.

In Germany too, historians have seen the attempt to reconcile secular and clerical ideas of church governance as seventeenth-century Lutheranism's defining challenge, as Lutheran states embarked on the task of establishing a functional ecclesiastical order after 1555.<sup>46</sup> These efforts saw the rise of the 'princely church government' (*Landesherrliche Kirchenregiment*) whose predominant model, as Lucian Hölscher highlights, followed broadly episcopalian lines by leaving secular rulers in charge of their churches' political governance as *summus episcopus* whilst the clergy continued to enjoy autonomy on doctrinal matters.<sup>47</sup> However, this division of competences was not quite as neat in practice as it was in theory: most historians agree that this church-building, intimately tied to wider absolutist state-building, often all but involved the total subjection of ecclesiastical matters to secular authority.<sup>48</sup> Concerns over 'Caesaropapism' – the notion that worldly rulers would use the power they had obtained through the Reformation to suppress the church similarly as the Popes – therefore became a staple of seventeenth-century German Lutheran polemics.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, they only acquired greater significance after the Thirty Years' War posed the question of church governance all over again to Lutheran clergy, rulers, and laity: for, as Lehmann posits, as the Holy Roman Empire's religious strife ended in stalemate, the path was cleared for Lutheran rulers to minimise the clergy's political power further and incorporate them into stately

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<sup>46</sup> See: Lucian Hölscher, *Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland* (Munich, 2005), p. 41. Hartmut Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century' in R. Po-chia Hsia (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity – Vol. 6: Reform and Expansion 1500–1660* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2007), pp. 59–60. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Vol I.*, pp. 488–489. Heckel, 'Die Wiedervereinigung als Ziel und Auftrag', pp. 19–21. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>47</sup> Hölscher, *Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeitsbewegung*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> See: Hölscher, *Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeitsbewegung*, p. 41. Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century', pp. 59–60. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire, Vol I.*, pp. 488–489.

<sup>49</sup> See: Brecht, 'Das Aufkommen der neuen Frömmigkeitsbewegung', p. 116. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 65–70. Martin Kruse, *Spencers Kritik am Landesherrlichen Kirchenregiment und ihre Vorgeschichte* (Witten, 1971), pp. 50–51.

administrations.<sup>50</sup> Just as in England, the seventeenth century thus ultimately saw a curtailment of the German Lutheran clergy's autonomy that was principally political, yet set a precedent for further secular intervention in matters of faith.

By comparison to its beleaguered German counterpart, the state of the Swedish Lutheran Church appears paradisiacal. Largely unperturbed by crisis and conflict within its borders, Sweden experienced according to Roberts a significant period of church-building.<sup>51</sup> Beneath this seeming idyll, however, historians have identified a very real and fierce conflict between clergy and monarchy over the primacy in church governance that mirrored that of other Protestant polities.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, much of Sweden's ecclesiological quarrel of the seventeenth century – dubbed by Sven Kjöllnerström in a landmark study 'the Church Law Problem' (*Kyrkolagsproblemet*) – focused on a single piece of legislation: the 1571 Church Ordinance that secured the clergy's autonomy and rights against political overreach.<sup>53</sup> The clergy's attempts to defend the law against a monarchy keen to extend its powers played out along similar lines as the aristocracy's efforts to safeguard *rådskonstitutionalism* – and ended similarly too: after successfully fending off reform initiatives by Gustavus Adolphus in 1623 and Axel Oxenstierna (1583-1654) in 1636, Charles XI cowed the clergy into submission with his church law of 1686 that almost holistically subordinated the Swedish Lutheran Church to monarchical control.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, the Swedish clergy thus suffered a similar fate as their German brethren.

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<sup>50</sup> Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century', pp. 69-71. See also: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 65-70.

<sup>51</sup> Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 172-173.

<sup>52</sup> See: Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', p. 132. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-158. Sven Kjöllnerström, *Kyrkolagsproblemet i Sverige* (Stockholm, 1944), pp. 374-375. Holmquist, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia, del IV.1*, pp. 26-28. Ole Peter Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation' in E.I. Kouri and Jens E. Olesen (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, Vol. II: 1520-1870* (3 vols., Cambridge, 2016), pp. 432-433.

<sup>53</sup> See: Kjöllnerström, *Kyrkolagsproblemet i Sverige*, pp. 373-375.

<sup>54</sup> See: Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II – Stormaktstiden* (4 vols., Stockholm, 1975), pp. 83-84. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 154-159. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-172. Kjöllnerström, *Kyrkolagsproblemet i Sverige*, pp. 377-378. Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', pp. 432-433. Anthony Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 109-110. Toivo Harjunpää,

Universally therefore, Protestant clergy in England, Germany, and Sweden saw their powers and autarky severely clipped by the end of the century, as secular rulers asserted their authority in church governance. This process evidently unfolded differently in the various polities and was far from inevitable: with its Presbyterian experiment and the Restoration, England seemed on the verge of reversing either the tendency towards a top-down or lay-controlled Church during the century. However, beyond the given realities at particular times and locations, this was ultimately a question of precedent: the trend was clearly pointing towards a greater secular control of churches and a steady decline of the clergy's political powers, at least *vis-à-vis* the monarchy. Whilst debates over the extent of secular interference in church affairs continued in the eighteenth century, the principle that worldly rulers could and should directly intervene in ecclesiastical matters was well and truly entrenched.

### The Crisis of Doctrine

The crisis of church government was often accompanied by a crisis of doctrine that mostly centred on whether the foundational creeds of Anglicanism and Lutheranism were radical enough. Oftentimes, these disputes could pull churches apart and see novel theological thought emerge.

In England and Germany, these debates mainly focused on justification, that is the path to human salvation – and thus, in many respects, the core of Protestant doctrine. In both cases, Reformation-era disputes which consensus creeds – the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the 1577 *Formula of Concord* – had supposed to resolve flared up again in light of wider political and religious developments in Europe.<sup>55</sup> Within Anglicanism, this was most

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<sup>55</sup> 'Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland in the Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy (1593-1700)', *Church History*, Vol. 37/1 (1968), p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> See: Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66. Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte*, p. 382-383. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 352-358. Bulman highlights that many

obviously enshrined in the quarrels between Puritans and Laudians surrounding predestination. Whilst the idea that God had merely chosen a handful of ‘elect’ for salvation was explicitly contained in the Elizabethan settlement of 1559, it was gravely challenged by Charles I and Laud: though historians have long debated the finer points of their theology – with the label of ‘Arminian’ being particularly contested – there seems to be a broad scholarly consensus that they took grave exceptions to central tenets of Calvinist theology.<sup>56</sup> Concretely, they placed greater emphasis on ceremonial liturgy and the minimisation of ‘election’ in human redemption before God.<sup>57</sup> The parliamentary victory in the Civil War seemed to put an abrupt end to Laudian pretensions, with MPs going above and beyond in their dismantling of the Archbishop’s innovations – culminating in the resolutely Calvinist 1645 *Directory of Worship* and 1646 *Westminster Confession*.<sup>58</sup> Again, however, the war brought unintended consequences that undermined Puritan interests: the rise of sectarianism and the toleration that Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) extended to it precluded any end to doctrinal strife – indeed, it became as vivid as rarely before, as only the most outrageous heresies and blasphemies were outlawed by Parliament in 1648 and 1650.<sup>59</sup> This included straightforwardly atheist thought, but likewise ‘Laudian’ beliefs, Catholicism, and Protestant heterodoxies such as an affirmation of free will and the purity of reason.<sup>60</sup> Beyond this essential Reformed

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Restoration Anglicans held Charles and Laud responsible for needlessly undermining the Elizabethan settlement. See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>56</sup> For a review of the historiography and arguments in favour of either proposition, see: Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, pp. 10-19. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-52. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-99. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103. *Ibid.*, p. 118. *Ibid.*, pp. 297-301. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 72-75. Michael Questier, ‘Arminianism, Catholicism and Puritanism in the England during the 1630s’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49/1 (2006), pp. 53-78. Anthony Milton, ‘Arminians, Laudians, Anglicans, and Revisionists: Back to Which Drawing Board?’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 78/4 (2015), pp. 733-734.

<sup>57</sup> See: Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, pp. 59-60. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103. David R. Como, ‘Predestination and Political Conflict in London’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46/2 (2003), pp. 286-287. *Ibid.*, p. 289. *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, p. 62. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> See: Morrill, ‘The Puritan Revolution’, p. 71. Hughes, ‘Religion, 1640-1660’, p. 355.

<sup>59</sup> See: Morrill, ‘The Puritan Revolution’, p. 79. *Ibid.*, p. 83. Hughes, ‘Religion, 1640-1660’, p. 357. *Ibid.*, pp. 362-368. John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 120.

<sup>60</sup> See: Hughes, ‘Religion, 1640-1660’, pp. 357. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369. Spurr, *English Puritanism*, p. 120.

consensus, however, little doctrinal unity was recognisable – and even that was dismantled upon the ascension of Charles II (1630-1685) to the throne: the Laudian cause celebrated a belated victory, as the episcopacy returned to a theology that was much closer to that of the Caroline divines than the moderate Calvinists who had informed the Elizabethan settlement.<sup>61</sup> Puritans were ignominiously expelled from the established church to languish as ‘Dissenters’ and ‘Nonconformists’.<sup>62</sup> Once more, Puritan incompetence had resulted in the opposite outcome they had intended.

The Lutheran Church’s rejection of Calvinist notions of predestination did not spare it from similarly divisive disputes on justification – partly because Martin Luther (1483-1546) had somewhat tied himself up in a Gordian knot on this question after rejecting both Calvinist and Catholic theology on this issue.<sup>63</sup> Historians have thus routinely focused on the clash between ‘gnesio-Lutherans’ who advocated a rigorous interpretation of the *sola gratia* principle and ‘Philippists’, followers of Philipp Melancthon (1497-1560), who were open to the role of freedom of will and good works in salvation.<sup>64</sup> Yet this and other divisive debates were also by no means settled by the supposedly unifying creed of the *Formula of Concord* that broadly came down in favour of the Melancthonian position – to the contrary: Wallmann has noted that Lutheranism saw an exponential rise in theological polemics after 1577.<sup>65</sup> This situation was likely aggravated by Germany’s triconfessional status which meant that Lutheran

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<sup>61</sup> Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 144-149. Bulman particularly shows how strongly Laudian ideals informed Tory Anglicans during the Restoration. See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 149-201. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

<sup>62</sup> See: Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 149-150.

<sup>63</sup> See: MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 349-351. Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte*, pp. 303-305.

<sup>64</sup> See: MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 349-353. Lehmann, ‘Lutheranism in the seventeenth century’, pp. 56-57. For a brief background on the inner-Lutheran disputes, see: MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 350-353. Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte*, pp. 303-306.

<sup>65</sup> Wallmann, ‘Lutherische Konfessionalisierung’, p. 52. Wallmann, Kaufmann, and Lehmann have of late sought to challenge conceptions of a homogenous Lutheran orthodoxy more generally. See: Wallmann, ‘Lutherische Konfessionalisierung’, pp. 41-50. Thomas Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Friede – Kirchengeschichtliche Studien zur lutherischen Konfessionskultur* (Tübingen, 1998), p. 139. Lehmann, ‘Lutheranism in the seventeenth century’, p. 64.

divines were locked in a constant polemical warfare with Catholic and Calvinist theologians – requiring a recurring restatement and examination of doctrine that was a constant source of potential internal disagreement.<sup>66</sup> Not least for these reasons, Reformed Christians mockingly referred to the Lutheran creed as the ‘Book of Discord’, as Wilson recounts.<sup>67</sup> The Thirty Years’ War only exacerbated inner-Lutheran disparities: for one, as Thomas Kaufmann notes, the conflict ended any coordinated attempt to further theological consensus by annihilating the scholarly networks between theologians across the Empire.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the war deepened what Kaufmann calls an ‘inner-Lutheran process of pluralisation’, rendering a meaningful confessional unity nigh impossible.<sup>69</sup>

By the early 1660s, hard-line stances on salvation by faith and grace alone were by no means excised from Protestant doctrines. However, they had sustained a significant blow, as crisis and warfare engendered a polarisation and breakdown of church order that made any doctrinal uniformity built on these beliefs ever more unenforceable. Anglicanism thus saw both the ‘Eclipse of Calvinism’, as Gerald Cragg put it, within its doctrine while having to accept the external reality of Dissent that was not to be undone.<sup>70</sup> German Lutheranism was in an even more precarious position: forced to accept the Reformed party in the Peace of Westphalia, it had not only failed to defend its Protestant predominance in the Holy Roman Empire, but to build a united Church and creed. Territorial rulers were thus left to determine the respective latitude or orthodoxy of their local Lutheran congregations. The confessionalization’s spectacular failure to impose rigid uniformity in England and Germany meant that stern commitments to

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<sup>66</sup> See: Kaufmann, *Erlöste und Verdammte*, p. 303. *Ibid.*, pp. 303-306. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 351.

<sup>67</sup> Wilson, ‘Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession’, p. 498.

<sup>68</sup> Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Friede*, p. 79.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>70</sup> Gerald R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660 to 1700* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 13.

predestination and *sola gratia* were no longer possibly normative – benefitting the expression of more liberal viewpoints.

In Sweden, by contrast, the situation appears to have largely been the reverse. This was partly due to a different starting point, since most historians agree that there was remarkable leeway to Swedish religious life in the early seventeenth century, in keeping with the spirit of the Scandinavian reformers: as Toivo Harjunpaa highlighted, Olaus Petri (1493-1552), Laurentius Petri (1499-1573), and Laurentius Andreae (c. 1470s-1552) were very strongly influenced by Melancthonian humanism and its conniving attitude in worship.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the Swedish Church only adopted the Augsburg Confession as its essential doctrinal text at the so-called Uppsala Synod (*Uppsala Môte*) of 1593 – more than a decade after German Lutherans had devised the more detailed *Formula of Concord*.<sup>72</sup> However, many Swedish clergy believed this to be an insufficient provision upon which to build a truly Protestant Church: historians have thus identified the consolidation of Lutheran orthodoxy, principally through the adoption of the *Formula of Concord* as the *Svenska kyrkan*'s essential statement of faith, as the principal doctrinal question of seventeenth-century Sweden – one that was intimately linked to the ecclesiological debate.<sup>73</sup> Sweden thus belatedly imported the question that divided German Lutheranism throughout the confessionalization period. This was no coincidence: though Swedish Church historians are keen to emphasise the intellectual autonomy of Swedish theologians, there is overall little doubt that they overwhelmingly looked to their German brethren for guidance in matters doctrinal and had often

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<sup>71</sup> Harjunpaa, 'Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland', p. 16. See also: Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 137-138.

<sup>72</sup> See: Ingun Montgomery, 'The institutionalisation of Lutheranism in Sweden and Finland' in Ole Peter Grell (ed.), *The Scandinavian Reformation – From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 152-153.

<sup>73</sup> See: Harjunpaa, 'Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland', pp. 16-18. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 140-142. *Ibid.*, p. 150. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, p. 79. *Ibid.*, p. 86. *Ibid.*, p. 88. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97. Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', pp. 429-431. *Ibid.*, p. 433.

attended Lutheran universities in Germany.<sup>74</sup> This religious fervour was, however, not met with political acclaim for two reasons, according to scholarly consensus: first, the reigning Vasa line depended on good relations with the Calvinist powers to prevent a resurgence of Catholicism which could threaten the Protestant succession in Sweden, excluding the endorsement of the *Formula of Concord* which had primarily served to distance Lutheran from Reformed Christianity.<sup>75</sup> Beyond this *realpolitik*, many historians argue that Swedish Lutheranism's comparatively moderate spirit was championed as a matter of principle by many influential figures, including Gustavus Adolphus, the Uppsala University Chancellor Johan Skytte (1577-1645), Archbishop of Uppsala Laurentius Paulinus Gothus (1565-1646), and the Linköping Bishop Johannes Terserus (1605-1678).<sup>76</sup> Their defence of the liberal Swedish Church did not outlast its political justification, however: the Peace of Westphalia secured the Lutheran Vasa line and cleared the way for orthodox forces to impose concordist Lutheranism on Sweden.<sup>77</sup> The *Formula of Concord* was thus declared a central statement of faith in 1663 by Queen Christina and confirmed by Charles XI in 1683.<sup>78</sup> Whereas war thus dealt the *coup de grâce* to orthodox uniformity in English and German Protestantism, Swedish Lutheranism found that it created the conditions to make it feasible in their realm.

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<sup>74</sup> See: Holmquist, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia, del IV.1*, p. 14. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', p. 135. *Ibid.*, p. 147. Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', p. 428. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, p. 79. *Ibid.*, p. 82. *Ibid.*, p. 85. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>75</sup> See: Holmquist, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia, del IV.1*, p. 18. Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', pp. 431-432. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', p. 145. Gunnar Westin, *Negotiations about church unity: 1628-1634* (Uppsala, 1932), p. 50. Montgomery, 'The institutionalisation of Lutheranism in Sweden and Finland', pp. 151-152. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. Grell has also highlighted the reliance of *stormaktstidens* Sweden on Calvinist immigrants for economic reasons. See: Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', p. 431.

<sup>76</sup> See: Holmquist, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia, del IV.1*, p. 18. Sven Göransson, *Ortodoxi och synkretism i Sverige* (Uppsala, 1950), p. 477. Grell, 'Religious and social regimentation', pp. 433-434. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, pp. 98-100. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>77</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, pp. 88-90. *Ibid.*, p. 98. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', p. 141. Göransson, *Ortodoxi och synkretism i Sverige*, p. xi.

<sup>78</sup> See: Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 141-142. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, pp. 87-90. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

From the second half of the century onwards therefore, the trend in Germany and England pointed towards greater latitude in dogma and worship, whilst Swedish Protestants were intent on eliminating any ambiguities in doctrine. Sweden thus did experience a ‘crisis of orthodoxy’ if one took its broadly liberal stance at the beginning of the century to be its established doctrine. If one follows Kaufmann’s dictum that ‘[o]rthodox Lutheranism is *strictu sensu* concordist Lutheranism’, however, the seventeenth century clearly ended in Sweden with the triumph of orthodoxy.<sup>79</sup> This was especially due to the spirit of unity and consensus that marked Swedish Lutheranism: as Sten Lindroth and Febe Crafoord have highlighted, the defence of unity in the right doctrine was considered pivotal to the survival of the realm.<sup>80</sup> This desire was already expressed in 1593, when the clergy had called for an Assembly ‘in order that a *constant and godly unity* can be established once more’.<sup>81</sup> This need for consensus in doctrine was, according to Crafoord, a recurring theme in any debate and writing about the state of the Swedish Church.<sup>82</sup> The longing for ‘*unio religiosa*’ (Harjunpaa) offered two options in the face of fierce theological debate: either the kind of latitude that the original Swedish Reformation had offered or the narrowness of Lutheran concordist orthodoxy.<sup>83</sup> A *via media* between the two was not possible. This set Protestant Churches onto differing paths: whilst rigid theological Augustinianism had thus been diminished in German and English Protestantism by the late seventeenth century, it was elevated to its greatest heights yet in Sweden.

## The Crisis of Piety

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<sup>79</sup> Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Friede*, p. 143.

<sup>80</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, p. 79. Febe Crafoord, “*Läter all ting ährliga och skickeliga tilgå*” – *Prästerskapet i 1600-talets Sverige* (Stockholm, 2002), p. 268.

<sup>81</sup> As cited in: Montgomery, ‘The institutionalisation of Lutheranism in Sweden and Finland’, p. 156.

<sup>82</sup> Crafoord, “*Läter all ting ährliga och skickeliga tilgå*”, p. 269.

<sup>83</sup> Harjunpaa, ‘Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland’, p. 32.

The crisis, if not outright unravelling, of ecclesiological and doctrinal order within the English and German churches evidently did not limit itself to universities, parliaments, courts, and pamphlets. This is what rendered them so extremely fierce: the fight over correct doctrine and church government had, after all, ultimately the goal of forging a pious and virtuous society. Yet the disunity and breakdown that followed from these crises had a formidable impact upon the countless souls each faction was so keen to save.

The term 'crisis of piety' needs to be carefully defined. A decline in piety can, after all, mean anything from an actual deterioration of belief to one of active worship and, when referring to individual churches, to one of conformity. In this context, it will mainly concern the latter two, that is whether the general laity actively partook in church life and followed the teachings of their established churches. Though it is in many respects the central query, it is also the hardest to conclusively answer. Sometimes, this is a mere matter of archival record: as for instance Lindroth and Erland Sellberg have pointed out, it is nigh impossible to ascertain just how pious the Swedish peasantry truly was in the early 1600s, given the scarcity of records historians have to work with.<sup>84</sup> The situation is arguably a little easier in England and the Holy Roman Empire, though again, historians have often relied on careful and nuanced analysis in order to draw wider conclusions. Added to this comes the reliability (or lack thereof) of the records that do exist: lamentations of clerics and lay believers often need to be taken with a pinch of salt since it is not always possible to confirm their accuracy – especially since religious figures of virtually every age have decried the impiety surrounding them. To piece together the

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<sup>84</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria II*, p. 79. Erland Sellberg, *Kyrkan och den tidigmoderna staten – En konflikt om Aristoteles, utbildning och makt* (Stockholm, 2010), p. 21.

state of piety in seventeenth-century England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden is hence a delicate piece of work.

Especially within England and Lutheran Germany, it is possible to argue that the ongoing theological conflicts alienated many believers. Partly, this can simply be ascertained by the actual collapse of church authority in the midst of conflict. Whilst historians have debated to what degree the conflict between Puritans and Laudians affected the laity in the pre-war period, there is a strong understanding that the upheavals of the Civil War and Commonwealth era, with its dismissal of half the pre-war clergy by the Puritans, weakened the clergy's sway over believers.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the resistance to Puritan liturgical and doctrinal reform on the grassroots-level – most neatly exemplified by the 1647-48 'prayer book rebellions' – has likewise led historians to believe that many Anglicans were not willing to give up on their preferred form of worship, be it out of custom or sincere faith.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, the Civil War and the Commonwealth granted the people of England an unprecedented taste of religious freedom: this expressed itself according to scholars most obviously in the (largely sanctioned) growth of sectarianism that made London a hub of heterodox theology and precluded any form of doctrinal uniformity.<sup>87</sup> Whilst the chaos and latitude of the Commonwealth's religious policy arguably rendered a return to a Laudian-style Anglicanism easier, it equally signified that religious unity was no longer realistically

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<sup>85</sup> See: Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, pp. 310-313. Milton, 'Back to Which Drawing Board?', p. 737. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 79-80. *Ibid.*, p. 101. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135. Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', p. 77. Harris, 'Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War', p. 627. Hughes, 'Religion, 1640-1660', pp. 370-371. Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 270-271. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 154-158. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174. Especially Bulman stresses the genuine anguish of Tory Anglicans at the impact of Puritan rule on ordinary believers.

<sup>86</sup> See: Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', p. 74. Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 134-135. Hughes, 'Religion, 1640-1660', p. 354. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>87</sup> See: Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, p. 101. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133. Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', pp. 80-81. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 159-160.

achievable, even if England's Restoration clergy appears to have believed otherwise.<sup>88</sup> A 'crisis of piety' in seventeenth-century England was thus first and foremost a crisis of conformity, rather than disillusion with faith.

As regards the Holy Roman Empire, historians have been bolder in identifying a proper 'crisis of piety' (*Frömmigkeitskrise*) during the seventeenth century, when Lutheran piety and faith lost their sway in public life.<sup>89</sup> Scholars have identified several root causes behind this phenomenon: beyond circumstantial factors such as the 'Little Ice Age', historians have concluded that Lutheran divines failed to develop an active religious creed that could effectively challenge their Calvinist and Catholic rivals among the laity.<sup>90</sup> The obsession of Lutheran theologians with dogmatic polemic, sustained by a revival of Aristotelian scholastics that did not prove popular with the laity at large, and rejection of good works in salvation thus contributed according to many scholars to a laxity in faith that put the Reformation Church on the defensive.<sup>91</sup> The war placed further pressures on Lutheran orthodox pastors who, quintessentially versed in matters of instruction, only succeeded over the course of the war to find a proper footing in pastoral care, as Kaufmann has posited.<sup>92</sup> The Thirty Years' War thus highlighted that a new, more accessible form of Lutheran piety was necessary for German Lutheranism to sustain itself – a call heeded by a reformist movement that quickly gained fame (or

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<sup>88</sup> See: Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, pp. 147-149. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 115-117. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-145. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-203. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-223. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

<sup>89</sup> See: Wallmann, *Pietismus-Studien*, pp. 118-120.

<sup>90</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 71-79. Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century', p. 61. *Ibid.*, p. 67. Brecht, 'Das Aufkommen der neuen Frömmigkeitsbewegung', pp. 115-118. Wallmann, *Pietismus-Studien*, pp. 127-130.

<sup>91</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 72-73. *Ibid.*, p. 77. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 347-351. Brecht, 'Das Aufkommen der neuen Frömmigkeitsbewegung', pp. 115-118. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 204-205. Wallmann, *Pietismus-Studien*, pp. 129-130. Johannes Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands seit der Reformation* (Tübingen, 1993), p. 105. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 38-41. Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich', p. 31. Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur – Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 2006), pp. 316-17.

<sup>92</sup> Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Friede*, pp. 102-105.

infamy) within German Protestantism: Pietism. Whilst many historians have rightly stressed that the initial impulse for spiritual renewal within German Lutheranism had come from a strong current of 'reform orthodoxy', the ascendancy of a new 'religion of the heart' ultimately had to be at odds with a classical Lutheran orthodoxy that, as Wallmann has highlighted, consistently prioritised dogma over practical piety.<sup>93</sup> It thus could not be reconciled with a Pietism at whose core stood, as Carter Lindberg has pointed out, the diametrically opposite perspective.<sup>94</sup> It hence appears undeniable that the classical model of German Lutheran orthodoxy had exhausted itself by the late seventeenth century.

Given the centrality of Lutheranism to the kingdom's civic creed, it is not surprising that concerns over discipline equally appear to have stood at the forefront of seventeenth-century Swedish Christianity. Indeed, as Harjunpaa and Roberts showed, the Swedish *stormaktstid* saw a strong drive towards inculcating a firm Lutheran faith among the population at large.<sup>95</sup> This effort was partly facilitated by the isolation in which most Swedes lived: beyond cities such as Gothenburg and Stockholm, few ordinary Swedes were ever confronted with the theological polemics and innovations that marked the German and English Protestant Churches. Heterodoxy was, as Roberts notes, virtually absent, with contemporaries such as the parson Petrus Gyllenius rejoicing: 'We have, thank God, revelations enough in the Word of God, and further visions are superfluous'.<sup>96</sup> The relatively isolated lives of most Swedes likewise appear to have had a

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<sup>93</sup> Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands seit der Reformation*, p. 105. For discussions of 'reform orthodoxy', see: Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century', pp. 61-63. *Ibid.*, p. 71. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 37. Walter Sparr, *Frömmigkeit, Bildung, Kultur – Theologische Aufsätze I: Lutherische Orthodoxie und christliche Aufklärung in der frühen Neuzeit* (2 vols., Leipzig, 2012), p. 62.

<sup>94</sup> Carter Lindberg, 'Introduction' in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *The Pietist Theologians – An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* (Malden, 2005), pp. 7-8.

<sup>95</sup> Harjunpaa, 'Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland', pp. 32-35. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 139-140. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-164.

<sup>96</sup> As cited in: Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', p. 143. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

beneficial collateral effect for the Swedish Lutheran Church, by fostering a close and trusting relationship between provincial clergy and laity – a recurring leitmotif among historians of the Scandinavian kingdom.<sup>97</sup> Even the experience of war abroad, usually the most unfailing means for unorthodox ideas to spread among the general population, does not appear to have had a major impact on uniformity in seventeenth-century Sweden. This may partly be attributed to the fact that many did not return home at all: Jan Lindegren has thus retraced that one Swedish village lost almost half of its adult men to the kingdom's military exploits – a number that, according to Parker, was reflective of the Swedish army's death toll during its early involvement in the Thirty Years' War more generally.<sup>98</sup> In fact, Parker highlights that certain members of the Swedish ruling elite consciously perceived war as an effective and convenient instrument to 'remov[e] both potential leaders and marginal (and therefore dangerous) elements from the population'.<sup>99</sup> Even considering the impact of war, however, there is much to suggest that Swedish Lutheran clergy were generally more rigorous in looking after the souls of their believers than their German brethren: according to Roberts and especially David Gudmundsson, the Swedish kingdom thus developed a stringent model of religious instruction and pastoral care for its soldiers that was exemplary for its time and had many beneficial effects on domestic clerical practice too.<sup>100</sup> This is not to say that Sweden was an idyll of religious harmony and discipline: whilst Swedish clergy seem to have far more able to offer a sense of confessional belonging or pastoral care than their German or English colleagues, the efficiency of these instruments did have its limits:

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<sup>97</sup> See: Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 134-136. *Ibid.*, p. 152. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163. Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 32. Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, p. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>98</sup> Jan Lindegren, 'The Swedish "Military State", 1560-1720', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 10/4 (1985), p. 317. Parker, *Global Crisis*, p. 186.

<sup>99</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>100</sup> Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 137-138. David Gudmundsson, 'The Consolation of Soldiers: religious life in the Swedish Army during the Great Northern War', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 39/2 (2014), p. 213. *Ibid.*, p. 214. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

Anthony Upton thus highlighted that one impetus behind Charles XI's 1686 Church Ordinance was the dissatisfactory state of doctrinal uniformity in many parishes.<sup>101</sup> Though one ought to be careful to distinguish between propaganda and genuine shortcomings, Upton cites sufficient evidence to confirm that there was sincere cause for concern in some places: Charles XI thus had the whole of the clergy of the Skara diocese tested after quizzing a local parson who was, as the king stated, 'so ignorant in his Christian knowledge that he could not answer various questions fit for children'.<sup>102</sup> Pietism also started to threaten Swedish Lutheran orthodoxy in the seventeenth century's second half, with repressive legislation against it passing as early as 1664 – suggesting a certain disquiet among Swedish clergy and secular authorities about their ability to maintain uniformity.<sup>103</sup> These caveats notwithstanding however, it is doubtful that Sweden experienced a *Frömmigkeitskrise* of German or English proportions.

Whilst it would be questionable to argue that there was a stark decline in religious sentiment, there is a strong case that Anglicanism and German Lutheranism lost, by early modern standards, much of their influence over believers: the widespread collapse of central(ised) authority, both secular and ecclesiastical, offered a major opportunity for heterodoxies to gain a greater lay following and significantly weaken church discipline – a Pandora's box that peace and the restoration of order could not or only insufficiently close again. Religious pluralism was there to stay in England and the Holy Roman Empire. Sweden's century of domestic peace, mass military recruitment policy, and, even for its time, potent ecclesiastical control mechanisms meant that it did not experience the same theological upheavals on the popular level. The Swedish Church thus secured

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<sup>101</sup> Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, p. 111.

<sup>102</sup> As cited in: Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, p. 216. See also: Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, p. 216. Harjunpää, 'Liturgical Developments in Sweden and Finland', p. 34.

<sup>103</sup> See: Poul Georg Lindhardt, *Skandinavische Kirchengeschichte seit dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1983), p. 284.

an extent of doctrinal unity and popular conformity that was enviable to orthodox Anglicans and German Lutherans.

## Conclusion

In his landmark study on the 'General Crisis', Hugh Trevor-Roper characterised the seventeenth century as

broken in the middle, irreparably broken, and at the end of it, after the revolutions, men can hardly recognize the beginning. Intellectually, politically, morally, we are in a new age, a new climate. It is as if a series of rainstorms has ended in one final thunderstorm which has cleared the air and changed, permanently, the temperature of Europe.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the fierce debates that have surrounded the 'seventeenth-century crisis' paradigm, few will disagree with this insight. Indeed, bar perhaps the twentieth century, many historians will be at pains to point to an era that saw more bloodshed, widespread misery, political upheaval, but also profound change in society and the sciences in Europe than the seventeenth century. That scholarship has especially focused on the English Civil War in this context is eminently understandable: even if accounting for the terrors and turbulences ravaging the European continent in general and European Protestantism in specific, England and its church stand out in this time as a place of particularly extraordinary chaos, uncertainty, and division – perhaps only surpassed by the German lands. With its complex political make-up, Germany has received less attention from historians who have largely preferred to exclude it from the 'seventeenth-century crisis'. This is questionable. Whilst the Thirty Years' War was a continental war involving nearly all of Europe's great powers, it must not be forgotten that it was – as Wilson has rightly stressed – at its heart the product of an internal crisis of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>105</sup> During the conflict's initial stages, it pitted German territories against

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<sup>104</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> Wilson, 'Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession', p. 474.

one another and was fought over causes related to imperial governance. One should therefore not shy away from taking the ‘birds-eye view’ on Germany and acknowledge that the Holy Roman Empire underwent a ‘seventeenth-century crisis’ with enormous ramifications for its political status.<sup>106</sup> Parker’s account, whilst still largely an exception to the rule, is a laudable example of this approach.<sup>107</sup>

What unites the conflicts in Germany and England was that religion featured as an intrinsic element in the wider factional struggles for interpretational hegemony on fundamental questions of internal governance. Evidently, the significance of these religious components should not be overstated: both contemporaries and historians have sought to stress that the English Civil War was not a religious war, but one principally fought for political reasons.<sup>108</sup> Even though the connection between war and religion seems more blatant in the Holy Roman Empire, historians such as Wilson have likewise gone to great lengths to stress that the Thirty Years’ War was primarily fought over a political constitution by factions that were not always neatly divided along confessional lines.<sup>109</sup> This argument is arguably sustained by the fact that the clerical resistance faced by Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XI in their quests to renew the Swedish church settlement never threatened the religious or political foundations of the Scandinavian kingdom. However, the complexity in analysing seventeenth-century religion in Europe separately from the ‘secular’ business of government lies in the simple fact that there was barely any separation between the two spheres truly worthy of the name. Religion transcended early modern society and permeated every sphere of it. This was particularly true of Protestantism, which encouraged secular rulers to reign over

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<sup>106</sup> See: Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, Vol. I, p. 638.

<sup>107</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 169-172. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-182. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-197.

<sup>108</sup> See: Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War*, pp. 111-113. For the ambiguous role of religion in the seventeenth-century crisis more broadly, see: Parker, *Global Crisis*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>109</sup> Wilson, ‘Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession’, pp. 512-513.

churches as *summus episcopus* and integrate them into the state's structures. In turn, this signifies that crises of religion and politics were often strongly interwoven. A crisis of the polity was thus often intrinsically linked to religion and could trigger a crisis of religion – as happened both within Anglicanism and German Lutheranism.

In England, the compromise of the Elizabethan settlement was reopened, as Calvinists and Laudians engaged in a struggle for religious supremacy in England that scarred the realm for much of the seventeenth century. Although the Restoration seemed to reinstate the Laudian order upon the church, its expulsion of committed Calvinists signified that there was no return to even a semblance of religious unity. England in 1660 was a religiously more divided realm than it was in 1600. The divisions within the English Church were mirrored in German Protestantism, where multiconfessionality created different dynamics, however: since radical and moderate Reformation Christians were not united by one church, Lutherans did not have to seek the integration of Reformed Christians within their faith. This did not mean that Calvinism had no impact upon Lutheranism's constitution though, to the contrary: the rapid expansion of Genevan Protestantism in Germany during the 'Second Reformation' paired with the *Formula of Concord*'s failure to unite German Lutherans and give rise to a dynamic faith created an ossified orthodoxy whose shortcomings were greatly exposed during the Thirty Years' War. Indeed, the structural challenge posed by Calvinism and the war to German Lutheranism can hardly be understated: even contemporary historians such as Lehmann have argued that the Reformation Church came perilously close to total annihilation during the conflict.<sup>110</sup> Swedish Lutheranism managed to escape this calamity, partly because of the kingdom's general stability yet also because of a theologically different starting point: whilst orthodox Lutherans in Germany thus found

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<sup>110</sup> Lehmann, 'Lutheranism in the seventeenth century', p. 66.

themselves on the defensive for much of the century, their Swedish brethren were steadily on the offensive as they tried and succeeded to supplant the moderate Protestantism that had been the hallmark of early seventeenth-century Sweden. Even as the political power of the clergy waned, its doctrinal ideas had prevailed by the close of the century. Conversely however, it likely was the less rigid Lutheranism of the early 1600s that saved Swedish Protestantism from many of the pitfalls of its German counterpart by offering a greater lay inclusion and advanced forms of pastoral care.

When the anonymous pamphleteer issued his lament in 1659, Protestant orthodoxy was thus not in Sweden, yet certainly in England and Lutheran Germany in crisis: it had lost its sway with many believers (even if acknowledging ambiguity in this regard), come under severe attack from religious hardliners, sectarian heterodoxies, and/or a reformed Catholic Church intent on rolling back the forces of Reformation 'heresy' – and most of all, it was beset by internal struggles that often were about power and dominance within state and church, yet ultimately grounded in the very nature of the Christian faith and the Reformation. First and foremost, this crisis was a product of the policy of a confessionalization pursued by religious and political leaders and the indivisible notion of religious uniformity it implied. What triggered the breakdown of religious order beyond anything else was the refusal to accept any aberration from established orthodox truth. As Europeans sought to restore order, the impossibility of this was recognised by ever more contemporaries. Confessional coexistence, not confrontation needed to become the paradigm as the seventeenth century drew to a close. Though this focused in essential terms on relations *between* confessions, it held some truth for factions *within* faiths. Indeed, it very much seems that to do justice to Protestant religiosity in the seventeenth century, it is necessary not to think of the Calvinist, Anglican, and Lutheran confessions as monolithic blocks, but rather along Kaufmann's model as pluralistic and

diverse ‘confessional cultures’ (*Konfessionskulturen*).<sup>111</sup> This was true before 1600, yet especially so as the end of this turbulent century drew nearer. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, it should be stressed that this pluralisation in England and Lutheran Germany expressed itself theologically most in the declining sway of Augustinianism: much of the seventeenth-century’s theological debates had centred around core doctrines of Protestant faith deeply steeped in Patristic thought. Puritans and gnesio-Lutherans did not succeed in entrenching predestination and an extreme form of *sola gratia* as key principles of doctrine, either because of their expulsion from the established Church altogether or their failure to enforce a meaningful dogmatic uniformity. The ‘crisis of orthodoxy’ was thus in no small part a ‘crisis of Augustinianism’. It is here that Sweden stands out again as the proponent of the nearly diametrically opposite model: a state where, after decades of successive dismantling of any inner-confessional pluralism, the officially established church and faith had gained in rigidity, with an intolerant and yet royally sanctioned creed, steeped in Augustinian orthodoxy, governing its church. The relative geographical and political isolation of Sweden that prevented large-scale conflict on its soil meant that the country possessed all the instruments to become a lone example of successful confessionalization. In the rest of Europe, new forces were brooding within Protestantism that would eventually pave the way for a holistically new approach to Reformation theology. More so than Trevor-Roper was willing to acknowledge, the turmoil of the seventeenth century had created the essential conditions for religious reform by shattering the illusion of orthodox uniformity.<sup>112</sup> Thus, a more living, practical, and reasonable – briefly, a more enlightened Protestant Christianity had the opportunity to surge ahead amidst the chaos of this century.

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<sup>111</sup> Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Frieden*, p. 141.

<sup>112</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 188.

### III. New Science, New Philosophy – New Theology? The Early Protestant Enlightenment Theology of the Cambridge Platonists and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

At the close of the seventeenth century, the theologians of European Protestantism faced fundamental crisis: confessionalization had inspired egregious carnage. Religious conflict and war had helped make churches ever more dependent on secular rulers, if not wholly subject to worldly authority. The aim(s) of a new universal church seemed unattainable, whilst theological hair-splitting and internal divisions had all too often caused rifts with the laity. As if this had not proved sufficient, a new formidable challenge to Protestant orthodoxy arose in the wake of the seventeenth century: what came to be known as the ‘new science(s)’ and ‘new philosophy’. Whilst the Reformation had initiated its erosion, philosophers such as René Descartes (1596-1650) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) delivered the final *coup de grâce* to the shaky edifice of Aristotelian scholasticism that had hitherto defined European scholarly pursuit and underpinned the Christian belief system – an act of destabilisation in which they were corroborated by a series of new scientific findings. Although historians have debated the validity of the concept of ‘*the Scientific Revolution*’, the frenzied responses to Hobbesianism and Cartesianism do very much suggest that a shift occurred.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of this febrile atmosphere, a momentum for renewal emerged: Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> See: Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds.), *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge, 1992). Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1996). Mikuláš Teich, *The Scientific Revolution Revisited* (Cambridge, 2015). Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), pp. xix-xx. *Ibid.*, p. 50. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56. For a recent overview of the Scientific Revolution and its intersection with Enlightenment, see: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 42-84.

theologians began to rethink their faith and its foundations. To begin with, Churches began to rethink their places in the secular polity: as historians such as David Sorkin and Ian Hunter describe, the new legal philosophy of Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) thus enabled the establishment of autonomous Churches within confessionally neutral states through the development of the ‘Collegialist’ and ‘Territorialist’ models of church governance – an important step towards lasting religious peace.<sup>2</sup> Yet the most groundbreaking change was observable in the realm of doctrine: valiantly, a new generation of Protestants sought to reconcile Christianity with the new spirit that was sweeping through Europe – and ended up paving the way for a new, indeed ‘enlightened’ theology. At the centre of this watershed stood a handful of figures, many of whom were based in England and Germany: the Cambridge Platonists and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). The Cambridge Platonists were a group of thinkers at Cambridge University. Their most prominent members were Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683), Peter Sterry (1613-1672), Nathaniel Culverwell (1619-1651), Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), and Henry More (1614-1687). Under the impression of England’s seventeenth-century turmoil, these men sought to redefine the boundaries of Anglicanism to forge a new religious settlement and pacify the realm. In the Holy Roman Empire, Leibniz embarked on a similar mission: born in the dying years of the Thirty Years’ War, the famous philosopher’s quest for religious peace remarkably mirrored that of the Cambridge Platonists.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite widespread acknowledgement of their achievements, they have not played a major role

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<sup>2</sup> See: David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment – Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 33-34. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153. Ian Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments – Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle, 1690-1730’ in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon, 2004), pp. 578-579. Martin Heckel, ‘Die Wiedervereinigung der Konfessionen als Ziel und Auftrag der Reichsverfassung im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation’ in Hans Otte and Richard Schenk (eds.), *Die Reunionsgespräche im Niedersachsen des 17. Jahrhunderts – Rojas y Spinola, Molan, Leibniz* (Göttingen, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> The centrality of the Holy Roman Empire’s turbulences for Leibniz’s intellectual development has been recently re-emphasised by Maria Rosa Antognazza. See: Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz – An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 7-8.

in the recent historiography of the ‘religious Enlightenment’.<sup>4</sup>

To retrace whether they shared a common enterprise that could help to establish a definition of ‘Protestant Enlightenment theology’ is the aim of this chapter. To achieve this end, the intellectual systems of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz will be critically examined.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, their theologies and the intellectual systems underpinning them will be compared on four counts: first, their vision of Christianity; secondly, their conception of God and the universe; thirdly, their conception of human nature; and lastly, their wider methodologies and the intellectual traditions they were steeped in. Throughout, it will be highlighted how the religious thought of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz fits with established understandings of Protestant Enlightenment theology, as especially developed in German Church history but also Anglo-American Enlightenment historiography. In doing so, the chapter builds on and reinforces three central tenets of scholarship: first, the inseparability of metaphysics and theology as emphasised by many historians of especially Leibniz and the *kirchliche Aufklärung*.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it confirms Sarah Hutton’s and Christia Mercer’s emphasis on the

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 6. *Ibid.*, p. 19. *Ibid.*, p. 61. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125. Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), pp. 54-55. *Ibid.*, p. 106. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis will principally centre on the following texts and editions: Ralph Cudworth, ‘A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality’ in Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality With A Treatise On Freewill*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1-152. Ralph Cudworth, ‘A Treatise of Freewill’ in Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality With A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 153-209. Henry More, *An Account of Virtue: Or Dr. Henry More’s Abridgment of Morals Put into English* (London, 1690). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’ in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Writings*, ed. Peter Loftson (Peterborough, 2012), pp. 57-102. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy – Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer and tr. E.M. Huggard (Peru, 1996). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘The Monadology’ in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Writings*, ed. Peter Loftson (Peterborough, 2012), pp. 115-154. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘The Principles of Nature and of Grace, Based on Reason’ in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Writings*, ed. Peter Loftson (Peterborough, 2012), pp. 103-114. Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion – A Reader* (London, 2016). Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz, *Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz’s Theologisches System – Eine möglichst correcte Ausgabe des lateinischen Textes und dessen Übertragung ins Deutsche*, ed. and tr. Carl Haas (Tübingen, 1860).

<sup>6</sup> See amongst others: Donald Rutherford, ‘Introduction: Leibniz and Religion’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), p. 524. Christia Mercer, ‘Leibniz on Knowledge and God’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), pp. 531-550. Ursula Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz,

importance of an irenic eclecticism that united old and new ideas to both the Anglicans and the Lutheran, thereby entrenching one of the Protestant Enlightenment's key intellectual principles.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, it will sustain the conception of an Erasmian Protestant Enlightenment, as put forth by Ernst Cassirer, Hugh Trevor-Roper, and John Pocock, that modelled itself in explicit opposition to the Augustinianism that had for long constituted the backbone of Protestantism.<sup>8</sup> Both the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz thus affirmed the existence of natural reason guided by free will as a self-reliant source of knowledge consummated by (biblical) revelation – a belief that, as many historians have confirmed, was inspired by the scientific and philosophical advances that compelled them to gradually emancipate their metaphysics and natural religion from Scripture without severing their link.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, however, as historians of Cambridge

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Wolff and Early Modern Theology' in Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A.G. Roeber (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 550-563. Ursula Goldenbaum, 'Spinoza's Parrot, Socinian Syllogisms, and Leibniz's Metaphysics: Leibniz's Three Strategies For Defending Christian Mysteries', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), pp. 551-553. Christia Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: its origins and development* (Cambridge, 2001). Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert – Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zurich, 1981), p. 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-65. Walter Sparr, 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen – Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz als Philosoph und Theologe', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, Vol. 28/1 (1986), pp. 139-178. Walter Sparr, 'Theologische Aufklärung – Kritik oder System?' in Albrecht Beutel and Martha Nooke (eds.), *Religion und Aufklärung – Akten des Ersten Internationalen Kongresses zur Erforschung der Aufklärungstheologie (Münster, 30. März bis 2. April 2014)* (Tübingen, 2016), pp. 21-24. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29. Wolfgang Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1989), pp. 70-73. Georg Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie – Forschungsskizze zu einem Topos der anthropologischen Wende', *Kerygma und Dogma – Zeitschrift für theologische Forschung und kirchliche Lehre*, Vol. 63 (2017), pp. 46-48. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> See: Goldenbaum, 'Leibniz's Three Strategies For Defending Christian Mysteries', p. 553. Mercer, *Leibniz's metaphysics*, p. 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-59. Christia Mercer, 'Platonism in early modern natural philosophy: The case of Leibniz and Conway' in James Wilberding and Christoph Horn (eds.), *Neoplatonism and the Philosophy of Nature* (Oxford, 2012), p. 107. Sarah Hutton and Douglas Hedley, 'Introduction' in Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: studies on Platonism and early modern philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> See: Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, tr. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 2009), pp. 137-141. *Ibid.*, p. 160. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (Indianapolis, 2001), p. 201. John Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce: The Conservative Enlightenment in England' in Lester G. Crocker (ed.), *L'Età dei Lumi: studi storici sul Settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, Vol. 1 (2 vols., Naples, 1985), pp. 553-554. *Ibid.*, pp. 557-558.

<sup>9</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 53-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-139. Rutherford, 'Introduction: Leibniz and Religion', p. 524. Mercer, 'Leibniz on Knowledge and God', pp. 531-550. Mercer, *Leibniz's metaphysics*, pp. 63-64. Goldenbaum, 'Leibniz, Wolff and Early Modern Theology', p.

Platonism and Leibniz have maintained, their theologies were a systematic attempt to replace the confessionalization's combative and polemical theology with a conciliatory and essentialist theology. Occasional differences notwithstanding, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz thus indeed shared the same enlightened Protestant Christianity.

### The Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian Christianity

In recent histories of the religious Enlightenment, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz have only played a secondary role at best.<sup>10</sup> This is peculiar, given the great importance that early Enlightenment historians have attributed to them: Cassirer thus credited Cudworth and More with the early attempts to revive the 'Renaissance Christianity' that became so central to enlightened theology in his eyes, while placing Leibniz at the centre of the German *Frühaufklärung* and its religious thinking.<sup>11</sup> There are multiple, interlinking explanations for this inattention: first, there is an ongoing debate whether the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz may legitimately be called 'Enlightenment' thinkers.<sup>12</sup> This is often rooted in Cassirer's and Peter Gay's thesis that the fundamental philosophical achievement of the Lumières was the shift to an '*esprit systématique*', away from the obsolete seventeenth-century '*esprit de système*' – that is, the kind of

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551. Goldenbaum, 'Leibniz's three Strategies for defending the Christian mysteries', p. 551-553. John Henry, 'Religion and the Scientific Revolution' in Peter Harrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Religion and Science* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 6. *Ibid.*, p. 19. *Ibid.*, p. 61. *Ibid.*, p. 123. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 54-55. *Ibid.*, p. 106. *Ibid.*, p. 119. *Ibid.*, p. 248. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>11</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 175. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141. Barth has also insisted upon Leibniz's importance to the German Protestant Enlightenment. See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-65.

<sup>12</sup> See: Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism* (2 vols., New York and London, 1995), pp. 132-141. *Ibid.*, p. 203. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-284. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-319. John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment – Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 6-9. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-43. Kieron O'Hara, *The Enlightenment – A Beginner's Guide* (London, 2018), pp. 46-47. William Bristow, 'Enlightenment', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/enlightenment/> (16 Apr. 2020).

metaphysical systems championed by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz.<sup>13</sup> Connected to this is the prominence attributed to Newtonian-Lockeanism in traditional Franco-centric interpretations of the (moderate) Enlightenment which at least marginalised the rationalist thought of Cudworth, More, and Leibniz.<sup>14</sup> This thinking has been nuanced of late, as Enlightenment historians such as Jonathan Israel have identified three principal traditions of Enlightenment philosophy – Newtonian-Lockeanism, Wolffianism, and neo-Cartesianism – which crucially include rationalist philosophies built on elaborate metaphysical systems.<sup>15</sup> However, this has not greatly opened the door to the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz, as many historians continue to express scepticism about their influence on the Enlightenment on the grounds that Cambridge Platonism was superseded by John Locke (1632-1704) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) in England, whilst Christian Wolff became more successful in imprinting his intellectual stamp on the Lutheran world than Leibniz.<sup>16</sup> David Sorkin thus goes as far as to label Wolffianism ‘the

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<sup>13</sup> See: Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680-1715*, tr. J. Lewis May (New York, 2013), pp. 245-246. *Ibid.*, p. 332. Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band: Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, ed. Hans Baron (4 vols., Darmstadt, 2016), p. 355. *Ibid.*, p. 356. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. xiii-xvi. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 81-82. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-141. *Ibid.*, p. 203. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-284. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-319. This did not prevent Cassirer from acknowledging that the German Enlightenment largely built on Leibniz and Wolff. See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 120-123.

<sup>14</sup> See: Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind*, p. 240. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 11-13. pp. 132-141. *Ibid.*, p. 345. Pauline Phemister, ‘Introduction’ in John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Pauline Phemister (Oxford, 2008), p. xl. Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. xiii-xvi. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9. *Ibid.*, 12-14. Roy Porter, ‘The Enlightenment in England’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 4-5. Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), p. 515. Scholars of Germany recognised the importance of rationalism for the *Aufklärung* earlier. See: Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, pp. 355-356. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 81. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-123. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 328-330. Klaus Scholder, ‘Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland’ in Heinz Liebing and Klaus Scholder (eds.), *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation – Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 461-462.

<sup>15</sup> See: Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 8-11. *Ibid.*, pp. 447-562.

<sup>16</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 301. *Ibid.*, p. 314. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-330. *Ibid.*, p. 345. Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 515-562. Pocock, ‘Clergy and Commerce’, p. 551. Gay, Sorkin, Beutel, and Rosenblatt thus focus on Wolffianism as the key intellectual tradition underpinning enlightened Lutheranism. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern*

first full expression of the religious Enlightenment among German Protestants', while only mentioning the Cambridge Platonists in passing as an important influence on English 'Moderation'.<sup>17</sup> There have, however, been a few dissenting voices to this minimisation of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: German Church historians such as Wolfgang Gericke and Walter Sparn have thus emphasised the singular significance of especially Leibniz to the religious Enlightenment, with the former in particular contending that it is 'from Leibniz onwards [that] we can date the beginning of the German ecclesiastical Enlightenment'.<sup>18</sup> On the Anglo-American side, Ritchie Robertson has recently highlighted the immense importance of Leibniz's ideas for the Enlightenment and especially its religious dimension, even if it remains at times ambiguous whether he considers him a part of the Enlightenment itself.<sup>19</sup> Sarah Hutton has further built on the scholarship of Rosalie Colie that linked the Cambridge Platonists to the Enlightenment.<sup>20</sup> There is thus a case to be made that the foundational moment of

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*Paganism*, p. 301. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-330. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 104-109. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 12. *Ibid.*, pp. 115. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-136. Helena Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment' in Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2006), pp. 287-288.

<sup>17</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 115. *Ibid.*, p. 61. Kantzenbach made a similar judgment on Wolff. See: Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 70. See also: Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 70-73. Sparn, 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen', pp. 139-178. Gericke also acknowledges the Cambridge Platonists' importance for enlightened theology. See: Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> See amongst others: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 1. *Ibid.*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-147. *Ibid.*, p. 170. *Ibid.*, p. 180. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246. The ambiguity in Robertson's work mostly stems from his general identification of Enlightenment with the *esprit systématique* and empiricism. See: *Ibid.*, p. xix. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>20</sup> To list but the classic accounts of Cambridge Platonism: Gerald R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason – A Study of Religious Changes within the Church of England, 1660 to 1700* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 37-60. Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789* (London, 1962), pp. 67-70. Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment – A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge, 1957). For some of Hutton's most important works, see: Sarah Hutton, *Anne Conway - A Woman Philosopher* (Cambridge, 2004). Sarah Hutton and Douglas Hedley (eds.), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: studies on Platonism and early modern philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2008). Sarah Hutton, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 136-159. Sarah Hutton, 'Introduction' in Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality with A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge, 1996), pp. ix-xxx.

the Protestant Enlightenment in Anglicanism and Lutheranism lay in the theologies of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz respectively.

Even a cursory inspection of the Cambridge Platonists' religious and philosophical ideas shows to what extent their brand of Christianity bore all the hallmarks of what modern scholarship qualifies as 'religious Enlightenment': they placed an immense emphasis on moderation – or 'temperance' – and reasonableness, while positioning themselves in a middling position that rejected both Hobbesian irreligion and Puritan 'Enthusiasme'.<sup>21</sup> In this, they adopted a position of the 'middle course' that historians such as Helena Rosenblatt would consider central to 'enlightened religion'.<sup>22</sup> Exalted, emotional religious experiences were to More and Cudworth not true displays of belief: More spoke scornfully of the ostentatious religiosity of 'superstitious hypocrites who because they go often to Church, repeat many prayers ... take themselves to be so very perfect that whatever is suggested to them by that Passion sounds like the Voice of Heaven'.<sup>23</sup> He also starkly repudiated the Puritan concern with predestination, with its harrowing implication of a few elect earning the privilege of heavenly happiness, as the 'black doctrine of absolute reprobation'.<sup>24</sup>

However, the Cambridge Platonists likewise voiced criticism of the established Church: in opposition to the confessional age's doctrinal controversies, they repudiated rigid dogmatism vehemently, with Cudworth invoking the example of Socrates who 'shunned that dictating and dogmatical way of ... the sophisters'.<sup>25</sup> Instead, they rallied around a minimalist Christianity that enabled them, remarkably for members of the post-Restoration Anglican Church as Gerald Cragg highlights, to passionately support

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<sup>21</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 33. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>22</sup> Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 287.

<sup>23</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> As cited in: Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason*, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 78.

toleration in religious affairs by casting many theological questions and forms of worship as *adiaphora* of secondary importance.<sup>26</sup> More thus said that ‘various Ceremonies, and other Circumstances of Divine Worship ... may be established’ under the condition that ‘these must have no repugnancy in them’, in other words not to violate basic precepts of Christianity.<sup>27</sup> Crucially, as Hutton stresses, this tolerant stance was also necessary to confirm their allegiance to the Restoration Church, given that many of them had cooperated with Cromwell’s regime.<sup>28</sup> Yet that the Cambridge Platonists tended to be averse to the ostentatious ritualism of Laudianism was beyond doubt: More thus cited ‘Rituality’ – that is the purely external adherence to ‘things ceremonial’ – and ‘superstition’ as two of four types of impiety.<sup>29</sup> The other two were attacks upon the Puritans (‘Enthusiasm’) and atheists (‘Profaneness’).<sup>30</sup> Their spiritual simplicity had clear limits, however: certain Christian tenets – such as the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ – were non-negotiable to the Cambridge Platonists.<sup>31</sup>

Yet at the undeniable core of the Cambridge Platonist faith stood ethics. To lead a morally sound life was in their view the foremost duty of the believer; ‘for Virtue, which is true and rais’d up to perfection, and which becomes thereby the Image of God, is certainly God’s best Worship’.<sup>32</sup> Linked to this were two other remarkable assertions: first, that the Christian faith was not merely to provide salvation in the next, but contentment in this earthly life: ‘such men are said to be perfect ... who are not only good, but also happy. For they define happiness to be the Perfection of human life’.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps most radically, the Cambridge Platonists believed that a virtuous life was within

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<sup>26</sup> Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason*, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. xi.

<sup>29</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 122.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Cudworth, ‘A Treatise of Freewill’, p. 186-187.

<sup>32</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 215.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

the grasp of humans, as they were equipped with a functional free will.<sup>34</sup> A more radical break with the Puritan's Augustinian disdain for the earthly life could hardly be found. It also stood against the ritualistic passivity of the Laudian Church: Cudworth and More advocated an active faith whose profession was not restricted to the temple or narrow theological disputation.<sup>35</sup> As Cragg wrote, the Christian religion for the Cambridge Platonists was 'a divine life not a divine science'.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst academic engagement with the Cambridge Platonists has been arguably a little sporadic, barely any early modern philosopher has obtained as much scholarly attention as Leibniz. Curiously, however, scholarly interest in his Christian faith and theology has only comparatively recently risen, especially among Anglo-American historians. Many explanations can be put forth to explain this: first, there is the aforementioned prioritisation of Wolff that all but reduced Leibniz to an inspiration.<sup>37</sup> However, historians have also attributed the lack of engagement with Leibniz's Christian thought to his religious ambiguity: Lloyd Strickland has very eloquently shown how many viewpoints were credited to Leibniz whom contemporaries and historians have in the past considered a Catholic, a Deist, or even a pagan.<sup>38</sup> Famously, as Donald Rutherford records, Leibniz was known among the common citizenry of Hanover as *Loevenix*, 'believes nothing'.<sup>39</sup> Within German academe, the emergence of a 'theological turn' in Leibniz scholarship did not occur until the 1980s, when Sparr contended in a seminal

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>36</sup> Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason*, p. 69. Hutton makes a similar point. See: Hutton, 'Introduction', pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>37</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 6. *Ibid.*, p. 124-125. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 104-105. *Ibid.*, p. 106. This view was already defended by Gay. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 301. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-330.

<sup>38</sup> Lloyd Strickland, 'Introduction: Leibniz – Theology and Practice' in Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion – A Reader* (London, 2016), p. 10. See also: Paul Lodge, 'Introduction' in Paul Lodge (ed.), *Leibniz and his Correspondents* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Rutherford, 'Introduction: Leibniz and Religion', p. 523.

article that Leibniz was ‘both philosopher and theologian’.<sup>40</sup> In English-language scholarship, more historians have begun to seriously engage with Leibniz’s Christian and indeed distinctively Protestant ideas since the turn of the millennium.<sup>41</sup> Especially Maria Rosa Antognazza, Christia Mercer, and Ursula Goldenbaum have been at the forefront of restoring Christianity’s centrality to Leibniz’s thought and, in Goldenbaum’s case, the influence he exerted through his innovative theology on Christian thinking in Germany.<sup>42</sup> More recently, they have been joined in this effort by Strickland – who declared that the German philosopher’s ‘chief concern was in fact theology’<sup>43</sup> – and Irena Backus who has sought to restore Leibniz as a Protestant, rather than a crypto-Catholic as he is still often depicted.<sup>44</sup>

This rehabilitation of Leibniz as a Christian and Protestant thinker could not be more warranted: for if the mark of ‘enlightened’ religion was evident in Cambridge Platonist thought, it comes forth even more clearly in his work. This is likely not a coincidence: Leibniz was very well acquainted with the work of Cudworth and More, even if their

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<sup>40</sup> Sparr, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> See: Rutherford, ‘Introduction: Leibniz and Religion’, pp. 523-530. Mercer, ‘Leibniz on Knowledge and God’, pp. 531-550. Paul Lodge, ‘Leibniz, Bayle, and Locke on Faith and Reason’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), pp. 575-600. Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz’s Three Strategies For Defending Christian Mysteries’, pp. 551-574. Maria Rosa Antognazza, ‘Leibniz and Religious Toleration’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), pp. 601-622. Michael J. Murray, ‘Leibniz’s Proposal for Theological Reconciliation among the Protestants’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 76/4 (2002), pp. 623-646. Mercer, *Leibniz’s metaphysics*.

<sup>42</sup> Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz, Wolff and Early Modern Theology’ p. 550. See also: Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz on the Trinity and Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 2007), pp. xiii-xxv. Mercer, ‘Leibniz on Knowledge and God’, pp. 531-550.

<sup>43</sup> Strickland, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> See amongst others: Lloyd Strickland, ‘Leibniz’s Harmony between the Kingdoms of Nature and Grace’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. 98/3 (2016), pp. 302-329. Strickland, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-11. Irena Backus, *Leibniz: Protestant Theologian* (Oxford, 2016). Irena Backus, ‘G.W. Leibniz and Protestant Scholasticism in the years 1698-1704’ in Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma and Jason Zuidema (eds.), *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism – Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 679-696. Sparr and Goldenbaum have also re-emphasised the Protestantism and more specifically the Lutheranism of Leibniz. See: Sparr, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, p. 151. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-159; *Ibid.*, p. 167. Ursula Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz as a Lutheran’ in Allison P. Coudert, Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner (eds.), *Leibniz, mysticism and religion* (Dordrecht and London, 1998), pp. 169-192.

importance to Leibniz's thought remains hotly debated.<sup>45</sup> However, there is much to be said for Mercer's thesis that rumours of Cambridge Platonist influence on Leibniz may have been somewhat exaggerated.<sup>46</sup> Despite obvious similarities, it would be mistaken to see Leibniz as a mere translator of English thought into a German confessional context. Though clearly steeped in their writing, he perfected their ideas to forge the foundation of a distinct enlightened German Protestantism that persisted well into the mid-eighteenth century.

Nonetheless, in its broad strokes, Leibniz's religion as outlined in his various treatises bore a striking resemblance to the Cambridge Platonist faith: Leibniz thus also endorsed a moderate, 'reasonable' Christianity wary of the extremes of 'libertinism' and sectarian 'fanatics' alike.<sup>47</sup> More than anything, the Christian God was a force of 'reasonableness', just, benevolent, and wise.<sup>48</sup> In defending this stance, Leibniz by no means considered himself a defender of an emergent consensus: to the contrary, he was extremely worried that a long-standing 'reign of darkness' harking back to the scholastic age had obscured the Christian religion's essence.<sup>49</sup>

This worrisome development was, in Leibniz's view, attributable to a vast array of actors, present and past alike: rather than the mere result of recent confessional strife, generations of theologians had undermined the Christian faith and ensured that the 'divine light is obscured by the opinions of men'.<sup>50</sup> This even included the Church

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<sup>45</sup> Especially Catherine Wilson and Allison Coudert have credited Cambridge Platonism with inspiring central tenets of Leibniz's philosophy. See: Catherine Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics – A Historical and Comparative Study* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 160-162. Allison P. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht, 1995), pp. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> Mercer posits that Leibniz developed his basic theological and philosophical views before his contact with Cambridge Platonist thought in the 1680s. See: Mercer, *Leibniz's metaphysics*, p. 175. Christia Mercer, 'Leibniz and his Master: The Correspondence with Jakob Thomasius' in Paul Lodge (ed.), *Leibniz and his Correspondents* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 58. *Ibid.*, p. 63. *Ibid.*, §22.

<sup>48</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', II.

<sup>49</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 53.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Fathers and specifically Augustine, whom Leibniz considered to have ‘exaggerate[d] things’<sup>51</sup> – an extraordinary verdict on the towering figure of Protestant theology. Yet Leibniz simply could not deny the effect these controversies had incrementally had on worship and faith: ‘Can one believe it? Some Christians have imagined that they could be devout without loving their neighbour, and pious without loving God’.<sup>52</sup> Just as the Cambridge Platonists had done, he also fiercely criticised the Christian religion’s ossification across the mainstream confessions. True piety, in his view, had been inhibited by the excesses of confessional quarrel which had given rise to dead dogma and aimless ritualism.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the Reformers’ original mission to return Christianity to its founding principles had failed, replacing one kind of scholasticism with another.<sup>54</sup>

In his quest to restore the essence of Christianity, Leibniz again mirrored the Cambridge Platonists by attributing supreme importance to ethics in faith. ‘[T]rue piety’, he was convinced, was engendered by a ‘love of God’ and a ‘knowledge of [His] perfections’ that ‘begets that pleasure in good action which gives relief to virtue’.<sup>55</sup> Again, this belief was rooted in the firm conviction Leibniz shared with the Cambridge Platonists that contentment in this earthly life was not only possible but indeed a natural consequence of faith: ‘the love of God makes us enjoy a foretaste of future felicity’.<sup>56</sup> Related to this was Leibniz’s assertion that, rather than wholly corrupt, humanity had to be capable of free will and the ability to recognise God’s wisdom through reason.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Christianity was to Leibniz unthinkable without the latter: ‘reason, far from being contrary to

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Leibniz’s anti-scholasticism, see: Sparr, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, pp. 167-168.

<sup>55</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>56</sup> Leibniz, ‘The Principles of Nature and of Grace’, §18.

<sup>57</sup> Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’, XIII. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §39. *Ibid.*, §81.

Christianity, serves as a foundation for this religion'.<sup>58</sup> This was, mildly put, a controversial stance. For Leibniz placed himself in diametrical opposition to the established orthodoxies of both German Protestant confessions: arguing that humanity was saved by grace in cooperation with reason rather than 'grace alone' was a non-starter not only for most Calvinists, yet also many Lutherans whose stern belief in the unfree will harked back to Martin Luther himself. By affirming free will, Leibniz openly defied the Augustinian pessimism of human nature that was still highly influential within orthodox German Protestantism.

At the same time, Leibniz was very careful not to dismantle the edifice of Reformation doctrine entirely: as for the Cambridge Platonists, concepts such as the Trinity and God's chosen order of the universe were to the German thinker merely '*above*' not '*against* reason' – and thus to be revered.<sup>59</sup> How indispensable these mysteries were to Leibniz has been shown by Goldenbaum who stressed that to him, they constituted the 'the only meaningful difference between [Christianity] and all the other religions'.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Leibniz was more conservative than his English counterparts on some issues, most significantly predestination: as a point of principle, Leibniz could not accept the doctrine as it was taught in its classical form. He abhorred the conceptions of the tyrannical, punitive divinity that underlay this idea, stating that theologians defending this doctrine 'imagine a God who deserves neither to be imitated nor to be loved'.<sup>61</sup> On these grounds alone, it was impossible for Leibniz to accept the notion of a handful of seemingly arbitrarily chosen 'elect'. Rather than just the few, he posited that 'God wills the salvation of all men and ... condemns only those whose will is evil'.<sup>62</sup> Yet his rejection of predestination was not quite as clear-cut as More's and Cudworth's. Instead, he muted it

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<sup>58</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §52.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, §23. See also: Sparr 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen', p. 169-173.

<sup>60</sup> Goldenbaum, 'Leibniz's Three Strategies for Defending the Christian Mysteries', p. 556.

<sup>61</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

into a doctrine of divine ‘foreknowledge’: while believers were solely responsible for their own actions determining their favour in the eyes of God, He was always aware of how they would act.<sup>63</sup> Rather than to discard the concept of predestination wholesale therefore, Leibniz sought to strip it of its seemingly unjust and arbitrary character. This became clearest in his usage of Calvinist terminology to illustrate his assertion, describing those who God ‘foresaw that they would cling with a lively faith to the doctrine of Jesus Christ’ as the ‘elect’.<sup>64</sup> Reviewing his position, one often cannot escape the impression Leibniz took more offence to predestination’s implications for God’s nature than the fate of believers.<sup>65</sup>

This seeming timidity was likely a result of Leibniz’s wider theological aim which was more ambitious than that of the Cambridge Platonists: instead of mere toleration, Leibniz aspired to nothing less than a full reunion of the squabbling Christian confessions – including Roman Catholicism. This is a goal he developed under the guidance of his (Catholic) benefactor Johann Christian von Boineburg (1622-1672) as early as the late 1660s: ‘every good man must desire that the lustre of the Church be everywhere restored’.<sup>66</sup> It was not least this ambition and his service to Catholics that raised doubts among contemporaries and historians over Leibniz’s commitment to the Lutheran faith.<sup>67</sup> However, throughout his life, he never strayed from the Lutheran Church and regularly reaffirmed his commitment to Protestantism, most notably in the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>65</sup> For more detailed discussions of Leibniz’s position on predestination, see: Sparr, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, pp. 161-166. Murray, ‘Theological Reconciliation among the Protestants’, pp. 632-646. Backus, ‘Leibniz and Protestant Scholasticism’, pp. 686-696.

<sup>66</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘A proposal to revive the Catholic Demonstrations (late 1679(?))’ in Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion – A Reader* (London, 2016), p. 49. Antognazza has shown that Leibniz did, in the absence of Church reunion, support toleration. See: Antognazza, ‘Leibniz and Religious Toleration’, pp. 601-622. Backus and Murray have written on Leibniz’s later desire to unify the Protestant confessions. See: Backus, ‘Leibniz and Protestant Scholasticism’, pp. 683-686. Murray, ‘Theological Reconciliation among the Protestants’, pp. 623-626.

<sup>67</sup> Strickland, ‘Introduction’, pp. 2-5. *Ibid.*, p. 10. Loptson, ‘Introduction’, p. 22.

*Theodicy*.<sup>68</sup> His theology was also still strongly grounded in Protestant thinking: Robert Merrihew Adams, Sparr, and Antognazza thus make the salient point that Leibniz was strongly influenced by the Lutheran syncretist Georg Calixt (1586-1656) who had championed reconciliation among the major Christian confessions too.<sup>69</sup> To further strengthen his 'Protestant credentials', Leibniz framed his arguments to be in line with a variety of prominent Reformation theologians, chief among them Luther, Melanchthon, and – extraordinarily for a Lutheran – Calvin.<sup>70</sup> He spared his scorn for the Socinians and other marginal movements whom he considered to defend the indefensible by denying the omnipotence and omniscience of God.<sup>71</sup> Leibniz thus arguably saw himself more as a mediator who took great care to avoid alienating or repudiating any of the major confessions wholesale: symptomatic of this is a note on the Eucharist from the early 1670s, in which he wrote that 'the dispute in the Church only exists because one side has not understood the other'.<sup>72</sup> There is therefore little reason to suspect that Leibniz simply played to the gallery when stating his conviction in the 'moderate opinions of the Churches of the Augsburg Confession'.<sup>73</sup> All of this notwithstanding, Leibnizian Christianity was as radical and innovative compared to the prevailing orthodoxy as that of his English colleagues.

How were Cudworth, More, and Leibniz able to forge a Protestant faith that was so optimistic and proactive, not least regarding humanity and its ability of self-improvement? *Prima facie*, their idea of Christianity flew in the face of one of the

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<sup>68</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'On the demonstration of the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist (autumn 1671(?))' in Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion – A Reader* (London, 2016), p. 44. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 67.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, 'Leibniz's Examination of the Christian Religion', *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 11/4 (1994), p. 521. Sparr, 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen', p. 167. Antognazza, *Leibniz*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>70</sup> To offer but examples: Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 67. *Ibid.*, §12. *Ibid.*, §158.

<sup>71</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Leibniz, 'On the demonstration of the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist', pp. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 67.

Reformation's founding principles of faith and the Augustinian creed that inspired it: salvation by grace alone. The Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz were also seemingly putting Protestant hamartiology on its head by denying that the Fall had absolutely and irretrievably corrupted humanity, bar for the mercy of the Almighty. To understand how the Anglicans and their Lutheran counterpart were able to challenge these essential principles of Protestantism, one must focus on the two central theologico-philosophical problems at the heart of their thought: first, their staunch belief in goodness as an absolute, essential category and secondly, the ability of humankind to attain it by their own efforts.

### The Metaphysics behind the 'New Theology'

The radical rethinking of the pillars of Protestant theology that was at the heart of the Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian project was rooted in their metaphysics. Cudworth, More, and Leibniz had not only harboured an interest in the finer points of justification but were interested in all the forces that bind the world. That this enquiry had an explicitly theological purpose was self-evident to especially Leibniz: 'Metaphysics ... needs to be pushed forward in order that we may have clear notions of God, soul, and person'.<sup>74</sup> This included examining the origin of the universe and the nature of God. It was this enquiry that prompted Cudworth, More, and Leibniz to develop a natural theology from which all their other ideas emanated. In the historiography of enlightened religiosity, this centrality of natural theology is commonly emphasised, especially given its link to one of its crucial questions: the equilibrium between reason and revelation.<sup>75</sup> This is of significance since, as Gericke put it: 'The ecclesiastical Enlightenment begins

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<sup>74</sup> Leibniz, 'A proposal to revive the Catholic Demonstrations', p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 80-92. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-142. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 21-24. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 12-14. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 136-137. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199. *Ibid.*, pp. 221.

where reason and philosophy do not play, as previously, the role of subservient spirits for revelation and theology but begin to assert their own claim to truth and begin to hold sway within the Church'.<sup>76</sup> Differently put, the key feature of enlightened religiosity is for natural religion to be seen as a self-reliant and complementary, if not equal, source of religious knowledge *vis-à-vis* its revealed counterpart. This belief in the power of reason was, as many historians of enlightened religion have stressed, in turn based on a physico-theology that placed a supreme emphasis on the observable intelligence of divine Creation which gave rise to a metaphysical optimism central to both the Enlightenment and its religion.<sup>77</sup> However, despite a recognition of their general significance, the details of these natural theologies and the metaphysics underpinning them have on occasion receded into the background in scholarly work of the 'religious turn'. This may possibly still be rooted in the persuasion that they did not flow from but were imported into Christian thinking: paradigmatic of this is Karl Barth's argument that these belief-systems were the expression of a secular, anthropocentric mindset flowing from philosophical and scientific discoveries that was superimposed on Christianity as a result of the (more ground-breaking) shift that saw human reason on par with divine revelation.<sup>78</sup> Yet they are crucial in establishing the essence of enlightened religiosity, especially of the Protestant brand. This becomes particularly apparent when considering that Leibniz scholars, including Barth, have long stressed the inextricability of his metaphysics with his theology (and epistemology).<sup>79</sup> Goldenbaum has even gone as far

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<sup>76</sup> Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 53-56. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 60-61. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 89-92. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 147-157. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>78</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 61-65. Barth is one of the few scholars to prominently discuss the importance of metaphysics and natural theology to the theological Enlightenment. See: *Ibid.*, 16-24. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-45. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-65. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>79</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 54-65. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 45-48. Sparr, 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen', pp. 142-143. Rutherford, 'Introduction: Leibniz and Religion', p. 524. Mercer, 'Leibniz on Knowledge and God', pp. 531-550.

as claiming that his metaphysical system was in no small part an attempt to vindicate Christian doctrine.<sup>80</sup> This renders it all the more important to consider the details of the metaphysics of Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists as being central to their enlightened Protestantism – for all of them took similar starting points to arrive at startlingly similar outcomes. As not least Ritchie Robertson has stressed with explicit view to Leibniz, one idea was central to religious Enlightenment: God’s unqualified goodness.<sup>81</sup> Especially for enlightened Anglicans and German Lutherans, it was this debate that pitted them squarely against both Protestant orthodoxy and Hobbesian materialism since it touched upon one of the most complex questions of Christian theology: how did God determine good and evil?

Recent historiography has tended to see the fault lines in this dispute emerge around two schools of thought: voluntarism and intellectualism.<sup>82</sup> In this reading, championed by amongst others John Henry and Peter Harrison, to answer the seemingly impossible problem of theodicy, theologians had centred on whether God was more defined by His goodness or omnipotence – and in turn whether His nature or will determined good and evil.<sup>83</sup> Protestant orthodoxy had, according to this narrative, on balance tended to assume the latter position since it explained the doctrine of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*.<sup>84</sup> Fascinatingly – and for them uncomfortably enough – orthodox Protestants shared this persuasion of the relativity of good and evil with the ‘atheist’ materialist philosophers, albeit for vastly differing reasons: since the philosophers’ mechanistic, atomistic universe reduced the cosmos to a corporeal existence where no ideal substance could embody

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Mercer, *Leibniz’s metaphysics*, pp. 63-64. Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz, Wolff and Early Modern Theology’, p. 551. Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz’s three Strategies for defending the Christian mysteries’, p. 551-553.

<sup>80</sup> Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz’s Three Strategies for Defending Christian Mysteries’, p. 571.

<sup>81</sup> Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 137-144. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>82</sup> Henry, ‘Religion and the Scientific Revolution’, p. 48. See also: Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, p. 155. Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 585-586. *Ibid.*, p. 588.

<sup>83</sup> Henry, ‘Religion and the Scientific Revolution’, p. 48.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

these principles, the world was free of absolute moral categories. Good and evil were therefore mere constructs devised by societal consensus for convenience. Both staunch orthodox Protestants and Hobbesian materialists thus made morality contingent, by basing it upon the will of either God or humanity. The importance of intellectualism to certain (religious) expressions of Enlightenment have recently been stressed by Ritchie Robertson and especially Ian Hunter, though both have refrained from identifying it with a particular confession.<sup>85</sup> Yet there is much to be said that it was qualifying hallmark of Protestant Enlightenment.

Both the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz opposed voluntarist ideas and sought to develop a metaphysical framework that would defeat them.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, how little time the Cambridge Platonists had for voluntarism becomes clear in the scorn with which they denounced the ‘divers modern theologers’ and ‘civil (or rather uncivil) philosopher’ who ‘not only seriously, but zealously’ defended this idea.<sup>87</sup> ‘[N]othing can be imagined so grossly wicked, or so foully unjust’, Cudworth stated, than to be commanded by an omnipotent God with no inherent sense of good or evil, and derided the logic that inspired materialist philosophy as an ‘assault against morality’.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the very fundamental purpose of his *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* was to prove these theologians and philosophers wrong and vindicate his own conviction that: ‘things [including God] are what they are, not by will but by nature’.<sup>89</sup> Leibniz very strongly echoed the ideas of Cudworth, stating that the illness that had befallen the church was the essential and categorical error that ‘people have pleaded the irresistible

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<sup>85</sup> Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 585-586. *Ibid.*, p. 588. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 190.

<sup>86</sup> Henry assigned both the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz to the intellectualist camp. See: Henry, ‘Religion and the Scientific Revolution’, pp. 48-49. The importance of the Cambridge Platonists’ alignment with the intellectualist position is also stressed by Hutton. See: Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. xvi. *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

<sup>87</sup> Cudworth, ‘Eternal and Immutable Morality’, pp. 13-14.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

power of God when it was a question rather of presenting his supreme goodness'.<sup>90</sup> His theology, just as that of the Cambridge Platonists, was strongly founded upon one principle: unconditional divine benevolence. Good and evil were to Leibniz non-negotiable categories – especially not when it came to divinity: 'God ... acts in the most perfect manner not only metaphysically but also from a moral standpoint'.<sup>91</sup> In other words, Leibniz's deity was defined by perfect goodness, rather than the potency of its will – and he had, as Sparr highlights, no time for orthodox Calvinists, gnesio-Lutherans, and Pietists who contended otherwise.<sup>92</sup> The principal aim of these thinkers hence became to justify their vision of the Christian deity as an inherently and absolutely benign being.

To achieve this (and prove the folly of his opponents), Cudworth resorted in part to logic: nothing could change its essential qualities without its very essence changing. For this to happen, it was necessary for the entity in question to become another entity entirely because to contend otherwise would, in Cudworth's words, 'imply a manifest contradiction: that things should be what they are not.'<sup>93</sup> No good thing could therefore ever turn evil by a mere act of will, unless its very nature changed. This, however, needed to imply the existence of an essence that determined the attributes of any given entity.<sup>94</sup> Even an almighty deity could not alter the qualities of substances post-creation without altering them *per se*, since omnipotence only extended to things that are – as opposed to things that are not.<sup>95</sup> God could not make an obvious evil good and obvious good evil by mere will. Therefore, good and evil were in no way arbitrary, but absolute.<sup>96</sup> In one

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<sup>90</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 53.

<sup>91</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', §1.

<sup>92</sup> Sparr, 'Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen', pp. 158-162.

<sup>93</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Cudworth did allow for certain non-essential things to be contingently good or evil, depending on their relationship to a primary good or evil. See: Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 19.

swoop therefore, Cudworth had subverted the logical foundations upon which both orthodox Protestants and radical materialists had based their theories.

Yet this was evidently not sufficient to Cudworth: his aim was to construe a self-sufficient intellectual system capable of sustaining his view of God, the universe, and humanity. Instead of merely relying on Scripture, Cudworth went to great lengths to prove not only the *de facto* but necessary existence of God. The root to this lay in the rationalist philosophy he and More had adopted from Descartes and his presumed forebears Aristotle and Plato, using it in conscious opposition to Hobbes and the materialist philosophers.<sup>97</sup> This led Cudworth to embrace a dualism between material and immaterial entities: the first were defined by their fluid, mutable, and ephemeral nature, whereas the latter were static, immutable, and eternal.<sup>98</sup> That the world needed to consist of 'two sorts of entities' (Cudworth) was dictated by the logic that they could not be in a perpetual state of rest or movement: in the one case, the very idea of change would be precluded which was as logically impossible as the other case, in which perpetual change would render the notion of right and wrong absurd.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, it was necessary for a coexistence between the mutable – or relative bodily matter – and the immutable – or spiritual matter – in the world.

This discovery had weighty implications for the metaphysical system Cudworth constructed: for the existence of eternal, universal entities implied their antecedence and superiority over relative materials. In short, there was an ideal realm that existed outside of time, one of unblemished and immortal truth: 'Nay, though all the material world were quite swept away ... there is no doubt but the intelligible natures ... would ... remain safe and sound'.<sup>100</sup> It was this realm of eternal truth and comprehension that

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<sup>97</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 123. For more on Cudworth's and More's reception of Descartes, see: Hutton, 'Introduction', p. xvi.

<sup>98</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 124.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Cudworth subsequently identified with an all-powerful, all-knowing, and indestructible God: ‘there is an infinite and eternal Mind (that is, a God) necessarily existing in the world, as that there ever was the *ratio* ... of a triangle, or circle, of unity, and duality’.<sup>101</sup> With this, Cudworth had succeeded in both his aims: first, to establish the existence of God and secondly, a God whose essence was defined by absolute and immutable truth. To derive the existence of absolute good and evil was a mere derivative exercise: for good could only be that which was amenable to truth, whereas evil could merely be that which stood in opposition to it.

As with his English counterparts, Leibniz too rooted himself in logical argument rather than to merely argue on the finer points of Scripture. Two concepts formed the foundation of his metaphysics: the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. The first stipulated that any hypothesis that constituted a contradiction in itself was false. Linked to this idea, Leibniz created a dualism of truths, differentiating between truths of necessity and fact.<sup>102</sup> The former were absolute and incontrovertible, whereas the latter were contingent and relative. The method was simple enough: if the contrary to a contention was thinkable, yet not observable, one was dealing with a ‘truth of fact’.<sup>103</sup> However, if the contradiction of a thesis was not conceivable, it was a necessary ‘truth of reasoning’.<sup>104</sup> These ‘Eternal Verities’ were immutable: as mathematical laws, they ‘admit no dispensation, and faith cannot contradict them’ – and it ought to be added, neither could an otherwise omnipotent God.<sup>105</sup> Truth and falsehood – and by extension good and evil – were by their very essence therefore non-negotiable categories. This stance had weighty implications for

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>102</sup> Leibniz, ‘Monadology’, §33.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, §33.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, §33.

<sup>105</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §3.

Leibniz's system, as it prompted him to conclude that contingent truths had to be dependent on eternal truths. To argue the opposite was in his view not possible since without the necessary truths 'not only would there be nothing existing but nothing would even be possible'.<sup>106</sup> Leibniz's metaphysics thus required the existence of a realm of ideal truth from which the realm of contingency emanated. Based on this insight, he formulated his second grand principle of sufficient reason – or that 'great principle, little employed in general'<sup>107</sup> as Leibniz referred to it. According to this notion, every phenomenon had to have a cause that spurred it on – or more simply put: the defining principle of the universe was interaction of causes and effects.<sup>108</sup> Since contingent beings could not produce motion on their own accord, they relied on a (spiritual) impulse to move forward.<sup>109</sup> Yet this implied that these impulses all needed to originate in one and the same first cause – one from which all the motion and thus the universe as such emanated.<sup>110</sup> This sufficient reason had to have 'no need of another reason, be outside of this series of contingent things and ... [carry] the reason for its existence within itself'.<sup>111</sup> That 'final reason of things', that perfect necessary being was to him none other than God.<sup>112</sup> This bore a number of implications: first and foremost, that God, as this first cause, could not be limited in any sort of way. Therein lay God's perfection for Leibniz: His infinity and status as the only 'self-sufficient being, *ens per se*'.<sup>113</sup> That this perfection was necessarily synonymous with moral perfection lay in Leibniz's conception of evil that he derived from these principles. For evil existing in the latter was to him necessarily rooted in this deficiency: 'the formal character of evil ... consists in

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<sup>106</sup> Leibniz, 'Monadology', §43.

<sup>107</sup> Leibniz, 'The Principles of Nature and of Grace', §7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, §7.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, §8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, §8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, §8.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, §8.

<sup>113</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', XXIII. See also: Leibniz, 'Monadology', §41.

privation'.<sup>114</sup> Evil was therefore not an active divine choice but an unavoidable fact of (created) life. The total absence of evil would amount to a replication of divinity which was a logical contradiction. However, this also meant that evil had no 'efficient cause' – God could never actively wish it to occur.<sup>115</sup> Based on these two theorems, Leibniz thence derived the necessary existence of not only God but specifically the good God.

By this means, Cudworth and Leibniz had challenged one of the foundational pillars of the confessional age's Protestant orthodoxy: voluntarist theologies that largely reduced good and evil, sin and virtue, to relative notions dependent upon God's arbitrary and inscrutable will. Instead, they posited an image of God as absolute and intelligible virtue. This, not the mere desire to place divinity under the mastery of reason that Barth suggested, was the essential cornerstone of their thinking.<sup>116</sup>

### The Cosmology and Harmatology behind the 'New Theology'

Demonstrating that virtue was the immutable and thus quantifiable essence of the ideal heavenly realm had obvious repercussions for theories of the nature of Creation and humanity. If God was inseparable from His goodness, this had to imply that it was logically impossible for Him to purposely create evil. Cudworth recognised this, stating that God 'can act nothing contrary to ... his own perfection, that is, can do nothing either foolishly or unjustly'.<sup>117</sup> Creation was a natural extension of His benignity, an act of pure love intended for the advancement of His truth and wisdom, not mere necessity.<sup>118</sup>

Leibniz again echoed the view of the Cambridge Platonists a generation later: God's goodness rendered it impossible for Him to intentionally forge a deficient world. Indeed, rather the opposite seemed plausible to the German thinker, namely that the Highest

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<sup>114</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §20.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, §20-21.

<sup>116</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 53-65.

<sup>117</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 166.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Being 'in designing to create the universe, purposed solely to manifest and communicate his perfections'.<sup>119</sup> For him to contend thus was again not only a challenge to those theological schools of thought that saw the wisdom and will of God to be *de facto* beyond human comprehension, yet also to the materialist and voluntarist philosophers, including Hobbes or Pierre Bayle (1647-1706; the principal target of his *Theodicy*), who saw nothing but chance or arbitrariness in the universe: such notions were to Leibniz the mere product of 'pretentious minds who instead of saying that eyes were made for seeing say that we see because we find ourselves having eyes.'<sup>120</sup> To extend the enquiry from the City of God to the *saeculum* was therefore the logical next step for all three thinkers.

The inherent goodness of God permitted the Cambridge Platonists to found a principle of cosmological harmony, according to which 'all the parts of the mundane system conspir[e] into one' to mirror the beauty and goodness of divinity: briefly put, God had indeed forged the best possible world and universe.<sup>121</sup> What was true of the material world was, with a caveat to be discussed, most certainly true of humankind: as the crowning achievement of Creation, the human race shared in divinity through the soul.<sup>122</sup> This was crucially important for Cudworth since it meant that each person had an imprint of divine knowledge – innate ideas – within them that spurred on the human process of understanding.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, in imitation of God as the origin of the world, the soul functioned not only as the repository of godly wisdom, but the '*primum* and *perpetuum mobile*' of human nature: 'that which first moveth in us, and is the spring and principle of all deliberative action, can be no other than a constant, restless,

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<sup>119</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §78.

<sup>120</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', XIX. For a summary of Bayle's views and his disagreements with Leibniz, see: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 115-122. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>121</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 97. Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 166.

<sup>122</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 185-186.

<sup>123</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', pp. 73-74.

uninterrupted desire, or love of good as such, and happiness'.<sup>124</sup> Each individual human being thus not only contained the potential knowledge of virtue, yet was principally spurred on by it – a revolutionary departure from the anthropological pessimism of the Puritans.

However, to contend that God represented good incarnate evidently raised the problem of human imperfection and sin. The classic Protestant vision based on the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity was evidently a non-starter for the Cambridge Platonists: it would be impossible to conceive of a good God who would punish His creation for missteps beyond their control.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps most absurdly, it would imply that God created sin, as Cudworth highlighted: 'if moral evil were to be imputed wholly to necessary nature, then must that, and the blame of it, needs be imputed to God himself, as the cause thereof'.<sup>126</sup> The very fact of sin implied choice on humankind's part: the choice to follow or resist God.

The untangling of the paradox of sin therefore compelled the Cambridge Platonists to topple another Augustinian pillar of Protestant theology: the bondage of the will.

Indeed, this became a central concern of their writings: Cudworth thus wrote an entire treatise in defence of the unshackled will and More dedicated a large share of the Third Book of his *Enchiridion ethicum* to it.<sup>127</sup> Yet Cudworth's treatment of the question, in its systematic and succinct nature, was perhaps the most consummate apology of free will and explication of Cambridge Platonist soteriology.

To Cudworth, the root of sin was the result of humanity's unique status as a rational creature with a dual nature combining the material with the immaterial.<sup>128</sup> Through the

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<sup>124</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 173.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156-157.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>127</sup> Cudworth's tract on freewill forms part of his three essays on 'Liberty and Necessity' which Hutton published under the name 'A Treatise of Freewill'. See: Hutton, 'Introduction', xxv. More, *An Account of Virtue*, pp. 172ff.

<sup>128</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 186.

soul, humanity shared in God and His wisdom.<sup>129</sup> Yet at the same time, the incarnation in the flesh meant that humans were equally tied to that very animalistic existence subject to flux and change.<sup>130</sup> Humankind was thus confronted with conflicting impulses to reconcile, namely the ‘dictate of ... conscience and ... the lower appetites ... impelling to pleasure or present good’.<sup>131</sup> Evil arose if the immediate needs of the flesh took precedence over the pure and eternal inclinations of the ideal nature within humanity.<sup>132</sup> Yet Cudworth’s Platonic conception of the antecedence of the ideal world forbade a scenario in which corporeal could overpower incorporeal matter. It would also violate the principle of harmony between the incorporeal and the corporeal realm: indeed, More in particular made an explicit point of the passions’ positive potential, arguing that ‘of their own nature they are good’ and citing Aristotle’s axiom that in a universe of ends ‘nature does nothing in vain’.<sup>133</sup> To resolve this dilemma, Cudworth resorted, as Hutton notes, to Descartes’ ‘atomical philosophy’ and more specifically the dualist conception of the soul he had derived from it.<sup>134</sup>

In line with this doctrine, Cudworth imagined the soul to be divided into two parts, one explicitly superior and one inferior.<sup>135</sup> The crucial difference between the two was their connection to either the spiritual or the bodily realm: the lower part of the soul was dedicated to the understanding and interpretation of bodily motions – that is, the passions.<sup>136</sup> The higher part of the soul, ‘free ... from all that magical sympathy with the body’, was in turn solely dedicated to the divine and its commands, immaculate and eternal.<sup>137</sup> For Cudworth, the battle between good and evil was thus not one between

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185-186.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>133</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, 34. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>134</sup> Cudworth, ‘Eternal and Immutable Morality’, p. 112.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112-114.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113-114.

flesh and spirit, but one contended within the spirit.

This division of the soul into two parts stemmed principally from Cudworth's epistemology: since God was synonymous with the ideal realm of truth, it followed that knowledge could not be gained by means of the material.<sup>138</sup> To know (and thus to approximate God) was not to experience, but to think. Knowledge could only be acquired through exercising the mind's pre-existing functions. Hence why the soul needed to be imprinted with certain inalienable ideas rather than being a blank slate, as Cudworth stressed through Aristotle, 'the senses [reach] only to singulars, but knowledge to universals'.<sup>139</sup>

His rationalism and positivist view of the material universe compelled Cudworth eventually to conceive of a divided soul: for true reason, along this understanding, could 'never err' since it could 'not be bribed, corrupted, and swayed' by the senses.<sup>140</sup> A second, speculative faculty of perception dedicated to apprehending the motions of the material world however could – and such an inferior soul could account for the fallibility of man in balancing the interests of the eternal and ephemeral realm without tainting either for it could 'err, and judge falsely, and sin'.<sup>141</sup>

It was within this lower soul that Cudworth – in line with the Cambridge Platonists' intellectualist notion of the precedence of wisdom over will – identified free will: a faculty of critical judgment that granted humans a capacity of self-control ('*sui potestas*') that strove to balance the impulses of godly intellection and the lower appetites of human beings.<sup>142</sup> As such, it was in Cudworth's words the soul's '*hegemonikon*', steering it to act either in accordance with or against divine nature.<sup>143</sup> Its role as a mediator

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>140</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 177.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181. *Ibid.*, p. 182. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

between the divine and the (translated) material impulses likewise meant that it was exclusive to humankind: as an incorporeal being and thus pure truth, God did not require any such capacity of discernment.<sup>144</sup> This in turn enabled Cudworth and More to endow free will with a positive purpose: rather than a mischievous device to set believers up to fail in their quest for salvation, it was a gift empowering humans to resolve the tension between their incorporeal and corporeal nature. Free will was, as More powerfully phrased it, a 'Power of abstaining from Ill', not a condemnation to succumb to it.<sup>145</sup> Yet it naturally made believers liable for their actions since they could, as Cudworth remarked, 'choose and prefer that which is really worse before the better, so as to deserve blame thereby'.<sup>146</sup>

Mirroring the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz concluded that the world needed to reflect its Creator's goodness and wisdom. The divine design was bound together by an impeccable and immutable harmony, with each of its constituent parts perfectly attuned – or, put simply: 'God is all order'.<sup>147</sup> Going a step further, Leibniz indeed stated that all Creation was destined to add to the glory of God – a marked contrast to the Augustinian pessimism of the corrupt earthly city.<sup>148</sup>

Creation's natural inclination towards good was according to Leibniz not least true of humanity which – in its unique proximity and semblance to God – bore an imprint of divine goodness as its defining characteristic.<sup>149</sup> This made itself manifest in one faculty before all others: reason. In marked contrast to any other created being, humanity was able to share in the wisdom of God Himself and, in Leibniz's words, 'penetrate into the

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>145</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 180.

<sup>146</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 179.

<sup>147</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 51. See also: Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', XXXII.

<sup>148</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', IX.

<sup>149</sup> Leibniz, 'The Principles of Nature and of Grace', §14.

heart of things'.<sup>150</sup> That this was possible lay in the constitution of the human soul: animals were thus only capable of 'perception' that is recognition of the physical realities in the realm of efficient causes.<sup>151</sup> Humanity on the other hand was capable of 'apperception' – that is consciousness of itself.<sup>152</sup> It was this self-awareness that enabled human beings to access the divine realm of reason and thus apprehend moral truth. Given the precedence of the ideal over the material, this had obvious implications for Leibniz's anthropology: for it was that rational soul that spurred on human action.<sup>153</sup> Rather than mere physical impulses, humanity thus had morality as its prime mover. Consequently, as Leibniz himself put it: 'no one is destined to sin'.<sup>154</sup> This, however, raised two fundamental dilemmas for Leibniz – indeed the very same that Cudworth and More had to contend with: if a human being was naturally inclined and able to withstand evil, it was within the believer's power to sin or not to sin. Differently put, it necessitated the existence of an entity anathema to much of Protestant orthodoxy: free will. In defiance of the legacy of Luther and Calvin, Leibniz thus again resembled the Cambridge Platonists in building a vision of faith based on this principle – as reflected in the full title of his *Theodicy*: 'Essays on ... the Freedom of Man'. However, in justifying his belief in human autonomy, Leibniz not only broke with mainstream Protestant tradition but also – at least methodically – with the example of Cudworth and More.

In contrast to Augustinian teaching, Leibniz did not believe that there was a conflict between the two natures of spirit and body – rather the contrary: they were perfectly conjoined through a 'system of Pre-Established Harmony', a divine parallelism that ensured that matter always acted in accordance with the mind.<sup>155</sup> Yet what determined

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<sup>150</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §81.

<sup>151</sup> Leibniz, 'The Principles of Nature and of Grace', §4.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, §4.

<sup>153</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 69. *Ibid.*, §256.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, §81.

<sup>155</sup> Leibniz, 'Monadology', §78.

the course of action of a human being under these circumstances? Given the body's passivity, the impulse for action had to come from within the ideal form, that is the human soul. This in turn raised the question whether God, its Creator, also determined the character of humans – and therefore their ability to act on their inherent goodness. Leibniz negated this: God was responsible for humanity's nature but not their actions. In creating the soul of a believer, He merely equipped them with a general disposition, granting a faithful Christian the opportunity to rise to happiness – provided they acted on their potential: 'God is therefore not the author of essences in so far as they are only possibilities'.<sup>156</sup> In that, he was not yet diverging from Cudworth and More. Both had after all stressed that, in their own right, the corporeal passions were good and that only through an imbalance with the higher truths of incorporeal divinity, evil arose. They too believed that the struggle for righteousness was contended within the soul, as the prime mover of human beings.

Where Leibniz seemingly starkly digressed from the Cambridge Platonists was in his conception of the constitution of the soul: for Leibniz rejected the Cartesian dualism that distinguished between a spiritual *res cogitans* and corporeal *res extensa*. In opposition to it, he championed his famous theory of the 'Monads'. To Leibniz, God's act of Creation had not simply limited itself to material reality. Rather, Creation had consisted of the formation of a series of spiritual substances, endowed with unique and defining qualities. These ideal forms – the famous monads, the 'elements of all things'<sup>157</sup> – contained the 'prototype' of everything in existence.<sup>158</sup> The monads were in turn attached to corporeal bodies within the physical world, as their 'souls'.<sup>159</sup> All action therefore derived from the hidden interaction between the monads, with the bodies

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<sup>156</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §335.

<sup>157</sup> Leibniz, 'Monadology', §3.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, §62-63.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, §70.

merely acting as their passive corporeal representations.<sup>160</sup> The doctrine of the monads caused Leibniz to reject the Cambridge Platonist idea of the ‘split soul’. Rather, he proposed a unitary soul whose necessary deficiencies were accountable for its lapses. However, whilst this reads a *prima facie* rejection of the Cambridge Platonist doctrine, there is an argument that in his *Monadology*, Leibniz had in fact merely refined it and purged it of its deficiencies: for, in creating the monads, he had succeeded in maintaining the purity of God’s perfection without stripping humanity of their share in His nature.<sup>161</sup> This was crucial since their optimism of human nature was founded on these divine qualities inherent to humankind. For, whilst it was necessary for the human soul to contain the characteristics that made it human, the character of individuals fell into the realm of contingency and was therefore beyond divine power.<sup>162</sup>

This enabled Leibniz to frame free will in conjunction with reason as a divine gift, a hegemonic power of rational judgment destined to help humanity overcome its inherent limitations as created beings. Given His goodness, God could not predestine a believer to lapse. Instead, He endowed everyone with a certain potential that humans could freely choose to live up to or not: ‘you have equal power to obey me and to disobey me’.<sup>163</sup> Sin was therefore nothing other than a failure of human reasoning prompted by the passions, that is ‘the confused perception of an apparent good’.<sup>164</sup> It was not the product of an inherently malevolently inclined will but a free decision not to make full use of one’s faculties of reason, judging by appearance rather than essence.<sup>165</sup> What differentiated the saved from the sinner to Leibniz was that the former had chosen to

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, §62-63.

<sup>161</sup> Wilson has contended that Leibniz may have been partly inspired by More or van Helmont in his conception of the Monads. To verify this claim however would be beyond the chapter’s scope. See: Wilson, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>162</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §335.

<sup>163</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §316.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, §319.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, §154.

follow 'right reason', that is the 'linking together of truths', whereas the latter was swayed by 'corrupt reason' tainted by 'prejudice and passion'.<sup>166</sup> Whilst all humans could rise to the supreme reason of God, not all would freely deliberate to do so. In proclaiming human freedom, however, Leibniz had made himself vulnerable to the charge that he had placed inherent limitations on God's omniscience or omnibenevolence: either He was ignorant that a human would sin or knew of the sin and condoned its occurrence. To resolve this impasse, Leibniz alleviated the idea of predestination: God could foresee whether a believer would lapse or not. This allowed for His omniscience to remain intact without harming free will: 'the foreknowledge and the providence of God allow freedom to our actions'.<sup>167</sup> This, however, did not solve the question of divine benevolence: why would God foresee human sin and do nothing to stop it? As per his metaphysical optimism, Leibniz contended that if any evil existed in the world, it was not because it was divinely willed, but 'because it is absolutely impossible to anyone at all to do better'.<sup>168</sup> It was therefore impossible for God to arbitrarily intervene and disrupt the sinner as this would be an act against His own divinity. Whatever misdeed was committed in the world, it was hence merely a means to an infinitely good and perfect end as conceived by divine wisdom. God 'cooperate[d] in moral evil and physical evil' by 'permitting it justly and directing it wisely towards the good'.<sup>169</sup> This was the principle of the 'best possible world' that Voltaire later famously ridiculed in his *Candide* (1759).

For all its real and perceived shortcomings, this theory had helped Leibniz in his monumental quest to restore the freedom of will to German Protestantism. Nonetheless, as seen in his reconciliation of free will with the language of predestination, Leibniz was

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, §62.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, §365.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, §165.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, §107-108.

clearly at great pains to make his ideas compatible with Protestant orthodoxy – complicated by the seemingly unequivocal position of Luther himself on this question. Indeed, Sparn has contended that ultimately, he sided with the Reformer rather than Erasmus.<sup>170</sup> Perhaps it is fairest to say that Leibniz occupied a middling position, affirming the principle of free will while recognising that many believers deliberately entered into a ‘bondage of the will’: ‘Fallen and unregenerate man is under the domination of sin and of Satan, because it pleases him so to be’.<sup>171</sup> This permitted him to agree with Luther, declaring ‘free will and will in bondage ... one and the same thing.’<sup>172</sup> Not least for this reason, Leibniz was willing to attribute a substantive role to divine grace in salvation, with the qualification that God would never deny assistance to anybody of goodwill.<sup>173</sup> One could debate to what extent Leibniz diverged from his English colleagues in these views. Most likely, the Holy Roman Empire’s ecclesiastical politics compelled the polymath to adopt a more conservative language than Cudworth or More.

Naturally, their theories substantively impacted the theology championed by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: for one, it fundamentally altered the story of the Fall which, in their reading, was all but bereft of its significance in irretrievably corrupting human nature and almost reduced to a cautionary tale of the consequences of disobeying divinity. The denial of hopelessly depraved human nature meant that it was very much possible for Christians to raise themselves to a state of total ‘Beatitude or Happiness’ (More) in this life, so long as they regained control over their passions and directed their powers towards virtue – briefly, if they managed to *properly* follow their

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<sup>170</sup> Sparn, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, p. 160. Sparn however recognises that Leibniz could never adopt Luther’s staunch Augustinianism that saw him reject free will. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>171</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §277.

<sup>172</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §277. For a more detailed discussion of Leibniz’s position on free will and how it fit within Lutheran orthodoxy, see: Sparn, ‘Das Bekenntnis des Philosophen’, pp. 160-161.

<sup>173</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 385.

(true) nature.<sup>174</sup> The restoration of a paradisiac balance where human divinity ruled over the flesh was neither solely possible through God's mercy, nor restricted to the next life. Through their epistemology, which saw the soul as an active agent, rather than 'merely passive to that which it receives of God'<sup>175</sup> (Cudworth), the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz had therefore essentially redefined Protestant doctrine: grace was no longer arbitrarily bestowed upon a Christian by God, but granted to anyone who had proven to make righteous use of their free will. Albeit thus acknowledging the ultimate need for the 'assistances of Divine grace' (Cudworth) to fully rise above the animalistic human condition, the hamartiology of Cudworth, More, and Leibniz did not attribute the same absolute importance to God's mercy as that of the Reformers.<sup>176</sup> *Gratia*, hitherto the sole and often highly exclusive avenue to justification, was now a mere complement to *arbitrio libero iusto*.

Thus, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz had discarded a pivotal element of the Augustinian theology that had underpinned much of Protestant orthodoxy. Their evident objective was to effectively deliver a philosophical *coup de grâce* to the doctrine of predestination that was particularly central to Calvinism and whose arbitrary spirit was mirrored, in their view, in Hobbesianism. From this perspective, all three thinkers may thus credibly be credited – as Barth and Georg Raatz have done with view to Leibniz – with initiating the turn to anthropological optimism that became one of the Protestant Enlightenment's most significant leitmotifs – an accomplishment that is, as they both again rightly highlighted, inseparable from their theology proper and cosmology.<sup>177</sup> Given the centrality of free will (or more precisely the lack thereof) to their major opponents, its significance for the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz becomes clear:

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<sup>174</sup> More, *An Account of Virtue*, p. 184. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>175</sup> Cudworth, 'A Treatise of Freewill', p. 184.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>177</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 20-21. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-65. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137. Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie', p. 46. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

together with their belief in absolute divine goodness, this faith in human agency formed the central pillar of their theologies and underlined their wish to depart from the orthodoxies of the confessionalisation age.

### The Method and Philosophy behind the ‘New Theology’

The radically less dogmatically constricted vision of (Protestant) Christianity put forth by the Cambridge Platonists and later Leibniz was thus at its core founded upon a particular metaphysical vision. Indeed, in keeping with the verdict of many historians on Leibniz, one may assert that their metaphysics served a distinctly theological purpose.<sup>178</sup> Yet this alone does not account for their doctrinal innovation: metaphysics and natural theology had served generations of scholastic theologians without yielding such fruits. Within Protestant theology, the use of metaphysics had from its early days proved controversial: as Richard Schröder notes, Luther famously declared the discipline incompatible with Christianity.<sup>179</sup> It hence seems necessary to go beyond the natural theologies of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz and scrutinise the methodological foundations upon which they built.

Here one quickly discovers the importance of their commitment to philosophical irenicism which inspired a – what Christia Mercer has dubbed – ‘conciliatory eclecticism’ central to their thinking:

they assumed that elements of the major schools of philosophy could be combined to form a coherent and *true* philosophical system. For such conciliators, the assumption was that the diverse philosophical traditions were not as incompatible as they first appeared, the goal was to forge conciliation among the worthy schools, and the result was a mixture of ancient and modern ideas.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz’s Three Strategies for Defending Christian Mysteries’, p. 571. Mercer, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>179</sup> Richard Schröder, *Johann Gerhards lutherische Christologie und aristotelische Metaphysik* (Tübingen, 1983), pp. 2-4. See also: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 136-139.

<sup>180</sup> Mercer, ‘Platonism in early modern natural philosophy’, p. 107.

According to her, this method inspired the intellectual mission of Leibniz and indeed Cambridge Platonists such as Anne Conway.<sup>181</sup> The eclecticism of Cudworth was in turn acknowledged by Hutton and Douglas Hedley.<sup>182</sup> Again, however, the essential method was not unique to either Leibniz or the Cambridge Platonists: as Mercer further outlines, the eclectic tradition, itself rooted in Renaissance humanism, was defended by a number of seventeenth-century philosophers – including Jakob Thomasius (1622-1684) who had instructed his young tutee Leibniz in the art of philosophical harmonisation, only to be left appalled to learn how his student had employed it.<sup>183</sup> It thus was how Cudworth, More, and Leibniz applied the method that accounts for their innovation, that is, the specific strands of philosophy they sought to combine. It is here that the revolutionary character of the Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian theology comes truly to the fore. Among the many influences upon these thinkers, one person stands out: René Descartes. In their admiration of the French philosopher, the ‘modern’ element in their theology is most obvious, especially for the Cambridge Platonists: More was according to Hutton the first to popularise Cartesian philosophy among English scholars.<sup>184</sup> This is not to say that they were uncritical of Descartes: More was later plagued by regrets for elevating the French philosopher to the scholarly mainstream and Cudworth, as Catherine Wilson stresses, had always found fault with much of his thinking.<sup>185</sup> Nonetheless, the influence of Descartes accounts for much of the novelty of the Cambridge Platonists’ metaphysics:

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-125.

<sup>182</sup> Hedley and Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

<sup>183</sup> See: Mercer, *Leibniz’s metaphysics*, pp. 27-39. Mercer further offers a more detailed treatment of Renaissance eclecticism and its expression in Thomasius. See: Mercer, ‘Leibniz and his Master’, p. 14. *Ibid.*, 16-18. *Ibid.*, 34-36. For the general importance of eclecticism to the Enlightenment and its roots in the Renaissance, see: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 160-171. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-268. William Bulman has stressed the importance of a more conservative Renaissance eclecticism to Restoration Tory Anglicans. See: William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment – Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 30-31.

<sup>184</sup> Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. xvi.

<sup>185</sup> See: Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. xvi. Wilson, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, p. 160-165. Whilst Wilson considers Cudworth essentially an anti-Cartesian, there is good reason to believe that he owed more to Descartes than she concedes.

to begin with, there is the evident dualism at the heart of their theories, with their division of the universe into incorporeal and corporeal entities. Further, their philosophies and theologies share the conception of God as the totality of pure and unadulterated reason; the notion of a teleological mechanistic universe operating in an immaculate harmony; and the rationalist epistemology that classified (divine) rational truths as the only certain knowledge. These Cartesian impulses infused the intellectualist theology of the Cambridge Platonists with new life. Herein Leibniz likely saw Cudworth and More's flaw: that they had conceded too much to Descartes. Pauline Phemister's recent study of Leibniz's correspondence with Cudworth's daughter Lady Masham corroborates this by showing that among the central criticisms Leibniz levied against her father is that his theories did not in fact resolve many of the problems posed by the French philosopher.<sup>186</sup> However, this is not to say that he rejected 'modern science' wholesale: as not least Mercer and Goldenbaum emphasised, Leibniz was himself a defender of the mechanical philosophy and merely sought to purge it from its somewhat distasteful excesses.<sup>187</sup> Reading his writings, it is consequently difficult to escape the impression that Leibniz made it his mission to correct the deficiencies of Cambridge Platonist metaphysics. This is most evident in his monadology, an attempt to overcome the problematic implications of Cartesian dualism – as adopted by More and Cudworth – for Christian theology proper, cosmology, and hamatiology. Yet even in spite of his stern criticism of the French philosopher and those such as Cudworth who had conceded too much to him in his view, there was significant overlap in the thought of Leibniz and Descartes, as not least testified by both of them being considered by some

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<sup>186</sup> Pauline Phemister, "'All the time everything's the same as here": the Principle of Uniformity in Correspondence between Leibniz and Lady Masham' in Paul Lodge (ed.), *Leibniz and his Correspondents* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 195.

<sup>187</sup> Mercer, 'Leibniz and his Master', pp. 26-27. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-36. Goldenbaum, 'Leibniz's Three Strategies for Defending Christian Mysteries', p. 556.

historians as proponents of ‘French rationalism’.<sup>188</sup>

That all three owed a philosophical debt to Descartes becomes most apparent in their apparent agreement with his ambition of a universe governed by an internally logical system of mathematical truths: the *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* is strewn with mathematical proofs intended to serve as evidence for Cudworth’s universe of interlinked ‘*noemata*’ (rational truths).<sup>189</sup> Leibniz’s metaphysical system is heavily reliant on eternal logical truths akin to those of geometry – and mathematics indeed became his chief weapon in defeating the key tenets of Cartesianism: in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), Leibniz, for instance, sought to dismantle Descartes’ theory by demonstrating that, contrary to the Frenchman’s assertions, a body’s quantities of motion and force were not equivalent.<sup>190</sup>

Therein lies, as Goldenbaum has rightly stressed (though with principal reference to Leibniz), the most obviously innovative aspect of the Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian theology: to have harmonised ‘modern science’ and ‘old theology’.<sup>191</sup> The Cambridge Platonists’ and Leibniz’s insistence upon both the fundamental harmony of the divine and the physical world, as well as the identification of the divine realm as one of perfect mathematical truths permitted them to apply the same principle on a methodical level, by bringing natural sciences into theological discourse. Just as this granted Descartes, as Henry highlights, the liberty to design immutable natural laws of physics, it permitted Cudworth, More, and Leibniz to create their system of absolute objective moral laws.<sup>192</sup> However, this integration of mechanical philosophy in their metaphysics and – by extension – their natural theologies represented a hitherto

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<sup>188</sup> See: Albrecht Beutel, ‘Aufklärung’ in Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and Friederike Nüssel (eds.), *Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie, Bd. 1: A-F* (4 vols., Göttingen, 2008), p. 113.

<sup>189</sup> Cudworth, ‘Eternal and Immutable Morality’, p. 125. See as a paradigmatic example: *Ibid.*, pp. 116-121.

<sup>190</sup> Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’, XVII.

<sup>191</sup> Goldenbaum, ‘Leibniz’s three Strategies for Defending Christian mysteries’, p. 553.

<sup>192</sup> Henry, ‘Religion and the Scientific Revolution’, p. 52.

unthinkable incursion of the natural sciences into the realm of theology: as Henry again writes, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz broke with a century-old mainstay of Christian thought by breaking down the strict boundary separating theology and all other fields of enquiry.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, according to Wolfgang Philipp and Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, this is the most fundamental accomplishment of the fledgling theological Enlightenment, as represented by these thinkers, for Protestantism at large: the reconciliation of Reformation religion with the modern, that is Copernican, conception of the universe.<sup>194</sup> As their analysis highlighted, resolving the conflict between modern science and ancient wisdom was crucial in permitting Protestant theology to discard many Augustinian beliefs and establish humanity on a new footing in its place in the cosmos: for Creator and Creation were now united in concord, rather than conflicting.<sup>195</sup> Yet the novelty in their approach cannot conceal the debt of Cudworth, More, and Leibniz to ancient philosophers. This especially true of the Cambridge Platonists: both repeatedly and heavily cited thinkers such as Aristotle, Pythagoras, Sextus Empiricus, and Cicero in their writings.<sup>196</sup> Leibniz too was eager to stress their value to contemporary philosophy, calling them reverently ‘able men’ worthy of defending against the assault of modern philosophers since they were closer to the truth than commonly thought.<sup>197</sup> The philosophical debt to antiquity of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz becomes perhaps most clear in their adoption of the Stoic method of theological reasoning, as outlined in Cicero’s *De natura deorum*.<sup>198</sup> Foremost, however,

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>194</sup> Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 24-25. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-28.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>196</sup> See amongst others: More, *An Account of Virtue*, pp. 113-115. *Ibid.*, p. 132. *Ibid.*, p. 254. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258. Cudworth, ‘Eternal and Immutable Morality’, pp. 24-25. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-44. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-127. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136. Cudworth, ‘A Treatise of Freewill’, p. 157. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-161. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-173.

<sup>197</sup> Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’, X.

<sup>198</sup> See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Paganism*, p. 123. See also: Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, ed. and tr. P.G. Walsh (Oxford, 2008), pp. 47-48. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-107.

the influence of the Greek thinker who became the namesake for Cudworth's and More's school of thought stands out. Cudworth himself made no secret of the centrality of Plato to his theology: 'Which mystery is thus acknowledged both in Christianity and Platonism, in that wisdom and intellect are made the eternal and first-begotten offspring of the first original goodness, the fountain of all things.'<sup>199</sup> Though he did not forge a school named after the famous Greek thinker, Leibniz was also deeply steeped in Platonic thought: Emily Grosholz has thus highlighted that the German thinker professed his admiration of the Greek as early as 1670 and took inspiration in the struggle against materialistic philosophy from him.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, Mercer has consistently sought to emphasise how much his theologico-metaphysical system relied on Platonism.<sup>201</sup> Even a cursory reading of especially Leibniz's later works shows that he clearly preferred Plato over Aristotle, whose *tabula rasa* doctrine he wanted to expressly refute in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, stating dryly: 'Plato thinks more profoundly'.<sup>202</sup> Beyond offering inspiration for their own theologies, the reliance on classical thinkers was a powerful tool: this becomes clear in their tendency to cast their arguments and those of their contemporaries – be they opponents or allies – in terms of ancient philosophy. This was, as William Bulman highlighted, a common rhetorical device that served to either delegitimise or legitimise intellectual enterprises by linking them to philosophical or theological projects that had previously failed or proven worthy of

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<sup>199</sup> Cudworth, 'Eternal and Immutable Morality', p. 132.

<sup>200</sup> Emily Grosholz, 'Plato and Leibniz against the Materialists', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 37/2 (1996), p. 255.

<sup>201</sup> Mercer, *Leibniz's metaphysics*, pp. 173-205. *Ibid.*, 250-252. Mercer, 'Leibniz on Knowledge and God', pp. 534ff. Mercer, 'Platonism in early modern natural philosophy', pp. 104-126. Christia Mercer, 'Platonism at the Core of Leibniz's Philosophy' in Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: studies on Platonism and early modern philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2008), pp. 225-238.

<sup>202</sup> Leibniz, 'Discourse on Metaphysics', XXVII. Goldenbaum and Mercer posit that Leibniz likely started to distance himself from Aristotle as a university student. See: Goldenbaum 'Leibniz's Three Strategies for Defending Christian Mysteries', p. 556. Mercer, 'Leibniz and his Master', p. 21.

eneration.<sup>203</sup> Cudworth thus continuously associated Hobbesian materialism with the arrogant and self-defeating relativism of Protagoras and the philosophy of Epicurus.<sup>204</sup> On the other hand, he was equally keen to stress that ‘that very mechanical and atomical philosophy that hath lately been restored by Cartesius’ was in fact ‘not only elder than Epicurus, but also than Plato and Aristotle, nay than Democritus and Leucippus also, the commonly reputed fathers of it.’<sup>205</sup> Leibniz took a similar line when he commented that the pupils of Descartes were ‘beginning to imitate little by little the Peripatetics, whom they ridicule’ by relying on the word of their master than their own independent thought.<sup>206</sup> In the same treatise, he also pointed to a passage in Plato’s *Phaedo* which he considered so pertinent that it ‘seems to have been uttered expressly for our too materialistic philosophers’.<sup>207</sup>

However, beyond a mere contrast, the appreciation of received wisdom by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz is indicative of the wider traditions they were rooted in: Christian humanism – and especially the Erasmian brand of it. The imprint of the humanist’s thought is especially evident with the Cambridge Platonists: as Colie and Hutton stress, it cannot be emphasised sufficiently how much continuity there was between the theologies of the Cambridge Platonists and Erasmus of Rotterdam.<sup>208</sup>

Whilst Leibniz’s relationship with Erasmus is less obvious and arguably underexplored, he may have imbibed many Erasmian beliefs from other sources: beyond his reading of the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz had thus strongly engaged with Renaissance humanist works and the writings of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers, the

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<sup>203</sup> See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. 117. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>204</sup> Cudworth, ‘Eternal and Immutable Morality’, pp. 12-13. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>206</sup> Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’, XVII.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, XX.

<sup>208</sup> Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*, p. 3. Hutton, ‘Introduction’, p. xvii.

Remonstrants.<sup>209</sup> While one ought to be careful in considering Arminianism a ‘carbon-copy’ of Erasmus’s theology, it is striking that Leibniz appears to have been most open towards Arminian ideas that were more in tune with Erasmian propositions: Leibniz thus condemned ‘certain Remonstrants’ such as Conrad Vorstius (1569-1622) for the supposed ‘limits’ they placed on divine omnipotence and omniscience.<sup>210</sup> Added to this comes that many early modern historians, most prominently among them Roland Bainton, Brendan Bradshaw, Manfred Hoffmann, Laurel Carrington, and Erika Rummel, have in recent decades undertaken serious attempts to ‘systematise’ Erasmian theology to move it beyond the superficial classifications of an ‘irenic middling path’ between Catholic and Reformation theology.<sup>211</sup> Thanks to these endeavours, the central cornerstones of Erasmus’ theology have been put into greater relief, making it easier to test whether the ‘enlightened theologians’ (as well as the Arminians) were indeed aligning as much with the humanist as Cassirer and Trevor-Roper contended. This analysis very much vindicates both historians: beyond their joint interest in an irenic essentialist Christianity unshackled from trivial dogma and focused upon practical individual piety, the parallelisms between Erasmian and (early) Enlightenment theology is most evident in their common affirmation of free will and belief in a dualism between

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<sup>209</sup> Gerda Utermöhlen records that Leibniz’s private library did include works by Erasmus. See: Gerda Utermöhlen, ‘Die Literatur der Renaissance und des Humanismus in Leibniz’ privater Büchersammlung’ in Albert Heinekamp (ed.), *Leibniz et la Renaissance: colloque du Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Paris), du Centre d’études supérieures de la Renaissance (Tours) et de la G.W. Leibniz-Gesellschaft (Hannover): Domaine de Seillac (France) du 17 au 21 juin 1981* (Wiesbaden, 1983), p. 230. For Leibniz’s positive reception of Arminius, see: Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 383.

<sup>210</sup> See: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘Rationale of the Catholic faith (mid-1680s(?))’ in Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion* (London, 2016), p. 71. *Ibid.*, p. 79. For the proposition of a similar view in Erasmus, see: Erasmus, ‘The Shield-Bearer Defending – A Discussion Part 2 (1527)’ in Clarence H. Miller (ed.), *Erasmus and Luther – The Battle over Free Will* (Indianapolis, 2012), p. 310.

<sup>211</sup> See amongst others: Roland H. Bainton, *The Erasmus of Christendom* (New York, 1969). Brendan Bradshaw, ‘The Christian Humanism of Erasmus’, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 33/2 (1982), pp. 411-447. Manfred Hoffmann, ‘Faith and Piety in Erasmus’s Thought’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 20/2 (1989), pp. 241-258. Laurel Carrington, ‘Desiderius Erasmus’ in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *The Reformation Theologians – An Introduction to Theologians in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford and Malden, 2002), pp. 34-48. Erika Rummel, ‘The theology of Erasmus’ in David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 28-38. Erika Rummel, *Biblical humanism and scholasticism in the age of Erasmus* (Leiden, 2008).

matter and spirit based upon a shared Platonic outlook.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, it is Platonism that accounts for the most striking parallelisms between the four thinkers.<sup>213</sup> The centrality of teleological harmony to their intellectual project – a quintessentially Platonic ideal – is again deeply revealing of that: just as it enabled, as Bradshaw highlighted, Erasmus to reconcile nature and grace, it aided Cudworth and Leibniz to insist on the complementary nature of mind and matter, whereas Leibniz relied on it for his ‘system of Pre-Established Harmony’.<sup>214</sup> Platonism also compelled them to identify truth and (thereby) virtue as the fundamental ends of humanity, as well as the idealist epistemology that was supposed to aid Christians in that endeavour.<sup>215</sup>

The parallels are not restricted to substance, but style – or rather, method: the concern with the Ancients betrays a deep appreciation in the humanist tradition with its return *ad fontes*. This becomes likewise clear in Cudworth’s and More’s repeated criticisms of scholastic theologians for their supposed ‘corruption’ of the Ancient philosophers.<sup>216</sup> Leibniz was more tempered, likely given his reunionist ambitions: whereas Cudworth and More largely bypassed the scholastics in favour of the Ancients and Church Fathers, the German thinker took care to emphasise their contribution to the Christian canon of thinking, stating rather generously that ‘there is sometimes gold hidden under the rubbish of the monks’ barbarous Latin’.<sup>217</sup> However, he too criticised the obstruction to the exercise of true religion caused by scholastic excesses and mainly found merit in medieval scholars when they followed Plato rather than Aristotle.<sup>218</sup> Lastly, the

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<sup>212</sup> On the Erasmian side, this point is especially highlighted in: Bainton, *The Erasmus of Christendom*, p. 60.

<sup>213</sup> How central Platonism was to Erasmian theology was highlighted by Brendan Bradshaw. See: Bradshaw, ‘The Christian Humanism of Erasmus’, pp. 411-447.

<sup>214</sup> Bradshaw, ‘The Christian Humanism of Erasmus’, p. 419.

<sup>215</sup> On the Erasmian side, this is again revealed very prominently in: Bradshaw, ‘The Christian Humanism of Erasmus’, p. 422. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>216</sup> Rummel, ‘The theology of Erasmus’, p. 33.

<sup>217</sup> Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §6.

<sup>218</sup> Leibniz, ‘Discourse on Metaphysics’, XXVIII.

philosophical debt owed by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz to humanism breaks particularly forth in their ‘conciliatory eclecticism’ that, as Mercer highlights, had its roots in the Italian Renaissance thought of figures such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494).<sup>219</sup> Again, as seen, this is not an aspect unique to them, since historians have long identified the continued importance of Renaissance wisdom for seventeenth-century erudition in general and the Enlightenment in specific.<sup>220</sup> Once more, it is *how* Cudworth, More, and Leibniz built on these consensual foundations that made their theological ideas innovative, be it in method or content.

In important respects, they all substantively diverged from Erasmus. Where Erasmus’s scrutiny of scholastic shortcomings led him to embrace a ‘*theologia rhetorica*’ (Rummel), the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz preferred a *theologia rationalis*: rather than the mere Word of God by itself, it was the mind with its innate ideas of divinity that was compelled to inspire Christians.<sup>221</sup> Their prioritisation of reason over rhetoric and history likewise caused Cudworth, More, and Leibniz to diverge from Erasmus on the question of theological ambiguity: rather than follow the recommendation of relying upon the judgment of the institutional Church, the Englishmen and the German were willing to leave non-essential uncertainties to the individual conscience of believers.<sup>222</sup> It was not least the influence of their natural theology, as well as the recollection of bloody wars and revolution(s) that had centred on the question of the Church’s doctrinal authority, that compelled the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz to grant reason an even more

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<sup>219</sup> Mercer, *Leibniz’s metaphysics*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>220</sup> See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 256-268. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-279. *Ibid.*, p. 374. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 56-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 17-31. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 73-74. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-117.

<sup>221</sup> Rummel, ‘The theology of Erasmus’, p. 33.

<sup>222</sup> Carrington, ‘Desiderius Erasmus’, p. 43. For Leibniz, this statement must be qualified since many of his early writings on Church Reunion accepted the authority of the Roman Church on many doctrinal matters. See amongst others: Leibniz, ‘A proposal to revive the Catholic Demonstrations’, p. 48. Leibniz, *Theologisches System*, p. 118.

prominent role than their humanist predecessors. What they did have in common with them, however, was their earnest commitment to Christianity: Cudworth, More, and Leibniz were not interested in redefining the foundations of religion in order to become independent of revealed religion. On the contrary: their project lay – in marked consistency with the irenicism that marked their entire creed – in forging, as Henry expresses it, a harmony between the two books of God, that of nature and that of Scripture.<sup>223</sup>

## Conclusion

Europe's late seventeenth century was – not only in England and the Holy Roman Empire – a time of reconstruction: society, politics, economies, and religion needed to be rebuilt, adjusted, and recast in order to heal the wounds and rectify the flaws that had enabled the carnage and crises of the preceding decades. Not always were these initiatives as inclusive or far-reaching as might have been wise or necessary, especially when faith was concerned. However, the passionate voices for a moderate, inclusive Protestant Christianity that had emerged during the period of the Civil War and Thirty Years' War resounded even more loudly as the period of confessionalization ended. Across denominational boundaries, Protestants sought to defy a version of Christianity that they saw as heartless and tyrannical.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the work of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz whose quest for a conciliatory and non-dogmatic faith was as much steeped in the humanist tradition of Erasmian Christianity with its Platonic moorings, as it was inspired by the turbulent events they had witnessed in their lifetimes: their determination to restore goodness as the essential, inalterable foundation of divinity and thus Creation was a riposte against a pessimistic Protestant orthodoxy that evoked an inscrutable and thus

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<sup>223</sup> Henry, 'Religion and the Scientific Revolution', p. 46.

arbitrary God reigning over a depraved world. It was this fundamental belief that enabled them to posit the agency and free will of Christian believers against the predestinarian theology of the Puritans and gnesio-Lutheran conceptions of *sola gratia*. However, the achievements of Cudworth, More, and Leibniz went far beyond the mere rediscovery of ancient and Renaissance wisdom. This becomes clear in their natural theologies: the Cartesian metaphysics pioneeringly adapted by Cudworth and More propelled them to undermine the key tenets of not only the fashionable ‘secular philosophy’ of their era, but of much what had sustained Protestant orthodoxy, albeit in order to save those tenets they regarded as even more fundamental to the Christian creed: the absolute truth of God’s existence and innate human morality. Therein lay the second major departure from Christian scholarly tradition: the Deist challenge by Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, and even Descartes compelled the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz to move beyond the realm of biblical exegesis, history, and philology as the central pillars to prove the veracity of the Christian religion. Briefly, it was, as Gay put it, the combination of ‘classicism plus science’ that stood at the core of the Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian thought.<sup>224</sup> This revolutionary method not only enabled them to go beyond humanist wisdom but to posit an, albeit cautious, confidence in human reason that separated them from more conservative reformers of their own time: where Bulman’s Anglican Enlightenment theologians persisted in a pessimistic view of human nature that made them rely on the reason contained within history, Cudworth, More, and Leibniz’s rationalism permitted them to place their trust in natural reason.<sup>225</sup> In their championing of ground-breaking scientific and philosophical thinking as inspired by Copernicus and Descartes, the Cambridge Platonists therefore added a wholly new

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<sup>224</sup> Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 313. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314.

<sup>225</sup> Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 73-74. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-117. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-140. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.

methodological foundation to the Christian humanism that had inspired them. Given the wrought context of Restoration within which they wrote much of their work, they must clearly be credited as the great forethinkers of this 'new theology'. Leibniz perfected this new approach and brought it to greater prominence within continental Lutheranism. To simply see their theologies as a humanist 'revival' would therefore grossly simplify their achievement. Rather than to merely adopt a 'modern' or 'scientific' lens through which to interpret Christianity, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz pursued an altogether more ambitious methodological project: to forge a continuity between past and present. This rendered their projects, as Mercer stated in relation to Leibniz, in equal terms 'radical and conservative'.<sup>226</sup> This, however, also means that their enlightened theology was unthinkable without its corresponding method and metaphysics. Their staunch commitment to the principle of consummate harmony – already stressed by Cassirer to be a pivotal legacy of Leibnizian religious thinking in Germany – paired with a firm belief in the human powers of self-emancipation through reason thanks to an inborn concept of morality became the cornerstone of a new kind of Christian thinking – an early Protestant Enlightenment that, again just as Cassirer posited, sought to emancipate the Reformation faith from its Augustinian baggage, yet crucially without giving up an attachment to Protestantism itself.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Mercer, 'Leibniz on Knowledge and God', p. 549.

<sup>227</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 175. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-160.

## IV. Disseminating the New Theology? The Life and Correspondences of Eric Benzelius the Younger

For a vision of enlightened Christianity to exist in the minds or on the note pages of a handful of thinkers is naturally not sufficient evidence of a unified phenomenon, let alone a transnational movement. For an idea depends on other factors to morph into a school of thought or movement: its dissemination and ultimately, impact in any given circle or society. This was of special significance to the musings of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: their ideas were not merely intended for personal satisfaction. Instead, they were to serve the public good, to produce tangible practical outcomes in the advancement of humanity. This was indeed their self-declared aim, as Leibniz put it:

As our perfection consists in the knowledge and the love of God, it follows that we are advanced in perfection to the extent that we penetrate eternal truths, and that we have zeal for the general good. So those who are truly enlightened ... try hard to procure the increase in the enlightenment of men, in Christian virtue and public happiness.<sup>1</sup>

The propagation of their thought was not optional, but an imperative. That Leibniz was especially interested in spreading his intellectual achievements across the learned world is, to put it mildly, well-documented. Barely any other philosopher of the pre-modern era has left a more extensive collection of writings for generations of historians to dissect and analyse. Chief among this wealth of material are his letters that he sent in copious correspondences to scholars across Europe. Whilst many of these have been examined in great detail by modern historians, others have to this day received less attention.

Among those which have received less attention are the letters Leibniz exchanged with a young Swede whom he hosted in Hanover in 1697: Eric Benzelius the Younger (1675-

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<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Review of Lüttichau's *Pansophia* (4 September 1696)' in Lloyd Strickland (ed.), *Leibniz on God and Religion* (London, 2016), p. 89.

1743) who visited Leibniz as part of a ‘grand tour’. There are many fascinating facets to Benzelius which make him a figure worthy of greater investigation: first, his biography coincides with arguably the most turbulent period in the post-Reformation Swedish kingdom. Born at the height of Sweden’s great power status, Benzelius would see fundamental political and societal upheavals in his native country within his lifetime – arguably, Sweden’s belated ‘seventeenth-century crisis’. Growing up under the auspices of the Caroline autocracy, his early adulthood coincided with the beginning of the Great Northern War which would end in catastrophe for Sweden: the death of King Charles XII (1682-1718) during his campaign heralded the total collapse of not only the *karolinska enväldet* but Sweden’s status as a major European power, as the peace negotiations incurred major territorial losses from which the kingdom never recovered.<sup>2</sup>

Domestically, Queen Ulrika Eleonora (1688-1741) and King Frederick I of Hesse (1676-1751), agreed to a fundamental reform of the Swedish constitution in 1719 and 1720 respectively: absolutism was replaced by parliamentary rule, as monarchs were obliged to defer to the Estates assembled in the *Riksdag*.<sup>3</sup> The Great Power Era (*stormaktstid*) made way for the so-called ‘Age of Liberty’ (*Frihetstid*) that lasted until 1772. By his mid-forties, Benzelius the Younger had therefore witnessed the rise and fall of Swedish absolutism, as well as the apogee and disastrous decline of the kingdom’s geopolitical might.

This was a fate he, of course, shared with countless other compatriots of his time. What renders Benzelius even more interesting, however, is that he was anything but a passive

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<sup>2</sup> See: Andrew Adin Stomberg, *A history of Sweden* (New York, 1931), pp. 507-512. Jens E. Olesen, ‘The struggle for supremacy in the Baltic between Denmark and Sweden, 1563–1721’ in E. I. Kouri and Jens E. Olesen (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia – Volume 2: 1520–1870* (2 vols., Cambridge, 2016), pp. 265-267.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the the transition from the *stormaktstid* to the *frihetstid*, see: Harry Lenhammar, ‘Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplýsningens Tid’ in Harry Lenhammar (ed.), *Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplýsningens Tid* (8 vols., Trelleborg, 2017), pp. 34-39. Michael Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History* (London, 1967), p. 269-272.

bystander in this turmoil: as the son of the Bishop of Strängnäs and later Archbishop of Uppsala, Eric Benzelius the Elder (1632-1709), the young Swede was a member of the highest echelons of Swedish society and indeed of one of the kingdom's most important clerical dynasties of the early modern age.<sup>4</sup> Upon his return from his grand tour, Benzelius the Younger first became a lecturer and librarian at the University of Uppsala, before joining the ranks of the Church of Sweden – and ultimately rising to the position of Archbishop, though he passed away shortly after his ascendancy to the role in 1642. He also had a distinguished political career during the Age of Liberty, leading the clerical estate through a number of *Riksdag* sessions. Beyond his political merits, Swedish historians have often underlined his instrumental role in advancing scientific life in the Scandinavian kingdom: in particular, the contribution of Leibniz to the development of Benzelius as a scholar has been stressed in this context, with first Hans Forssell and then Asta Ekenvall outlining the relationship between the two.<sup>5</sup> Most recently, Marsha Keith Schuchard has looked into their engagement with Jewish theosophy.<sup>6</sup>

Leibniz was not the only European scholar of repute that Benzelius was corresponding with: the Swedish cleric built an impressive network of correspondents from all walks of learning, be it theology, politics, history, philology, or natural science (quite often, he

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the Benzelius family, see: Björn Ryman, 'Släkten Benzelius' in Harry Lenhammar (ed.), *Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplýsningens Tid* (8 vols., Trelleborg, 2017), pp. 264-271.

<sup>5</sup> See: Hans L. Forssell, 'Minne af Erkebiskopen Erik Benzelius den yngre', *Svenska Akademiens Handlingar*, Vol. 58 (1883), pp. 113-476. Unfortunately, Forssell did not always offer precise sources for many of his quotes and claims, though the importance of his work remains seminal for scholars of Benzelius, as acknowledged amongst others by Björn Ryman. Ryman, however, also argues that Forssell 'rather describes the setting of his time than the man Benzelius' and did not always do his personality justice. See: Björn Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.: en frihetstida politiker* (Stockholm, 1978), p. 3. Asta Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', *Linköpings Biblioteks Handlingar*, Vol. 4/3 (1953), pp. 5-64. Ekenvall focused primarily upon Leibniz's influence upon Benzelius's understanding of Swedish history and his work as an historian. Nonetheless, she offers the most complete account of their connection.

<sup>6</sup> See: Marsha Keith Schuchard, 'Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism' in Allison P. Coudert, Richard H. Popkin, and Gordon M. Weiner (eds.), *Leibniz, mysticism and religion* (Dordrecht and London, 1998), pp. 84-106.

would in fact converse with the same individual on nearly all of these subjects). The most prominent of these letters were compiled by Swedish historians Alvar Erikson and Eva Nilsson Nylander in three volumes in the late 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Among the many eminent individuals Benzelius wrote to was the theologian Johann Andreas Schmidt (1652-1726), a lecturer in Church history at the University of Helmstedt and long-time associate of Leibniz who was strongly influenced by the theology of the humanist Church reunion advocate Georg Calixt (1586-1656).<sup>8</sup> Schmidt became an almost equally important contact for the Swede during his travels across Protestant Germany as Leibniz. Given Benzelius's theological background, there is a question as to whether he could have seen any merit in the moderate, irenic version of Christianity that Leibniz had advocated.

Did Benzelius, if at all, review the novel theological ideas of Leibniz? How did he respond to them? What do his other correspondences and *curriculum vitae* reveal of the influence – or lack thereof – that Enlightenment in general and Protestant Enlightenment theology in specific played in early eighteenth-century Swedish Lutheranism?

This chapter will answer these questions by reviewing the life and work of Benzelius, with a particular focus on his correspondences with Leibniz, Schmidt, the orthodox

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<sup>7</sup> See: *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger From Learned Foreigners, Vol. I: 1697-1722*, ed. Alvar Erikson (2 vols., Gothenburg, 1979). *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger From Learned Foreigners, Vol. II: 1723-1743*, ed. Alvar Erikson (2 vols., Gothenburg, 1979). *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, ed. Alvar Erikson and Eva Nilsson Nylander (Gothenburg, 1983). It is not wholly certain that Erikson and Nilsson Nylander succeeded in gathering the full collection of letters in all cases. The Cyprian-Benzelius correspondence indeed appears to be incomplete, as Pentti Laasonen stated that certain letters went missing. See: Pentti Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden. Ernst Salomon Cyprian und Erik Benzelius d.J.' in Ernst Koch and Johannes Wallmann (eds.), *Ernst Salomon Cyprian (1673-1745) zwischen Orthodoxie, Pietismus und Frühaufklärung – Vorträge des Internationalen Kolloquiums vom 14. bis 16. September 1995 in der Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha Schloß Friedenstein* (Gotha, 1996), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> See: Paul Zimmermann, 'Schmidt, Johann Andreas' in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Vol. 31: Scheller – Karl Schmidt* (56 vols., Leipzig, 1890), p. 735.

German Lutheran Ernst Salomon Cyprian<sup>9</sup> (1673-1737), and his brother Gustaf Benzelstierna (1687-1746). Based on these sources and the existing historiography, it seeks to reconstruct the Swedish cleric's philosophical and theological ideas, with a special focus on his views on central matters of enlightened religion. This analysis will centre first on the innovative, enlightened aspects of Benzelius's thinking emerging from his exchanges and actions before proceeding to analyse the more conservative facets of his thought. This will be followed by an attempt to dissect and explain the dissonances in his views.

Ultimately, it will be argued that, although Benzelius shared much with his enlightened counterparts in terms of temperament and philosophical outlook, he was unable to translate this into subscribing to their irenic enlightened theology. This was to the greatest extent due to the pragmatic political compulsions the Swedish kingdom placed on Benzelius who could not pursue his scholarly interests and was instead forced into the strict corset of Lutheran orthodoxy whose interests he upheld not least for pragmatic *raisons d'état*. Nevertheless, the contact with Leibniz, Schmidt, and the budding Pietist movement in Halle had so profoundly impacted the cleric that he was ready to accept certain gradual changes within the Church of Sweden. At the same time, especially as the leader of the clerical estate at the erstwhile apogee of the 'Age of Liberty', he embodied all the contradictions of this turbulent period in Swedish history, its uneasy coexistence of the old and new thinking. Albeit consequently not a textbook example for an enlightened cleric, the case of Benzelius highlights the Protestant Enlightenment's reliance on contingent factors of *realpolitik*, rather than mere conviction alone – not

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<sup>9</sup> The chapter will focus on Benzelius's side of the correspondence, with specific reference to the following letters: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 49, 50, 55, 57, 58, 76, 90, 97.

only in terms of its dissemination but crucially in its ultimate acceptance by otherwise sympathetic thinkers.

## The New Thinking in Benzeliu's Correspondence with Leibniz and Schmidt

Before delving into the depths of his engagement with the 'new theology' developing in Protestant Europe, it is perhaps wise to familiarise oneself with the context in which Benzeliu met with Leibniz and Schmidt. The young Swede encountered Leibniz in Hanover at the beginning of his grand tour in 1697. The contact between the two was established by Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld (1655-1727), a Swedish philologist and collector, who stood in good grace with Leibniz.<sup>10</sup> The visit lasted roughly three weeks and was, according to Ekenvall who relied on the travel diary that Benzeliu kept during his journey, followed up by another brief encounter in February 1698.<sup>11</sup> From Hanover, Benzeliu moved on to Helmstedt, where he met Schmidt.<sup>12</sup> Concluding his travels through Germany, the young Swede continued through the Netherlands to England, before moving on to Paris.<sup>13</sup> Benzeliu's departure from Hanover heralds likewise the beginning of his epistolary relationship with Leibniz: his first letter to his Hanoverian host was written in October 1697, a little less than two months after their farewell.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Schmidt and Benzeliu began their exchanges whilst the Swede was still

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<sup>10</sup> Erik Benzeliu the Younger, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeliu den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne' in *Brefväxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzeliu den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzeliustierna*, ed. Johan Hinric Lidén (Linköping, 1791), p. xvi..

<sup>11</sup> Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzeliu d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', pp. 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Benzeliu's meetings during his grand tour are also recorded in a memorial speech Olof Dalin held in honour of Benzeliu. See: Olof Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede, welche auf den Erzbischof und Pro-Cancellarium der königlichen Universität zu Upsala, Herrn Doctor Eric Benzeliu ... ist gehalten worden', *Stockholmische Magazin*, Vol. II (1754), pp. 39-45. For the description on his time in Helmstedt, see: *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Benzeliu, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeliu den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne', pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>14</sup> *Erik Benzeliu's Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 1. Ekenvall seems to have read their letters, though she did not seem to award them overly great importance in her analysis. See: Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzeliu d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', pp. 20-21.

travelling through Germany: the first preserved letter in their correspondence, penned by Schmidt, dates to May 1698.<sup>15</sup> This is not a departure from the norm: in both cases, the most intense period of the correspondence occurred during Benzelius's grand tour. Of the fifteen letters between Leibniz and Benzelius included in the Erikson-Nilsson Nylander collection, ten were exchanged between 1697 and August 1699.<sup>16</sup> The same is true of the Schmidt letters: eight of the ten letters in the collection were written between 1698 and 1699.<sup>17</sup> Whilst the exchanges became more intermittent after Benzelius's return to Sweden in December 1700, he did remain in contact with both his German hosts. After an interval of nearly two years, his correspondence with Leibniz resumed in a short exchange between March and May 1701.<sup>18</sup> Thereafter followed a longer respite of another five and a half years, before Benzelius wrote to Leibniz again in January 1707.<sup>19</sup> This letter was not answered by the German until December the same year.<sup>20</sup> The last letter in the collection is dated October 1708 and was sent by Benzelius to Leibniz.<sup>21</sup> The correspondence with Schmidt appears to have subsided at around the same time: the last two items in the correspondence consist of a letter by Schmidt to Benzelius from May 1704 which the Swede did not appear to have responded to, though he sent him a brief note in January 1707.<sup>22</sup> This letter likewise constitutes the last item in the correspondence. All of their letters are in Latin, even though other correspondences suggest that Benzelius mastered English, French, and German: Henry Lyell thus wrote to

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<sup>15</sup> *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 9.

<sup>16</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 1, 2, 3, 6a, 7, 10. *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, nos. 6, 10, 25, 33.

<sup>17</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 4, 5, 8. *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, nos. 9, 11, 13, 15, 23.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 17. *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 51.

<sup>19</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 30.

<sup>20</sup> See: *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 100.

<sup>21</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 37.

<sup>22</sup> See: *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 77. *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 30.

Benzelius that 'I find by ye Letter you Did My Wife ye honour to writ, that you are already become proficient In English to a wonderfull degree'.<sup>23</sup>

Particularly the initial intensity of Benzelius's literary links with Leibniz and Schmidt suggests that the meetings with the two had a great impact on him. The correspondence's content corroborates this impression: throughout their epistolary relationship, Leibniz emerges as the senior party. His letters to the young Swede tended to be brief and pithy, whereas Benzelius sent his erstwhile host quite long letters, especially at the beginning of their exchanges. Most of them were laden with elaborate words of praise for Leibniz.<sup>24</sup> This changed later on, as Benzelius himself became more elliptic in his writings.<sup>25</sup> Most importantly however, the relationship was decidedly one-sided: the exchanges were always invariably initiated by Benzelius who would inform Leibniz of an important discovery or piece of news that he wished to communicate to him. The high esteem in which Benzelius held Leibniz may perhaps best be summarised by a letter that he wrote to Olof Rudbeck: 'So great and wide-ranging is [Leibniz's] wealth of knowledge; there is not a thing that I wanted to know of that he could not enlighten [me on]'.<sup>26</sup>

None of this is to say that the German did not appreciate his Swedish mentee. In fact, Leibniz was very taken by his visitor, as he not least showed in a letter to Sparwenfeld often quoted by Benzelius scholars:

You have done me a special favour in referring the young Mr. Benzelius to me, a man who is truly in my taste. For he not only burns to learn something and to use his time well but also possesses great actual knowledge and furthermore such a noble and charming manner that he

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<sup>23</sup> *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 35. Other examples of letters written to Benzelius in the cited languages include: *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, nos. 29, 31, 42, 48, 56.

<sup>24</sup> See for example: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 1.

<sup>25</sup> See for example: *Ibid.*, nos. 7, 30.

<sup>26</sup> As cited in: Forssell, 'Minne af Erkebiskopen', pp. 140-141.

will always win the hearts of everyone wherever he may be. In other words, I have no doubt that he will one day be a new adornment to his country and his family.<sup>27</sup>

How strong an impression the young Benzelius made on Leibniz is also shown by the fact that it was him who referred the Swede with glowing praise to the ‘theological scholar of the University of Helmstedt’, that is Schmidt.<sup>28</sup> The relationship between the two was marked by the same respect and reverence. The young Swede thus became an eager student of Schmidt and his academic craft, much to the Helmstedt professor’s delight, as Leibniz noted: ‘he wished with all his heart that there were many among our students from Germany who could resemble him; and that he is presenting him as a model to others’.<sup>29</sup> Again, their letters bear witness to this: whereas Schmidt’s notes tended to be rather brief in length (though by no means less cordial in content), Benzelius sent rather long letters laden with news of his travels and thoughts concerning his studies.<sup>30</sup> The obligatory expressions of admiration feature again, even though not quite as extensively as with Leibniz. Benzelius was evidently delighted by the appreciation of his two correspondents: as Lars Engwall has stressed, such esteem by especially Leibniz, already one of the most prominent thinkers of his time, was a special honour to be bestowed upon the young Swede.<sup>31</sup>

Their mutual appreciation renders the question of the impact they had upon his work and thought all the more interesting and pertinent. The correspondence again supports the impression of a deep and widespread influence that Leibniz and Schmidt had upon their Swedish mentee. The first and obvious notable one is that especially Leibniz permitted Benzelius to tap into the wider network of the European Republic of Letters of

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<sup>27</sup> As cited in: Lars Engwall, ‘From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society’ in Lars Engwall (ed.), *Scholars in Action – Past-Present-Future* (Västerås, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> As cited in: Ekenvall, ‘Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz’, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> As cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> See amongst others: *Erik Benzelius’ Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 4, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Engwall, ‘From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society’, p. 20.

its days: as Ekenvall and Björn Ryman underlined, Benzelius was thanks to the German's vouching for him able to forge contact with a number of other European thinkers.<sup>32</sup> Most prominently, this includes Leibniz's intimate friends Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1699), Thomas Smith (1638-1710), and the Bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715).<sup>33</sup> Through these intercessions – as well as the recommendations of his Swedish mentors such as Sparwenfeld – Benzelius was thus gradually able to build up a large network of contacts from across the continent that included, beyond the aforementioned, Johann Albert Fabricius (1668-1729), Archbishop Tenison (1636-1715), Hans Sloane (1660-1753), and Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715).<sup>34</sup> How impressive his connections were is perhaps best summarised by Ryman who stated that 'no Swede should during Charles XII's war have maintained contact with so many European men of science as Benzelius'.<sup>35</sup> Benzelius himself appeared rather proud of his vast networks, even if he lamented their occasional lack of reliability:

I was also quite busily in correspondence with learned [men] who kindly and favourably reminded me of this when we parted; for this irritated me, that [I] was often hearing that they were lamenting themselves to have had our friendship and sought to do them all requested favours, including a demand for an exchange of letters, but then one never heard of them, wondering whether they were living or dead. Who these very learned [men] were shows my volume of letters which I believe should be good for *Historia Literaria*. I was therefore home, but at the same time abroad through the exchange of letters and so I knew what happened there.<sup>36</sup>

In and of itself, the extent and breadth of the correspondence, as well as the connections resulting from it, thus establish the young Benzelius as a fledgling member of the early Enlightenment's Republic of Letters.

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<sup>32</sup> Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', p. 15. Ryman, 'Släkten Benzelius', p. 267.

<sup>33</sup> See: Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 41. *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40. *Ibid.*, p. 43. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> Benzelius, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzelii den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne', pp. xviii-xix.

It should be emphasised that the benefits derived from this correspondence did not flow unilaterally towards Benzelius who assisted his contacts in obtaining information on Swedish current affairs and sciences. In this endeavour, he not only granted them access to otherwise hardly available resources but acted as an ambassador of his country's learning. Indeed, Ekenvall demonstrated that this was a function he pursued rather zealously *vis-à-vis* Leibniz who appears to have especially relied on Benzelius to obtain rare books from Sweden: upon Benzelius's arrival in 1697, he brought Leibniz a couple of volumes that Sparwenfeld had intended to present to his German friend and once their own relationship was established, Leibniz continued to rely on Benzelius's services in this respect.<sup>37</sup> It is hard to overestimate Benzelius's service in sourcing volumes by Swedish authors for Leibniz, as the latter himself stressed it in a letter to the French priest Claude Nicaise (1623-1701) in August 1697, shortly after their first meeting: 'A young, greatly knowledgeable Swede ... has brought me a great number of curious books published in Sweden ... which are little known to us'.<sup>38</sup> Benzelius himself took his duties towards Leibniz most serious, as he informed him in their correspondence of books that could be of interest to his mentor.<sup>39</sup> Leibniz was not the only beneficiary of these connections, however, as Forssell pointed out: Benzelius thus struck a very fruitful arrangement with the Parisian Abbé Jean-Paul Bignon (1662-1743) for some time, from whom he received updates from the French world of learning in return for novelties from his native Sweden.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', p. 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe herausgegeben von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen – II. Philosophischer Briefwechsel, Bd. 3: 1695-1700*, ed. Leibniz Forschungsstelle der Universität Münster (4 vols., Berlin, 2013), p. 365. According to Ekenvall, this included foremost volumes on Swedish history. See: Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzelius den yngre och G.W. Leibniz', pp. 19-20.

<sup>38</sup> Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe – II. Philosophischer Briefwechsel, Bd. 3*, p. 365.

<sup>39</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 188.

Naturally, however, contact with figures of Enlightenment is not tantamount to an intellectual commitment to the values and ideas of Enlightenment – especially in matters religious. As seen in the preceding chapter, Leibniz’s appreciation of Cudworth did not necessarily signify his agreement on certain questions of philosophy or faith. Rather therefore, it raises the question whether such a commitment existed. To assess this, one must delve closer into the relationship Benzelius developed with his correspondents and how they influenced his views. Even a cursory review of Benzelius’s letters and work demonstrates that his travels and contact with some of the great minds of the late seventeenth century was profoundly influential for the young Swede’s essential scholarly methodology and scientific worldview. This is also greatly acknowledged in the historiography: Ekenvall emphasised that the friendship with Leibniz had a lasting influence on Benzelius, especially in his development as an historian.<sup>41</sup> She points out that the books that Leibniz was interested in centred on the pre-medieval history of Sweden, as part of a wider project of his on the origins of the European peoples.<sup>42</sup> Benzelius’s correspondence with Leibniz reflects this, as his longest letter (of which indeed two versions exist) to his mentor elaborated on this joint quest to reconstruct the ancient history of Sweden.<sup>43</sup> Back in Uppsala, Benzelius proceeded to build on the historical inquiries he had begun with Leibniz and became a renowned historian already, publishing amongst others works on the history of the Swedish people.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ekenvall, ‘Eric Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz’, p. 15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27. She also offered a brief overview of Leibniz’s ideas on this subject. See: *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius’ Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 6a, 6b.

<sup>44</sup> See amongst others: Eric Benzelius the Younger, *Utkast till svenska folkets historia*, ed. Carl Jesper Benzelius (Lund, 1762). *Anecdota Benzeliana. Eric Benzelius d.y:s anteckningar i svensk historia*, ed. Hjalmar Lundgren (Stockholm, 1914).

Beyond their joint interest in Swedish history, however, the impact of Benzelius's European travels becomes most evident in the Swede's promotion of learning in his native kingdom: especially during his time as Uppsala University librarian from 1702 to 1724, Benzelius undertook monumental efforts to ensure that Swedish scholars and centres of learning could tap into the growing transnational pursuit of scientific enquiry. Benzelius's activism in the scientific sphere has been analysed in great detail by Forssell and Engwall.<sup>45</sup> According to them, Benzelius was convinced that there was a prime necessity for Swedish scholars to organise themselves better in order to catch up with the rest of Europe.<sup>46</sup> To this end, he was involved in the launch of not one, but three scientific societies at Uppsala, the very first of their kind in Sweden: the *Collegium Curiosorum* (1710), the Guild of Book Learning' (*Bokwetsgillet* - 1719), and finally, the the Swedish *Societas Regia Litteraria et Scientiarum* in 1728.<sup>47</sup> As if this was not enough, Benzelius was also intimately involved in launching scientific publications intended to promote Swedish scholarship: the *Daedalus Hyperboreus* – labelled Sweden's 'first academic journal' by Engwall – and the *Acta Literaria Suecia* in 1715 and 1720 respectively.<sup>48</sup> Many historians have speculated whether the ardour Benzelius displayed in setting up a scientific society in the Scandinavian kingdom was a direct influence of his contact with Leibniz who, as amongst others Engwall and Schuchard have come to point out, was involved in a similar endeavour around the time of Benzelius's stay.<sup>49</sup> However, given his further travels to and contacts with men of science in France and

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<sup>45</sup> See: Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', pp. 269-327. Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to the Royal Society', pp. 17-25. See also: Schuchard, 'Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism', p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> See: Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', pp. 276-278. Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society', pp. 20-21.

<sup>47</sup> The history of Sweden's eighteenth-century scientific societies and the crucial role played by Benzelius in their foundation has been very succinctly summarised by Engwall. See: Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society', pp. 17-27. *Ibid.*, p. 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21. *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> See: Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society', p. 20. Schuchard, 'Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism', pp. 87-88. Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 290.

England, it is highly likely that – as indeed Engwall contends – Leibniz was but one of many to inspire Benzelius.<sup>50</sup> Benzelius’s efforts for science thus both had an inward, as well as an outward dimension: beyond offering a bridge from Sweden to the learned minds of the European Republic of Letters, he was very eagerly involved in the creation of a national Republic of Letters that would eventually prove capable of integrating itself into the international scientific community of early modern Europe.

A champion of the sciences Benzelius undoubtedly was. But what philosophy underlay this campaign? Ryman has arguably uncovered the best guide to Benzelius’s thinking in the form of an encyclopaedia with annotations by the Swede that the historian has dated to the early eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> This tome, according to Ryman, reveals the most important intellectual influences of Benzelius.<sup>52</sup> Fascinatingly, as with the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz, it is a combination of ancient and modern thinkers: whereas, on the classical side, Ryman identifies Cicero and Prudentius as pivotal to Benzelius’s thinking, he considers Leibniz and especially John Norris (1657-1711), a rationalist English thinker with ties to Cambridge Platonism, as the two modern philosophers with the greatest impact on the Uppsala librarian.<sup>53</sup> All this reveals Benzelius’s rather familiar philosophical outlook, namely – in Ryman’s words – ‘a blend of science and personal philosophy’ centred around ‘neo-Platonism, idealist scientific theory and thereby an opposition to empiricism and scepticism’.<sup>54</sup> Broadly, therefore, his general views appear to have taken him towards a similar direction as the great theological reformers in England and the Holy Roman Empire: a combination of old and new thinking, based on

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<sup>50</sup> See: Engwall, ‘From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society’, pp. 20-21.

<sup>51</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>53</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 220-221. For more on John Norris and his philosophy, see: June Yang, ‘John Norris’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/john-norris/> (01 May. 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 220-221.

Platonist and Stoic influences, as well as a rationalist philosophy. In this, he was in fact contributing to a greater trend in Swedish learned circles from the 1690s onwards: as Bo Lindberg has shown, the kind of rationalist conciliatory eclecticism endorsed by Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists gained ever greater prominence at the kingdom's universities in the first half of the seventeenth century, meaning that Benzelius was part of a wider philosophical momentum.<sup>55</sup> In this context, another defining trait of the early *Collegium Curiosorum* and its members that is often highlighted by historians gains in importance: their exceptional dedication to 'practically useful knowledge' (Engwall).<sup>56</sup> Most of the discussions conducted within the circles of academics were thus to identify means for scientific discovery to benefit the public good at large. This was Benzelius's dedicated purpose, as Olof Dalin (1708-1763) stressed in a commemorative speech in his honour in 1744: he 'loved the useful sciences which concern the welfare of a whole nation and sponsored these with all the zeal and delight' he could muster.<sup>57</sup> Benzelius confirmed this in his autobiographical sketch: 'The love of my fatherland has burned since ... childhood in me; and [I] am certain that her welfare is bettered through ... [scientific] societies'.<sup>58</sup> Concretely, this meant that his scientific groups prioritised activities such as the amelioration of agricultural practices and public health across the kingdom, as Engwall describes: 'At the first recorded meetings it is established that windows should not be placed too low, that swampy sites should be avoided, that flat and not jagged cornerstones should be used, that mortar is stronger if horse dung is mixed into it, etc.'<sup>59</sup> The parallelism to Leibniz's – but also the Cambridge Platonists' –

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<sup>55</sup> See: Bo Lindberg, 'Den eklektiska filosofin och "libertas philosophandi" – Svensk universitetsfilosofi under 1700-talets första decennier', *Lychnos – Lärdomshistoriska Samfundets Årsbok* (1973-1974), pp. 217-233.

<sup>56</sup> Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society', p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Benzelius, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzelii den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne', p. xxvi.

<sup>59</sup> Engwall, 'From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society', p. 24.

practical, public-spirited thinking is more than evident in this context. In other words, aside from sharing many of their metaphysical beliefs, Benzelius equally supported the early Enlightenment theologians in their practical quest for the this-worldly application of knowledge. Indeed, Ryman has considered his influence pivotal in laying the ground for the many scientific successes of eighteenth-century Sweden.<sup>60</sup> It is hard to overstate the innovative character of Benzelius's work and thought, as it shines through in his correspondences and scientific 'activism': it was anything but the rule that a Swedish clergyman, who was born and bred into the climate of seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy, would present such an openness to the scientific, cosmopolitan, and publicly-minded creed of the early Enlightenment. If Benzelius was thus committed to many of the precepts informing enlightened scientific thinking, the question of his possible attachment to enlightened religious thinking becomes all the more curious.

Of particular interest in this context is Benzelius's work on the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus: while at Oxford's Bodleian Library, Benzelius discovered hitherto unknown writings of the thinker and planned to use his sensational findings to produce a compendium of Philo's works, prefaced by an analysis by him – a project that would occupy most of the rest of his lifetime.<sup>61</sup> The significance of Philo Judaeus' thought on Benzelius is heavily debated: according to Schuchard, the engagement with Philo Judaeus suggests that the Swede shared his German mentor's enthusiasm for a religious tradition that many, including Allison Coudert, consider central to Leibniz's theologico-philosophical thought: Kabbalism, a heterodox current of Jewish theology that, as Coudert summarises, affirmed the existence of an 'unwritten ... divine revelation granted to Moses on Mt. Sinai', the so-called 'Kabbalah', and had subsequently been co-

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<sup>60</sup> Ryman, 'Släkten Benzelius', p. 269.

<sup>61</sup> Famously, Benzelius would later have to realise that an English scholar, Thomas Mangey (1683/4-1755), uncovered the same writings as him at the Bodleian Library and was on course to publish his own edition of Philo's writings. See amongst others: Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 48.

opted by a number of Christian thinkers.<sup>62</sup> In Schuchard's view, Benzelius' fascination for this strand of Jewish thought was central to the relationship he developed with Leibniz and his friend van Helmont.<sup>63</sup> However, Friedemann Stengel has questioned the reliability of some of Schuchard's claims and it is indeed doubtful whether Benzelius subscribed to Kabbalism.<sup>64</sup> His description of his meeting with van Helmont is at best ambivalent: 'In Wolfenbüttel, I was also acquainted with F.M. von [sic] Helmont, an old man, but erudite ... in Pythagorean Philosophy and the Kabbala which on its own can soon make a man mad, or at least maniacal. He adored me since I was curious for knowledge.'<sup>65</sup> In his memorial speech, Dalin suggested even more strongly that Benzelius was not particularly enamoured of the 'ridiculous and kabbalistic philosophy' of van Helmont, whilst still emphasising that he enjoyed their encounter, because for 'a mind thirsty for knowledge, everything, be it wise or foolish, suits them just fine'.<sup>66</sup> This is evidently not proof that Benzelius held the same views as Dalin. Nonetheless, it casts further doubt over his attachment to kabbalism. What can be said with certainty is that Benzelius' interest in Philo Judaeus was, as Forssell has highlighted, rooted in a wider appreciation of Hebrew thought within early modern Swedish Lutheranism.<sup>67</sup> Before coming to Germany, the young Swede underwent a thorough tuition in Jewish philosophy and the Hebrew language under the tutelage of Gustaf Peringer (1651-1710), who also presided over a treatise Benzelius wrote in 1692 on Moses Maimonides.<sup>68</sup> On

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<sup>62</sup> See: Schuchard, 'Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism', p. 96. Allison P. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht, 1995), p. ix. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. ix-xi. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8. For Coudert's analysis of how Kabbalism may have accounted for Leibniz's intellectualism, see amongst others: Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, pp. 1-14. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-157.

<sup>63</sup> Schuchard, 'Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism', pp. 92-93.

<sup>64</sup> Friedemann Stengel, *Aufklärung bis zum Himmel – Emanuel Swedenborg im Kontext der Theologie und Philosophie des 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2011), p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> Benzelius, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeli den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne', p. xvi.

<sup>66</sup> Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 41. Claes Annerstedt, 'Erik Benzelius d.y. ' in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (2018), <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/18503> (09 May. 2019).

<sup>67</sup> Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', pp. 127-131.

<sup>68</sup> See: Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 38.

his grand tour, Benzelius did also engage Leibniz – including in their correspondence – in discussion about the *‘Litterae Orientales’*, including his work on Maimonides.<sup>69</sup> In Jena, as Dalin reveals, Benzelius further came into contact with Johann Andreas Danz (1654-1727) who instructed his visitor ‘more than a little in the Rabbinical’.<sup>70</sup> That he would proceed to Oxford is therefore not a great surprise given its status, as William Bulman has highlighted, as the foremost hub for the study of Jewish and Muslim thought in seventeenth-century Europe.<sup>71</sup> Most significantly, however, writings and letters analysed by Forssell suggest that the enquiry into Philo did not simply have an antiquarian purpose, but was very much – as with virtually every scholarly pursuit of Benzelius – undertaken with the intention of producing an impact in contemporary Sweden and Europe: according to Forssell, Benzelius saw his research into Philo as an attempt to fortify Christianity against its enemies, exulting in a letter of ‘how forcefully this old memorial of the Church’s oldest times [could] benefit the Church’s cause against heretics and schismatics’.<sup>72</sup> At first sight, this may in itself again not appear much, given that Church history had become one of the many battlegrounds of theology, not least for Lutheran orthodoxy in both Germany and Sweden. However, Eric Benzelius the Elder was not convinced that the research of his son was dedicated to such honourable, traditional ends. Instead, as another letter quoted by Forssell shows, he suspected that there were more pernicious influences at play, writing indignantly that if his son indeed believed ‘that such research in the early history of the Church shall build a dam against false teachings and sects, you have probably obtained this idea from the Helmstedt professors’.<sup>73</sup> It thus very much appears that Benzelius the Younger’s methodology and

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<sup>69</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius’ Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Dalin, ‘Gedächtnißrede’, p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment – Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 26-31. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> As cited in: Forssell, ‘Minne af erkebiskopen’, p. 156.

<sup>73</sup> As cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 157.

thought went beyond what was deemed proper for the Swedish Church's orthodox establishment. From the fragments of Benzeliu's work on Philo Judaeus, Forssell was able to reconstruct that the young Swede was generally of the strong opinion that the ancient writer offered the best ammunition against especially those of Socinian sympathies by offering a sound justification of the Trinity.<sup>74</sup> Again, in this particular quest, he appears to have shared much ground with Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists who had made a great virtue of extracting modern use for ancient – and especially non-Christian – wisdom as part of their conciliatory eclecticism to counter such extremes.

The interest and affinity Benzeliu showed in Philo is of crucial significance since it could be an important thread binding together with the religious thinking of Leibniz, Cudworth, and Benzeliu. Again, the fact that Benzeliu never completed his compendium on Philo Judaeus means that it is not possible to fully reconstruct what his thoughts on his philosophy and theology were, to what extent he shared them, and how – if ever – he incorporated it into his own vision of faith. If Philo thus proves to be a somewhat unreliable guide to the religious thinking of Benzeliu, one other issue proves to offer a less ambiguous insight: Church reunion.

### The Old Thinking in Benzeliu's Correspondence with Schmidt, Cyprian, and Benzelstierna

A superficial analysis of the correspondence and Benzeliu's journey upon his return to his homeland may lead one to wonder whether the Swedish Lutheran could not indeed have been inclined to sympathise with the 'new theology' of his German (and indeed many of his Dutch and English) contacts. However, the evidence points very much to

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<sup>74</sup> Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', pp. 214-215. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196. According to Forssell, Benzeliu took particular exception to Gerardus Vossius (1577-1649), John Spencer (c. 1630-1693), and Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736).

the opposite of this conclusion – first and foremost by omission: the correspondence with Leibniz is scant on theological discussion. This is not least striking since Ekenvall recorded that the two Protestants discussed many theological and ecclesiastical matters at length when they met in person, with the young Swede mentioning the exchanges in his travel diary.<sup>75</sup> Most significantly, she was able to learn from said diary that Leibniz's secretary gave Benzelius access to some of his master's syncretist writings and correspondences, including his exchanges with Paul Pellisson (1624-1693), a French Calvinist convert to Catholicism.<sup>76</sup> Benzelius must therefore have been very much aware of the ideas, if not the designs of his German host in the reconciliation of central European Christianity. Furthermore, Forssell noted that Leibniz and Schmidt were but two of many Protestants of syncretist sympathies Benzelius met during his travels.<sup>77</sup> Though he may not have been aware of the extent of his friends' plans, Benzelius was certainly confronted with the ideas themselves, amongst others in a letter to the young Swede from Justus Christoph Böhmer (1671-1732) in 1697.<sup>78</sup> While Benzelius was therefore conscious that a school of German Lutheranism was engaged in projects to reunite (Western) Christianity, it renders the questions of his own stance towards such ideas all the more important. That he did not discuss theological questions with Leibniz in their correspondence does seem to indicate that the two Lutherans found little ground for agreement and joint activity in this particular field. At the same time, Benzelius may likewise not have wanted to reveal the degree to which he was informed of Leibniz's endeavours for church reunion which were, as Forssell rightly pointed out, mostly

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<sup>75</sup> Ekenvall, 'Eric Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', pp. 12-13.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 145. *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>78</sup> As cited in: Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 152.

conducted under the radar of the public eye (of course, it would have also required him to confess his indiscretion).<sup>79</sup>

It is here that the connection with Schmidt proves to be of particular interest: for what immediately strikes is that the exchanges between Benzelius and the Helmstedt theologian focused to a much greater extent than the Leibnizian correspondence on ecclesiastical and theological matters. Nearly all the great figures of German Lutheranism's many undercurrents thus feature at some point in the letters, from the orthodox icon Abraham Calov (1612-1683), to the Pietist Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), and the syncretist Calixt.<sup>80</sup> Even Anglican theology is represented through John Dury (1596-1680) at one point during the correspondence.<sup>81</sup> Despite the comparative brevity of their exchanges, the correspondence with the Helmstedt church historian offers therefore a compelling insight into the theological views of the young Benzelius, as he was confronted with thinking that was alien if not anathema to much of Swedish Lutheran orthodoxy. Indeed, the exchanges with Schmidt show that the Swede simply did not share the opinions of his newly made German friends: he did not make a secret of his scepticism of many of Leibniz's and the Helmstedt professor's theological ideas. This was particularly the case with religious union which Benzelius bluntly considered pointless. He even appears to be telling Schmidt that he did breach the topic with Leibniz during his visit and that he had stated his opposition to it.<sup>82</sup> Of particular significance in this context is a letter of June 1698 where Benzelius voiced his objections to such a project in no uncertain terms: in his view, the idea of union was doomed from the very beginning, since the dogmatic systems of the three confessions had in their intricacy grown to be

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<sup>79</sup> Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 145.

<sup>80</sup> See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 5, 8, 30.

<sup>81</sup> See: *ibid.*, no. 4.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

fundamentally incompatible.<sup>83</sup> Beyond being a profoundly practically unfeasible quest, Benzelius however also considered it a spiritual danger, stating that Lutherans should beware those who eroded their unity and creed.<sup>84</sup> On these grounds, the young Swede went even further as to justify the categorical exclusion of Calvinism in Sweden at the Uppsala Synod in 1593.<sup>85</sup> However receptive Benzelius may thus have been to the ideas of reform-minded thinkers such as Schmidt and Leibniz in a variety of matters, this open-mindedness appears not to have extended to religious questions where he squarely defended the orthodox line of the Church of Sweden. In itself, this would not be overly surprising, especially given that Leibniz was in regular epistolary contact with individuals whose thinking was different from his own, including orthodox Lutherans such as Cyprian. However, the undeniable overlap of much of Benzelius's philosophical thinking with that of especially Leibniz makes his staunch rejection (both explicit and implicit) of most of the central ideas of enlightened theology quite remarkable. This is especially true given that his lifelong dedication to the promotion of (enlightened) science in Sweden shows that this sympathy with Leibnizian thinking was by no means a youthful sin but borne out of genuine conviction.

This renders it all the more interesting to explore the reasons why Benzelius was willing to follow Leibniz and Schmidt on many issues yet crucially not on ecclesiastical reconciliation. To understand the thinking and intellectual trajectory of Benzelius in this regard, it is insufficient to merely scrutinise his exchanges with the world outside Sweden, but necessary to look at his correspondence with fellow Swedes. Among the many important relationships of Benzelius's life, one of the best documented may be his correspondence with his brother Gustaf Benzelstierna, the *Censor Librorum*, which was

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

compiled and published as early as 1791 by Johan Hinric Lidén.<sup>86</sup> His edition of the Benzeliu-Benzelstierna correspondence includes letters exchanged between 1711 and 1742, the year before the Swedish cleric's death. Consequently, they offer a unique long-term insight into the thinking of the maturing and mature Benzeliu. This is not to say that Benzeliu's correspondences with Protestant Germany are not of importance either – far from it. However, the exchanges that become of greater interest in this context changed as he returned to Sweden: the longer Benzeliu stayed in Sweden and the more he rose within clerical and political ranks, the more he started to liaise with Protestant Europe in an altogether different fashion. Instead of writing principally to the learned world, his epistolary relationships now assumed a more overtly (church) political character. Nowhere is this more evident than in the growing sway that Ernst Salomon Cyprian exercised over Benzeliu. Of the same generation as him, Cyprian started to dominate Benzeliu's epistolary network from 1707 onwards – precisely around the time that Benzeliu ceased his correspondence with his moderate Lutheran acquaintances.<sup>87</sup> After tentative beginnings, the correspondence drastically picked up in intensity from roughly 1718 onwards.<sup>88</sup> The most heated period of their epistolary relationship took place between October 1720 and March 1723, with conversation mostly centring around theological matters.<sup>89</sup> In thirty years, Benzeliu and Cyprian would exchange a large number of letters, of which thirty-nine (of often rather impressive length) have been

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<sup>86</sup> See: *Brefwäxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzeliu den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, ed. Johan Hinric Lidén (Linköping, 1791).

<sup>87</sup> See: *Letters to Erik Benzeliu the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 97. *Erik Benzeliu's Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 33.

<sup>88</sup> According to Laasonen, Cyprian had initially reached out to Benzeliu's father to no avail and his first attempts to contact Benzeliu the Younger were unsuccessful too. See: Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden', p. 71-73.

<sup>89</sup> See: *Letters to Erik Benzeliu the Younger, Vol. I*, nos. 161, 168, 171, 172, 176, 182, 190, 194, 196, 200, 208, 210. *Erik Benzeliu's Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58. Laasonen has found twenty-four letters from this period. See: Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden', p. 77.

preserved and compiled in the collections of Erikson and Nilsson Nylander.<sup>90</sup> In the historiography, their correspondence was already assessed by Pentti Laasonen.<sup>91</sup>

Benzelius's exchanges with Benzelstierna and Cyprian are not only of great interest in themselves, but also complement his correspondence with Schmidt. As in his letters to the Helmstedt scholar, the Swede continued to harshly reject the very idea of church reunion towards his brother and his German orthodox Lutheran friend. Indeed, during the most intense period of the Benzeliu-Cyprian correspondence in the early 1720s, the prospect of Protestant Union dominated their discussions: at the time, the option of unity between Lutherans and Reformed Protestants was explored within the Holy Roman Empire, culminating in a plan for Church reunion forged upon the behest of Christoph Matthäus Pfaff (1686-1760) at Regensburg in 1722.<sup>92</sup> Inner-Protestant conflicts ultimately defeated the ambitions of the syncretists, though the progress they made was serious enough for Cyprian to consider these consultations a lethal threat to his cherished Lutheran (orthodox) creed.<sup>93</sup> Eagerly, he sought to enlist Benzeliu's help in obtaining moral support from the Church of Sweden in countering the designs of Protestant unification. He found a less fervent, yet nonetheless committed ally in Benzeliu whose personal distaste for the idea comes greatly to the fore in the correspondence. The perhaps most stringent condemnation of reconciliation between the different Christian churches came in a letter Benzeliu wrote to Cyprian in February

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<sup>90</sup> See: *Erik Benzeliu's Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 33, 38, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 71, 76, 97, 99. *Letters to Erik Benzeliu the Younger, Vol. I*, 97, 120, 146, 148, 151, 156, 161, 168, 171, 172, 176, 182, 190, 194, 196, 200, 208, 210. *Letters to Erik Benzeliu the Younger, Vol. II*, nos. 262, 267, 282, 293, 322, 328, 357.

<sup>91</sup> Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden', pp. 71-83. Laasonen principally summarises the exchanges' contents and analyses Cyprian's motives in engaging with Benzeliu, though he also briefly reviews the latter's motives and positions.

<sup>92</sup> For a detailed analysis of Pfaff's syncretist endeavours, see: Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, *Christoph Matthäus Pfaff und die Kirchenunionsbestrebungen des Corpus Evangelicorum, 1717-1726* (Mainz, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> *Letters to Erik Benzeliu the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 194. For a wider account of Cyprian's views on Pfaff's church reunion plans, see: Schäufele, *Christoph Matthäus Pfaff und die Kirchenunionsbestrebungen*, pp. 181-188. *Ibid.*, 196-198.

1723: 'Detestor unionem illam religionum, nunquam stabilem futuram.'<sup>94</sup> There is little reason to believe that Benzelius was simply placating his German correspondent, since he used similarly strong language in his letters to his own brother:

Concerning the [issue of] Syncretism in the [Holy Roman] Empire, [may] God who alone can guide [us] take over the reins. O Tempora! Our Swedish Lords stood so firm at the Peace of Osnabrück [to ensure] that the Reformed were not to be [considered] affiliates under the Augsburg Confession<sup>95</sup>

Combining the letters Benzelius wrote to Schmidt, Cyprian, and Benzelstierna, it is possible to reconstruct the principal motives behind Benzelius's rejection of syncretism. These in turn reveal that for all his dedication to promote ideals of Enlightenment in the sphere of secular erudition, he retained a strong – albeit mostly formal – sense of Lutheran orthodoxy that did not waver throughout his life. In particular, Benzelius objected to ecclesiastical union on three grounds: the aforementioned lack of realistic implementation, the need for religious unity in Sweden, and, though to a lesser degree, an apprehension of Calvinist domination.

The first objection, Benzelius defended especially on the ground of historical precedent: he thus pointed to previous futile attempts to reconcile even merely the Protestant confessions under one roof as evidence that the Churches had become too dogmatically incompatible to be reunited. Benzelius's pessimism and scepticism was in fact not unfounded, considering the record of these initiatives which were perhaps most succinctly summarised by Johannes Wallmann: 'whereas only the one article on the Eucharist remained contentious among Luther and Zwingli in Marburg in 1529, whereas three irresolvable differences in teaching were laid down at the 1631 Colloquy of Leipzig ..., there were in 1661 in Kassel four points on which the pupils of Calixt and the

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<sup>94</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 58.

<sup>95</sup> *Brefwäxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, no. 6.

Reformed negotiated, without reaching agreement'.<sup>96</sup> It was likely for that reason that he felt that the invocation of the past as a warning example was the strongest argument in his arsenal – for it was a recurring leitmotif in the Swede's critique of syncretism: towards Benzelstierna, he thus invoked, as seen above, the complicated disputes surrounding the recognition of Reformed Protestants under the Augsburg Confession during the negotiations of the Peace of Westphalia and the Swedish opposition to this idea, without making a secret of his belief that he considered their reluctance of the time justified.<sup>97</sup> Somewhat acerbically, he told his brother the anecdote of a Brandenburg delegate who allegedly claimed that Frederick William was ready to subscribe to the *Formula of Concord* to secure this end: 'Count Oxenstierna and Mr. Salvius answered that if it was so, it would not be of necessity for him to desire being included with the others in the Religious Peace'.<sup>98</sup> Before Cyprian in turn, Benzelius recalled quite often the warning example of John Dury's failed reunionist enterprise and the role played by the Swedish bishop Johannes Matthiae Gothus (1593-1670) in this sorry tale.<sup>99</sup> However, most emphatically, the Swede also repeatedly stressed the impact prior ambitions for reconciliation of the various confessions had on two individuals very close to him: his father, Eric Benzelius the Elder, and his grandfather, Eric Odhelius (1620-1666). Both had made a name for themselves in the syncretism controversies that engulfed the Church of Sweden in the latter half of the seventeenth century by authoring a treatise repudiating this tendency.<sup>100</sup> This work, the so-called *Palma Pacifera*, has been considered as the

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<sup>96</sup> Johannes Wallmann, 'Zwischen Reformation und Humanismus. Eigenart und Wirkungen Helmstedter Theologie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Georg Calixts', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. 74/3 (1977), p. 363.

<sup>97</sup> *Brefwäxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, nos. 6, 7.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 6, 99.

<sup>100</sup> Sven Göransson and more recently, Steffie Schmidt offer extensive analyses of the Swedish syncretism controversies. See: Sven Göransson, 'Schweden und Deutschland während der synkretistischen Streitigkeiten, 1645-1660', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte – Archive for Reformation History*, Vol. 42 (1951), pp. 220-243. Steffie Schmidt, *Professoren im Norden: Lutherische Gelehrsamkeit*

most pivotal theological tract of seventeenth-century Swedish theology by Church historian Sven Göransson, as not least Steffie Schmidt highlights.<sup>101</sup> Benzelius the Younger very much appears to have had a similar estimation of its genius: in his correspondence with his German contacts, he regularly emphasised the pivotal role his ancestors played in resisting the advance of syncretist ideas within Sweden and Lutheranism in general with great gusto. Before Schmidt in particular, he elaborated to what extent his views on Church reunion were grounded in the example set by his grandfather and father in 1698.<sup>102</sup> Several decades later, he repeatedly stressed the important influence of the Odhelius-Benzelius family lineage in his opposition to efforts for Church reunion before Cyprian as well.<sup>103</sup>

However, Benzelius did not simply have to rely on the memory of his family to be aware of the difficulties that arose of Church union. By the time of his correspondence with Cyprian, he had himself been involved in such a dispute. This controversy is succinctly outlined by Hilding Pleijel in: in the late 1710s, Carl Gyllenborg (1679-1746), the former chaplain of the Swedish Church in London, had together with the Bishop of London, John Robinson (1650-1723), negotiated a plan that would bring the confessions of their countries closer together.<sup>104</sup> Whilst especially the Anglicans were, according to Pleijel, convinced that the doctrinal disagreements with their Scandinavian brethren were ‘quite meaningless’, the Swedish clergy was of a decidedly different view – leading to the plan being roundly rejected.<sup>105</sup> Pleijel mentioned that Benzelius was in the thick of this

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*in der frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel der theologischen Fakultäten in Kopenhagen und Uppsala* (Göttingen, 2018), pp. 278-288. *Ibid.*, pp. 299-316. Odhelius had initially begun with the work until his untimely death in 1666, leading his son-in-law to complete it. See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 99.

<sup>101</sup> Schmidt, *Professoren im Norden*, p. 323.

<sup>102</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 49. *Ibid.*, no. 99

<sup>104</sup> See: Hilding Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V. Karolinsk Kyrkofromhet, Pietism och Herrnhutism 1680-1772* (6 vols, Uppsala, 1935), pp. 240-241. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 239-242.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

controversy, though he said little of the position he took on the issue.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that Benzelius viewed the idea of a merger with the Anglican Church more positively than one with German Reformed Christians. If anything, the failure of the Gyllenborg plan likely added to his belief that ecclesiastical union of any sort was, ultimately, inherently doomed.

On the other hand, the focus on history (and its record of failures) may lead one to conclude that Benzelius's opposition to syncretism was much less dogmatic than it was pragmatist: he simply did not believe in the viability of the idea, fearing instead that the search for religious unity would simply result in further acrimony. This is evidenced by his borrowing of Gustavus Adolphus's comment 'Vereor, ne dum tres illas componere laboramus, novem aliae exsurgant' – a phrase that Benzelius used both in his correspondence with Schmidt in 1698 and with Cyprian in 1721.<sup>107</sup> It is possible that this was simply a diplomatic cop-out, intended to assuage the other party without taking overly forceful a stance that, as he must have feared, could bear potentially unintended consequences.

To understand this apprehension, one must turn to the religious politics of late seventeenth-century Sweden: as seen in the second chapter and emphasised by historians such as Steffie Schmidt and Göransson, the entrenchment of Lutheran orthodoxy within the Swedish Church at that moment meant that the kingdom was no longer styling itself as the broadly Protestant protecting power of Gustavus Adolphus's days.<sup>108</sup> Instead, Sweden saw an entrenchment of what Johan Loccenius, according to Pleijel, defined as the foundation of the kingdom: “unity in the true religion” (*unio vel*

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 4, 55.

<sup>108</sup> Schmidt, *Professoren im Norden*, pp. 158-159. Schmidt stresses too that the growing rivalry with Brandenburg played a role in Swedish foreign policy adjusting itself to the pressures building within the Church. See: *Ibid.*, p. 158.

*unitas verae religionis*)'.<sup>109</sup> According to this interpretation, the very fabric of state and society relied on the primacy of the unsullied Lutheran doctrine, embodied within the *Enhetskyrkan*, that is the 'United church'. Any perturbation to this unity was not only a threat to religion, but the state and society itself. What this meant for seventeenth-century Swedish theological debate in general and on syncretism in particular has been extensively described by Steffie Schmidt: within Sweden, she thus highlights that any cleric or theologian suspected of 'syncretist sympathies', most prominently among them Johannes Matthiae, was censored and silenced.<sup>110</sup> On the international level, she shows that Sweden made its opposition to the ambition of Church reunion clear whilst broadly trying to abstain from any deeper involvement in the debates raging within German Lutheranism since participation in polemics could 'cause confusion and create damage and thus endanger the ecclesiastical peace'.<sup>111</sup> That this concern was well-substantiated, Steffie Schmidt demonstrates by outlining the crisis surrounding the 1661 Kassel Colloquy: one year after said meeting, Uppsala's theological faculty received a request by their Wittenberg colleagues to join them in condemnation of the Kassel discussions which the (Reformed) Margrave William IV of Hesse-Kassel had convened to ascertain the potential of a Protestant conciliation.<sup>112</sup> This plea for confessional solidarity, as Steffie Schmidt colourfully retells, sent Swedish theologians into a tailspin and the carefully worded response in support of their orthodox brethren in Saxony came only after prolonged consultations involving the King, the Chancellor Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, the Uppsala faculty members, and the clergy.<sup>113</sup> The need of the Swedish Church to avoid any excessive theological controversy within its own ranks had not substantively

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<sup>109</sup> Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>110</sup> Schmidt, *Professoren im Norden*, p. 155. *Ibid.*, p. 168. *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300. *Ibid.*, pp. 303-304. Schmidt mentions that Matthiae's syncretist efforts fell prey to a *damnatio memoriae* in Eric Benzelius the Elder's work on the Swedish Church's history. See: *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326-330. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299-316.

changed during the Great Northern War, as is perhaps best summarised by Archbishop Matthias Steuchius's reaction to the Anglo-Swedish plans: 'Since, in these highly lamentable times, Sweden's people cannot have the joys of any carnal wealth, it is still their only firm happiness that they enjoy the pure and flawless heavenly teachings'.<sup>114</sup> At their worst therefore, syncretism and the rows surrounding it had the potential to undo the prized unity of the Swedish Church upon which the kingdom's legitimacy and stability rested in the eyes of many, especially the conservative clergy. That Benzelius was reluctant to endorse Church reunion may consequently be a very natural consequence of the continued centrality of the Lutheran faith to the Swedish state – a reality that had not been significantly altered by the rise of the Age of Liberty: Harry Lenhammar has thus emphasised that the ideal of 'unity in religion and the righteous worship' (*enighet i religionen och den rätta gudstjänsten*) continued to stand at the heart of the Swedish political imagination after 1719.<sup>115</sup>

Lastly, another crucial explanation for Benzelius's scepticism towards union was his concern that a Protestant union would empower the Reformed at the expense of his Lutheran brethren. Already during his travels to Germany, he appears to have been largely suspicious of his 'fellow Protestants' and their growing influence.<sup>116</sup> The apprehension towards the Reformed is one he especially voiced towards Benzelstierna. Benzelius was visibly frustrated by the efforts undertaken by fellow Lutherans in Germany who were persisting on their path of conciliation, against the seemingly better judgment offered by history, as he wrote to his brother in 1722:

Who has denied that they are not at religious peace in the empire? That they are is, apart from God, foremost thanks to the Lutherans and [especially] in the form of us Swedes; but now, the [German] Lutherans have little gratitude to spare for this. That is the problem, whether [the

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<sup>114</sup> As cited in: Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, p. 242.

<sup>115</sup> Lenhammar, 'Sveriges Kyrkohistoria – 5.', pp. 33-39. As cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>116</sup> This is mentioned amongst others in a letter sent to Schmidt on 9 April 1699. See: *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 8.

Reformed] will treat us better, if they prevailed, than the Roman Catholics. And I say this before God; and shall prove it with examples, if it were to be ordered of me.<sup>117</sup>

This impression only grew with time: in a letter to Cyprian of 1730, Benzelius professed his conviction that the hatred of the Reformed towards the Lutherans was at least on par with that of the Catholics.<sup>118</sup> A religious union, even simply one among the Protestant confessions, therefore meant to Benzelius most likely – as it did for many of his creed, including Cyprian – the marginalisation of Lutheranism by the Reformed. It is not surprising that he would consequently likewise not concede on the question of the mere toleration of Calvinist Protestants in Sweden, continuing to defend their exclusion, as he had done before Schmidt. Whereas he was therefore not afraid to emancipate himself from his father in a variety of aspects, Benzelius was staunchly defending the orthodoxy of the Swedish Church he had imbibed through his ancestors and the socio-political environment he found himself in. The sincerity of his views in this respect is not to be doubted: the Swede was as crystal-clear in his utterances towards orthodox and moderate Lutherans, as he was in official and personal correspondence. One must of course not fall into the trap of equating syncretism with enlightened theology itself. However, the uncompromising stance Benzelius took towards church reunion and toleration reveals him to be an opponent of the kind of theology sponsored by Leibniz, the Cambridge Platonists, and their growing following well into the first half of the eighteenth century.

### The Union of Old and New Thinking in Benzelius's Moderate Orthodoxy

Even if he did not share their theological outlook, Benzelius's letters to Leibniz and Schmidt – and how his contact with them inspired him in his later work – are most

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<sup>117</sup> *Brefväxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, no. 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 76.

remarkable for a young Swedish Lutheran of his time: raised in the suffocating atmosphere of orthodoxy during the latter years of the *stormaktstid* by one of the foremost proponents of conservative Protestantism, Benzelius displayed an honest intellectual curiosity for the new ideas developing across Europe. Not only did he show interest, yet he indeed proceeded to transfer much of what he saw and learned to his Swedish homeland. However, the dissonance between his philosophical, scientific, and theological views becomes consequently all the more jarring. If he adopted the Leibnizian mindset in such a broad variety of fields, the question becomes why he was *prima facie* unable to transpose his philosophy to theology and Sweden's religious affairs. The correspondences with Leibniz and Schmidt yield seemingly little in this regard, especially after 1708, when Benzelius ceased to write to his reformist German contacts. Oddly, it is not immediately possible to discern why Benzelius let the exchange with Leibniz and Schmidt fizzle out when he did – their last exchanges were marked by the usual cordiality.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, there exists no sign of Benzelius writing to his friends in Hanover and Helmstedt again. This is especially striking in light of the unabating admiration Benzelius retained for especially Leibniz throughout his lifetime. Thus, in the autobiographical sketch he produced towards the end of his life, the Swede dedicated a brief paragraph to his encounter with Leibniz, writing:

I came to Hanover in August 1697 and, having the recommendation of Sir Sparwenfeld towards the great man Leibniz, there could be no kindness that he did not show to me and he was also well-disposed to me, since he [was] happily ready to dedicate his time [to me] and teach [me] something.<sup>120</sup>

Another bewildering aspect of their correspondence is that its intensity decreased almost immediately upon the young Benzelius's return to Sweden. One more prosaic

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<sup>119</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, nos. 30, 37. *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger, Vol. I*, nos. 77, 100.

<sup>120</sup> Benzelius, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeli den Yngres egenhändig anteckning om sit Lefverne', p. xvi.

explanation for this could be offered by Laasonen who emphasised that the ‘Great Northern War ... [rendered] all civil contacts between Germany and Sweden more difficult’.<sup>121</sup> Bar the occasional letter therefore, it would have been nigh impossible for Benzeliuſ to maintain a steady exchange with his German contacts between 1700 and 1721 – essentially from nearly the moment Benzeliuſ returned to his homeland. However, whilst Leibniz would of course not live to see the end of the war, potentially barring Benzeliuſ from resuming any correspondence, Schmidt only died in 1726. This would have made it possible for Benzeliuſ to establish a new exchange, which he never seems to have attempted. Plausibly, this sudden cessation of contact could therefore simply be that the conclusion of his travels meant that Benzeliuſ was less reliant on the recommendations of his German friends in the establishment of new contacts and the navigation of new libraries than before. However, given the evident scientific and philosophical interests they shared, it nonetheless seems odd that Benzeliuſ would no longer feel the compulsion to share his insights and work in Sweden with them. In fact, in one of their last letters, Benzeliuſ explicitly requested the assistance of Leibniz in providing him with important resources in his work on Philo Judaeus.<sup>122</sup> In other words, there remained a very vital interest on the Swede’s part to keep in contact with his Hanoverian mentor. The puzzle surrounding the end of the Leibniz-Benzeliuſ correspondence is not exclusive to modern-day historians, as is confirmed by a 1713 letter to Benzeliuſ from the Swedish legate Johan Gabriel Werwing unearthed by Ekenvall: ‘I would be a rich man if I earned ten coins every time Sir Leibniz speaks to me about the Sir Professor, praises his former correspondence and wonders why it had to cease’.<sup>123</sup> Although Ekenvall found a reply by Benzeliuſ in which he pledged to resume his contact

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<sup>121</sup> Laasonen, ‘Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden’, p. 71.

<sup>122</sup> *Erik Benzeliuſ’ Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 17. Though Leibniz gave a favourable answer, Ekenvall claimed that it came to nothing. See: *Letters to Erik Benzeliuſ the Younger, Vol. I*, no. 51. Ekenvall, ‘Eric Benzeliuſ d.y. och G.W. Leibniz’, p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> As cited in: Ekenvall, ‘Benzeliuſ d.y. och G.W. Leibniz’, p. 28.

with his Hanoverian friend, it appears that he never made good on this.<sup>124</sup> Leibniz died in 1716, likely without hearing from Benzelius after their last known letter from 1708. The reasons behind his contacts in enlightened Protestant Germany subsiding after his return to Sweden will therefore likely have had more complex reasons than mere logistical difficulty.

There is one major influence that could help explain both his suddenly declining interest in further exchanges with Leibniz and Schmidt and his steadfast refusal to engage with their novel theological ideas: the ever-greater importance of the Swedish Lutheran Church and its politics to Benzelius. As previously mentioned, it is remarkable that Cyprian became one of Benzelius's principal correspondents at around the precise time that his contacts with Leibniz and Schmidt withered. Rather than mere coincidence, it may have signalled that Benzelius's life situation had changed significantly: at the same time as he valiantly tried to build his reputation as a scholar and man of erudition, the Swede likewise began to become involved with the clergy of the Church of Sweden that would ultimately lead to his appointment to the position of Archbishop of Uppsala. His path towards an ecclesiastical career was not as straightforward as his background may lead one to believe: it was only after his father's death that he was ordained, arguably because scholarship and science had for most of his time at Uppsala been at the forefront of Benzelius's mind. What may have ultimately compelled Benzelius to abandon his scholarly endeavours was the lamentable state of learning in his native kingdom, especially at the dusk of the Swedish Great Power Era. This has indeed been hypothesised by other Benzelius historians too and is confirmed by accounts of his time: in his memorial speech to Benzelius, Dalin thus stated of Benzelius's work on Philo that

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<sup>124</sup> Ekenvall, 'Benzelius d.y. och G.W. Leibniz', p. 28.

‘such kinds of arts have here in Sweden not yet come so far as that they paid [off]’.<sup>125</sup>

Very early on, his own father in fact berated him for dedicating himself to erudition,

telling him: ‘Our poor north can little afford such science’.<sup>126</sup> This is a conclusion

Benzelius appears to have eventually reached himself. In his own autobiographical notes,

Benzelius lamented the frustration of his project on Philo Judaeus:

I worked [during] free moments, albeit sluggishly, whilst I sufficiently saw that no bookseller here wanted or could publish [the work]. For this is among the greatest causes why those who can produce something in Sweden do not do so, [because] their works can still never be published.<sup>127</sup>

The general poor state of Swedish science was compounded by external factors,

including the aforementioned war and the plague in Uppsala. Especially the latter had

according to Engwall an immense impact on Swedish scholarship: he thus cites Bishop

Jesper Swedberg as saying that the illness led to ‘many ... dying. Wherefore the young

people went away; and all Academic exercises ceased until the following year.’<sup>128</sup> To the

strains imposed by scarcity, disconnection from most scientific networks, and war

therefore, even more were added. Under these circumstances, Benzelius’s achievements

in the promotion of learning become even more remarkable.

Exhaustion and exasperation with the hurdles facing him may thus have played an

instrumental part in Benzelius’s decision to eventually follow the footsteps of his father

and opt for a position in the Church of Sweden. Thus, after receiving ordination in 1709

and being promoted within Uppsala’s Theological Faculty in 1723, he became the Bishop

of Gothenburg in 1729 and then in 1731, the Bishop of Linköping. The slow pace of his

rise through the ranks may further indicate that Benzelius, as Ryman argues, retained a

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<sup>125</sup> Dalin, ‘Gedächtnißrede’, p. 48. See also: Schuchard, ‘Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism’, p. 97.

<sup>126</sup> As cited in: Forssell, ‘Minne af Erkebiskopen’, p. 157.

<sup>127</sup> Benzelius, ‘Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeli den Yngres egenhändigte anteckning om sit Lefverne’, pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>128</sup> Engwall, ‘From Collegium Curiosorum to Royal Society’, p. 18. As cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 18.

somewhat unenthusiastic stance towards the calling: 'In the manner of his time, he proclaimed that he had never sought office within the Church without always pointing out that others had suggested him'.<sup>129</sup> Although he very much continued to pursue his studies and literary interests as much as his new office permitted him to do, his new duties meant that especially from the 1720s onwards, he shifted his interests more towards politics. In 1723, Benzelius made his debut at the *Riksdag* on which he was to have a lasting impact, culminating in his leadership of the clergy at the Diet.<sup>130</sup> Concurrent with this position, a certain distance towards his former contacts was of greater benefit than maintaining close contact with them, lest he wanted to face guilt by association. This was not a theoretical danger: as Benzelius recounted to his brother in 1733, a certain Eric Björner had attacked him based on his relationship with Leibniz. Whilst it is not possible to fully reconstruct what Benzelius was exactly being accused of, his response to Björner's condemnation was as dry as it was unequivocal: 'I refuse to become a martyr for Leibniz's opinion.'<sup>131</sup> Another example, this time explicitly related to theological questions, is a 1737 lamentation of the Bishop of Linköping to Benzelius about the hurdles he encountered in striking up an exchange with the Papal nuncio Domenico Passionei (1682-1761) since he wished that 'neither must he be thrown before the inquisition, nor I be suspected of syncretism'.<sup>132</sup> Not least against this background, one may be tempted to consider the writings of the mature Benzelius as a disavowal of whatever sympathies he may have had for the ascending Enlightenment.

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<sup>129</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 32.

<sup>130</sup> Benzelius's impact at the *Riksdag* is the subject of Ryman's book which analyses in particular his political career. See: Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*. Benzelius briefly speaks of his 'onerous' work in the *Riksdag* in his autobiographical sketch too. See: Benzelius, 'Utdrag af Ärke-Biskop Erik Benzeli den Yngres egenhändiga anteckning om sit Lefverne', p. xxvi.

<sup>131</sup> *Brefväxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzeliusstierna*, no. 113.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 170.

At the same time, it would be sorely mistaken to see the churchman Benzelius as the polar opposite of the scholar Benzelius. Naturally, the demands of the former had to take precedence before (some of) the curiosities of the latter. Yet a closer look at his life's work show that, in spite of his undoubtedly rigidly orthodox upbringing and church, Benzelius succeeded in instilling a measure of the moderate, enlightened spirit of his scholarly pursuits into his orthodox Lutheranism. As he put it in a letter of 4 May 1737, unearthed by Forssell:

so I have always believed and still believe that if Christians in general and moreover theologians on both sides could restrain themselves from irate discords, the Church and society would be in better shape. However, unfortunately and to our shame, it has come to the point that one believes the truth cannot be defended other than with polemics and I would be unreasonable if I did not recognise that our brethren of faith likewise suffer of this error<sup>133</sup>

Among the most visible signs of Benzelius's comparative open-mindedness in religious matters – as relayed by many Swedish historians – is his connivance of the budding Pietist movement within the Swedish Church.<sup>134</sup> Whilst the traditional orthodox establishment of the Church of Sweden considered the influx of Pietist thought as a fundamental threat to the principle of 'unity in the true religion', Benzelius took a much more relaxed approach to the new ideas that took hold within Lutheranism: rather than resort to outright oppression, still the favoured means of many of the old guard, he preferred dialogue, negotiation, and accommodation. This was not least remarkable since he departed from his father in this respect whose anti-Pietism was infamous, as Laasonen highlighted.<sup>135</sup> Many historians have rooted Benzelius junior's sympathies for

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<sup>133</sup> As cited in: Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 337.

<sup>134</sup> See amongst others: Gustav Åsbrink and Knut B. Westmann, *Svea rikes ärkebiskopar från 1164 till nuvarande tid* (Stockholm, 1935), p. 330. Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 21-22. Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, p. 290. *Ibid.*, p. 458. Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', pp. 334-338. Ryman, 'Släkten Benzelius', p. 268. For more information about the beginnings of Pietism in Sweden, see: Poul Georg Lindhardt, *Skandinavische Kirchengeschichte seit dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1982), pp. 284-285. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges Kyrkohistoria – 5.', pp. 20-31. Michael Roberts, 'The Swedish Church' in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Sweden's Age of Greatness, 1632-1718* (London, 1973), pp. 151-153.

<sup>135</sup> Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der Spätorthodoxie im Norden', p. 72.

the Pietist cause in his travels to Germany: for he had not only visited the syncretist centres of Hanover and Helmstedt or the orthodox strongholds of Jena and Wittenberg, but also – rather controversially – Halle.<sup>136</sup> As Lenhammar recounts, Benzelius the Elder had staunchly opposed his son's plans to visit the hotbed of Pietism, warning against the 'harmful ideas' he might face.<sup>137</sup> Evidently, his appeals fell on deaf ears. During his time at the famous *Reformuniversität*, Benzelius met with and learned from amongst others August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), Joachim Justus Breithaupt (1658-1732), and Samuel Stryck (1640-1710).<sup>138</sup> Forssell further pointed out that Benzelius, to his father's fury, was impressed by Gottfried Arnold's *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie* (Impartial History of the Church and Heresies) which was published in Frankfurt just at the time of his visit to the town.<sup>139</sup> Taken together, as amongst others Pleijel and Ryman argue, this led to the followers of Spener across Lutheranism hailing Benzelius as a 'friend and helper' (Ryman), a sentiment culminating in the orthodox Lutheran being listed as a 'Christian friend' on a pamphlet circulated among German Pietists.<sup>140</sup>

This eagerness to learn and engage with theological thinkers from an array of perspectives was not only limited to Pietism, crucially: despite his fierce repudiation of syncretism and other perspectives on Calixtian Lutheranism, the exchange with Schmidt in particular was marked by an awesome respect on Benzelius's part towards the Helmstedt theologian. Throughout the correspondence, the young Swede requested the expertise of Schmidt, including on questions surrounding Dury's ecumenism which he felt was based on a chiliasm somewhat inconsistent with the Gospel and the Augsburg

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<sup>136</sup> See: Forssell, 'Minne af erkebiskopen', p. 146. Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 41.

<sup>137</sup> As cited in: Lenhammar, 'Sveriges Kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 21.

<sup>138</sup> See: Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 41. According to Ryman, Benzelius in fact said of his experience that 'I heard nothing untoward of the theologians' there. As cited in: Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 21.

<sup>139</sup> p. 151-152.

<sup>140</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 21-22. Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, p. 290.

Confession.<sup>141</sup> He also indulged some of those Lutheran Swedes who began to engage with Wolffianism.<sup>142</sup> In a memorable moment reported by Gustav Åsbrink and Knut Westmann, one of those new Swedish Wolffians – Sven Rosén (1708-1750) – eagerly sought to convince Benzelius of the unique value of Wolffian natural religion, only to be told that '[t]he Holy Spirit offers enough conviction' of this fact.<sup>143</sup> Despite this sardonic putdown, the very fact that Benzelius earnestly engaged with Rosén was not a matter of course for an orthodox Swedish Lutheran, even during the Age of Liberty.

What inspired Benzelius to conceive of Swedish Lutheranism as a much broader church than many of his fellow orthodox brethren? One possible explanation offered by a few historians for his toleration of especially (moderate) Pietism within the Church is Benzelius's own religious crisis: as Ryman outlined, the Swedish cleric underwent on the heel of a scandal involving his daughter a profound and agonising phase of doubt the firmness of his faith.<sup>144</sup> This crisis ultimately compelled him to start a religious diary, the so-called 'Godly observations' (*Gudeliga betraktelser*) in which he recorded his sufferings in a manner that, as Ryman argues, 'for the religiously objective, orthodox time strikes ... as unusually subjective, especially coming from the otherwise so impenetrable Benzelius'.<sup>145</sup> Amongst others, he thus lamented that 'my faith is often weak, [so] that I should not call it a faith'.<sup>146</sup> Pleijel too opined that this crisis impressed the importance of individual faith further upon Benzelius and compelled him to a more sympathetic attitude towards the Pietists.<sup>147</sup> However, this is an insufficient key to understanding Benzelius, especially considering that his sympathies for Pietist cause

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<sup>141</sup> Erik Benzelius' *Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 4.

<sup>142</sup> For the beginnings of Wolffianism in Sweden, see: Edvard Leufvén, *Upplysningstidens Predikan – I. Frihetstiden* (2 vols., Stockholm and Uppsala, 1926), p. 42.

<sup>143</sup> As cited in: Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea Rikes Ärkebiskopar*, p. 330.

<sup>144</sup> As cited in: Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>145</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>146</sup> As cited in: Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 201.

<sup>147</sup> Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, p. 458.

date back to his grand tour and therefore long before his religious crisis. Instead, this connivance is probably rather to be explained by one of the most intriguing and arguably paradoxical traits of Benzelius: his own belief in universal harmony. As multiple historians have emphasised, this was among the defining characteristics of Benzelius.<sup>148</sup> Ryman has thus emphasised that Benzelius saw his mission principally as a ‘mediator’ and ‘peace broker’.<sup>149</sup> Pleijel, whom Ryman cites as well in this context, indeed rooted this understanding in Benzelius’s broader philosophical worldview: ‘[Benzelius’s] motto *Felix Concordia* is reminiscent of Cicero’s *Concordia omnium*. The notion of everyone’s unity is also the ideal that was on Benzelius’s mind’.<sup>150</sup> Contrary to the established practice of seventeenth-century German Lutheran orthodoxy, there was little desire on Benzelius’s part to engage in the divisive polemics and confrontational tactics that had been part and parcel of the confessionalization period. In keeping with the Swedish tradition, he believed them to have the exact opposite of their desired effect, to assure religious harmony and unity. At first sight, this would of course render it odd for Benzelius to oppose the idea of (Western) Christian or even Protestant Union so stringently, given its potential ability to permit latitude in religion without giving up on the idea of unity in religious affiliation. It is especially baffling considering that, in keeping with Pleijel’s indication, his irenicism appears to have very much been inspired by his wider philosophical outlook, as grounded in Ciceronian thought. However, two factors must be taken into consideration here: first, there was the general relationship between philosophy and theology in early eighteenth-century in Sweden that was governed by a decree of 1689 that granted the Swedish Lutheran clergy and theological

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<sup>148</sup> See amongst others: Pleijel, *Svenska Kyrkans Historia – V*, pp. 289-292. Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 204. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea Rikes Ärkebiskopar*, p. 330.

<sup>149</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 209.

<sup>150</sup> As cited in: Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 204.

faculties a monopoly on the discussion of matters of faith.<sup>151</sup> This barred all intervention of philosophy in religious questions and to contravene it thus constituted an all but potentially career-destroying move, especially for young clerics such as Benzelius.<sup>152</sup> The *cordon sanitaire* separating matters of reason and revelation in Sweden thus meant that he had no incentive to expand his enquiries into this highly controversial arena, let alone promote a principled policy of reunion or toleration. Beyond this factor of *realpolitik*, the Swedish need for religious unity offers the best explanation for his reluctance to subscribe to one of the key tenets of Protestant Enlightenment thinking. Benzelius was willing to tolerate dissenting opinions within Lutheranism, so long as they could be integrated within the Church. However, he could not accept any movement that threatened to undermine the unity of the Swedish Church, since Benzelius was fully aware of the risk they posed to both the institutional church and socio-political peace. To him, the project of Church reunion had crucially been discredited on doctrinal, but also ultimately historical grounds: it had shown to produce instability and controversy, rather than harmony. Indeed, as the letter to his brother appears to indicate, Benzelius believed that the best means to assure harmony was to maintain the *status quo* instated by the Peace of Westphalia: coexistence (though ideally in separate political entities) was vastly preferable to the messy, divisive business of reunion.<sup>153</sup> As such, it was to be resisted. In this he was again, in keeping with Schmidt's and Lenhammar's analysis, treading in the footsteps of an established tradition within late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Swedish Lutheranism.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> See: Lindberg, 'Den eklektiska filosofin och "libertas philosophandi"', p. 218. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-233. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 150-151.

<sup>152</sup> See: Lindberg, 'Den eklektiska filosofin och "libertas philosophandi"', p. 218. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-233. Roberts, 'The Swedish Church', pp. 150-151.

<sup>153</sup> *Brefväxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, no. 6.

<sup>154</sup> Schmidt, *Professoren im Norden*, p. 306. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges Kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 22.

That this may be the most reliable lens through which to understand Benzeliu's approach to heterodoxy is evidenced by his quite messy dealings with one particular figure: Johann Conrad Dippel (1673-1734) who, as Albrecht Beutel summarised it, achieved infamy for both his unique brand of theology that fused Pietist ideas with rationalist elements and his highly polemical attacks against established Protestantism.<sup>155</sup> Dippel had come to Sweden in 1727 to promote his radical ideas yet was eventually banned from the country for his agitation. Though, as Ryman relays, the German Pietist had little positive to say about Sweden and its 'whore church' as a result of his experiences, he was unfailingly kind in his judgment of one man: Benzeliu.<sup>156</sup> More than that, as Laasonen further specifies, Dippel in fact claimed that Benzeliu had offered him a fair hearing before the clergy.<sup>157</sup> The delicate aspect about the affair was, as both Ryman and Laasonen note, that Dippel had certainly been guilty of embellishment but not of outright untruth: Benzeliu had suggested to put Dippel under scrutiny by other learned theologians.<sup>158</sup> This overture may have been due to the fact that he was not a stranger to Benzeliu, for he had in fact already come across Dippel in Frankfurt during his grand tour.<sup>159</sup> Interestingly however, he was already then aware of both his work and the row it was causing: in 1699, Benzeliu notified Schmidt in one of his letters of the destructive impact of the radical Pietist's work in Darmstadt.<sup>160</sup> He therefore ought to have been aware of not only the controversial nature of Dippel's work, but also his general *modus operandi* in the realm of public relations. Evidently, upon the escalation of events, Benzeliu flatly refused to engage Dippel again and voted, as Åsbrink and

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<sup>155</sup> Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), pp. 152-153.

<sup>156</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzeliu d.y.*, p. 208. As cited in: Ryman, *Eric Benzeliu d.y.*, p. 208.

<sup>157</sup> Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden', p. 80.

<sup>158</sup> See: Laasonen, 'Die Rezeption der deutschen Spätorthodoxie im Norden', p. 80. Ryman, *Eric Benzeliu d.y.*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>159</sup> Dalin, 'Gedächtnißrede', p. 42.

<sup>160</sup> *Erik Benzeliu's Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 8.

Westmann pointed out, for the expulsion of the German from Sweden.<sup>161</sup> In his letters to Cyprian and Benzelstierna, Benzelius lamented the unfortunate turn of events that had seen him associated with or at least sympathetic of a demagogue of Dippel's calibre. He thus condemned the German's *Demonstratio Evangelica*, in which he had still insisted on enjoying Benzelius's goodwill, to his brother as a 'scandalous and outrageous book'.<sup>162</sup> To Cyprian, he contemptuously wrote that Dippel had been guilty of various blasphemies and slurs against the Church of Sweden in his writings.<sup>163</sup> His anger towards the German Pietist culminated in Benzelius convincing his friend Andreas Rydelius (1671-1738), who was writing a pamphlet against Dippel, to include a letter penned by him in which he lambasted 'his impertinence (I mean Dippel's) against the Swedish nation, and the arrogance, which he spews at the beginning of his Demonstrations'.<sup>164</sup>

The fiasco surrounding Dippel offers a two-fold insight into the challenges Benzelius was facing. On the one hand, there was the more pragmatic, political one: he could not be seen to depart too strongly from the orthodox line without incurring embarrassment or worse, suspicion such as the kind Johannes Matthiae had faced before him. Hence likely his fervent attempts at putting as much distance between himself and syncretism or Dippel as possible. On the other hand, there was a more deep-rooted philosophical objection. His desire for harmony goes a long way to explain why Benzelius was opposed to radicals of Dippel's ilk and conciliatory syncretists alike: in his eyes, they did little than to sow division and acrimony, without improving the condition of Lutherans or Lutheranism. When dissenters were open to settlement and understanding – as many of

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<sup>161</sup> Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea Rikes Ärkebiskopar*, p. 331.

<sup>162</sup> *Brefwäxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, no. 48.

<sup>163</sup> *Erik Benzelius' Letters to his Learned Friends*, no. 76.

<sup>164</sup> *Brefwäxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, no. 73.

the original Pietists were – Benzelius was normally happy to engage with and integrate them into the fold of Swedish Lutheranism.

## Conclusion

Eric Benzelius the Younger is one of the most intriguing characters of early modern Swedish Lutheranism. Was he a man of Enlightenment? If his services to the enlightened pursuit of science are concerned, this is certainly a worthy title to bestow upon him. There can be little doubt that the Swede took much inspiration from early Enlightenment figures such as Leibniz to implement shares of their programme in Sweden. As them, he sought to ‘unite faith and erudition’, as Ryman has put it.<sup>165</sup> However, his efforts only extended so far: for all his readiness to embrace new ideas and thinking, Benzelius drew – as many Swedish clerics before and after him – a line at religion. Whilst syncretism was not in itself at the core of enlightened theology, it is equally impossible to count any theologian who rejected the idea of toleration and reunion as forcefully as Benzelius as one of its proponents. This must be unambiguously stated: Eric Benzelius the Younger was not a Protestant enlightened theologian in the Leibnizian or Cambridge Platonist mould. He was not prepared to relinquish the central tenets of the Lutheran orthodoxy that still dominated the Church of Sweden. The primacy and impenetrability of theology remained to him sacrosanct throughout his life. This had very much been the view of Eric Benzelius the Elder and though his son proved his independence of mind on more than one occasion, his father’s brand of orthodoxy clearly had left a profound mark upon him. Whilst historians such as Ryman have attributed his lack of theological innovation to a reluctance to challenge the consensus within the *Enhetskyrkan*, it does look as if Benzelius held many of his conservative views

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<sup>165</sup> Ryman, ‘Släkten Benzelius’, p. 268.

sincerely.<sup>166</sup> How starkly Lutheran orthodoxy imprinted his life was even remarked upon by his admirer Lidén in 1791: ‘Here and there, there are *less tolerant* remarks towards foreign religious brethren; ... This bears witness to *his period’s* thought and ought to be judged according to the customs of *said period*’.<sup>167</sup> This sentence, however, points already to one of the ambiguities of Benzelius: he was a religious conservative, yet crucially not a reactionary. In fact, it is remarkable how many of his ideas and opinions place him in a similar camp as the reformist Tory Anglicans who Bulman studied: from the pursuit of their grand tour to their interest in oriental and historical studies to their vision of a uniformist yet moderate Church that guaranteed political stability, the overlap in their conceptions of the Christian faith and its role in society is striking.<sup>168</sup> There might even be a case to consider Benzelius, in the Lutheran tradition, an *Übergangstheologe* (transition theologian), especially in line with Albrecht Beutel’s definition of it as a combination of the practical and conciliatory spirit of Pietism with doctrinal orthodoxy and elements of rationalism.<sup>169</sup> A reformist orthodox Lutheran, he had recognised the need for the Swedish Church to abandon the rigid dogmatism that had marked it not least during the Caroline autocracy. Through his grounding in the new sciences, Benzelius was strongly committed to the ideal of the ‘public good’ as it was propagated by not least Leibniz and appears to very much have transposed this principle to the religious sphere: instead of focusing on the ‘dead letter’ of Lutheran teaching, the principal motivation driving Benzelius was to ensure the means for the church to serve

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Johan Hinric Lidén, ‘Företal’ in *Brefväxling imellan Ärke-Biskop Eric Benzelius den Yngre och dess broder, Censor Librorum Gustaf Benzelstierna*, ed. Johan Hinric Lidén (Linköping, 1791), p. xii. Lidén was, in fact, openly toying with the enlightened religiosity of his day himself, as Gottfrid Westling recorded. See: Gottfrid Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka med särskildt afseende på Linköpings stift’, *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, Vol. 17 (1916), p. 194. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>168</sup> See: Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 10-12. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-31. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-47. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-61. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-76. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-121. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-145. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-199.

<sup>169</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 97.

its mission best. In this quest, he was likely indeed – to return to Ryman’s verdict – hamstrung by the continued primacy of theology at Swedish universities, preventing him from bringing his ideas to more innovative conclusions in the realm of religion. However, there is much reason to believe that he considered the thought of Leibniz to be genuinely contrary to his own aim of religious harmony in the Swedish context. For its application was simply from a political perspective not possible: Lutheranism – and especially its orthodox variation – was in his opinion simply a *sine qua non* for the stability of Swedish society. To weaken the bond to the Church was therefore not only a gamble in religious, but also in socio-political terms. For similar reasons for which Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists embraced toleration and syncretism therefore, he rejected it. This, however, did not prevent him from reaching settlement and reconciliation wherever possible, especially though not exclusively, with moderate Pietists. Perhaps his ability to distance himself from some of the excesses of Lutheran orthodoxy was rooted in his complicated entry into the ministry: in an ideal Sweden of his time, he may have more likely dedicated his life to science and research.<sup>170</sup> That Benzelius stood somewhat apart from his clerical peers has also been argued by Ryman who claimed that the (more open-minded) secular nobles were his ‘true friends’.<sup>171</sup> In the end, following his innate irenicism, Benzelius forged his own *via media*: one that allowed him, as far as possible, to reconcile his personal affinity for the new sciences and philosophy of Europe with the public demands of the old theology of Sweden. He thereby perfectly embodied the tensions that marked the Swedish *frihetstid* more generally. At the same time, he was one of its last icons. Little was perhaps more evident of this than that the spirit of religious toleration he himself had rejected began, as

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<sup>170</sup> Ryman thus argued that Benzelius flourished most while at Uppsala University. See: Ryman, ‘Släkten Benzelius’, p. 271.

<sup>171</sup> Ryman, *Eric Benzelius d.y.*, p. 32.

Lidén's quote suggests, to properly embed itself in Sweden in less than half a century after Benzelius's death.

## V. Translating the Protestant Enlightenment ‘Proper’: Change and Continuity in the Theologies of Joseph Butler and Johann Joachim Spalding

By the time of Benzelius’s death in 1743, his battle to fortify the Lutheran Church against the ideas of his erstwhile mentor Leibniz was not only starting to be lost in Sweden. In England and Lutheran Germany, they were in fact beginning to become established in the mainstream. The early 1740s thus marked the early apogee of Protestant Enlightenment theology, as championed by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: nothing marked this success more than the much-celebrated return of Christian Wolff (1679-1754) to Halle, following his initial expulsion from the Prussian university for promoting a rationalist philosophy that drew significant inspiration from Leibniz. His rehabilitation and, by extension, vindication by King Frederick II (1712-1786) symbolised that the enlightened spirit had now gained a firm foothold within German Protestantism. However, Wolff’s triumphant return was only the culmination of a gradually growing sway of his and Leibniz’s ideas over the religious imagination of especially German Lutherans. One of them was the young Johann Joachim Spalding (1714-1804). Born to a German parson in Swedish Pomerania, Spalding became a student of theology and philosophy before eventually rising to be one of the leading lights of the so-called Neology movement in Prussia.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of his long career, he promoted enlightened theology through his activity as a Lutheran minister in Berlin, a seat on the

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<sup>1</sup> For scholarly analyses of Spalding’s work and life, see: Hans Nordmann, *Johann Joachim Spalding* (Naumburg (Saale), 1929). Joseph Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding – Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1967). Albrecht Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding – Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2014).

Supreme Consistory of the Prussian Lutheran Church, and the publication of various treatises, sermons, and pamphlets.

Spalding's theology was unquestionably influential. Yet evidently, it was a theology that was influenced by a number of other thinkers. Initially drawn to Wolff whom he passionately defended before orthodox Lutherans, Spalding drew on a wider array of sources in his search for the divine truth later in his life.<sup>2</sup> Intriguingly, the Lutheran was particularly enamoured of English-language writers: chief among them were, as many Spalding scholars have stressed, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), and the Bishop of Durham, Joseph Butler (1692-1752).<sup>3</sup> Spalding was in fact so fond of these thinkers that he produced translations for a number of them.<sup>4</sup> His appreciation of Butler is particularly deserving of greater attention as part of the enquiry into the history of the Protestant Enlightenment. For one, the Anglican exercised an important influence on the German: the stamp of Butler's thought is very clearly visible in Spalding's theology, as has already been outlined by especially Joseph Schollmeier and most recently, Albrecht Beutel.<sup>5</sup> Yet Butler himself is a man of great interest to the Protestant Enlightenment: despite what historian David McNaughton dubbed 'a fairly uneventful life', Butler was to have an enormous impact on Christian thinking in England.<sup>6</sup> Born into a Presbyterian family, he became one of the

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<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, *Der Wolffischen Philosophie Bittschrift an die Academie zu R\*\* ans Licht gestellet von Einem Liebhaber der Wahrheit* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1738). For Spalding's early Wolffianism, see also: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 37-42.

<sup>3</sup> See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52. Nordmann, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 6. Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, p. 166. Laura Anna Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen (1748-1800) – Eine Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt, 2013), pp. 74. *Ibid.*, p. 79-81. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-88.

<sup>4</sup> For a full account of Spalding's translations see: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 238.

<sup>5</sup> See: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 181-183. Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), p. 113. *Ibid.*, 121. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>6</sup> See: David McNaughton, 'Introduction' in Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons & Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford, 2017), p. xi. Paul Avis, *In Search of Authority: Anglican theological method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (London, 2014), pp. 307-309.

most renowned Anglican clerics of his day. Winning the favour of the Hanoverian Queen Caroline (1683-1737) – a student of Leibniz herself, as McNaughton notes<sup>7</sup> – he steadily rose through the episcopal ranks of the Anglican Church and produced a variety of writings that earned him the praise of contemporaries and posterity alike, including Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898). Chiefly remembered for his moral philosophy, Butler was of great significance for the study of theology as well – perhaps exemplified by nothing more than the high esteem in which England’s universities and churches (in the plural) held him.<sup>8</sup> Despite the endurance of his thought in the nineteenth century, Butler’s work attracted comparatively little interest from historians in the twentieth. Only in the 1990s, when the 300th anniversary of Butler was celebrated, his life and work was newly examined by amongst others Bernhard Ensink and Paul Avis.<sup>9</sup> The most substantive scholarly treatment of him remains the volume edited by Christopher Cunliffe.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, McNaughton has emerged as a leading expert on Butler, editing and reissuing many of the Anglican’s works.<sup>11</sup> Most post-war scholarship on Butler’s life and work has, however, been produced by theologians and philosophers interested in his understanding of morality and its relationship with his theology.<sup>12</sup> Intellectual historians have shown comparatively little interest in him. Most intriguingly, Butler has not generally been considered an Enlightenment figure: in Cunliffe’s edited volume, the very word ‘Enlightenment’ is barely mentioned, mostly in purely contextual

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<sup>7</sup> McNaughton, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxiv.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

<sup>9</sup> See: Bernhard Ensink, *Ethik und Theologie bei Joseph Butler (1692-1792)* (Kampen, 1995). Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 307-326.

<sup>10</sup> See: Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler’s Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> See: McNaughton, ‘Introduction’, pp. xi-xxxiii.

<sup>12</sup> See: Ensink, *Ethik und Theologie bei Joseph Butler*, pp. 8-10. *Ibid.*, 10-13. McNaughton, ‘Introduction’, pp. xiii-xiv. Christopher Cunliffe, ‘Introduction’, in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler’s Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), p. 1.

remarks unrelated to Butler's work.<sup>13</sup> Only Avis has lately rehabilitated the bishop as an enlightened clergyman.<sup>14</sup> This is all the more interesting given that Butler's thought, with its emphasis on an ethical and essentialist Christianity that was optimistic in its view of humanity, displays many hallmarks of Protestant Enlightenment. Few thinkers therefore could offer more illumination as to the evolution of eighteenth-century Anglican and Lutheran Enlightenment theology than Butler and his admirer Spalding.

In the historiography of the religious Enlightenment, the theology embraced by Butler and particularly Spalding has generally been associated with the peak of theological Enlightenment within the Anglican and Lutheran Churches, when enlightened philosophy and Protestant doctrine were most harmoniously aligned.<sup>15</sup> This, however, required in the eyes of many historians a certain rupture with earlier expressions of

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<sup>13</sup> See: David Brown, 'Butler and Deism' in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), p. 9. Basil Mitchell, 'Butler as a Christian Apologist' in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> See: Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 307-326.

<sup>15</sup> See: Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Bd. 4, Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, ed. Hans Baron (4 vols., Darmstadt, 2016), pp. 371-372. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, tr. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 2009), pp. 176-177. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism* (2 vols., New York and London, 1995), pp. 329-330. Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert – Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zurich, 1981), p. 89. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-146. David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment – Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 8-9. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 112. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. v. *Ibid.*, p. 86. Walter Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit – Theologische Aufsätze II: Protestantisches Christentum und die Herausforderung Aufklärung* (2 vols., Leipzig, 2016), pp. 14-15. Wolfgang Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1989), p. 95. Martin Greschat, 'Die Aufklärung. Einleitung' in Martin Greschat (ed.), *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte – Bd. 8, Die Aufklärung* (14 vols., Stuttgart, 1983), p. 33. Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 39. *Ibid.*, p. 43. Klaus Scholder, 'Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland' in Heinz Liebing and Klaus Scholder (eds.), *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation – Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Berlin, 1966), p. 462. Reinhard Wunderlich, 'Theologie in der Aufklärung – Geschichtlicher Rückblick mit postmodernem Ausblick' in Jürgen Jahnke (ed.), *Aufklärung – Projekt der Vernunft* (Pfaffenweiler, 1998), p. 16. Ian Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenments – Rival Aufklärer at the University of Halle, 1690-1730' in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon, 2004), pp. 589-590. Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), pp. 167-169. *Ibid.*, pp. 248-252.

enlightened Protestantism in approach and substance alike.<sup>16</sup> Whilst scholars such as Karl Barth and Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach have taken care to emphasise the important continuities between both stages of Lutheran Enlightenment, much scholarship regards Neology as a movement intent on emancipation from earlier enlightened theologies that had conceded too much to both orthodoxy and outdated philosophies.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this compelled (and continues to compel) some historians to consider eighteenth-century Anglican Moderation and Lutheran Neology as enlightened theology ‘proper’, while casting their antecedents in terms of proto-Enlightenments.<sup>18</sup> This also chimes in with John Robertson’s thesis that the Enlightenment at large should be restricted to the years 1740-1790.<sup>19</sup> Against this, another reading posits a Protestant Europe that experienced, as Barth put it, a shift from a broadly ‘conservative’ to a more

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<sup>16</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113. Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 589-590. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251. David Sorkin, ‘A Wise, Enlightened, and Reliable Piety’ – *The Religious Enlightenment in Central and Western Europe, 1689-1789* (Southampton, 2002), p. 10. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 159-161. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 14-15. Walter Sparr, ‘Theologische Aufklärung – Kritik oder System?’ in Albrecht Beutel and Martha Nooke (eds.), *Religion und Aufklärung – Akten des Ersten Internationalen Kongresses zur Erforschung der Aufklärungstheologie (Münster, 30. März bis 2. April 2014)* (Tübingen, 2016), p. 24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 191. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 116. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-146. For the scholarly distinction between Wolffianism and Neology, see also: Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 589-590. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251. Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Bd. 4*, pp. 371-372. Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 44. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. Sparr, ‘Theologische Aufklärung’, pp. 32-37. Helena Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’ in Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660–1815* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2006), p. 292. Sorkin, ‘A Wise, Enlightened, and Reliable Piety’, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Beutel thus distinguishes between ‘early forms’ (*Frühformen*) of *kirchliche Aufklärung* and Neology. See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 89-111. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-151. For other examples of this tendency, see: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment*, p. 176. Scholder, ‘Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland’, pp. 461-462. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 95. Wunderlich, ‘Theologie in der Aufklärung’, p. 16. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Bd. 2, Reformation und Neuzeit* (2 vols., Gütersloh, 1999), pp. 466-467. *Ibid.*, p. 468. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 26-28. *Ibid.*, p. 61. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-147. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251. Sorkin appears to take a similar stance in the English context. See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 26. *Ibid.*, p. 61. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>19</sup> John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment – Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 8. *Ibid.*, 41.

‘radical’ theological Enlightenment in the eighteenth century – though the abruptness of this shift remains subject to debate.<sup>20</sup>

It is hence worth exploring once more – in keeping with the existing historiography – how much Butler and Spalding precisely fit into the wider framework of the Protestant Enlightenment established by Cudworth, More, and Leibniz. This makes it possible to ascertain to what extent one may speak of a ‘uniform’ Protestant Enlightenment spanning the period under investigation. Retracing the parallelisms in the theologies of the two enlightened clergymen and Spalding’s engagement with Butler will further allow greater light to be shed on the flow of ideas across Protestant Europe in the eighteenth century.

To this end, this chapter will outline Spalding’s intellectual journey from Wolffian to Neologian in order to delineate the progression of Protestant Enlightenment theology from the mid-1730s onwards. Beginning with a dissection of the extent to which his Wolffianism concurred with Leibnizian Protestant Enlightenment theology, it will then analyse his initial reception of Butler, retracing his engagement with the Englishman’s work and ideas both on the basis of Spalding’s own writings and the analysis of historians.<sup>21</sup> Thereupon, a selection of Butler’s and Spalding’s later writings will be compared and contrasted with the theology of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz with the aim of identifying to what extent an intellectual continuity in Protestant Enlightenment theology can be discerned. This analysis will specifically focus on Butler’s *The Analogy of Religion* – including Spalding’s translation – as well as his *Fifteen Sermons*

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<sup>20</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 89. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 143-146. This stance is also broadly defended by Gay, Hunter, Ritchie Robertson, Sorkin, and Sparr. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 329-330. Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 589-590. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 158-161. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. Sparr, ‘Theologische Aufklärung’, pp. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> See: Anonymous, *Der Wolffischen Philosophie Bittschrift*.

*Preached at the Rolls Chapel and Dissertation of the Nature of Virtue*.<sup>22</sup> On Spalding's side, his *Betrachtungen über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Observations on the Determination of Man), *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christentum* (Thoughts about the Value of Feelings in Christianity), and *Religion, Eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* (Religion, a Human Affair) will be examined.<sup>23</sup>

The chapter concludes that, notwithstanding an altered method, epistemology, and focus, the principal ideas of Leibniz, Cudworth, and More were equally shared by Butler and Spalding. Specifically, it shows that many of the metaphysical and anthropological notions central to the work of the early enlightened theologians were still present in later eighteenth-century enlightened Anglicanism and German Lutheranism, with the key differences often being more of emphasis. The divergences in approach and epistemology by Butler and Spalding were often in no small part inspired by an attempt to popularise Enlightenment theology, by making its pivotal lessons more accessible to the wider Christian flock. Their adaptation of Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian religious thinking of the therefore principally marked the 'trickling down' of Protestant Enlightenment from the learned world to the practising Church.

## The Intellectual Trajectory of Spalding

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<sup>22</sup> The specific editions used for this chapter are as follows: Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Course and Constitution of Nature* (London, 1736). Joseph Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel' in Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons & Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford, 2017), pp. 1-134. Joseph Butler, 'A Dissertation of the Nature of Virtue' in Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons & Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford, 2017), pp. 135-141. Joseph Butler, *Bestätigung der natürlichen und geoffenbarten Religion aus ihrer Gleichförmigkeit mit der Einrichtung und dem ordentlichen Laufe der Natur*, tr. Johann Joachim Spalding (Leipzig, 1756). David McNaughton has indeed stressed the necessity of considering these three works in conjunction with one another. See: McNaughton, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

<sup>23</sup> The specific editions used for this chapter are as follows: Johann Joachim Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christentum* (Leipzig, 1761). Johann Joachim Spalding, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, 7<sup>th</sup> edn (Leipzig, 1763). Johann Joachim Spalding, *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* (Berlin, 1798).

Spalding's theology was undoubtedly cut from the same cloth as that of Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists. Similarly to them, he championed a basic, ethical Christianity that saw the pursuit of virtue not only as the chief aim of faith, but one that was evidently within the grasp of humanity. He spurned notions of predestination, claiming instead that God's grace was open to any Christian who desired to rise to the offer.<sup>24</sup> In the Lutheran's view, salvation was therefore *de facto* 'the work of our own thinking and will'.<sup>25</sup> He also embraced a spirit of moderation that rejected both Pietism and Deism. Indeed, he dedicated a whole tome, the *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christentum* (1761) to refuting the central tenets of Pietist worship, arguing that their extravagant displays of emotions were in no conceivable fashion evidence of divine inspiration.<sup>26</sup> Spalding also regarded their pessimistic Augustinian ideas on justification, that reduced Christians first to mere supplicants deprived of agency before effectively elevating them to the ranks of total beatitude, as deeply counterproductive, given 'how much the notion of culpability is weakened through this idea'.<sup>27</sup> His struggle against Deist pretensions is most visible in an appendix of his *Bestimmung des Menschen* (included from the third edition onwards) and his last work *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* (1798).<sup>28</sup> Although more suspicious of Catholicism than Leibniz, Spalding too supported the idea of confessional union between Lutheran and Reformed Christians in Prussia, all while supporting Frederick II's tolerant religious policy more generally.<sup>29</sup> He had little time for zealous polemics about the 'ancillary creeds of religion'.<sup>30</sup> What mattered to him more than any dogmatic technicalities was a commitment to the 'great

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<sup>24</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 79. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111. *Ibid.*, p. 111. Beutel discusses Spalding's ambivalent relationship with Augustinian ideas in greater detail. See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 115-116. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>28</sup> See amongst others: Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 57-68. Spalding, *Religion*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>29</sup> See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 56. *Ibid.*, p. 146. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181. *Ibid.*, p. 227. *Ibid.*, p. 275. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>30</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 186.

fundamental article' of faith, namely 'that [a pious] disposition counts for more than knowledge and disputing'.<sup>31</sup> With Neology thus undoubtedly representing the textbook example of enlightened religiosity, the question of Spalding's intellectual trajectory becomes all the more interesting: what ideas informed his opinions, and can a direct intellectual lineage be traced from the early Enlightenment theology championed by Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists?

Of special interest is Spalding's engagement with Wolffianism. While at the University of Rostock, Spalding had been an ardent follower of Wolff and penned an anonymous petition to the university in defence of Wolffian ideas: the pamphlet – labelled *Der Wolffischen Philosophie Bittschrift an die Academie zu R\*\* ans Licht gestellet von Einem Liebhaber der Wahrheit* (Petition of the Wolffian Philosophy [addressed] to the Academy in R\*\* brought to light by a lover of the truth) – was published in 1738.<sup>32</sup> It offers a compelling insight into the mind of the young Spalding. Most significantly, it shows Spalding to be almost perfectly aligned with Leibnizian ideas.

The petition, written from the anthropomorphised perspective of the 'Wolffian philosophy', sought to convince orthodox Lutherans that they had nothing to fear from Wolffianism.<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, it contended that Wolffianism and orthodoxy were engaged in a joint struggle against the 'conceited freethinkers' and the Pietist 'enthusiast'.<sup>34</sup> Heterodox splinter groups such as the Socinians were equally forcefully condemned.<sup>35</sup> The petition energetically rejected the accusation that Wolffianism was merely a backdoor to irreligion.<sup>36</sup> To convince the reader of the innocuousness and

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>32</sup> Apparently, this occurred without Spalding's consent. See: Johann Joachim Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding's Lebensbeschreibung, von ihm selbst aufgesetzt...*, ed. Georg Ludewig Spalding (Halle, 1804), p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, *Der Wolffischen Philosophie Bittschrift*, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

usefulness of Wolffianism, the pamphlet carefully considered and refuted the particular objections raised by orthodox Lutherans. It is in this dissection that the author's grounding in Leibnizian precepts is particularly evident. This begins first and foremost with his method: as Leibniz and Cudworth before him, Spalding proposed a conciliatory eclecticism that sought to champion new thinking while honouring ancient wisdom: 'I do not wish to say that the moderns shall not have thought or said much of importance; I simply believe that one exposes a certain simple-mindedness when one condemns anything old because it is old'.<sup>37</sup> He also followed the same logical chain of reasoning as Leibniz and Cudworth, beginning with the nature of God and the universe before expounding his views on the condition of the *saeculum* in general and humanity in particular. Likewise, Spalding grounded his argument in logical reasoning: he passionately defended the 'principle of sufficient reason' (*Satz des zureichenden Grundes*) against accusations that it was a fundamentally Spinozist axiom.<sup>38</sup> In the orthodox Lutheran reading, this abstract principle curtailed God's omnipotence by subjecting Him to laws of necessity outside His control. In his refutation of this interpretation, Spalding resorted to Leibniz's distinction between necessity and contingency: '[For a phenomenon] to have its reason, why it is, and [for it] to be absolutely necessary are two wholly distinct things. In the case of the latter, its opposite is impossible, in the case of the other not at all.'<sup>39</sup> This distinction helped Spalding to dismiss claims that the principle of sufficient reason implied a diminution of God's power: the fact that divinity would always act in accordance with what was truthful and good was not a constraint but simply tautology.<sup>40</sup> Having successfully defended the Leibnizian maxim, Spalding then proceeded to repudiate the voluntarist notions of the Christian deity:

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

How base the idea is that God were to act without intention, without the determination of His infinite understanding and without reason? How indecent [is] the fancy to attribute the holy works of God to a blind by-product which originates from somewhere, which has no reason why it comes to be? One faces insoluble confusions once one disputes these clear truths.<sup>41</sup>

Again, through the interlocutor Wolff, the Pomeranian thus strongly subscribed to the intellectualism of Leibniz that established God as the embodiment of absolute goodness. This represents an important thread joining enlightened Lutheran thought of the early and mid-eighteenth century. How close the young Spalding and Leibniz were in their thinking is further demonstrated by the former's characterisation of the created universe. This particularly concerned the problem of sin: as Leibniz, Spalding needed to protect Wolffianism from the charge of implying that, as Spalding pithily summarised it, 'I am making God one of the origins of evil in the world'.<sup>42</sup> To avoid this conundrum, he resorted once more to two distinctly Leibnizian ideas: first, he attributed the shortcomings of Creation to its necessary 'imperfections' (*Unvollkommenheiten*) that followed from the fact that the world could not be identical with the divine being.<sup>43</sup> The universe was therefore not flawed by deliberate design, but by necessity. Building on this, Spalding then propounded the idea of the 'Best Possible World': 'our world, regardless also of its imperfections, nonetheless must be better than the other [worlds] and of all possible [ones] the best'.<sup>44</sup> Echoing Leibniz once again, Spalding had thus depicted creation as an act of essential benevolence by an intrinsically and absolutely good God.

Naturally, the vision of humanity Spalding presented based on this conception of God and the universe was equally in line with Leibnizian ideas: humans were thus spurred on by the 'pre-established harmony' (*vorbestimmte Harmonie*) between the material and

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

ideal realm and the existence of innate ideas.<sup>45</sup> The centrepiece of his argument, however, was his defence of the (partially) free will:

Judgments, however, are free. ... They are within the power of the soul and an object of their freedom. The soul therefore has its purpose before itself without coercion and without necessity. She judges, she concludes, she wills and proceeds thus uninhibitedly in doing so until a certain motion of the body demands it<sup>46</sup>

Crucially, Spalding seems to have accepted the natural limits of this power.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, he seems to have held on to a basic notion of original sin, referring early in the text to a 'natural depravity of humans'.<sup>48</sup> In doing so, however, he did not depart greatly from Leibniz's notion that the soul was liable to err and pursue an apparent, rather than an actual good. This is further corroborated by Spalding's defence of the Leibnizian concept of divine foreknowledge to avoid renewed charges of denying God's omniscience.<sup>49</sup> Again, this permitted Spalding to distance himself from the Reformed doctrine of double predestination and secure the will's basic freedom without impinging on the perfection of Divinity or departing too radically from Lutheran orthodoxy.

In defending Wolffian natural religion before the masters of Rostock, Spalding was therefore also upholding the ideas of Leibniz who had offered much inspiration to Wolff. Although he never mentioned his name in the text, Spalding was likely steeped in Leibniz's original work: he thus emphasised the importance of defeating the irreligion of the likes of Pierre Bayle, suggesting an awareness of the *Theodicy*.<sup>50</sup> The young Spalding's pamphlet is thus a testimony of his attachment to Leibnizian Enlightenment theology. This renders it all the more compelling to enquire to what extent the Leibnizian-Wolffian thinking carried over into his Neology.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

For, as mentioned, he by no means took sole inspiration from fellow Germans: as Beutel writes, the learning of the English language at the age of 27 opened an entirely new world to the young German.<sup>51</sup> Especially the works of Shaftesbury had an enormous impact on him: ‘Although I did not immediately understand him quite fully, his way of thinking and writing touched me greatly’.<sup>52</sup> His enthusiasm for all things British becomes apparent in his correspondence too: in a letter to his close friend Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (1719-1803), he thus expressed his ardent desire to build an epistolary relationship with ‘an English clergyman’ – an ambition that likely remained unfulfilled in his lifetime.<sup>53</sup> Spalding’s enthusiasm for British ideas and culture may, according to Beutel, have been rooted in his ancestral links to England: in fact, as Beutel shows, the German Lutheran’s family derived its name from the Lincolnshire town they originally hailed from.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, Spalding was naturally not alone but participating in a wider trend of a German appreciation of English literature and philosophy in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup> How much these Anglophone authors influenced Spalding is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that he sought to make them accessible to a wider audience in Germany: before garnering success with his own pamphlets and treatises, Spalding acted principally as a translator of especially English and French works.<sup>56</sup> This

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<sup>51</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 32. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding’s Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 17. Beutel even claims that Spalding’s appreciation of Shaftesbury was a central motivator behind his linguistic efforts. See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Joachim Spalding, *Briefe*, ed. Albrecht Beutel and Olga Söntgerath (Tübingen, 2018), no. 43.

<sup>54</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>55</sup> The importance of English ‘Moderation’ to the Neology movement more widely is stressed by Beutel. See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113. For more on eighteenth-century ‘Anglomania’ in Europe, including the German territories, see: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 11-13. *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330. *Ibid.*, pp. 380-382. Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 515-527. Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth Century Germany* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 58-76. Fania Oz-Salzberger, ‘The Enlightenment in Translation: Regional and European Aspects’, *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’Histoire*, Vol. 13/3 (2006), pp. 387-388. *Ibid.*, pp. 393-394. *Ibid.*, pp. 395-396. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> Among the most important of Spalding’s translated works are: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Early of Shaftesbury, *Die Sittenlehrer oder Erzählung philosophischer Gespräche, welche die Natur und Tugend betreffen*, tr.

was likely due to doubts over his own faculties as a writer: in another letter to Gleim in 1750, Spalding thus wrote somewhat wistfully that he was ‘once again a translator, [as] nature seems to have destined me to be’.<sup>57</sup> Of particular interest to this enquiry is Spalding’s translation of Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*. Originally published in 1736, Spalding released it for the German reading public in 1756, a few years after Butler’s passing.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Spalding decided to adapt the title slightly, opting for ‘Confirmation’ (*Bestätigung*) rather than ‘Analogy’ (*Gleichnis*). This was a conscious choice, destined to reflect ‘the actual purpose’ of Butler’s work, as he put it.<sup>59</sup> The effort Spalding had invested in the task of translating Butler was, according to his own testimony, rather considerable – though the return on this investment was not all too great: the *Bestätigung* did not become a bestseller, even if the Lutheran noted with great satisfaction that it was met with great acclaim by ‘valid judges’.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, despite its modest popularity, the *Analogy* became the only of his translations to be issued for a second edition in 1779, a development Spalding noted with bewilderment.<sup>61</sup>

From the outset, however, the idea to translate Butler into German was not borne out of an expectation of commercial success, as Spalding wrote.<sup>62</sup> Instead, it was due to the very high calibre of the work: in his autobiographical sketch, Spalding noted that ‘the sharp

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Johann Joachim Spalding (Berlin, 1745). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, *Untersuchung über die Tugend*, tr. Johann Joachim Spalding (Berlin, 1747). Jean Le Clerc, *Untersuchung des Unglaubens, nach seinen allgemeinen Quellen und Veranlassungen*, tr. Johann Joachim Spalding (Halle, 1747). Jacob Foster, *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Stücke der natürlichen und gesellschaftlichen Tugend*, tr. Johann Joachim Spalding (2 vols., Leipzig, 1751-1753). For a full list, see: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 238.

<sup>57</sup> Spalding, *Briefe*, no. 32.

<sup>58</sup> See: Butler, *Bestätigung der natürlichen und geoffenbarten Religion*.

<sup>59</sup> Johann Joachim Spalding, ‘Vorbericht des Uebersetzers’ in Johann Joachim Spalding, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 6.1 (Tübingen, 2006), p. 300. This version is henceforth referenced as: Spalding, ‘Vorbericht des Uebersetzers’ (SpKA).

<sup>60</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding’s Lebensbeschreibung*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>61</sup> See: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 238. Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding’s Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding’s Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 53.

observational spirit, which reigns in this book, had consumed me very much'.<sup>63</sup> He was convinced that Butler had offered a work of Christian apologetics far more effective than much else that was available on the market.<sup>64</sup> He consequently appears to have believed that the production of a German-language version of the *Analogy* was only a matter of time.<sup>65</sup> Only when no such edition came forth, Spalding eventually took the initiative and introduced Butler to the learned world of Germany.<sup>66</sup> Though he shied away from overly enthusiastically showing his sympathies in his translator's preface, aware that 'the words of praise which translators ... heap upon the writings procured by them are certainly somewhat suspicious', his great appreciation of Butler is without doubt.<sup>67</sup> He praised the *Analogy* as a work governed by a 'spirit of pure reason, truth, and probity' and noted the acclaim it had won in Butler's native land as 'one of the most thorough writings of this century'.<sup>68</sup> Beyond lauding his intellectual merits, Spalding also emphasised that the Anglican had led an exemplary life that had garnered the praise of countless contemporaries in England.<sup>69</sup> His admiration of the Anglican also came forth in Spalding's other works: in his *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, he commended Butler as a 'sublime author' and cited him at length – an honour not awarded to many other writers.<sup>70</sup> Another fact which underlines the importance of Butler to Spalding is that he produced the *Bestätigung* out of his own impulse rather than waiting for a commission from a publisher – to the point where he noted his annoyance when the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>64</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Uebersetzers' (SpKA), pp. 296-297.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>67</sup> Johann Joachim Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Übersetzers' in Joseph Butler, *Bestätigung der natürlichen und geoffenbarten Religion aus ihrer Gleichförmigkeit mit der Einrichtung und dem ordentlichen Laufe der Natur nebst zwo kurzen Abhandlungen von der persönlichen Identität und von der Natur der Tugend*, tr. Johann Joachim Spalding (Leipzig, 1756), p. iii. This version is henceforth referenced as: Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Übersetzers' (1756).

<sup>68</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Uebersetzers' (SpKA), p. 300. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292. *Ibid.*, pp. 300-301.

<sup>70</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 84. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* praised his publisher for 'having the work translated'.<sup>71</sup>

There is therefore good reason to believe that Butler's thought was pivotal in shaping Spalding's own thinking and laying the groundwork for what became the ultimate expression of enlightened theology in German Lutheranism.

That Spalding would develop a fondness for Butler is not very striking when considering that the Anglican professed to a similar vision of Christianity as the German Lutheran. Indeed, Butler shared much of his faith with the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz too: he also defended a Christianity centred around fundamental moral commandments against the machinations of enthusiasm and Deism.<sup>72</sup> In his *Analogy*, Butler thus characterised 'Religion' as a 'practical thing' whose main purpose was to offer humans simple guidance on the path to God and salvation.<sup>73</sup> He spurned both materialistic hedonism and extravagant displays of piety, pleading instead for moderation with the words: 'Is not the middle way obvious?'.<sup>74</sup> Butler likewise abhorred notions of God and the universe that ascribed an inevitability to human actions: systems which focused on 'necessity' as the guiding principle of Creation achieved in his view little else than 'to eradicate the very Perceptions of Blame and Commendation' among its subscribers.<sup>75</sup> Instead, he greatly stressed the agency of believers in rising above sin through their own spiritual efforts and free will: Butler was of the firm conviction that believers 'want and are capable of, Improvement' thanks to the benevolence of a Christian God who had

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<sup>71</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding's Lebensbeschreibung*, pp. 52-53. The emphasis is from Spalding himself, further highlighting how displeased he was with the wrong account of events.

<sup>72</sup> See amongst others: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 102. Repudiations against Deism, atheism, and enthusiasm can be found amongst others in: Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, pp. 207-209. *Ibid.*, p. 330. Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 51. For a scholarly review of Butler's opposition to enlightened deism and especially Wesleyan enthusiasm, see: Brown, 'Butler and Deism', pp. 7-21. Christopher Cunliffe, 'The "Spiritual Sovereign: Butler's Episcopate"' in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 43-45. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57. Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 316-318.

<sup>73</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, pp. 407-408.

<sup>74</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 159.

sufficiently endowed humanity with the faculties to better themselves.<sup>76</sup> Within this theology, one finds very many ideas that the young Wolffian Spalding would naturally have embraced. Interestingly, however, it was particularly the novelty of Butler's approach and thought that enthused Spalding, elevating the *Analogy* above the writings of 'others who persistently show us again what we have already seen countless times'.<sup>77</sup> It was also what likely doomed his translation of the *Analogy* from his perspective, since no 'great number [of readers] ... would be capable of sufficiently disciplined and patient contemplation to follow this author on his to some degree new and alien ... path'.<sup>78</sup> What drew Spalding to Butler therefore was a novel theology unlike any he had encountered before – potentially representing a break with the programme offered by early Protestant Enlightenment theologians.<sup>79</sup>

### Change in the Enlightened Theologies of Butler and Spalding

When delving more deeply into the writings of Butler and the mature Spalding, many notable differences with the enlightened theology of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz are observable. Historians of the religious Enlightenment have traditionally clustered the principal divergences between the different generations of Enlightenment theologians around questions of method, metaphysics, and epistemology.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>77</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Übersetzers' (1756), p. xiii.

<sup>78</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding's Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 53.

<sup>79</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Uebersetzers' (SpKA), p.297.

<sup>80</sup> See: Georg Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie – Forschungsskizze zu einem Topos der anthropologischen Wende', *Kerygma und Dogma – Zeitschrift für theologische Forschung und kirchliche Lehre*, Vol. 63 (2017), p. 42. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 3-4. *Ibid.*, 14-18. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 95. *Ibid.*, p. 113. *Ibid.*, p. 207. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 2-4. *Ibid.*, p. 76. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 176-177. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 96. Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenment', pp. 589-590. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, 250-251. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', pp. 292-293. *Ibid.*, p. 297. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 196.

The very first observation that strikes upon comparing the works of Butler and Spalding with those of the early enlightened theologians are their chosen audiences: whereas many works by Leibniz, Cudworth, and More went unpublished in their lifetimes, circulating mostly in personal correspondence with men and women of similar learning, Butler and Spalding prolifically released their writings to the public. Likewise, they almost exclusively wrote in the vernacular English and German – in itself symptomatic of the general changes within the learned sphere during the Enlightenment, well-documented in the historiography.<sup>81</sup> The expansion of readerships beyond the Latinised erudite circles of the seventeenth-century *Res publica litteraria* had indeed seen its slow beginnings with the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz who had written and published a number of works in English and French. Similarly, the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz had themselves criticised the excessive complexity of scholastic theology and its revival by orthodox Protestants. However, Butler and Spalding went a step further in their ambition to present a practical, ethical theology: their works were not only released but intended to reach as great an audience as possible. This was an aim they explicitly stated in their work: in the preface to his *Fifteen Sermons*, Butler thus stressed that he considered it pivotal for authors to cater for the ‘whole class of readers’, adding that ‘the best auditories are mixed’.<sup>82</sup> Spalding was even more unequivocal about the need to reach ‘the mass of those who need education and awakening’ on a subject such as religion that was manifestly ‘affecting general needs’.<sup>83</sup> This included even the illiterate masses: Spalding thus wrote that his *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle* was concerned with the ‘affair of any Christian, including the most simpleminded’.<sup>84</sup> To the

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<sup>81</sup> See: Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise – Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg and Munich, 2013), pp. 41-48. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 18. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-41.

<sup>82</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 12.

Neologian, this was a *sine qua non* for writings on moral and religious subjects.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, their chosen forms of publication matched Butler's and Spalding's objective: both released sermon collections and brief treatises that were likelier to achieve high circulation.<sup>86</sup> The language they employed sought to be as simple as possible in order to remain understandable even to many who had not enjoyed a formal university or otherwise classical education. Butler thus wrote that the intended aim of his *Fifteen Sermons* had been to offer 'what is plain and of easy comprehension'.<sup>87</sup> Spalding emulated this attempt in his *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen*, stating that the target audience of his work were 'those who are capable and accustomed to reasonable, but not scholarly (*schulgerecht*) thinking'.<sup>88</sup> This did not mean that they wanted to offer a simplistic theology: as Beutel highlights, Spalding especially saw his mission as educational, that is to verse Christians in the art of critical thinking.<sup>89</sup> This was an ambitious task, as the authors themselves acknowledged: Butler stated that he had found certain reasonings and ideas simply too complex to be necessarily made comprehensible to every single reader.<sup>90</sup> Even accounting for this natural limitation, however, he was crystal-clear that 'confusion and perplexity in writing is indeed without excuse'.<sup>91</sup> Spalding was even more radical than the Anglican: in fact, in his translator's preface of the *Analogy*, he lamented that Butler had perhaps not taken sufficient care 'to lower himself to those who are not accustomed to such a comprehensive kind of

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<sup>85</sup> For more on the popular educational mission of Neology in general and Spalding in particular, see: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 146-151.

<sup>86</sup> Whilst this fed into a wider tendency of 'ethical preaching' on the Anglican side, as Cunliffe has noted, it nonetheless reaffirms the special importance Butler himself placed on the moral betterment of his listeners. See: Cunliffe, 'Butler's Episcopate', p. 48. Beutel in turn highlights how seriously Spalding took his homiletical duties. See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 112-119. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>87</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

thinking'.<sup>92</sup> In this criticism, the German was echoing many of Butler's contemporaries and scholars today, as Cunliffe has highlighted.<sup>93</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Spalding attributed the popular failure of his translation in part to this circumstance.<sup>94</sup> However, he did concede that Butler had not engaged in deliberate obfuscation but simply been constrained by the complexity of his subject-matter.<sup>95</sup> This was the reason why even his attempts to improve the clarity of his thought by using exact terminology made the *Analogy of Religion* in the Lutheran's view hard to follow.<sup>96</sup> This state of affairs notwithstanding, the works of the Anglican and the Lutheran suggest that as the eighteenth century progressed, there was a quest for greater simplicity in theological writing: from the beginning, Butler and Spalding had sought to offer the most accessible guide to the Christian religion that was humanly possible to produce – though arguably with differing degrees of success.

This adaptation to a wider audience naturally had an impact beyond style: in their substance, Spalding and Butler were quite willing to depart from the precedents set by Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists too. This is perhaps most visibly reflected in their reluctance to enter into the technicalities of a number of philosophical debates with thinkers of the distant past and more recent present. Although Butler and Spalding did at times refer to particular thinkers whose ideas they sought to either sustain or refute, they avoided discussing the theories of particular schools in great depth and detail.<sup>97</sup> This is a little less pronounced with Butler who, whilst only referencing Descartes in

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<sup>92</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Übersetzers' (1756), p. xv.

<sup>93</sup> Cunliffe, 'Butler's Episcopate', pp. 55-56. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>94</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding's Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 53.

<sup>95</sup> Spalding, 'Vorbericht des Uebersetzers' (SpKA), p. 298.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Examples of Butler and Spalding citing classical and early modern thinkers include: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 12. *Ibid.*, p. 50. *Ibid.*, p. 85. *Ibid.*, p. 132. *Ibid.*, p. 135. Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. iii. *Ibid.*, p. vii. *Ibid.*, p. 337. Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, pp. 163-164. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Spalding, *Religion*, pp. 63-64.

passing in his work, dedicated a few notes in his *Fifteen Sermons* to the discussion of Hobbes's views on human nature.<sup>98</sup> However, it is noteworthy that he largely kept this kind of discourse out from the main work, restricting it to notes and appendices. In Spalding's work by contrast, the great modern philosophers were all but absent by name. None of this is to say that they ignored the competing philosophies and theologies debated across Britain and the German territories at the time: instead of taking aim at particular thinkers and systematically dismantling their individual systems, however, Butler and Spalding kept their criticism general, targeting wider schools of thought that even less well-educated Christians may have been aware of. Spalding thus very firmly rejected the materialist philosophy that saw humans as 'a heap of elementary pieces, randomly thrown together' and 'the unforeseen result of a blindly and necessarily functioning mechanism, desired by no-one'.<sup>99</sup> At another point, he criticised – in a manner akin to Cudworth and Leibniz – the 'hollow ... sophistry of the former scholasticism'.<sup>100</sup> Again however, they seemed to refrain from entering too deeply into the discussion of philosophical *minutiae*. If modern philosophers and theologians were largely bypassed, ancient thinkers could not expect a more privileged treatment either. The tendency of Leibniz and the Cambridge Platonists to cast their own and their opponents arguments in classical Greek or even Roman form is similarly largely absent, with few exceptions: as Cudworth, Butler thus noted the parallelisms between Hobbes and Epicurus, whilst drawing on the example of Socrates and Plato at individual points in the *Fifteen Sermons*.<sup>101</sup> The philosophers of old featured even less in Spalding's work: in fact, the only ancient thinker he explicitly evoked in support of his reasoning was Cicero.<sup>102</sup> The reluctance to heavily draw on classical wisdom was very much intentional,

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<sup>98</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. iii. *Ibid.*, vii. Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', pp. 23-25. *Ibid.*, 51-53. *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>99</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 63.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>101</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 12. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>102</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 64.

though not necessarily a sign of a wholesale rejection of it: Butler was, as seen, undoubtedly steeped in the works of old thinkers. In fact, by his own admission, the Bishop of Durham was engaging in a careful balancing act by appealing to both readers who were versed and who were (largely) ignorant in the history of philosophy.<sup>103</sup> He was very aware of the risks of his approach:

Thus a subject may be treated in a manner, which all along supposes the reader acquainted with what has been said upon it, both by ancient and modern writers; and with what is the present state of opinion in the world concerning such subject. This will create a difficulty of a very peculiar kind, and even throw an obscurity over the whole before those who are not thus informed; but those who are, will be excused of such a manner, ..., as a saving of their patience.<sup>104</sup>

McNaughton notes that Butler largely succeeded in his approach since the inaugural audience of his sermons – mostly members of the legal profession – tended to possess a sufficient educational background.<sup>105</sup> This might also explain why Butler did not see a similarly heightened need to adapt his language as his German admirer. However, just as the Anglican, Spalding showed appreciation for the ‘most astute and impartial explorers of truth of olden and new times’ and their service for offering a path to a true Christianity.<sup>106</sup> He simply does not seem to have believed that they, let alone the finer points of their wisdom, were indispensable in scrutinising the essence of faith. This seems plausible in light of the fact that Spalding studied philosophy alongside theology at Rostock and was therefore familiar with the great thinkers of his and previous times.<sup>107</sup> The attempt to accommodate their readership’s significantly differing levels of education likely led to and was benefitted by another, truly substantive departure from early enlightened Protestant authors: Butler and Spalding emphatically rejected any necessity

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<sup>103</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> See: McNaughton, ‘Introduction’, p. xi. David McNaughton, ‘Editor’s Notes’ in Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons & Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford, 2017), p. 160.

<sup>106</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>107</sup> See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 24-45. *Ibid.*, p. 50. *Ibid.*, p. 66. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

to engage in the more complex aspects of metaphysics – the first major rupture which historians cite in the shift of the Protestant Enlightenment, especially within German Lutheranism.<sup>108</sup> In the introduction to his *Analogy*, Butler explicitly refused to offer a holistic vision: ‘I shall not take it upon me to say how far ... analogical Reasoning, can be reduced to general Heads and Rules; and the Whole be formed into a System’.<sup>109</sup> Spalding too denied any greater claim to intellectual authority and distanced himself from any pretence of being a ‘sage of the world’ (*Weltweisen*).<sup>110</sup> This was not least grounded in their shared scepticism of abstract ‘Logick’ (Butler) and excessive ‘speculation’ (Spalding) that was, in their eyes, more likely to cloud the minds of believers than to illuminate them.<sup>111</sup> As Butler phrased it: ‘The least observation will shew how little the generality of men are capable of speculations’.<sup>112</sup> Spalding indeed feared that excessively abstract reasoning could lead theologians astray, rather than help them gain an understanding of the good Christian life.<sup>113</sup> In his view, the pursuit of speculative knowledge for its own sake bore the risk of undermining the very foundations of religion, as ‘this eager search after mere knowledge (*Wissen*) concludes with no other success than total sceptical ignorance (*Nichtwissen*)’.<sup>114</sup> Butler likewise pointed to how this abstract manner of reasoning had compelled some of the greatest minds to arrive at fallacious conclusions.<sup>115</sup> To avert this risk, doctrine and faith needed to be reduced to the lowest common denominator. Spalding perhaps put it most bluntly: ‘if I want to

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<sup>108</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 49. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 589-590. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 167-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251. Sparn, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, p. 2. Sparn, ‘Theologische Aufklärung’, pp. 22-24. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-37.

<sup>109</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. v.

<sup>110</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 27.

<sup>111</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. v. Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 51. Spalding, *Religion*, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 218. See also: Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 83-84. *Ibid.*, p. 86. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>115</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 51.

know if I am a Christian, then I have to be able to know it more easily than by means of a ton of abstractions and deductions'.<sup>116</sup> Butler voiced the same belief in his sermons: 'morality and religion must ... appeal to what we call plain common sense'.<sup>117</sup> Minimalism in metaphysical discourse was therefore of the utmost importance to both authors in order to preserve the Christian creed's integrity. Butler and Spalding thus offer model examples of the triumph of the '*esprit systématique*' over the '*esprit de système*' evoked by Ernst Cassirer and Peter Gay that encouraged subsequent generations of historians to exclude rationalist theologians from the Enlightenment.<sup>118</sup>

However, their refusal to be drawn into metaphysical complexities was not merely based on practical considerations, but philosophical ones. This leads to the next substantive difference of early and high Enlightenment theology that historians have identified: that Butler and Spalding relied on an empiricist epistemology as popularised by John Locke and Isaac Newton that differed starkly from the rationalism of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz.<sup>119</sup> To the two clergymen, natural knowledge was mainly gained through experience, that is observation of and reflection upon the natural world. Butler thus believed firmly that 'God instructs us by Experience, (for it is not Reason but Experience which instructs us)' in the matters most relevant to (natural) religion, especially ethics.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 51.

<sup>118</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. xiii-xvi. *Ibid.*, 6-9. *Ibid.*, 12-14. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 81-82. *Ibid.*, p. 87-88. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-141. See also: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>119</sup> See: Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte – Bd. 2*, p. 469. Wunderlich, 'Theologie der Aufklärung', p. 19. Sparr, 'Theologische Aufklärung', p. 33. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 14-15. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-23. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113. For the empiricist ideas of Butler and Spalding, see: Cunliffe, 'Introduction', p. 1. Brown, 'Butler and Deism', pp. 8-9. Terence Penelhum, 'Butler and Human Ignorance' in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 117-139. Alan Millar, 'Butler on God and Human Nature' in Christopher Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 299-301. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-306. Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 311-314. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 330. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>120</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 312.

At the same time, the rationalist method was not without merit in his eyes, as Alan Millar and Terence Penelhum have acknowledged.<sup>121</sup> Butler indeed believed that both approaches were complementary in the study of morality:

In the former [rationalist] method, the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reasons of things; in the latter [empiricist method], that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing<sup>122</sup>

Notwithstanding such an ‘uneasy combination of rationalist and empiricist elements’ (Penelhum) observable in Butler’s thought, scholars have on balance identified the bishop as an empiricist.<sup>123</sup> Penelhum has clearly demonstrated the extent to which Butler’s thought was inspired by Locke’s writing: this includes Butler’s endorsement of ‘probability’ and induction in knowledge production; his conviction in the human ability to recognise the cosmos as a ‘created system’; and, indeed, his very conception of ‘analogy’.<sup>124</sup> Whilst Penelhum did argue that Butler did not simply adopt Locke’s philosophical ideas wholesale but adapted and expanded upon them on occasion, the importance of the empiricist to the bishop is undeniable.<sup>125</sup> Conversely, Butler did not have a very high opinion of rationalists ‘who explain the human Body, and the Nature of Diseases and Medicines from mere Mathematicks without sufficient *Data*’.<sup>126</sup> Further, the empiricist approach had distinctive practical advantages to the bishop since it was more suitable ‘to satisfy a fair mind’ and relatable to the human experience.<sup>127</sup> However

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<sup>121</sup> Millar, ‘Butler on God and Human Nature’, pp. 305-306. Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 121-122. *Ibid.*, p. 127. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130. Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 311-314. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

<sup>122</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> See: Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, p. 122. See also: Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 120-128. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132. Millar, ‘Butler on God and Human Nature’, pp. 299-301. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-306.

<sup>124</sup> Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 120-125. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132. Ensink has also noted the Lockean inspiration behind Butler’s idea of analogy, though he stated that it cannot be asserted with certainty when Butler first read Locke. See: Ensink, *Ethik und Theologie bei Joseph Butler*, pp. 136-138. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>125</sup> Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 122-123. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>126</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. vii. Italics in the original text.

<sup>127</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 5.

positively the Anglican viewed rationalist speculation in principle therefore, he strongly delimited the realm of its enquiry, as Penelhum and Millar rightly noted.<sup>128</sup> This starkly distinguished him from the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz. Spalding arguably went somewhat beyond the Anglican in both his embrace of experience as the best guide in religious matters and his scepticism of rationalism and speculative reasoning. In his *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, he thus argued that ‘all that I have taught has been handed to me through the mere simple-hearted observation of human nature’<sup>129</sup> – in his eyes, as he had previously written in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, the best method of identifying and verifying truth, since the conclusions reached by it were ‘without doubt the most reliable ones’.<sup>130</sup> He had little time for the ‘mass of unthinkable formulas or sterile speculations ... which, to the damage and dishonour of Christianity, have from time immemorial only confused minds and divided people’.<sup>131</sup> Though principally aimed at the neo-scholasticism of orthodox Lutheranism, one may wonder whether his objection to ‘formulas’ was a grievance with Wolffianism. He was acutely embarrassed by his early writings as a student whose ‘oblivion and suppression’ he wished for later in life, singling out the *Bittschrift* as a work he wanted to distance himself from.<sup>132</sup> This was partly due to the delusions of grandeur associated with this work, since Spalding admitted that he was at the time driven by a ‘certain vanity and desire for fame’.<sup>133</sup> Potentially, however, given his later denunciation of the kind of mathematical and metaphysical proofs championed by not least Wolff, part of his embarrassment may have stemmed from acting as an apologist of rationalism. The reliance on experience in their work was undoubtedly a substantive epistemological shift

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<sup>128</sup> Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 118-122. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-130. Millar, ‘Butler on God and Human Nature’, pp. 304-306.

<sup>129</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 27.

<sup>130</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 185.

<sup>132</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding’s Lebensbeschreibung*, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

away from Cudworth's and Leibniz's thought, even when acknowledging that they likely were not the primary targets of Butler's and Spalding's ire towards excessively complex thinkers. What both clergymen did was not amounting to the wholesale rejection of early Anglican and Lutheran Enlightenment theology, but an adaptation that sought to excise unnecessary abstraction from it.

Nevertheless, the empiricist mindset of Butler and Spalding meant that their approach to the grand questions of theology starkly differed from that of Cudworth and Leibniz: whereas the latter had started from the existence and condition of God and His created universe, the two clergymen focused much more on the human condition. Their theoretical starting point consistently tended to be the human pondering on the purpose of their life. This was another significant shift that scholars have insisted upon: the rise of anthropocentrism in enlightened theology that constituted a stark turn away from the cosmological preoccupations of seventeenth-century thinkers.<sup>134</sup> Especially Spalding has been singled out as the 'initiator of the anthropological turn ... in the philosophy of religion and theology' (Georg Raatz).<sup>135</sup> This primacy attributed to the nature of humankind is most notable in Butler's *Analogy*, which begins with the necessity of the afterlife, and the fourteenth sermon 'Upon the Love of God' from his *Fifteen Sermons*.<sup>136</sup> Within Spalding's oeuvre, this approach finds particular application in his *Bestimmung des Menschen* which in turn mirrored in many respects Butler's fourteenth sermon: first, both demonstrated that reflecting on their existence would lead humans to conclude that the pursuit of sensual pleasures was not simply spiritually unfulfilling but

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<sup>134</sup> See: Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie', pp. 40-44. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 95. *Ibid.*, p. 113. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-249. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 76. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> Raatz, 'Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie', p. 42. See also: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 76. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>136</sup> See: Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, pp. 17-45. Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', pp. 120-126.

demonstrably dangerous in the long-term.<sup>137</sup> Based on this consideration, they highlighted that humans could recognise their suitability for a higher destiny that went beyond the ephemeral offerings of the material universe.<sup>138</sup> Further reflection would, they argued, lead humans to realise the necessary existence of God and the prospect of an afterlife, for which the earthly life was destined as a preparation.<sup>139</sup> Butler and Spalding thus pursued a diametrically opposite argumentative tactic and method to the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: where the latter had, on the basis of their rationalism and grounding in ancient philosophy, pursued a line of deductive reasoning from abstract principles, the empiricism of the former had compelled them to arrive at their conclusions through induction. Laura Anna Macor has convincingly demonstrated that Shaftesbury served as the inspiration for Spalding's monologue on fundamental yet practical questions of humanity's purpose.<sup>140</sup> Given that scholars have also identified Shaftesbury as a crucial influence on Butler, there is much to be said that the bishop likely also took his literary cue from the philosopher.<sup>141</sup> Butler's and Spalding's approach had the obvious advantage of being relatable to a wider readership that may not have found the strict argumentative chain of Leibniz and Cudworth accessible. Without the epistemological and philosophical rationalism that had been central to the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz and Wolff, a much greater emphasis needed to be placed on humanity, its faculties, and experiences, rather than the attributes of divinity and the universe.

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<sup>137</sup> See: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', pp. 122-123. Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>138</sup> See: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 123. Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 11-12. *Ibid.*, p. 15. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>139</sup> See: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', pp. 123-124. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126. Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 32. *Ibid.*, p. 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

<sup>140</sup> Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 74. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-81. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-89. See also: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>141</sup> See: Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 9. Ensink, *Ethik und Theologie bei Joseph Butler*, p. 5. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 293. David McNaughton, 'Butler's Predecessors' in Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons & Other Writings on Ethics*, ed. David McNaughton (Oxford, 2017), p. 187. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

Yet arguably, their differing epistemologies account for what many historians have identified as the most substantive chasm between the two generations of Protestant Enlightenment theologians: a renegotiation of the relationship between natural and Scriptural theology. German Church historians in particular consider this the great dividing line between Wolffians and Neologians: in the common interpretation, first put forth by Karl Aner, the Neologians thus extended the dominion of reason, with most of the corpus of revealed truth now equated with reasonable truth.<sup>142</sup> This approach was, as Schollmeier argued, driven by an impression among the Neologians that the ‘balance between reason and revelation’ as put forth by rationalist theologies ‘was an unsustainable compromise’.<sup>143</sup> A similar shift can be observed when comparing the religious thinking of the Cambridge Platonists and Butler: Cunliffe and Penelhum highlighted the comparatively lesser relevance the Anglican attributed to the Bible in the transmission of many basic truths of Christianity.<sup>144</sup> The epistemological change between the two generations indeed appears to be the main driver behind this re-conception: where Platonic rationalism had compelled Cudworth, More, and Leibniz to be more confident about the capacities of reason to attain knowledge of the universals, Butler’s and Spalding’s grounding in empiricist thinking led them to greater epistemological doubt. This is especially stressed by Butler scholars who consider the Anglican’s emphasis upon the ‘epistemic limitations’ (Penelhum) of humanity which in turned informed a ‘retreat from proof to probability’ (David Brown) as the pivotal cornerstone of his theology.<sup>145</sup> Crucially, this is where Schollmeier likewise saw the greatest influence

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<sup>142</sup> See: Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 144.

<sup>144</sup> See amongst others: Cunliffe, ‘Butler’s Episcopate’, p. 50. Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, p. 133.

<sup>145</sup> Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, p. 117. Brown, ‘Butler and Deism’, p. 8. See also: Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 117-122. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-130. Brown, ‘Butler and Deism’, pp. 8-9. *Ibid.*, p. 18. *Ibid.*, p. 21. *Ibid.*, p. 25. Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 318-319. *Ibid.*, pp. 322-323.

of Butler on Spalding: in his adoption of Butler's concept of 'probable proof' in the apologetics of the Christian faith.<sup>146</sup> Consequently, Butler and Spalding advocated an expansion and subsequent marginalisation of the realm of truths *supra rationem*: whereas the rationalist Protestant Enlightenment theologians had tended to limit these to a few dogmatic truths whose authority needed to be respected, the new empiricist generation not only considered more doctrines (or at least their intricacies) to be beyond human understanding but also considered this as proof of their lesser relevance to Christianity. Butler's and Spalding's popular focus was likely relevant here too: whatever was beyond the grasp of the average believer could not be essential in salvation. They were not the only Enlightenment figures to make this logical leap: scholars such as Gay have thus highlighted the seeming paradox that Lockean scepticism led to a *de facto* expansion of the realm of reason.<sup>147</sup> Naturally, Butler and Spalding did not discount revelation: as Schollmeier highlighted, both clergymen indeed made it their quest to prove the indispensability of revelation to religion since reason alone was insufficient to gain a true understanding of the Christian faith and salvation.<sup>148</sup> Differently put, most historians believe that the heightened confidence in human judgment was more reflective of a depreciation of dogma than of the Bible: whereas especially Leibniz and Wolff had sought to buttress dogmatic truth, Butler and Spalding proceeded – in a more

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<sup>146</sup> Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 181-183. In most other spheres where the two overlapped, Schollmeier claimed that Spalding derived greater inspiration from August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack (1703-1786), Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson. See: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 183. Beutel has also stressed Spalding's awareness of reason's natural limits: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>147</sup> Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 185-186. *Ibid.*, p. 330. Within the context of eighteenth-century German theology, this line of thinking was picked up by Barth. See also: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 100.

<sup>148</sup> Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 181-182. Brown echoed this claim in relation to Butler. See: Brown, 'Butler and Deism', p. 21. Schollmeier's thesis is in turn supported by Penelhum's contention that Butler believed the limitation of human reason to be proof of the necessity of revelation. See: Penelhum, 'Butler and Human Ignorance', p. 117. *Ibid.*, p. 127-128. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134. Schollmeier however likewise posited that Spalding watered down Butler's notion of proof, with absolute certainty all but unobtainable. See: Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 182.

Lockean fashion – to sustain Scriptural truth.<sup>149</sup> According to most historians, this was enabled by the so-called ‘accommodation theory’ of exegesis that replaced the doctrine of verbal inspiration with a vision of the Bible as collection of universal truths whose message had been adapted to the historical realities of its times.<sup>150</sup> This was indeed a significant change from early Protestant Enlightenment theology: the dominion of reason had further diminished that of doctrine.

### Continuities in the Enlightened Theologies of Butler and Spalding

These differences in style and substance raise the question whether Butler and Spalding represented a new form of enlightened Protestantism that shared little with its ancestors beyond a broad commitment to an ethical, simplified, and broadly tolerant Christianity. After all, even if they arrived at similar conclusions, Butler and Spalding had started from a differing set of epistemological premises and placed the natural religion underpinning Protestant Enlightenment theology on a novel intellectual foundation. However, for all their innovation, one may in fact argue that Butler’s and Spalding’s theologies were still generally grounded in the same metaphysical, anthropological, and soteriological ideas as those of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz – even if they took them at times to more radical conclusions.

The parallelisms between the various generations of Protestant Enlightenment theologians begin with the queries at the heart of their work: the problem of good and evil, even if they approached it from differing angles. Whilst the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz had, by virtue of their Platonic-Cartesian rationalism, enquired about the

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<sup>149</sup> See: Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, pp. 371-372. Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, p. 4. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 329-330. Brown, ‘Butler and Deism’, pp. 17-18. *Ibid.*, p. 21. Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, p. 129. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Avis, *In Search of Authority*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>150</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 13-14. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 110-111. For a broader account of the Enlightenment’s approach to the Bible, see: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 182-199.

nature of good and evil as categories in themselves, Butler and Spalding were first and foremost concerned with how humans identified good and evil. Briefly put, their focus did not lie on ‘goodness’ as a (divine) concept but more concretely the ‘good life’. This was thus the central query of Butler’s *Fifteen Sermons* (‘What is the rule of life?’) and Spalding’s *Bestimmung des Menschen* (‘why am I here and what should I reasonably be?’).<sup>151</sup> This subtle shift may be attributed to their joint appreciation of Cicero and Shaftesbury, in whose works the practical question of the ‘good life’ featured heavily.<sup>152</sup> Yet while this change in focus is naturally symptomatic of broader structural changes in Enlightenment thinking that was moving away from theoretical abstraction to practical guidance, the purpose of their writings was essentially the same – and of course, it was a central leitmotif of Enlightenment.<sup>153</sup> This alone is naturally not sufficient to claim the existence of substantive similarities in their visions of God, the universe, and humanity. Reconstructing Butler’s and Spalding’s understanding of God’s and goodness’s nature is a more arduous task than in the case of Cudworth or Leibniz, somewhat ironically because of their refusal to offer a coherent metaphysical system. Despite these obstacles, one may obtain an approximation of their thinking based on a number of remarks and elaborations across their work. From this analysis, it is possible to conclude that both Butler and Spalding espoused a similar intellectualism as the Cambridge Platonists and

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<sup>151</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 3. Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> See: Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 15, *Ibid.*, 50. Spalding, *Religion*, p. 64. Cicero, ‘Discussions at Tusculum (V)’ in Cicero, *On the Good Life*, ed. and tr. Michael Grant (London, 1971), p. 52. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61. The general importance of Cicero and stoicism to Butler is discussed by McNaughton in his edition of the *Fifteen Sermons*. See: McNaughton, ‘Introduction’, p. xv. McNaughton, ‘Editor’s Notes’, p. 161. *Ibid.*, p. 164. *Ibid.*, p. 172. *Ibid.*, p. 174. *Ibid.*, p. 179. *Ibid.*, p. 181. McNaughton, ‘Butler’s Predecessors’, pp. 187-188. Barth discussed the influence of Ciceronian ideas on eighteenth-century German Protestant theology more widely, characterising the thinking of Spalding and his fellows as mere stoicism in Christian clothing. See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 56-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92. Especially Macor has demonstrated the importance of Shaftesbury for Spalding in this context. See: Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 80. *Ibid.*, p. 86. Ritchie Robertson, in turn, has highlighted the possible Stoic influences on Shaftesbury. See: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 265.

<sup>153</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 77. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 186-188.

Leibniz: to them, good and evil were not relative notions, purely dependent on the inscrutable divine will. Instead, they were objective norms governing the world. From this, they concluded that the cosmos had been designed as an orderly system by a perfectly benevolent God. The importance of this reasoning to Butler's thought has already been recognised by scholars such as Millar: he identified the Anglican's 'teleological theology' with its belief in the 'divine attributes' of consummate love and the 'principle of the harmony of the natural and moral worlds' that flowed from this idea as the pillars upon which his entire theological and philosophical edifice rested.<sup>154</sup> It is nonetheless worth demonstrating the remarkable parallelisms between Butlerian, Cambridge Platonist, and Leibnizian thinking in detail: to begin with, Butler recognised that 'goodness is a fixed, steady, immovable principle of action' which suggests that he did not believe that the divine being was free to arbitrarily attribute certain objects and actions with moral qualities.<sup>155</sup> That Butler arrived at a similar conclusion as Cudworth was grounded in his belief in a divinely instated natural moral system of 'Rewards and Punishment' observable in the world.<sup>156</sup> More concretely, it manifested itself in the fact that certain acts were destined to produce 'Uneasiness', whereas others led to 'Happiness'.<sup>157</sup> He was careful to distinguish the two from short-term physical comfort and discomfort: genuine felicity was thus rooted in a balanced state of mind, rather than a satisfied appetite and by the same token, material deprivations were not to be confused with spiritual unhappiness.<sup>158</sup> This state of affairs, as well as the human ability to perceive it, were to Butler the ultimate proof of a natural 'Moral Government', as he

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<sup>154</sup> Millar, 'Butler on God and Human Nature', p. 294. *Ibid.*, p. 302. *Ibid.*, p. 306. See also: *Ibid.* pp. 293-298. *Ibid.*, pp. 300-302. *Ibid.*, p. 306. *Ibid.*, p. 315. Avis has also insisted on the importance of 'Butler's realism'. See: Avis, *In Search of Authority*, p. 322.

<sup>155</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 10.

<sup>156</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 71.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

called it, dispensing this justice.<sup>159</sup> If this was the case, it seemed evident to him that the forces spurring on the universe were not arbitrary but part of an intelligent design intended to align the ideal and the material: ‘the natural and moral Constitution and Government of the World are so connected as to make up together but one Scheme’.<sup>160</sup> Within this system, anything deemed to be conducive to this felicity was ‘virtuous’, whereas anything contrary to it was ‘vicious’ [sic].<sup>161</sup> Butler was firm in his conviction that these were absolute, non-negotiable categories – an assessment that led him to echo Cudworth in his *Fifteen Sermons*, saying that ‘[t]hings and actions are what they are’ since ‘vice cannot be happiness, but upon the whole be the misery’.<sup>162</sup> From this discovery, it was not a large logical step to the perception of a cosmic harmony identifiable across the universe: ‘for the World ... appears to be so: to be a Scheme, System or Constitution, whose Parts correspond to each other, and to a whole; as really as any Work of Art’.<sup>163</sup> The whole course of cosmic history was for Butler in other words unfolding along the lines of a ‘general moral plan’ that was moving towards a greater good.<sup>164</sup> Every element within this plan therefore possessed a specific function and contributed to the production of a greater good, rather than existing by chance and producing arbitrary, isolated outcomes – again a notion Butler seemed to share with the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz. In fact, in defying the materialists that saw randomness as the governing principle of the universe, Butler curiously resorted to the very same example as Leibniz: ‘Yet there is no Doubt, but that our Eyes were intended for us to see with’.<sup>165</sup> With good and evil established as objective norms governing Creation, Butler could argue that ‘perfect goodness in the Deity’ needed to be the

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>162</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 66.

<sup>163</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 181.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

original impulse behind all Creation.<sup>166</sup> He seemed somewhat reluctant, however, to make God synonymous with goodness.<sup>167</sup> In the *Fifteen Sermons*, he preferred instead to characterise God as ‘a wise, powerful Being’.<sup>168</sup> Most likely, this distinction between essence and characteristic was due to his unwillingness to delve in metaphysical speculations. Beyond the observation that God’s will in creating humanity was (provenly) good, it was immaterial to Butler to know whether it was the all-encompassing hallmark of God’s essence.

Spalding offers a similar picture of his understanding of the Christian deity: on several occasions, he exulted ‘His wise and almighty goodness’ and spoke of his ‘vivid vision of a God who is love itself’.<sup>169</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Spalding took explicit exception to the classical depictions of the wrathful God common to Augustinian forms of Christianity.<sup>170</sup> In particular, he fiercely repudiated the, in his view, absurd opposition between a vengeful God and a merciful Christ acting as a *de facto* balancing influence.<sup>171</sup> Whilst he wanted believers to hold divinity in awe, he was adamant in wishing to ‘remove those notions which attribute something arbitrary and indeed all too human to the most perfect and purest being of God’.<sup>172</sup> Interestingly, Spalding seems to have fully adopted Butler’s notion of a ‘Moral Government’, a term and idea he evoked literally (*moralische Regierung*) in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, operating within the world.<sup>173</sup> Like Butler, he believed that nature dispensed some form of immediate justice in the

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<sup>166</sup> Butler ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 68.

<sup>167</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 66. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>168</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 124.

<sup>169</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 34. Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 96.

<sup>170</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, pp. 82-85. Spalding’s critical stance on Augustinian theology is discussed by Beutel, see: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 115-116. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. Traditionally, Church historians have identified the Neologians as the principal challengers to theological Augustinianism in German Protestantism. See: Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 97. *Ibid.*, p. 98. Raatz, ‘Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie’, p. 43. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>171</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 106-108.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>173</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 45.

*saeculum*, rather than restricting it to the afterlife: he thus noted that the untrammelled pursuit of the passions was inevitably leading to moral (and often physical) decline – suggesting that decisions produced tangible realities that permitted judgments as to their quality as objectively morally good or bad.<sup>174</sup> Following from this, Spalding subscribed to a view of absolute truth that he framed similarly to Cudworth, observing that entities could not change into their opposite of without their very essence changing – or put differently, that things could not be what they were not: ‘I cannot determine that a being that is better and more sublime than I am is equal or worse than me.’<sup>175</sup> As with Butler, these observations compelled him to claim the existence of an absolute ethical system permeating Creation.<sup>176</sup> Keeping once more with Butler’s example, Spalding then concluded that the universe was ‘a whole full of order, from the smallest grain of dust to the most immeasurable extension, full of regularity in all its laws, of the bodies as well as of the spirit’ in a manner more akin to the Leibnizian.<sup>177</sup> The fact that he cited the *Fifteen Sermons*’ preface at length in support of this notion of absolute moral norms governing the world suggests that Butler’s influence on the German was quite considerable in this respect.<sup>178</sup> The belief that Creation had flowed from a spirit and act of goodness in turn suggests that both Butler and Spalding held similar views as to the workings of the world and the universe as the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: if God had fundamentally benevolent intentions in forging the cosmos, it would naturally follow that He could not have purposely created evil and chaos. There is indeed much in Butler’s writings to support this, including a quote from the Book of Ecclesiasticus in support of this ideal: “God hath made nothing imperfect”.<sup>179</sup> In his *Analogy*, he further

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>178</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>179</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 54.

made an allusion to the Leibnizian ideal of the 'best possible world' by stating that it was impossible for anyone to prove that God could have created a more perfect world than the one in existence '[b]ecause, some unknown Relation, or some unknown Impossibility, may render what is objected against, just and good; nay good in the highest practicable Degree'.<sup>180</sup> Spalding echoed this sentiment in his *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen*, arguing that God did not ordain or even tolerate any 'suffering without an aim towards a greater advantage' and that subsequently, 'all is how it ought to be' in the world.<sup>181</sup> In their intellectualism, as well as their corresponding vision of God and the universe therefore, Butler and Spalding were thus very much committed to the same essential metaphysical principles as the early enlightened Protestant theologians.

However, this naturally meant that Butler and Spalding had to confront a similar dilemma as their forerunners: sin. A good, omnipotent God who had created a harmonic universe could not have purposely or inevitably created a flawed humanity. This was an intellectual obstacle they again tackled in a manner highly similar to the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: first, by affirming the quintessentially positive quality of human nature. Augustinian conceptions of total depravity and inescapable bondage in sin were roundly rejected. Butler did acknowledge that '[t]here are natural Appearances of our being in a State of Degradation', but he likewise stated that this was far from an inevitable condition.<sup>182</sup> More so, in his second sermon 'On Human Nature', he argued that the human tendency for virtue was stronger than the one towards vice.<sup>183</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>180</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 186. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 181-186. This seeming endorsement of the idea of the 'best possible world' was also noted by Penelhum, though he did not use the expression itself. See: Penelhum, 'Butler and Human Ignorance', p. 122.

<sup>181</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 54. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>182</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 111. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>183</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', p. 27.

sin arose when humans acted against their design, not when they followed it.<sup>184</sup> Spalding followed the Anglican's example of accepting the general prevalence of sin, whilst stating that human nature was inherently predisposed towards virtue – and sin therefore contrary to it.<sup>185</sup>

Again, similarly to the Cambridge Platonists and especially Leibniz, both clergymen proceeded to root evil not in necessary corruption or divine shortcoming but human choice. Butler put this perhaps most bluntly by saying that 'we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it: and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it.'<sup>186</sup> Spalding shared this positive view of human agency as well: 'God wants me to be good; it hereby depends on me, on my reluctance or non-reluctance'.<sup>187</sup> This was a logical imperative and an observable reality: God's system of divine justice functioned solely because humans could choose between right and wrong. Otherwise, Creation would appear to act cruelly, punishing humans for failing to adhere to a standard they had no means of attaining. God had therefore, according to the two clergymen, foreseen that humans possessed the tools for their own salvation – specifically in the form of reason: this 'capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters' was in Butler's eyes what elevated humans above 'brutes' and thus 'capable of moral government'.<sup>188</sup> Again, this inseparability between Butler's belief in a harmonic cosmos designed by a benevolent deity and his faith in natural human goodness and agency has been emphasised by Penelhum and especially Millar.<sup>189</sup> Spalding followed

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>185</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 62. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. Wolfgang Gericke and Raatz have also noted the continuity in the cosmological and anthropological optimism of the Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalist theologies with the Neologians. See: Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 96. Raatz, 'Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie', pp. 46-48. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>186</sup> Butler, 'Fifteen Sermons', pp. 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 62.

<sup>188</sup> Butler, 'A Dissertation of the Nature of Virtue', p. 135.

<sup>189</sup> Penelhum, 'Butler and Human Ignorance', pp. 136-137. Millar, 'Butler on God and Human Nature', pp. 295-300. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-306. *Ibid.*, p. 308. *Ibid.*, p. 313.

into the same footsteps as Butler by linking the ability to reason and act in accordance with morality as intrinsic to human nature.<sup>190</sup> To aid them on their ethical journey, God had, according to the two clergymen, further granted humans an essential idea of morality. Butler thus freely spoke of a ‘natural sense of good and evil’ without which believers would be bound to fail on their path to salvation: ‘Reason alone ... is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in ... man’.<sup>191</sup> Instead, it needed to be complemented by ‘those affections which *God has impressed upon his heart*’.<sup>192</sup> These divinely inculcated ‘affections’ compelled humans to moral conduct.<sup>193</sup> Spalding echoed this belief, stating that the ‘author of our nature has also ... given us the deeply impressed awareness of right and obligation herein’.<sup>194</sup> To many scholars, this evocation of a ‘moral sentiment’ constitutes the quintessential transformation of enlightened theology in the eighteenth century: the re-integration of emotion into epistemology and moral philosophy.<sup>195</sup> According to this reading, Butler and Spalding were at the forefront of – as Helena Rosenblatt and Ritchie Robertson frame it – a ‘sentimental turn’ away from the dominance of mere reason that was inspired by the philosophy of Shaftesbury which held that humans were compelled by an innate sentiment in their moral conduct rather than the pure application of reason.<sup>196</sup> *Prima facie*, this appears to contradict the rationalist theologies of the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz, and Wolff. Yet arguably, this was a reorientation rather than repudiation of early Protestant Enlightenment theology. For one, the value of emotion in religion was clearly delimited by both Butler and Spalding: their stern opposition to Methodist and Pietist ‘enthusiasm’ meant that

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<sup>190</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>191</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 47.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* Italics added by the author.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. Italics in the original text.

<sup>194</sup> Spalding, *Religion*, p. 33.

<sup>195</sup> See: Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 292-297. Brown, ‘Butler and Deism’, pp. 8-9. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 137. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 249-252.

<sup>196</sup> Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 292-297. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 33-35. *Ibid.*, p. 38. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-252. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266..

sentiment had to be in harmony with reason, instead of becoming the main parameter of moral conduct and piety. Secondly, neither the Cambridge Platonists nor Leibniz were, as seen, particularly inimical towards human sentiment.<sup>197</sup> Lastly, the importance of the sentimental turn may have been overstated: scholars such as McNaughton have questioned the depiction of Shaftesbury as a ‘sentimentalist’, arguing instead that his concept of a ‘moral sense is simply ... reason in another guise’.<sup>198</sup> This seems plausible, not least when considering that Shaftesbury was, as McNaughton and Ritchie Robertson highlight, an ardent intellectualist: he affirmed the existence of immutable moral laws governing the universe and believed that humans could understand thanks to their inborn faculties and reason.<sup>199</sup> Indeed, this was – as seen – the approach of Butler and Spalding too. Whilst the growing centrality of Shaftesbury’s thought likely did help to entrench a certain subjectivity in enlightened theology that many historians subsequently identified as one of its hallmarks, this may still be considered a shift of emphasis rather than substance.<sup>200</sup> After all, the quintessential idea of the Protestant Enlightenment remained broadly the same across the generations: believers were still expected to identify objective moral truths by acting on divinely inculcated impulses from within. In fact, Butler and Spalding likely relied on Shaftesbury in their efforts to delimit the influence of another philosophical school: Lockeanism. The English

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<sup>197</sup> See: Henry More, *An Account of Virtue: Or Dr. Henry More’s Abridgment of Morals Put into English* (London, 1690), p. 34. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Cassirer especially stressed the continuity in the harmonisation of sentiment and reason in German Enlightenment thinking from Leibniz onwards. See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>198</sup> McNaughton, ‘Butler’s Predecessors’, p. 191.

<sup>199</sup> McNaughton, ‘Butler’s Predecessors’, p. 190. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 221. For the defence of innate moral categories in Shaftesbury, see: Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 80-81. *Ibid.*, p. 83. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 221. *Ibid.*, p. 266. Michael B. Gill, ‘Lord Shaftesbury [Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury]’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/shaftesbury/#Innaldea> (01 Apr. 2020). It is also worth noting – as Macor does – that Leibniz was among the few of Shaftesbury’s contemporaries who did not consider his thought antagonistic to Christianity. See: Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 79.

<sup>200</sup> See: Sparr, *Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit*, pp. 14-15. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113. Wunderlich, ‘Theologie in der Aufklärung’, p. 19.

philosopher's embrace of innate moral categories thus helped Spalding in wholly and explicitly rejecting of the Lockean ideal of the *tabula rasa*, stating that it was impossible that 'these urges of right and goodness could be a mere prejudice, an effect of my education'.<sup>201</sup> Beyond curbing the excesses of Lockean empiricism, the nobleman may even have rooted the clergymen in a philosophical tradition that was central to the first generation of Protestant Enlightenment theologians: Platonism.<sup>202</sup> This is especially true of Spalding who ascribed his early appreciation of Shaftesbury to the 'solemn Platonism of the *Rhapsody*', which captured his 'admiration wholesale'.<sup>203</sup> Whilst Butler scholars such as McNaughton have emphasised the importance of Aristotelianism to the Anglican, one may very much connect his defence of an innate moral sense to Shaftesbury's Platonic and intellectualist philosophy.<sup>204</sup> The adoption of a 'Christian Shaftesbureanism' (Rosenblatt) thus had on the one hand the advantage of appealing to an empirical 'religion of the heart' that carried more weight with the average believer than a pure 'religion of the mind' propagated by rationalist thinkers, whilst on the other hand enabling Butler and Spalding to retain essential aspects of the epistemologies and anthropologies championed by the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz.<sup>205</sup> This still had repercussions for the value and scope attributed to reason by this new generation of enlightened theologians, yet did not wholly dislodge the edifice of the natural theology that Cudworth, More, and Leibniz had erected.

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<sup>201</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 21-22. For the rejection of this Lockean principle in Shaftesbury, see: Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>202</sup> For the centrality of Platonism to Shaftesbury, see: McNaughton, 'Butler's Predecessors', pp. 190-191.

<sup>203</sup> Spalding, *Johann Joachim Spalding's Lebensbeschreibung*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>204</sup> See: McNaughton, 'Introduction', p. xxiii. McNaughton, 'Editor's Notes', p. 171. McNaughton, 'Butler's Predecessors', p. 190.

<sup>205</sup> Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 293. Rosenblatt concedes that the German Protestant Enlightenment constituted an exception in the 'sentimental turn'. See: *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Yet if God had intended for humanity to be good and offered them ample assistance to overcome their natural imperfections, this evidently raised (once more) the question why humans persisted in sin. For Butler and Spalding, this was simply a consequence of their unwillingness to act on their potential – a view which strongly echoes Leibniz’s notion of the ‘self-bondage of the will’.<sup>206</sup> Briefly put, they subscribed to the notion of a free human will, capable of directing humans through the earthly life and enabling them to find not only salvation, but indeed happiness in the temporal world. Whilst Butler did not use the term itself, scholars such as Millar and Penelhum have likewise concluded that the Anglican’s theological system required the existence of an autonomous human will, with Millar pointing in particular to the role played by ‘conscience’ in his theology.<sup>207</sup> Spalding, on the other hand, used many variations to denote the scope of human action, from ‘voluntarily/freely’ (*freywillig*) and ‘freedom’ (*Freyheit*) to indeed ‘free will’ (*freyen Willens*).<sup>208</sup> The exact functioning of free will in Butler and Spalding bore greater resemblance to the Cambridge Platonists than to Leibniz: in their conceptions, the will became a power of critical judgment within the soul, a mediator between conflicting impulses. Butler expanded on this notion in his second sermon, where he argued that ‘there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man’ capable of ‘pronounc[ing] determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong and unjust’.<sup>209</sup> Free will was thus ‘the judge of actions’.<sup>210</sup> Spalding too characterised it as a ‘faculty to choose and to favour in

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<sup>206</sup> See: Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, pp. 35-36. Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, pp. 136-140. Spalding, *Religion*, p. 23. Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 75.

<sup>207</sup> See: Penelhum, ‘Butler and Human Ignorance’, pp. 136-137. Millar, ‘Butler on God and Human Nature’, pp. 297-299.

<sup>208</sup> See: Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 92. Spalding, *Religion*, pp. 64. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>209</sup> Butler, ‘Fifteen Sermons’, p. 29. As mentioned, Millar has likewise identified the principle of humanity’s liberty of action in this idea of Butler. See: Millar, ‘Butler on God and Human Nature’, pp. 297-299.

<sup>210</sup> Butler, ‘Dissertation of the Nature of Virtue’, p. 138.

my decisions one over the other'.<sup>211</sup> This conception of free will as a faculty of *iudicium* bore very close resemblance to the hamartiology and epistemology of especially Cudworth. Again, as with Cudworth and Leibniz, the freedom of will had a caveat: salvation was not simply earned through the mere performance of objectively 'good' acts, but fundamentally involved sincere faith and the assistance of God's mercy. This was of course not least important to protect the two clergymen from charges of rendering revelation irrelevant to salvation. Butler thus did consider 'the Assistance of God's Spirit ... necessary to renew' humanity.<sup>212</sup> Spalding also vehemently rejected any charge that he was 'seeking to deny the influence of divine grace', re-affirming its importance in the 'restoration of man to righteousness and felicity'.<sup>213</sup> In fact, Beutel and Macor both argue that Spalding stands out in his resolute (and typically Lutheran) opposition to Pelagianism.<sup>214</sup> *Liberum arbitrium iustum* was thus joined yet again by *fide* and *gratia*. However, Spalding did not believe that grace would be denied to anyone who had shown goodwill: 'God grants the faith which is properly necessary for beatitude unfailingly and immediately to anyone who obeys without deliberate resistance the convictions of his spirit'.<sup>215</sup> The continuity with the anthropology and hamartiology of Cudworth and Leibniz is very recognisable – not only in the mere restoration of human agency and free will, yet most crucially, in the limitations Christians encountered in the quest for salvation. Once more, difference in method did not mean that Butler and Spalding diverged from Cudworth, More, and Leibniz on the essential tenets of theology, even if they went on occasion beyond them.

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<sup>211</sup> Spalding, *Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 226.

<sup>213</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 17. For more on the cooperation between divine grace and human will in Spalding's theology, see: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 82-83. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-136. *Ibid.*, p. 229. Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, pp. 134-137.

<sup>214</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 134-135. Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, p. 123. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-139.

<sup>215</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 124.

There was therefore a strongly recognisable parallelism between the theologies of Butler and Spalding and those of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz. Partly, this may be credited to a common Platonic foundation, thanks especially to the impact of Shaftesbury on the two eighteenth-century clergymen. Yet there were other philosophical and theological influences that may account for this similarity. Ascertaining these with certainty is a difficult task, given that one works with limited source material in this context: Butler thus had most of his literary estate destroyed after his death, while the lion's share of Spalding's private papers was wrecked during the Second World War.<sup>216</sup> Their defence of a moderate, irenic theology that emphasised the importance of free will in salvation suggests that the eighteenth-century clergymen built on a similarly quintessentially Erasmian foundation as Cudworth, More, and Leibniz. As with the latter, however, it is not entirely possible to gauge to what extent Spalding and especially Butler were inspired by the work of Erasmus. Within the critical edition of Spalding's writings, Erasmus is only mentioned once: in a letter from 1776, where the German Lutheran recounts that his colleague Johann Friedrich Sigismund Augustin (1739-1818) had been thinking of releasing a new edition of the Dutch humanist's *Paraphrases*, but had eventually decided against it.<sup>217</sup> Spalding seemed to regret his colleague's reluctance to proceed with the project since he had expected it to be highly useful in exegesis.<sup>218</sup> While he was therefore familiar with Erasmus's writings and considered them worthy of exploration, it is impossible to assess how far this appreciation went. However, both Butler and Spalding were acquainted with Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), a possible medium through which they may have come to appreciate certain Christian humanist ideas of faith: Butler thus referenced Grotius's *De Veritate*

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<sup>216</sup> See: McNaughton, 'Introduction', p. xi. Ensink, *Ethik und Theologie bei Joseph Butler*, pp. 2-3. Cunliffe, 'Butler's Episcopate', pp. 38-39. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>217</sup> Spalding, *Briefe*, no. 142.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

*Religionis Christianae* in the *Analogy*, whilst Spalding cited the Remonstrant's seminal work in his university dissertation *De Calumni Juliani Apostatae*.<sup>219</sup> At the same time, given the important divergencies between Arminius's and Grotius's thought that not least Sarah Mortimer has highlighted, the Dutch philosopher may only partially account for the parallelisms between the eighteenth-century clergymen's thought with Erasmus.<sup>220</sup> Spalding's translation of Jean Le Clerc's *De l'incrédulité* in the 1740s underlines, however, that he was greatly immersed in Arminian theology more widely.<sup>221</sup> Beyond the above, it is also possible that Butler and Spalding may have owed a certain intellectual debt to the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz, and Wolff. Especially the continued influence of his early Wolffianism on Spalding is undeniable, even if he consciously sought to go beyond it in his Neology. Indeed, Beutel has suggested that the mature Spalding's theology could be considered a combination of Wolffian and Shaftesburean elements, highlighting a greater continuity in the Lutheran's thinking than many scholars have hitherto acknowledged.<sup>222</sup> Interestingly, beyond Spalding's evident appreciation of Leibniz and Wolff, his aforementioned dissertation also reveals that he was acquainted with Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*.<sup>223</sup> In Butler's case, the influence of the seventeenth-century thinkers is more difficult to verify, given the lack of evidence left to posterity. However, one may ask whether Shaftesbury again acted as a mediating influence given his well-documented debt to Cudworth and More.<sup>224</sup> A similar

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<sup>219</sup> See: Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, p. 337. Johann Joachim Spalding, 'De calumnia Juliani Apostatae in confirmationem Christianae religionis versa Exercitatio Theologica...' in Johann Joachim Spalding, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Albrecht Beutel, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 6.1 (Tübingen, 2006), p. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 20. *Ibid.*, p. 23. *Ibid.*, p. 25. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>220</sup> Sarah Mortimer, 'Religion and Enlightenment', in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (eds.), *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Chichester, 2016), pp. 347-349.

<sup>221</sup> See: Le Clerc, *Untersuchung des Unglaubens*.

<sup>222</sup> Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 32. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>223</sup> Spalding, 'De calumnia Juliani Apostatae', p. 33.

<sup>224</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 84-85. Sarah Hutton, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2015), p. 153. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Die Moralisten: Eine philosophische Rhapsodie – Eine Wiedergabe gewisser Unterhaltungen über Natur und

argument has thus been made by Beutel with view to the German Neologians more generally.<sup>225</sup> What can be said with certainty, however, is that the wide range of traditions upon which Butler and Spalding drew highlights yet another philosophical commitment they shared with their predecessors: eclecticism. Their goal too was to distil the 'true theology' from a variety of intellectual sources, from old and modern times. They simply occasionally differed on the particular thinkers they chose to draw on.

Taken together, the two eighteenth-century clergymen thus appear to have built on very similar intellectual foundations as the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz, accounting for the great compatibility of their visions of Christianity: beyond their joint appreciation of a simple Christian faith, affirmative of human free will and focused on the promotion of ethics, this seems particularly plausible in light of their endorsement of absolute goodness as the hallmark of God and Creation, in addition the eclectic method pursued by all of the cited thinkers.

## Conclusion

The eighteenth century saw the Protestant Enlightenment coming into its own, especially in Anglicanism and German Lutheranism. Between 1720 and 1790, its theology attracted an ever-greater number of thinkers, clergymen, and believers. Crucial to this achievement was that the religious thinking fostered in the universities, academies, and studies was seized upon by bishops and priests, to be put into practice in parishes and ecclesiastical governing bodies. This was a process that did not occur in isolation but was underpinned by a further expansion of the Protestant Republic of Letters, in keeping

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Moral' in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Ein Brief über den Enthusiasmus/Die Moralisten*, tr. Max Frischeisen-Köhler (Hamburg, 1980), p. 92.

<sup>225</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113.

with the general progress of Enlightenment: theologians such as Spalding not only took inspiration from ideas developed abroad but made it their declared mission to propagate them to their domestic audience in the vernacular language. Whilst the German Lutheran's translation of Butler's *Analogy* was not met with commercial success, he nonetheless managed to spread many of the Anglican's ideas – and those of many other Anglophone writers – among his fellow believers by incorporating them in his own writings. The transmission of enlightened religiosity across borders, both geographical and confessional, was thus in full flow among its Protestant practitioners. The definitive turn away from the learned languages of Latin and even French – again in parallel to enlightened thinking as a whole – opened the 'new theology' to include a broad range of middling audiences who may have previously been excluded from its discourse and benefitted the greater transition from theory to practice.

Butler and Spalding are two prime examples of this shift, not only on the basis of their biographies but their thought itself. Both had recognised that for Enlightenment theology to achieve its ambitious mission, it needed to be even more radically simplified than it already had been. First and foremost, this meant casting out much of the prolonged metaphysical discourses that many ordinary Christians would simply be unable to follow, if it did not distract them from the central purpose of their theologies. Instead, Butler and Spalding demonstrated that many of the basic intellectualist beliefs contained within, for instance, Cambridge Platonist and Leibnizian-Wolffian thought were attainable through mere observation of the world and human nature. In this context, they adopted an anthropocentrism that historians have considered one of the central leitmotifs of eighteenth-century Protestant Enlightenment theology.<sup>226</sup> Whereas much of especially Cudworth's and Leibniz's theories had centred on the general

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<sup>226</sup> See: Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, p. 76. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

character of God and the created universe, humanity and its destiny occupied the centre-stage for Butler and Spalding. Neither of them had an interest in forging a holistic system that could stand as an alternative to that of Cudworth, Leibniz or Wolff. Butler came perhaps closest to one in his *Analogy of Religion* and Spalding in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*. Yet the proper purpose of their writings was to prove humans were, as Spalding described it, 'reasonable and free creatures' who could contribute to their salvation through their own efforts.<sup>227</sup> To arrive at this conclusion, it sufficed for believers to know and understand the essential pillars of metaphysics, rather than the edifice as a whole. This was a minimalist approach they extended to other spheres of their thought: they no longer needed a system of dogma but only the quintessential truths of Christianity. In fact, as per their epistemology as inherited by Locke and Shaftesbury, there was a natural limit to human knowledge that required Christians to be merely concerned with doctrines within their actual grasp. How substantive this shift was is manifested in Spalding's own literary development when comparing his petition to the University of Rostock to his later writings: whereas the former was still following the exact scholarly style of the Republic of Letters that had marked the works of Cudworth and Leibniz, his main *oeuvre* was much closer to Butler's simple literary approach with its focus on the human condition and 'good life'. This may indeed, in keeping with historians such as Barth, Kantzenbach, Gay, and Ritchie Robertson, be argued to have been the central change in enlightened theology over the course of the eighteenth century: where the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz had intended to offer certainties based on complex proof, Butler and Spalding injected a greater dose of relativism and subjectivity into the Protestant Enlightenment that enabled them to

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<sup>227</sup> Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle*, p. 178.

pursue greater simplicity.<sup>228</sup> The transition from a rationalist to an empiricist Protestant Enlightenment thus principally involved a further reduction in the canon of doctrines. The change in epistemology and the popularist fervour of especially Spalding, however, by no means led to either him or Butler relinquishing the essential metaphysical ideas that had been at the core of the Cambridge Platonists or Leibniz. It seems patently clear that the foundations of Butler's and Spalding's Protestant Enlightenment theology 'proper' were, at their core, all but the same as those of the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz: the essential governing principles of the universe were still absolute goodness and truth since God had forged it out of an act of sheer benevolence; Creation operated on a principle of harmony; humanity was flawed, yet not least thanks to the kindness of its Creator, able to overcome sin through its powers of reasoning and free will; and they had even been endowed with divinely inspired notions of right and wrong, innate moral categories to assist them in this endeavour. The influence of Lockean empiricism on Butler and Spalding is thus perhaps comparable to that of Cartesian rationalism on Cudworth, More, and Leibniz: taking an essential theory or at least elements of it – in this case, epistemology – and adapting it to be in greater compliance with fundamental precepts of established Protestantism. In this effort, they were guided by Shaftesbury who had already dedicated himself to the task of overcoming Locke's voluntarism. For all their focus on 'experience' and the observation of nature, Butler and Spalding therefore defended the same essential metaphysical, anthropological, and indeed doctrinal concepts touted by Cudworth and Leibniz before them. This was indeed the argument of Barth: in his eyes, the much-vaunted 'anthropocentric turn' in German

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<sup>228</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 71. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92. *Ibid.*, 108-109. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-145. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 329-330. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 249-252. This was, in Gay's and Ritchie Robertson's view, a shift observable across early modern European philosophy more broadly. See: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 160-168. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-197. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 27-28. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Protestant theology, with its optimistic view of humanity and its role in the universe, was already inherent to the thought of Leibniz and Wolff, not an innovation of the Neologians.<sup>229</sup> The apogee of the Protestant Enlightenment was thus very much achieved by an intellectual evolution, rather than revolution, perhaps more so than recently acknowledged by historians. Yet for all their differences, there was a fundamental philosophical continuity tying together the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz with Butler and Spalding: all four defended a Christianity steeped in central notions of Platonic and Christian humanist thinking, forming a theological tradition stretching from the late seventeenth century all the way to the close of the eighteenth century, as not least the publication of Spalding's *Religion, eine Angelegenheit des Menschen* in 1798 testifies. By then, Protestant Enlightenment theology had largely lost its sway both in England and Lutheran Germany. Especially in Spalding's native Prussia, the death of Frederick II in 1786 and the French Revolution ushered in an age of religious reaction that meant that his reformist spirit was no longer welcome.<sup>230</sup> However, just as forms of enlightened religiosity were on the decline in Britain and the Holy Roman Empire, they were coming into their bloom elsewhere: Sweden.

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<sup>229</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 20-21. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-65. *Ibid.*, p. 89. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-146.

<sup>230</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 262-266. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding*, pp. 259-271. *Ibid.*, p. 305-306.

## VI. 'The New Reformers': The Swedish Protestant Enlightenment of Jacob Axelsson Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester*

In late 1798, Johann Joachim Spalding received a letter from a Scandinavian admirer. In broadly fluent German, a Swedish clergyman expressed his utmost gratitude to the ageing Neologian for recently welcoming his son in Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Yet the letter was not a mere expression of gratitude for Spalding's hospitality: 'Ever since I came to know your writings ... I have been moved by the wish to declare my warm esteem to you'.<sup>2</sup> He hailed the 'invaluable proofs' of Spalding's 'enlightened zeal and quest for the cause of the pure Christianity' that had not least inspired himself.<sup>3</sup> The clergyman in question was Jacob Axelsson Lindblom (1746-1819), the Bishop of Linköping and a rising star within the late eighteenth-century Church of Sweden. His admiration for the German Neologian signalled the beginning of a new age in Swedish Lutheranism. Just as the Anglican and German Lutheran Enlightenment were slowly beginning to unwind under the dual pressures of reaction and romanticism, Sweden saw the ascendancy of its own Protestant Enlightenment, as clergymen began to take note of their European brethren's ideas and practices. This movement became known as the Swedish incarnation of Neology (*neologi*) – with Lindblom as one of its prime representatives.<sup>4</sup> Among the most famous

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<sup>1</sup> Linköping Stiftsbibliotek (LiSB), *Lindblomska Brevsamlingen*, E005/Br29, Vol. 12, no. 37, unpag.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See amongst others: Edvard M. Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping* (Lund, 1905). Carl Arvid Hessler, *Stat och Religion i Upplysningstidens Sverige* (Uppsala and Stockholm, 1956), pp. 219-227. Bertil Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten 1786-1800* (Uppsala, 1966). Patrik Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen: Om lärostandet i Linköping på 1790-talet', *Scandia*, Vol. 63 (1997), pp. 47-76.

initiatives in Lindblom's quest to instil the spirit of enlightened theology in Swedish Lutheranism was the publication of the country's first theological journal, the *Journal för Prester* (Journal for Parsons). Established by Lindblom with a few collaborators in 1797, he released six issues in two years, bringing together a small but dedicated group of enlightened theologians determined to leave their mark on Swedish Lutheranism. Despite its brief lifespan, the journal offers comprehensive insights into the spirit and aims of Sweden's Protestant Enlightenment, so that many intellectual and Church historians of Sweden have relied upon it as a valuable source: in the historiography of the Gustavian Church, Lindblom, the *Journal för Prester*, and their importance for Swedish Lutheranism have thus been reviewed by Edvard Rodhe, Gottfrid Westling, Carl Arvid Hessler, Bertil Rehnberg, and, most recently, Patrik Lundell.<sup>5</sup> They have approached the Bishop's efforts to propagate enlightened Christianity in Sweden from different angles: whereas Rodhe, Westling, Hessler, and Rehnberg primarily focused upon the significance of Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester* for the Swedish Church's internal development in the late eighteenth century, Lundell has sought to establish the existence of a religious Enlightenment in Linköping, as part of an exercise in local intellectual history. Lindblom's reform work and his periodical have, however, hitherto not greatly featured in English-language scholarship, beyond isolated mentions.<sup>6</sup> Most significantly, whilst most historians acknowledged and outlined some of the foreign influences that underpinned Swedish *neologi*, Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester* have not yet properly been incorporated into the canon of transnational Religious

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<sup>5</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*. Gottfrid Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka med särskildt afseende på Linköpings stift', *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, Vol. 17 (1916), p. 159. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-189. Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 219-221. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 298-319. Sven Göransson, 'Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet', *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, Vol. 65 (1964), pp. 91-94. Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen', pp. 47-76.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism, 1700-1918* (Oxford, 1995), p. 283. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

Enlightenment historiography as exemplified by David Sorkin's work, with the existing research rarely venturing beyond the local context of Sweden.<sup>7</sup> This raises questions:

How does the Swedish Protestant Enlightenment of Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester* fit into the established understandings of religious and specifically, Protestant Enlightenment – including the one formulated in this thesis? Were there any distinctive characteristics to late eighteenth-century Swedish Enlightenment theology?

Building on the Swedish-language historiography on Lindblom and his periodical, as well as Jakob Christensson's work on the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the theology of Lindblom and his allies was not only fully aligning with Anglican and particularly German Lutheran ideas of enlightened theology, but indeed cast their mission in explicitly confessional terms, seeking to equate Protestantism with Enlightenment itself. To this end, it will offer a general outline of Sweden's religious, political, and social development during the eighteenth-century's second half in order to illuminate the factors that enabled the ascendancy of Lindblom and the Swedish Neology movement. Thereafter, the chapter will examine the programme and underlying theology of Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester*, before ultimately analysing the notions of 'Protestantism' and 'Enlightenment' that underpinned their mission.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Enhetskyrkan during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*

The ascent of Swedish Protestant Enlightenment theology would have been unthinkable had the Swedish Church, state, and society not undergone significant changes in the

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<sup>7</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 141. *Ibid.*, p. 143. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-203. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 195-197. Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 219-221. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-227. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 299-300. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303. *Ibid.*, p. 307. *Ibid.*, pp. 309-319.

<sup>8</sup> The chapter will primarily focus on the articles published in the *Afhandlingar* section of the *Journal för Prester* and a number of other writings by Lindblom.

eighteenth century's latter half. It required the solid foundations of the orthodox *enhetskyrkan* to at least wobble – which it certainly did, as the Enlightenment's spirit began to pervade the Scandinavian country even more than in Eric Benzelius the Younger's time.

This was, however, by no means a foregone conclusion: whereas many institutions and conventions of the Great Power Era fell prey to the upheavals that followed the Great Northern War, the Swedish Church – as seen in chapter four – succeeded in maintaining its mighty standing within state and society. The doctrine of the *enhetskyrkan* stood firm. This is not to say that the Swedish Church was impervious to change: again, as seen, there was a need for (limited) adaptation within Swedish Lutheran orthodoxy. Beyond the aforementioned rise of Pietism and Benzelian moderation, this especially made itself felt in the establishment of Wolffianism as Swedish Lutheranism's dominant 'school philosophy' (Rehnberg) from especially the 1740s onwards.<sup>9</sup> The origin and spirit of Swedish Wolffianism remains disputed among Swedish historians: whereas Tore Frängsmyr merely saw it as yet another weapon in the arsenal of an unenlightened Lutheran orthodoxy, Sten Lindroth argued that the so-called 'Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy' marked an important step in opening Swedish Protestantism to enlightened influences.<sup>10</sup> While he also acknowledged that Wolffianism's principal purpose was to curb the most radical excesses of Enlightenment in Sweden, there are strong grounds to contend that his verdict captured the complex reality a little better than Frängsmyr's.<sup>11</sup> Many Swedish historians have thus cited the Andreas Knös Affair of 1742 as an example of how Wolffianism served both reactionary and reforming ends in Swedish

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<sup>9</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 18. See: Tore Frängsmyr, 'Christian Wolff's Mathematical Method and its Impact on the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36/4 (1975), p. 664.

<sup>10</sup> See: Frängsmyr, 'Christian Wolff's Mathematical Method', p. 664. Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III – Frihetstiden* (4 vols., Stockholm, 1997), p. 524. *Ibid.*, pp. 550-552.

<sup>11</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 514.

Lutheranism.<sup>12</sup> The affair centred around the student Andreas Knös (1721-1799) who had incurred accusations of ‘excessively free reasoning’ (*allt för fritt raisonnera*) on questions of Protestant doctrine from the University of Uppsala’s theological faculty after he claimed that central tenets of Lutheranism could be established by mere reasoning.<sup>13</sup> The controversy that followed resulted in an official reassertion of the theological faculty’s monopoly on questions of faith in 1749 and thus, as Lindroth asserts, the continued dominance of Swedish Lutheran orthodoxy.<sup>14</sup> Yet crucially, some Swedish historians see it as an intra-Wolffian dispute: Harry Lenhammar thus argues that Knös and his mentor Johan Ihre (1707-1780) represented the more classical enlightened Wolffianism propagated in Germany, while his detractors principally subscribed to the orthodox Wolffian school.<sup>15</sup> However late and limited, Wolffianism may thus be considered an initial incursion of enlightened religious thinking into Swedish Lutheranism – even if its reactionary potential is undisputed.

It was not the only cautious inroad of Enlightenment into Sweden during the Age of Liberty: Benzelius’s commitment to promote modern sciences in the country thus began to bear remarkable fruits, with Carl von Linné (1707-1778) and Anders Celsius (1701-1744) making genuinely ground-breaking discoveries. According to Christensson, this flow and emergence of new ideas into and within Sweden was by no means restricted to the study of nature: he thus highlights that Sweden’s quasi-republican government was beginning to win ‘the applause of the French Enlightenment philosophers’.<sup>16</sup> This even included the

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<sup>12</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 524-527. Harry Lenhammar, ‘Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplýsningens Tid’ in Harry Lenhammar (ed.), *Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplýsningens Tid* (8 vols., Trelleborg, 2017), pp. 96-98. Tore Frängsmyr, ‘The Enlightenment in Sweden’ in Roy Porter and Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 167-168. Lindroth especially offers a quite detailed account of the affair.

<sup>13</sup> As cited in: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 525. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 524-526.

<sup>14</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 527.

<sup>15</sup> Lenhammar, ‘Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.’, pp. 96-97.

<sup>16</sup> Jakob Christensson, ‘Idéhistorisk inledning’ in Jakob Christensson (ed.), *Signums Svenska Kulturhistoria – Frihetstiden* (9 vols., Lund, 2006), p. 11.

*Encyclopédie* which exclaimed that '[t]he Swedes ... have become one of the most enlightened (*éclairées*) nations of the North and one of the freest European peoples who have kings'.<sup>17</sup> The admiration was certainly reciprocal: English, German, and French philosophers were themselves, as Westling, Christensson, and Alexander Kraus emphasise, widely read in Sweden from the very turn of the century onwards.<sup>18</sup> In the 1760s, churchman Anders Chydenius (1729-1803) instigated an abolition of censorship which, as Christensson put it, 'gave Sweden in one swoop one of Europe's freest climates for [the expression of] opinion[s]'.<sup>19</sup> All these initiatives were inspired by a utilitarian creed closely linked to the economic theory of '*utilism*' which historians such as Bo Lindberg and Frängsmyr consider the ruling ideology of *frihetstidens* Sweden: already visible in the work of Benzelius's scientific societies, ideas were scrutinised as to whether they were 'useful', that is if they would demonstrably maximise the efficiency and welfare of Swedish state and society.<sup>20</sup> This mindset even extended to the Church, as Frängsmyr and Lenhammar have highlighted: clergymen were thus encouraged to ask themselves: 'What can a priest do for the promotion of economic life?'.<sup>21</sup>

Crucially, as again emphasised by Lindroth and Rehnberg, this brand of scientific Enlightenment could coexist with the Swedish Church's orthodox Lutheranism.<sup>22</sup> In fact, as Lindroth emphasised, most prominent figures of the *frihetstidens* proto-

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<sup>17</sup> As cited in: Alexander Kraus, 'Nordlichter der Vernunft oder die Aufklärung in Skandinavien' in Alexander Kraus and Andreas Renner (eds.), *Orte eigener Vernunft – Europäische Aufklärung jenseits der Zentren* (Frankfurt and New York, 2008), p. 92. See also: Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), p. 684.

<sup>18</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 118. Christensson, 'Idéhistorisk inledning', p. 14. Kraus, 'Nordlichter der Vernunft', pp. 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> Christensson, 'Idéhistorisk inledning', pp. 11-12. *Ibid.*, p. 12. See also: Kraus, 'Nordlichter der Vernunft', p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> See: Bo Lindberg, *De lärdes modersmål: latin, humanism och vetenskap i 1700-talets Sverige* (Gothenburg, 1984), p. 79. Tore Frängsmyr, 'Den gudomliga ekonomin – Religion och hushållning i 1700-talets Sverige', *Lychnos: Lärdomshistoriska samfundets årsbok* (1971/72), pp. 219-220.

<sup>21</sup> Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 103. See also: Frängsmyr, 'Den gudomliga ekonomin', p. 244.

<sup>22</sup> See: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 18. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 509.

Enlightenment were pious Lutherans, if not clergymen themselves.<sup>23</sup> Benzelius was a stellar example of this but it was true of other spheres of knowledge too: Sven Göransson thus highlighted that the advances in natural law theory that influenced the Age of Liberty's constitution were not seen to infringe the Swedish Church's stringent orthodoxy, even if it granted greater legitimacy to the use of reason.<sup>24</sup> The cornerstone of this mentality could be summarised by the liberal 1766 printing laws which contained one notable exception: publications that trespassed onto the territory of Christian doctrine remained banned.<sup>25</sup> While the Enlightenment thus began to take root in the Scandinavian country, this process was evidently cautious and largely bypassed the religious realm. For this to change, a quite fundamental shift was needed. Traditionally, Swedish historians have credited one man for enabling this shift: King Gustavus III (1746-1792).

In 1772, Gustavus III (1746-1792) put an abrupt yet peaceful end to half a century of *Riksdag* rule and reinstated the monarchy as the kingdom's centre of power. This regime change was, according to Lenhammar, largely positively received by the clergy – crucially because they did not believe that the return to absolutism would radically alter the dominance of Lutheran orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup> They were mistaken: for the king harboured very strong enlightened ambitions, to the point where an academic consensus has formed that considers Gustavus III's enlightened absolutism as the true catalyst of the Swedish Enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, historians have coined the term of 'the Gustavian Enlightenment' (*Gustavianska Upplysningen*) to describe this Swedish incarnation of

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<sup>23</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 509. See also: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 43. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>24</sup> Göransson, 'Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet', p. 85.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief summary of the reform, see: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>26</sup> Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> See for a brief account of the standard interpretation: Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV – Gustavianska Tiden* (4 vols., Stockholm, 1981), pp. 166-176.

Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> Yet most historians argue that Gustavus not only increased the scope of Swedish luminary thinking, but fundamentally changed its direction: his claim to fame in establishing a Swedish Enlightenment (or, depending on the historian, a semblance of it) is principally based on his promotion of French *philosophie* in his kingdom.<sup>29</sup> As Lindroth recounted, Queen Ulrika Louisa (1720-1782) had made sure that her son imbibed the French *philosophes* such as Voltaire from a very early age.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, as is often stressed, he was staying in Paris to meet with many of his literary heroes when he received the news of his father's death and need to return to Stockholm.<sup>31</sup> Despite the fact that Gustavus found these Parisian encounters to be thoroughly underwhelming – he lamented that the writers were 'more pleasant to read than to meet' – this did nothing to dampen his enlightened ambitions for his kingdom after assuming the throne.<sup>32</sup> Naturally, the king's enlightened ambitions could not rest on his shoulders alone. Johan Henrik Kellgren (1751-1795) and Nils von Rosenstein (1752-1824) are but two of the most commonly cited names in supporting the king's efforts to promote the Swedish *Lumières*.<sup>33</sup> Despite this development seemingly building on the enlightened foundations laid during the *frihetstid*, historians have tended to depict their creeds as largely antagonistic: according to Lindberg, the first generation of modernisers felt marginalised as the French Enlightenment's aesthetics took the centre stage, while many Gustavian Enlightenment figures dismissed their forebears as 'drab, tedious, and lost in the austere study of detail'.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly, this new Francophile Enlightenment in Sweden was no longer inherently in harmony with the Church and Lutheran orthodoxy,

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<sup>28</sup> See amongst others: *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>29</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 166. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 140. Kraus, 'Nordlichter der Vernunft', pp. 96-97.

<sup>30</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>31</sup> Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 124.

<sup>32</sup> As cited in: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 173.

<sup>33</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 140-143. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 177-193.

<sup>34</sup> Lindberg, *De lärdes modersmål*, p. 129. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

as many historians contend that it introduced hitherto nearly unthinkable ideas such as Deism and enlightened anti-clericalism into Swedish religious life.<sup>35</sup> Lindroth thus pointed to the contempt Kellgren showed for Christianity and its theological foundations in general, culminating in his utterance: 'Every faith is a cult'.<sup>36</sup> The Church's resulting fears of irreligion were compounded by events in the rest of Europe, with scholars citing the French Revolution as the principal source of anxiety among Swedish clerics.<sup>37</sup> Whilst these concerns were most certainly exaggerated, it shows that there was movement within the Swedish Church. It was no longer exempt from the tide of enlightened ideas.

Crucially, however, fomenting a new intellectual climate was only the beginning of Gustavus III's enlightened ambitions: in the two decades of his reign, he launched many reform efforts destined to modernise, simplify, and streamline Swedish religious life. In 1781 and 1782, Gustavus thus issued Toleration Edicts that established the right of foreign Catholics and Jews to settle in Sweden.<sup>38</sup> The Church of Sweden's internal affairs were not immune to his reform zeal either: ahead of Sweden's impending Reformation jubilee of 1793 and, according to Lenhammar, after an investigation that reported major grievances within the Swedish Church, Gustavus thus commissioned a new catechism, a new Bible translation, a new hymnal, and a new Church agenda.<sup>39</sup> As with Frederician

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<sup>35</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 120-123. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 167. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-175. Poul Georg Lindhardt, *Skandinavische Kirchengeschichte seit dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1982), p. 286.

<sup>36</sup> As cited in: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 185.

<sup>37</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 154-155. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 168. Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, pp. 305-306. For a more general discussion surrounding clerical anxieties over irreligion, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 118-119. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-156. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223. Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, p. 218.

<sup>38</sup> See: Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', pp. 140-145.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. For Liliestråle's orthodox credentials, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 149-150. *Ibid.*, p. 165. For a more detailed description of the individual reform efforts, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 134-138. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158. *Ibid.*, p. 210. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-227. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', pp. 128-152. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-178. Lindhardt, *Skandinavische Kirchengeschichte*, p. 287.

and Josephinist enlightened absolutism, this served a dual purpose: for one, it was an evident attempt to bring the Church closer under royal control. Yet there is also widespread historiographical consensus that Gustavus III also genuinely sought to convert some of his philosophical convictions into religious policy.<sup>40</sup> Naturally, he needed allies within the Church to achieve this ambition. Consequently, as Lenhammar argues, the king began to assert greater control over clerical appointments to promote clerics who were closer to his enlightened temperament.<sup>41</sup> Through this initiative, Gustavus laid the foundations for a reformist momentum within the Swedish Church: Neology. Among the enlightened clerics to benefit from royal patronage were thus Olof Wallquist (1755-1800), Uno von Troil (1746-1803) – and Lindblom.<sup>42</sup> Lindblom had an unusual career path for a clergyman: the offspring of a parson, he followed a plethora of interests, few of which had a direct, if any, relation to theology. According to his autobiographical sketch, he became an ardent lover of Latin– a language he had mastered by the age of 10 – at his boarding school and devoured classical writers.<sup>43</sup> While studying under none other than von Linné at Uppsala University, Lindblom developed an appreciation for the sciences that compelled him to toy with the thought of dedicating his life to botany and zoology.<sup>44</sup> After completing his studies in 1770, he opted for a position as lecturer at Uppsala where he eagerly pursued his classical studies before Gustavus spotted him as a worthy contender for the bishopric of Linköping in 1786. After an (in Rodhe’s estimation) all but rigged election, Lindblom transitioned from the

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<sup>40</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 120-123. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 171-172. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 134. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>41</sup> See: Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 149. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-164. See also: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 120-121.

<sup>42</sup> See: Lenhammar, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.*, p. 149. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-164. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 85. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 121.

<sup>43</sup> Jacob Axelsson Lindblom, 'Jacob Axelsson Lindbloms Självbiografiska Anteckningar från Barndoms- och Studieåren', *Äldre Svenska Biografer*, Vol. 7-8 (1925), p. 23. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

humanities and social sciences to priesthood.<sup>45</sup> Thus, ‘without having thought about it’, as Lindblom confessed to Spalding, he was, at ‘40 years of age, appointed as Bishop from a philosophical professorship’.<sup>46</sup> Despite his distinguished career, culminating in his appointment as Archbishop of Uppsala in 1805, Lindblom never fully lost the blemish of the ‘lateral entrant’ into priesthood. In his commemorative eulogy of the late Archbishop, Samuel Hedborn (1783-1849) thus acknowledged that ‘Lindblom was not a theologian in the stricter meaning of the word’.<sup>47</sup> People less positively inclined towards Lindblom even circulated a rumour that the new bishop ‘did not even own a Bible’ at the time of his consecration, as many historians have recounted.<sup>48</sup> Though Gustav Åsbrink and Knut Westmann acknowledged that this claim was very likely false and in fact compelled Lindblom to build ‘a collection of Bibles in all languages’ which he then bequeathed to posterity in repudiation of his critics, the bishop’s status as a theological amateur is generally accepted among scholars.<sup>49</sup> In fact, Lindblom himself appears to have been acutely aware of the gaps in his theological education – and it compelled him to seek refuge in the ideas of Spalding’s Neology: ‘Without experience of my own, your writings have served me as guideline’ he thus wrote to the Prussian Enlightenment theologian.<sup>50</sup> Whilst this was possibly exaggerated flattery, there is little doubt that Spalding’s works were a major inspiration to Lindblom: in the absence of deeper

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<sup>45</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 39-48. For a broader comment on clerical appointments in eighteenth-century Sweden, see: Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, pp. 125-126.

<sup>46</sup> LiSB, E005/Br29, Vol. 12, no. 37, unpag.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver ärke-biskopen, prokansleren ... Jacob Axelsson Lindblom* (Stockholm, 1819), p. 29.

<sup>48</sup> Gustav Åsbrink and Knut B. Westmann, *Svea rikets ärkebiskopar från 1164 till nuvarande tid* (Stockholm, 1935), p. 377. Göran Hägg, *Gud i Sverige* (Stockholm, 2010), p. 305.

<sup>49</sup> Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea rikets ärkebiskopar*, p. 377. For the verdict of historians on Lindblom’s merits as a theologian (or lack thereof), see amongst others: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 211-212. Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, pp. 179-180. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea rikets ärkebiskopar*, p. 379. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296. Henrik Gladh, ‘Jacob Lindblom’, *Svenskt Biografiskt lexikon*, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/10473> (04 Nov 2019). Hägg, *Gud i Sverige*, p. 305.

<sup>50</sup> LiSB, E005/Br29, Vol. 12, no. 37, unpag.

theological erudition, Lindblom chose to fully dedicate himself to the practical implementation of the Protestant Enlightenment he had learned from Spalding and others. According to Hedborn, Lindblom thus did not leave many original scholarly works since he dedicated most of his waking hours to changing the Swedish Lutheran Church.<sup>51</sup> His restless quest for reform has defined his standing among contemporaries and historians alike: he was not an intellectual innovator, but a man of action.<sup>52</sup>

It is not entirely clear when Lindblom first came into contact with enlightened Protestant ideas, though he probably encountered them prior to his entry into priesthood: in 1785, he thus translated *Trostgründe wider ein sieches Leben* (Reasons for comfort in defiance of an infirm life) by the German *Aufklärer* Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769) into Swedish.<sup>53</sup> Particularly Rodhe has emphasised the influence of Gellert on Lindblom's religiosity, citing letters that the young Swede wrote in praise of and directly to his German idol.<sup>54</sup> Rodhe also noted that Lindblom had also been immersed in enlightened literature – including Voltaire and the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* of Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811) – before Gustavus poached him for the Linköping bishopric.<sup>55</sup> Especially Lindblom's interest in the *ADB* could account for his introduction to enlightened religiosity since Nicolai was very close to the Neologian circles in Prussia, most notably Spalding.<sup>56</sup> Closer to home, it is notable that Ihre, the man who presided over the contentious Knös thesis, was an important figure in

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<sup>51</sup> Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelson Lindblom*, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 197. *Ibid.*, p. 211-212. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 134-138. *Ibid.*, p. 179-181. *Ibid.*, p. 189. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea rikets ärkebiskopar*, p. 379. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296. Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'.

<sup>53</sup> See: Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, *Om tröst för sjuka*, tr. Jacob Axelsson Lindblom (Uppsala, 1785).

<sup>54</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>56</sup> See: Albrecht Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding – Meistertheologe der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2014), pp. 137-138.

Lindblom's years at Uppsala.<sup>57</sup> Whatever the precise source of his convictions, their foundations were apparently already in place by the time of his appointment as bishop, allowing him to smoothly proceed to act on them. Not least given his family background, Lindblom was in more than one respect predestined to the role of the Swedish clergy's practical reformer: the Lindbloms appear to have been excellently connected within the Swedish Church's upper echelons. This is perhaps best evidenced by an anecdote from Lindblom's schooldays, recorded in his autobiographical sketch: a teacher who subjected him to an unjustified corporal punishment almost faced disciplinary consequences from the then Bishop of Linköping, Petrus Filenius (1704-1780), after his wife Ulrica Benzelstierna (1725-1766) – a friend of the pupil's parents – reported that he had 'abused the young Lindblom'.<sup>58</sup> It is certainly noteworthy that Lindblom's family entertained such close connections with the Swedish episcopacy and indeed the prestigious Benzelstierna family. With family renown came local advantage: Lindblom had spent much of his youth in Linköping and could – according to Hedborn, Rodhe, and Lindblom himself – rely on a wide network of contacts there.<sup>59</sup> Whilst not a priest by training therefore, he was intimately acquainted with the realities of clerical life and could rely on strong connections within the diocese. This was likely also of crucial help to him after Gustavus was assassinated in 1792 and replaced by the more orthodox Gustavus IV Adolphus (1778-1837). Whilst the rigidity of the king's religious regime is debated among historians, it speaks for Lindblom's aptness at working within the Swedish Church's power structures that he not only secured his position, but eventually

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<sup>57</sup> See: Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelsson Lindblom*, p. 18. Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 13-15. Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'.

<sup>58</sup> Lindblom, 'Själviografiska anteckningar', p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 39. Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelsson Lindblom*, p. 28. Jacob Axelsson Lindblom, 'Afsked till Presterskapet i Linköpings Stift af ... Jac. Ax. Lindblom.' in *Slutet af Prestmötet i Linköping, den 9 Oktober 1805* (Linköping, 1806), p. 9.

rose to the position of Archbishop under him.<sup>60</sup> He was thus sufficiently shielded to pursue his ambitious work to renew Swedish Lutheranism, even as he faced a newly emboldened conservative opposition.

Historians have identified these efforts as two-fold: first, Lindblom greatly focused on practical changes to Swedish church life.<sup>61</sup> In his capacities as bishop and archbishop, he thus oversaw a variety of liturgical and educational reforms.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, Lindblom scholars have emphasised his services to disseminating enlightened theology within the Swedish Church.<sup>63</sup> This he once again achieved again by two means: initially, by undertaking and commissioning the translation of German theological works – including Spalding's *Über die Nutzbarkeit des Predigtamtes und Deren Beförderung* (On the Utility of the Preaching Office and its Promotion – 1772) and *Religion, a Human Affair* which were published in Swedish in 1796 and 1799 respectively.<sup>64</sup> This was a feat that he enthusiastically relayed to Spalding in his letter of 1797, where he also thanked the Prussian for handing his son a copy of *Religion, a Human Affair* which became the basis for the Swedish edition that appeared two years later.<sup>65</sup> However, the arguably most

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<sup>60</sup> For a brief summary of the debate over Gustavus IV Adolphus's religious policy, see: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 204-209. For Rehnberg's own more nuanced view, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 457-459. For a brief classical account of Gustavus IV Adolphus's position on religion in English, see: Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, p. 221. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-225. Lundell has also questioned the king's depiction as an unreconstructed reactionary. See: Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen', p. 59.

<sup>61</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 180-200. Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, p. 283. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea Rikes ärkebiskopar*, p. 379. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>62</sup> See amongst others: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 180-200. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea Rikes ärkebiskopar*, p. 379. *Ibid.*, p. 381-382. Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, p. 283. Dick Helander, *Den Lindblomska Katekesen* (Stockholm, 1947). Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen', pp. 62-65.

<sup>63</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 180. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201. Åsbrink and Westmann, *Svea rikes ärkebiskopar*, p. 379. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296. Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'.

<sup>64</sup> See: Johann Joachim Spalding, *Om prediko-ämbetets nytta och huru den befordras*, tr. Johann Luttemann (Copenhagen, 1796). Johann Joachim Spalding, *Religion, en Angelägenhet för Människan*, tr. Johann Luttemann (Nyköping, 1799). For more on Lindblom's translation work, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 156. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 296-298.

<sup>65</sup> LiSB, E005/Br29, Vol. 12, no. 37, unpag.

significant means which the bishop chose to propagate the ‘new theology’ was launching the *Journal för Prester*. In the periodical, he promoted the works of foreign Enlightenment theologians and offered a forum for Swedish Lutherans to indulge the spirit of the age. The enlightened public of Sweden greatly welcomed this initiative: the *Journal för Svensk Litteratur* (Journal for Swedish Literature) thus glowingly praised the periodical for ‘[breaking] the ice’ of Swedish Lutheranism’s ‘dogmatic intolerance’, even if it found most articles in the journal’s first volume wanting, if not outrightly mediocre.<sup>66</sup> Lindblom and his associates did not get much of an opportunity to act upon this criticism: despite the advances made by Swedish Protestantism in the Gustavian period, the intellectual atmosphere was not amenable enough for the project to last much longer than two years. Rodhe and Rehnberg have recounted the events behind the *Journal för Prester*’s closure in great detail: according to them, a cabal of orthodox Lutheran clergy pressured Lindblom and his fellow editors from 1798 onwards.<sup>67</sup> After successfully lobbying Gustavus IV Adolphus to issue a Royal Letter that amounted to all but a repudiation of the Bishop of Linköping’s ideas in 1799, Lindblom decided to discontinue the *Journal för Prester* that same year.<sup>68</sup>

### The Promotion of German Enlightenment Theology by Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester*

The fierceness of orthodox opposition to Lindblom’s publishing enterprise raises the question of how radical the objectives and ideas promoted of the Bishop and his allies

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<sup>66</sup> *Journal för Svensk Litteratur*, Vol. 2 (1798), p. 307. *Ibid.*, p. 310. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 307-311.

<sup>67</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 207-212. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 372-441. See also: Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, pp. 187-188. For an English summary, see: Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>68</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 211. See also: Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, p. 221.

were, especially compared to those of the German Neologians who had inspired his mission to begin with.

It comes as little surprise that Rehnberg identified the promotion of practical religious reform as one of the chief aims of the *Journal för Prester*.<sup>69</sup> In and of itself, this was not worthy of condemnation: there is a broad consensus among Swedish historians that Lutherans of all theological camps were concerned by a rise in heterodoxy, religious indifference, and ‘unbelief’ (*otro*) that they sought to combat through a renovation of the Church.<sup>70</sup> Yet Lindblom and the contributors to the *Journal för Prester* had a very clear-eyed view of the threats the Church faced: to them, Deism was a lesser problem in Sweden than in other European countries, with one article soberly ascertaining that ‘Our country is certainly not overflowing with so-called free-thinkers who ... question the dear truths of religion’.<sup>71</sup> This was echoed in another piece by Johan Åström (1767-1844) who saw dangers in both extremes of Deism and ‘enthusiasm’ (*svärmeriet*), whilst decidedly arguing that ‘reason has still not been as abused by the free-thinkers, as revelation by unreasonable enthusiasts’.<sup>72</sup> More than anything, however, he believed that these dangers were eclipsed by the threat of a declining piety: ‘in particular among the higher popular classes, religion in general and Christendom in particular are often seen, if not with contempt, at least with ... indifference’.<sup>73</sup> This increasing disregard for the Church and its faith was, in their eyes, in no small part caused and fuelled by the partly lamentable state of its representatives and doctrine. Already as a schoolchild, Lindblom

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<sup>69</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 300. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>70</sup> See: Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, pp. 118-119. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-157. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223. Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 217-219. Lenhammar, ‘Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.’, pp. 135-137. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>71</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), p. 91. In this assessment, the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theologians appear to be broadly in line with modern historians. See: Lundell, ‘Upplysningen i provinsen’, p. 61.

<sup>72</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 339. Rodhe identified Åström as the author of the piece. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 207.

<sup>73</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 324.

had experienced the gloom and absurdity often associated with Lutheran orthodoxy: in his autobiographical sketch, he recalled that the services he attended as a schoolchild left him 'wholly wistful upon the first entry, so that I burst into tears'.<sup>74</sup> However, he also saw the comical facet of the priest's absurd theatrics while delivering the sermon.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, the young Lindblom found himself 'for most of the service, either laughing or weeping'.<sup>76</sup> In his position as bishop, he was, according to Rodhe, highly alarmed by the letters of a layperson who informed him of a variety of grievances at his local church.<sup>77</sup> The dissatisfaction of the anonymous writer especially centred on the falling standards within the Swedish Church:

Many priests step forward to the altar and onto the pulpit, the two holiest places, with brown boots, brown coat, red unkempt wig, unshaven, uncouth, maybe unwashed, impure collar. His attentiveness to his own cleanliness and neatness is matched with that of the Church.<sup>78</sup>

Beyond such surface-level observations, the anonymous correspondent highlighted many substantive concerns with the theology the Swedish laity was exposed to during services: 'We poor country peasants ... who have been flooded by threats of hell and the eternal sulfuric streams, may never hear something which serves the betterment of customs'.<sup>79</sup> Though he considered a share of them exaggerations, Rodhe acknowledged that there was sufficient credibility to some complaints raised by the correspondent.<sup>80</sup>

Under the impression of this worrying state of affairs, Lindblom had a very clear goal: to improve the Church of Sweden from top to bottom – including the clergy. This was a point Lindblom particularly emphasised in an address to the Linköping clergy in 1793:

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<sup>74</sup> Lindblom, 'Själviografiska anteckningar', p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 176-179.

<sup>78</sup> As cited in: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>79</sup> As cited in: *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>80</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 178.

‘Yet above all, the betterment we want to bring about in others begins with ourselves’.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, Lindblom and the journal contributors were not afraid to criticise their own clerical estate: Lindblom’s eventual successor as Archbishop of Uppsala, Carl von Rosenstein (1752-1824), thus acknowledged in an article that the clergy had historically proved itself guilty of corruption and that many entrants into the Church service were not morally suitable for the priesthood.<sup>82</sup> Carl Gustaf Leopold (1756-1829) – a non-clerical ally of the Swedish Neologians – chose particularly drastic words, ascertaining that ‘our preachers commonly enter the calling, often with highly mediocre natural gifts and even lesser resources of understanding and skills’.<sup>83</sup> Clerical training reform therefore became, as Rehnberg highlights, a pivotal aim of the journal.<sup>84</sup> The suggested remedies for this malaise were manifold, including raising the age of clerical ordination and a more severe treatment of clerical misconduct in law.<sup>85</sup> Two pieces saw the key to the clergy’s improvement in the ‘priestly meetings’ (*prestmöte*): these were supposedly regular assemblies of the local clergy, organised and presided over by the bishop of their respective diocese.<sup>86</sup> Despite being a central feature of Swedish Church governance, these meetings had been held rather irregularly in the past and thus yielded much of their practical value, according to the Finnish Neologian Jacob Tengström (1735-1823).<sup>87</sup> In their view, the continuing education and control of local clergy could be significantly

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<sup>81</sup> Jacob Axelsson Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut i Linköping d. 12 Sept. 1793* (Linköping, 1794), p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 167. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Rodhe identified von Rosenstein as the author of this piece. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 207.

<sup>83</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 2. Rodhe identified Leopold as the author of the piece. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 205. For Leopold’s background, see: Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, p. 131. *Ibid.*, p. 139-144. Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 221-223.

<sup>84</sup> See: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 305.

<sup>85</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 177. *Ibid.*, p. 178-179.

<sup>86</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. p. 30. *Ibid.*, 64-67.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67. Rodhe identified Tengström as the author of the piece in question. See Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 206. For more on Tengström, see also: Magnus Gottfrid Schybergson, ‘Tengström. 1. Jakob T.’, *Nordisk Familjebok – Konversationslexikon och Realencyklopedi, Vol. 28: SYRTEN-VIKARNA, 2nd edn* (38 vols., Stockholm, 1919), pp. 839-843.

improved by these conventions: ‘The more often these priestly meetings are called together, the sooner shall Enlightenment and the critical spirit (*pröfningsandan*) spread itself among the estate’s members’.<sup>88</sup> Even this clerical self-criticism and calls for training reform were not exclusive to the periodical, however: as Rehnberg wrote, calls for the clergy’s improvement had already been growing within the Swedish Church during the Age of Liberty.<sup>89</sup> Again, Lindblom and his collaborators were not overly straying from the mainstream.

Naturally, however, there were two sides to Christian education: for Lindblom and his collaborators, clerical education was merely a means towards an even greater end, namely the provision of proper instruction to the laity. This was a central plank of Lindblom’s understanding of the clergy, as he stated in his 1793 speech: ‘We are called not to govern over God’s congregation without instructing them’.<sup>90</sup> This was echoed even more explicitly in the *Journal för Prester*: ‘May each and every priest remember that he is an instrument in the hand of a higher power, destined to spread Enlightenment and ennoble the morality of humans’.<sup>91</sup> Beyond improving the quality of their teachers, the Swedish Protestant Enlightenment reformers sought, as Rehnberg again highlights, foremost to improve the quality of teaching materials.<sup>92</sup> This was considered a matter of urgency, since, according to Tengström, nearly all of them were in dire need of overhaul:

Our general public has already had to miss for a long time a new Bible translation, a more useful and complete handbook, improved church songs, and both catechisms and theological textbooks that are consistent with the progress in Enlightenment of the [present] age<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 30. See also: *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>89</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 493. For a further review of the concerns over the state of eighteenth-century Swedish clergy in, see: Westling, ‘Om ”upplysningstidens” svenska kyrka’, pp. 125-130.

<sup>90</sup> Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, p. 18.

<sup>91</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 24.

<sup>92</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 306-308.

<sup>93</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 204. Rodhe identified Tengström as the author of the piece. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 207.

Yet the arguably most important medium to transmit Christian teachings to believers was preaching. Lindblom singled it out as a crucial moment in the liturgy to the Linköping clergy in 1793: 'We must never forget that the time we spend in the pulpit is the only one during the week during which the flock entrusted to us ... can receive tuition' and 'to hear the path of salvation out of our mouths'.<sup>94</sup> Preachers were hence urged to rise to the occasion: 'Shall we then, instead of [offering them] important, practicable, and satisfying teachings, fob them off with useless, futile, and inadequate observations?'.<sup>95</sup> It appears consequently only logical that Lindblom placed a special focus on the art of preaching in his journal: each issue thus included at least two sermons, the *Homiletiska Utkast* (homiletic excerpts), and many essays offered suggestions for preaching reform. Mostly, authors appealed for greater simplicity – though not simplification – in preaching, contending that it had to be of practical utility for their audience: as Leopold put it, sermons should offer instructions 'in Religion and teachings in the conduct of life'.<sup>96</sup> Yet while the periodical's radical agenda for church reform may have caused some unease among more conservative clergy members, it was not the main reason why it was forced to shut down.

What caused the Lutheran orthodox uproar was less Lindblom's practical programme, but the theology underpinning it, as becomes clear when reading the objections of Lindblom's detractors to the *Journal för Prester*.<sup>97</sup> Chief among them was the Bishop of Lund, Petrus Munck (1732-1803), who, as Rodhe and Rehnberg recounted, openly accused his colleague in Linköping in early 1798 of opening the door to 'socinianism' in

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<sup>94</sup> Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 208-212. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 208. For more on the Lutheran orthodox critique of Lindblom, the *Journal för Prester*, and Neology in Sweden, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 186-187. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-208. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

Sweden.<sup>98</sup> In a letter to another brethren, Munck became even more explicit, comparing Lindblom's heterodoxy to that of two seventeenth-century clergymen who were disciplined by the Swedish Church for allegedly supporting for syncretism:

I have now received the first issue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of the priest journal ... Bishop Johannes Matthiae and Terserus left the calling for much less zest for action and their error was much less dangerous ... This newspaper should be prohibited<sup>99</sup>

More worryingly for Lindblom, Munck was not alone, as Rodhe stressed: even his friend and fellow reformist Wallquist expressed concerns that Lindblom's ideas were veering towards a '*purus naturalismus*' at odds with the primacy of revelation.<sup>100</sup> Clearly therefore, it was the theology of the *Journal för Prester* that rendered it unacceptable to the orthodox camp. Yet what kind of theology was it? As the moniker of 'Neology' suggests, the movement spearheaded by Lindblom has largely been considered a 'German import article' (Lundell) in the existing historiography.<sup>101</sup> Scholars have especially focused on Lindblom in this context, with Henrik Gladh stating that the Bishop 'listened first and foremost to voices heard in the German religious debates'.<sup>102</sup> Given his engagement with Spalding, this does not appear overly surprising. However, historians have equally contended that the periodical was primarily injecting German ideas into the Swedish theological mainstream.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> As cited in: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 209. See also: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 394-396.

<sup>99</sup> As cited in: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 210.

<sup>100</sup> As cited in: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 217. See also: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 182-186.

<sup>101</sup> Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen', p. 52. See also: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 143. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 117. *Ibid.*, p. 161-162. *Ibid.*, p. 168. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-172. *Ibid.*, p. 174. *Ibid.*, p. 213. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296. Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'. Jakob Christensson, *Lyckoriket – Studier i Svensk Upplysning* (Stockholm, 1996), p. 367.

<sup>102</sup> Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'. See also: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 211-212. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 181. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 295-296.

<sup>103</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 202-203. *Ibid.*, p. 205. Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 180-182. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 299-300. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303. *Ibid.*, p. 307. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

A cursory reading of the *Journal för Prester* appears to confirm this impression. This begins on a purely formal level: according to Rodhe, Lindblom was especially inspired to this venture by German outlets of the same genre.<sup>104</sup> One of the greatest was most likely the *Neue Journal für Prediger* (New Journal for Preachers) which fulfilled much the same purpose for German Protestantism as the *Journal för Prester* would in the Swedish context.<sup>105</sup> The magazine's opening editorial, penned by Johan Stenhammar (1769-1799), did not make a secret of the fact that its publishers were merely walking in the footsteps of their 'brethren in faith in other countries'.<sup>106</sup> The hitherto stringent censorship meant that, whilst the concept of a theological journal was evidently well-known and proved elsewhere, it was a novelty in the Swedish context – one which its editors considered long overdue: 'why refrain any longer from enjoying the fruit of their useful works and add to those the results of our own research?'.<sup>107</sup> The journal's structure was also mirroring wider trends in Enlightenment Europe: the first section, titled *Afhandlingar* (essays), consisted of excerpts from recently published treatises and short essays produced for the publication. Most of these writings centred on practical subjects such as liturgy, homiletics, and pedagogy. The second section of the journal was *Recensioner* (reviews) which discussed recently published theological literature. This was followed by the aforementioned *Homiletiska utkast*, that is extracts from recent sermons. A journal edition would invariably end with the *Strödda Underrättelser* (miscellaneous news) which offered a glimpse into important events and developments across Sweden and Europe. Whilst this undeniably demonstrates the influence of foreign examples, this particular aspect should not be excessively laboured: as historians such as Lindroth outlined, the

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<sup>104</sup> See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 202.

<sup>105</sup> This impression is compounded by the fact that a few of the articles of the first issues were translations from the *Neue Journal für Prediger*. See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 43-50.

<sup>106</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), unpag. Rodhe identified Stenhammar as the author. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 203.

<sup>107</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), unpag.

concept of an Enlightenment journal was already tried and tested in Sweden, most notably through Kellgren's *Stockholms Posten*.<sup>108</sup> In fact, Lenhammar argues that the journals created in the wake of the liberal printing laws of 1766 had already deprived Sweden's theological faculties of their monopoly on the debate of divine questions by discussing theological subjects.<sup>109</sup> This became even more pronounced after the death of Gustavus, as some of the restrictions to free expression imposed in the wake of the French Revolution were undone: this was, according to Westling and Rehnberg, instrumental in enabling the blossoming of a whole new generation of Swedish journals such as the *Extra Posten* and *Läsning i blandade ämnen* which actively partook in religious debates.<sup>110</sup> At least in its conception therefore, the *Journal för Prester* constituted merely the next logical step in the development of the Swedish literary and religious sphere – a convergence of Swedish and wider European experiences.

The immense sway of the German Protestant Enlightenment for Lindblom and his allies does become apparent in its contents, however: especially in the early issues, most *afhandlingar* were translations from German. These were either excerpts from recently published books or articles that had originally appeared in other journals, including the *Neue Journal für Prediger*.<sup>111</sup> The pre-dominance of German influences carried over to the review and news sections: of twenty-eight reviewed works, nineteen were originally published in German.<sup>112</sup> Of the remaining nine, four were originally written in Swedish, three in Latin, and two in English.<sup>113</sup> It is hence eminently understandable why especially

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<sup>108</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 167.

<sup>109</sup> Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 160.

<sup>110</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 159-167. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 135-137.

<sup>111</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 1-27. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-50. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), pp. 1-32. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-86. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), pp. 19-29. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), pp. 402-416.

<sup>112</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 73-120. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), pp. 117-139. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), pp. 58-104. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 109-126. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 267-292. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), pp. 417-443.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Rehnberg contended that Lindblom and his associates championed the ‘intellectualist and ethical’ theology of their brethren in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>114</sup> A survey of the Swedish contributions in the magazine and Lindblom’s own writings confirm this impression too, with a few minor caveats. The enlightened intentions of the journal’s founders were very clearly communicated in Stenhammar’s editorial which reads like a comprehensive manifesto: ‘Religion surely loses less through the doubter’s interjection than the ignoramus’s fear and idleness’.<sup>115</sup> Instead, the editors championed the virtue of the ‘inquisitive reason which proves all things’.<sup>116</sup> This was indeed the maxim under which the whole enterprise ran: Paul’s appeal from the 1. Thessalonians, ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good’.<sup>117</sup> The critical spirit of the Enlightenment – reminiscent of the famous Kantian ethos – is further substantiated by the literal invocation of ‘Enlightenment’ (*uplysning* – *Aufklärung*) and variations of ‘to enlighten’ (*uplysa* – *aufklären*) throughout the journal.<sup>118</sup> Though Lundell cautioned against exaggerating the significance of this terminology, given that it had long formed part of Swedish religious vocabulary, it is very much possible to contend that the word *uplysning*, as used by Lindblom and collaborators, was modelled on the German example of *Aufklärung*.<sup>119</sup> As seen, Spalding et al were widely read among Sweden’s enlightened circles, suggesting an awareness of the word’s use in the Holy Roman Empire. Furthermore, as Kraus has highlighted, this terminology did have very high currency in eighteenth-century Swedish discourse generally.<sup>120</sup> In other words, the proponents of Swedish Neology explicitly cast their work in the terminology of the German *Aufklärung*, believing themselves to

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<sup>114</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 304. *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>115</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), unpag.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> 1. Thess. 5:21. The Swedish formula was somewhat punchier: ‘Pröfwet allt; och behåller thet bästa’.

<sup>118</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, p. 72. *Ibid.*, p. 77. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 165. *Ibid.*, p. 168. *Ibid.*, p. 204. *Ibid.*, p. 206. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 332.

<sup>119</sup> Lundell, ‘Upplysningen i provinsen’, p. 49.

<sup>120</sup> Kraus, ‘Nordlichter der Vernunft’, p. 92.

implement their mission in their own church. In keeping with their German role models, the principal aim of Lindblom and his publication was to further the ideal of a 'living religiosity' (*levvande religiositet*), a vibrant, practical Christianity.<sup>121</sup> This ambition was already reflected in the title, with its focus on the ministry rather than doctrine: the journal was not intended to offer a forum for dry dogmatic debate but guidance to parsons in their everyday work. It was thus almost entirely focused on matters of practical theology, leaving questions of systematic theology almost wholly aside. In fact, as noted by Rehnberg, just as Spalding and his fellow Neologians in the Holy Roman Empire, Lindblom and his allies emphasised the need to consider theology and religion as separate entities.<sup>122</sup> Whilst the former was of primary benefit to university scholars, most Christians were not to concern themselves with the detail of dogma.<sup>123</sup> Rather than burden the minds of believers with the finer points of the Trinity for instance, they should be instructed in how to live a proper Christian life.<sup>124</sup>

While thus far clearly aligning with the German Neologians, their focus on practical improvement renders it somewhat difficult to fully ascertain the theology proper, cosmology, anthropology, and hamartiology of Lindblom and his associates. However, a few indicative inferences may be gleaned from the journal and Lindblom's other writings. Most significant in this context is Tengström's article on catechism reform: in this piece, the Finn offered a brief outline of the essential dogmatic principles upon which the Lutheran faith was supposed to be based and which ought to be taught to believers.<sup>125</sup> Whilst not offering a holistic insight, this sketch does sustain Rehnberg's thesis that the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment thinkers followed the ideals of German

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<sup>121</sup> Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelson Lindblom*, p. 31.

<sup>122</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 303.

<sup>123</sup> Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, pp. 7-9. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>125</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 212-217.

enlightened Protestantism: beginning with the nature of divinity, Tengström's argument appeared to be rooted in intellectualist thinking, as he emphasised the 'fatherly love of God towards humanity' and the 'wise and determined Laws of Nature' in particular.<sup>126</sup> Whilst acknowledging the existence of original sin, he stressed that the rational faculties of humans could aid them in the quest for salvation.<sup>127</sup> Consequently, 'reason and revelation' (*Förnuftet och Uppenbarelsen*) were in his view operating in harmony.<sup>128</sup> Again, ethics were placed at the centre of Christian teachings, whereas excessive instruction in the Christian mysteries was roundly rejected.<sup>129</sup> A parallelism with the theologies of the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz, Butler, and Spalding is therefore very much observable in Tengström's catechism proposal. This observation is mirrored across the *Journal för Prester* and the writings of Lindblom, even when accounting for occasional divergences in individual contributions: on the whole, there was a continued reference to an omniscient and benevolent God that echoed the rhetoric of English and German Protestant Enlightenment theology with its insistence on a quintessentially good deity.<sup>130</sup> Mostly, authors prioritised the 'love' (*kärlek*) of God over His wrath and acknowledged the existence of objective, divinely determined truths that were accessible to humans through the use of their own reason.<sup>131</sup> Lindblom himself highlighted in an introduction to the new translation of the New Testament published in 1796 that God willed the restoration of all humans.<sup>132</sup> The language of 'freedom' (*frie; friwillig*) appears throughout the journal, suggesting a belief in the liberty of human will to consciously choose to sin or not, rather than being predestined to transgress the divine will due to a

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>130</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 16-17. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 210.

<sup>131</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 213. *Ibid.*, p. 218. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 333. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>132</sup> Jacob Axelsson Lindblom, [Untitled] in *Vår Herres och Frälsares Nya Testamente* (Linköping, 1796), unpag.

corrupt nature.<sup>133</sup> Åström in fact not only defined humans as ‘free and reasonable beings’, but contended that they possessed inborn ‘moral abilities’ (*moraliska förmögenheter*) – suggesting both a relatively optimistic conception of human nature and a continuity with beliefs of other established Protestant Enlightenment thinkers in innate ideas.<sup>134</sup> Linked to this are recurrent expressions of righteousness and ethics, e.g. ‘virtue’ (*dygd*), calls to ‘ennoble’ (*förädla*) or ‘improve’ (*förbättra*) one’s ethical state, as well as the notion of ‘moral customs’ (*sedlighet*) that was central to German Neology.<sup>135</sup> The language of emotion is equally important, as evidenced by the regular appearance of ‘felicity’ (*lycksalighet*) which played a pivotal role in German Neologian theology by denoting the passage to happiness in the earthly and thereupon the heavenly life.<sup>136</sup> Just as Butler and Spalding had done, Lindblom placed a particular emphasis on the harmony between reason and sentiment: ‘The lack of this connection ... has always made ... our enlightened Christendom worthless’.<sup>137</sup> The importance attributed to righteous conduct in worldly affairs by the *Journal* is also reflected in the rhetoric of utility writers used, with words such as ‘useful’ (*nyttig*), ‘practical’ (*praktisk*) or ‘purposeful’ (*lämplig*) recurring throughout.<sup>138</sup> Whilst this may be considered a nod to the Age of Liberty’s creed of *utilism*, it also echoes the ideas of German enlightened theologians such as Spalding. Tengström’s invocation of Christ as a teacher, an example of proper Christian practical living, fits equally into this mould.<sup>139</sup> Simplicity and clarity were likewise greatly important to the Swedish Protestant Enlightenment thinkers, with Tengström again

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<sup>133</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 217. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 335. *Ibid.*, p. 339. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-341. *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>134</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 335. *Ibid.*, p. 334-335.

<sup>135</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 86. *Ibid.*, p. 169. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), p. 90. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 24. *Ibid.*, p. 62. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>136</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 17. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 170.

<sup>137</sup> Lindblom, [Untitled] in *Vår Herres och Frälsares Nya Testamente*, unpag.

<sup>138</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), p. 90. *Ibid.*, p. 131. *Ibid.*, p. 134. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 7. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), unpag. *Ibid.*, p. 109. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 204. *Ibid.*, p. 205. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 31.

<sup>139</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 211.

insisting that the truths of Christianity should be intelligible to everyone in the congregation.<sup>140</sup> This was complemented by a socio-political dimension: improvement was a holistic endeavour and not just restricted to the individual Christian, as Tengström's evocation of the notion of 'the common good' (*den allmänna goda saken*) demonstrates.<sup>141</sup> Religion was an agent of social cohesion to most contributors, since the ties 'of the common religion' were 'stronger than civil laws', as one argued.<sup>142</sup> Based on this, the Swedish Neologians conceived of the clergy as social figures of authority: by educating believers, the spiritual estate in Sweden was guarding public peace.<sup>143</sup> In fact, this was their central task: one (anonymous) author thus claimed that it was self-evident that there were no divine foundations to the clergy and that, as such, it occupied a mere socio-political function.<sup>144</sup> Following from this belief, they advocated limiting the political power of Church dignitaries, declaring a cleric to be a fully-fledged 'civil servant' (*tjensteman i staten*).<sup>145</sup> Briefly put, clerics were supposed to implement instructions handed to them by worldly officials and restrict themselves to purely religious matters. Crucially, as Åström emphasised, this did not mean that secular authorities should meddle in questions of teaching: 'a government is not directly a judge in theological disputes'.<sup>146</sup> Though not exclusive to the religious Enlightenment, the single-minded focus of Lindblom and his allies on both individual and societal ethics was entirely in tune with English and German expressions of Protestant Enlightenment. The influence of German Protestant Enlightenment thinking is also recognisable in other aspects of the *Journal*: enlightened clergymen in Sweden thus followed in the footsteps of their

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<sup>140</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 206-207. *Ibid.*, p. 219. See also: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), p. 123.

<sup>141</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 205.

<sup>142</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 18. See also: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 166.

<sup>143</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 18. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 166.

<sup>144</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 22.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>146</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 352.

German counterparts by prioritising the New over the Old Testament, as Tengström did in his piece on catechism reform for instance.<sup>147</sup> In short therefore, Lindblom and his allies broadly subscribed to the same fundamental ideas about God, the universe, and humanity as especially their Neologian colleagues in Germany.

Beyond this obvious intellectual debt, the fundamental philosophical influences behind Lindblom and the journal's contributors are not ascertainable with certainty. Its practical focus meant that there was little explicit recourse to established philosophers in the periodical. This analysis is further complicated by the fact that, as Rehnberg and Lundell have pointed out, contemporaries and even historians have often not properly distinguished between different manifestations of Protestant Enlightenment theology and their philosophical foundations.<sup>148</sup> Where at least sections of the Swedish *neologi* movement appeared to diverge from Spalding and the German *Neologie* was in their abandonment of empiricist epistemology in favour of the rationalism of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). This is especially Rehnberg's view: he considered Lindblom's publication pivotal in instilling the Prussian philosopher's thinking in Swedish Lutheranism.<sup>149</sup> To substantiate this thesis, he highlighted a review of a work by the orthodox writer Gottlob August Baumgarten-Crusius (1752-1816): whereas the German Lutheran was a self-proclaimed empiricist, the reviewer of his work identified himself as a rationalist, a believer in 'pure reason' who was of the conviction that 'teachings ... may never wholly be derived from experience, since experiences teaches what happens but not what

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360. Rodhe identified Tengström as the author of the piece. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såson Biskop i Linköping*, p. 207.

<sup>148</sup> See: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 203-205. Lundell, 'Upplýsningen i provinsen', p. 53.

<sup>149</sup> Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 299. Westling also appears to have seen Lindblom as part of a wider Kantian wave in Swedish thought. See: Westling, 'Om "upplýsningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, p. 177. *Ibid.*, p. 182. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

should happen'.<sup>150</sup> However, as Gladh and indeed Rehnberg himself observed, this was not the sole philosophical influence discernible in the periodical.<sup>151</sup> Certain articles appear to embrace empiricism, with Tengström for instance emphasising the value of 'experience' (*erfarenhet*) over any 'rational inferences' (*förnuftslut*) in one contribution.<sup>152</sup> Leopold also had, as Westling noted, no love lost for Kant and continued to stick to Lockeanism.<sup>153</sup> More to the point, Lindblom himself was quite sceptical of what he called 'the exaggeration of human reason' (*menniskoförnuftets öfverdrift*).<sup>154</sup> Rodhe's argument that the Bishop remained altogether committed to the empiricist approach, on the grounds that Kantian moral philosophy was not greatly accessible to most laypeople, feeds into this impression.<sup>155</sup> Gladh therefore appears correct to take exception to the depiction of specifically Lindblom as the 'standard bearer of Kantianism'.<sup>156</sup> Ultimately, however, the epistemological divide clearly did not split the enlightened Lutherans who contributed to the periodical. What mattered was a belief in a simpler, more ethical, more inclusive, and more optimistic Christianity.

Yet this diversity of opinion within the journal is in itself a remarkable characteristic. Though clearly dominated by enlightened spirits, it is not always possible to attribute writers to a particular camp: from classical Neologians such as Spalding to rationalists such as Gottlieb Jacob Planck (1751-1833), the whole spectrum of Protestant enlightened religiosity was covered. Notably, the only two English authors featured in the journal were both dissenters: John Evans (1767-1827) was a Baptist and Joseph Fawcett (c. 1758-

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<sup>150</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 64. For Rehnberg's argument, see: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 299. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-312.

<sup>151</sup> See: Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 300.

<sup>152</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 218.

<sup>153</sup> Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 140.

<sup>154</sup> Lindblom, 'Afsked till Presterskapet i Linköpings Stift', p. 12. Lindblom, [Untitled] in *Vår Herres och Frälsares Nya Testamente*, unpag.

<sup>155</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 214.

<sup>156</sup> Gladh, 'Jacob Lindblom'. For a review of the growing influence of Kantianism in late eighteenth-century Sweden, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 140. *Ibid.*, p. 144. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-155. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, p. 177. *Ibid.*, p. 182. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

1804) a Presbyterian renowned for his unitarian leanings.<sup>157</sup> On the conservative end, the journal's editors appeared very fond of Samuel Friedrich Nathanael Morus (1736-1792), a German Lutheran theologian of a reformist disposition who was classified as 'orthodox' by one contributor.<sup>158</sup> Besides highly favourable reviews of his works, a lengthy laudatory biography of Morus was published in the periodical.<sup>159</sup> The Swedish contributors also hailed from a wide range of perspectives, from Kantians such as Åström and Neologians such as Tengström to Samuel Ödmann (1759-1829), a tentative reformer who was, as E.N. Söderberg argued, very carefully treading the line between orthodoxy and Enlightenment.<sup>160</sup> This commitment to pluralism of opinion may naturally have been a precaution to temper the wrath of the orthodox clergy. Nonetheless, the earnest admiration of Morus alone suggests a genuine commitment to irenicism. It was crucially also in Lindblom's nature: he was a man of mild temper who intensely disliked confrontation and violence. Hedborn thus hailed him as someone who 'never involved himself in polemics, on the contrary, one often found him involved in the mediation among the discordant'.<sup>161</sup> This was partly simply a character streak, as a childhood anecdote in his autobiographical note reveals: the young Lindblom had inadvertently destroyed his mother's weaving and was severely disciplined as a result. In Lindblom's opinion, this punishment did not fit the crime, as 'my intention was not ill, my

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<sup>157</sup> See: Gordon Goodwin rev. by L.E. Lauer, 'Evans, John (1767-1827)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, September 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8966> (12 Nov 2019). Alan Ruston, 'Fawcett, Joseph (c. 1758-1804)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, January 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9225> (12 Nov 2019).

<sup>158</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 61.

<sup>159</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), pp. 122-125. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), pp. 372-394.

<sup>160</sup> E.N. Söderberg, 'Ödmann. 1. Samuel Lorens Ö.', *Nordisk Familjebok – Konversationslexikon och Realencyklopedi*, Vol. 34: Ö – ÖYSLEBÖ, 2nd edn (38 vols., Stockholm, 1922), T. Westrin (ed.), p. 15. For more on Ödmann's work, see: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', pp. 192-194. *Ibid.*, p. 210. *Ibid.*, p. 227. For Åström's Kantianism, see: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>161</sup> Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelson Lindblom*, p. 30.

understanding too little to know that I was doing damage'.<sup>162</sup> One may wonder about parallels between this benevolent attitude and the Neologian hamartiology that rejected the arbitrary punishment of sincere error. Lindblom's commitment to moderation was reflected in his journal which, as Rodhe pointed out, generally avoided controversy and antagonism, both in tone and theology.<sup>163</sup> This again emerges in the review of Baumgarten-Crusius who was sharply criticised for his aggressive tone: 'does Mr B. truly believe that he shall win followers for his beliefs through such onslaughts and insulting claims?'.<sup>164</sup> Lindblom further appears to have shown quite eclectic leanings: as befitted his love of ancient erudition, he had an equal interest in the reception, dissemination, and implementation of new ideas as he did in olden wisdom.<sup>165</sup> He warned his fellow clerics in 1805 that 'a contemptuous suspicion towards the old and powerlessness in scrutinising the new has sown disorder, indecision, indifference, and ignorance' whilst Hedborn highlighted that 'If his inclination was towards the new, it was not because he despised the old'.<sup>166</sup> The importance of reconciling past and present knowledge was also defended in the journal, with one author stressing that there had to be 'neither a blind trust in or reverence for a supposed infallibility of antiquity ... nor an imprudent observation of the hazardous speculations of more recent researchers'.<sup>167</sup> Swedish Enlightenment theologians therefore appear to have subscribed to a similar kind of conciliatory eclecticism as enlightened Anglicans and German Lutherans.

Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment was thus indeed, as most historians concur, deeply steeped in the German Protestant Enlightenment – and it becomes consequently quite

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<sup>162</sup> Lindblom, 'Självtbiografiska Anteckningar', p. 15.

<sup>163</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 205.

<sup>164</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 59. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>165</sup> Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelson Lindblom*, p. 11.

<sup>166</sup> Hedborn, *Åminnelse-tal öfver Ärke-biskopen, Prokansleren ... Jacob Axelson Lindblom*, p. 29. Lindblom, 'Afsked till Presterskapet i Linköpings Stift', p. 12.

<sup>167</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 6. Other examples include: *Ibid.*, p. 69.

clear why the journal experienced a fierce backlash from the orthodox establishment: the marginalisation of dogma at the expense of natural reason and ethics was a direct challenge to their teachings. Furthermore, the conservative clergy was concerned by the political challenge posed by the journal's vision where the state and priesthood were, in Göransson's words, 'no longer work[ing] to maintain the pure doctrine rather than to promote religion and morality among the people'.<sup>168</sup> Lindblom thus contested both the intellectual and political authority of an already beleaguered *enhetskyrkan* which explains the virulent response from Munck and other stalwarts of Lutheran orthodoxy to his project.

### The 'Protestant Enlightenment' of Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester*

In and of itself, the periodical's reliance on German Lutheran Enlightenment theology is not surprising. After all, its express purpose was to introduce ideas and insights produced elsewhere to a Swedish audience. Theological innovation from Lutheran Germany had always flowed very easily into Sweden, given the shared confessional affiliation. Arguably most significantly, the Swedish Neologians were simply adopting the key principles of enlightened religiosity common to the Protestant Enlightenment as a whole. The broad spectrum of opinion represented in the journal further underlines that there was a lively debate among Swedish Enlightenment theologians within these tenets. What does deserve greater attention is that Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theologians were seemingly overwhelmingly inspired by their German brethren, to the exclusion of other currents of theological thought – including from within the Church of Sweden.

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<sup>168</sup> Göransson, 'Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet', p. 91

The comparative neglect of non-German works is especially remarkable given that Stenhammar's editorial pledged that the periodical would publish pieces 'from Danish, German, and English journals and theological works'.<sup>169</sup> As seen, this promise was barely kept: even in the news section, notices from Denmark and England were also eclipsed by novelties from Sweden and Germany. Admittedly, this state of affairs was probably not the result of deliberate disinterest, as is testified by the *Journal för Prester's* extensive coverage of the recently founded Missionary Society's planned enterprise in Tahiti.<sup>170</sup> Most likely, the underrepresentation of theological developments outside of Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire was due to a lack of reliable channels of information. By and large, the periodical's editors appear to have relied on foreign journals and Swedish nationals abroad for intelligence: in a number of reviews and news items, foreign societies and journals such as the *Monthly Review enlarged* were referenced as sources of information.<sup>171</sup> This apparent dependence on publications from abroad was not without risks, as the editors had to learn: in the very first issue of the *Journal för Prester*, it was thus purported that a Jewish community in Italy had brought their religious practice more in line with Christian customs, amongst others by deciding that the 'Jewish Sabbath shall be celebrated on Sunday'.<sup>172</sup> Prudently, however, a disclaimer clarified that, though this story had been reported by 'many newspapers, ... [we] believe that it needs confirmation'.<sup>173</sup> The writer was vindicated in their scepticism, since the periodical needed to report two issues later that the Italian anecdote had been debunked.<sup>174</sup> This incident highlights to what extent Lindblom and his associates appear to have lacked

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<sup>169</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), unpag.

<sup>170</sup> Nowadays better known as the *London Missionary Society*. See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 174-175. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 148-154.

<sup>171</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 122. For other examples, see amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 172-174. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 183.

<sup>172</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 177.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 182.

trustworthy networks that could keep them abreast of the state of the world. Certainly, in their quest to enlighten the Swedish clergy, Lindblom and his fellow editors seem to have been keen to promote news and thinking from elsewhere too, not necessarily exclusively from Germany. Yet by sheer pragmatic reality, it was easier for them to obtain information and ideas from the Holy Roman Empire. This is especially suggested by the recurring notices from German Lutheran hubs of knowledge and activity, such as Göttingen and Marburg.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, in at least one of these notices, a Swede who had recently visited the University of Göttingen was explicitly named, suggesting that he acted as source for the update from the famous reform university.<sup>176</sup> Crucially, however, even these channels were not always quick or exhaustive: in a news piece from 1798, readers were requested to relay any information they had on a Swedish cleric who died in the German town of Coburg in March 1796.<sup>177</sup>

Whether by choice or constrictio, it is evident that the *Journal för Prester* did indeed, as most historians claim, mainly transport German ideas into Swedish theological discourse. However, these practical hurdles do not explain the lack of original Swedish contributions to the periodical. For crucially, the quantitative dominance of German works within the journal is striking even when compared to the Swedish Church: the inaugural issue thus featured a mere two *Afhandlingar* from Swedish authors, compared to four from Germany. Only from the second volume onwards, it was more common for the magazine to be primarily composed of writings from Swedish authors – though even these tended to be either excerpts from other works or had previously appeared in other

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<sup>175</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), pp. 119-122. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), pp. 181-182. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 156-157. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 315-316.

<sup>176</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 315-316.

<sup>177</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), pp. 184-185.

publications, especially *Läsning i blandade ämnen*.<sup>178</sup> Overall, only a very small fraction of the *Afhandlingar* were originally submitted to the journal for publication. The response of Munck and other orthodox grandees demonstrates why this was the case: the strict uniformity of the *enhetskyrkan* suffocated the development of an original Swedish Lutheran theology by removing any incentive for innovation. Lindroth put it quite succinctly: ‘The firmer the orthodoxy, the more pointless and dangerous [it was] to research the divine mysteries’.<sup>179</sup> This problem was expressly addressed in the *Journal för Prester* by Tengström who made an explicit appeal for a more ‘liberal’ (*liberalt*) approach to theological debate:

What thinking and inquisitive theologian, who simultaneously loves his peace and his reputation, will happily expose himself to the rude prejudices and charges of heterodoxy by his less enlightened brethren?<sup>180</sup>

Consequently, he argued, it was only evident that there few ‘Swedish original works in the ways of theology’, especially of a calibre comparable to those of Lutheran Churches elsewhere in Europe.<sup>181</sup> How genuine these concerns were is shown by Lindblom himself: despite his seniority within the clerical ranks, he confided to Spalding that he did not trust his colleagues in Sweden to support his initiatives in spreading the ideas of the German Neologian: ‘Because the state of the censor in our country was not quite conducive to the issue of said [translation], I had it printed in Denmark’.<sup>182</sup> This restrictive climate again comes across in the journal’s review section: few of the discussed works were translations into Swedish and reviewers often quite explicitly

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<sup>178</sup> This includes: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 51-64. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), pp. 1-12. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 163-202. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-234. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), pp. 323-352.

<sup>179</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III*, p. 546.

<sup>180</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 72. See also his piece on catechism reform: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 204.

<sup>181</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 73.

<sup>182</sup> LiSB, E005/Br29, Vol. 12, no. 37, unpag. Lundell has colourfully described how the vagaries of Linköping’s censorship regime, with individual censors often influencing whether a work was deemed acceptable or not, impacted Lindblom’s publishing work. See: Lundell, ‘Upplýsningen i provinsen’, pp. 57-58.

expected their readers to consume them in the original, rather than to wait for editions in their native tongue.<sup>183</sup> Partly, this was simply due to their readership's high level of erudition, since laments about the lack of a Swedish version of a particular work were mostly voiced when reviewers hoped it to be read beyond their usual audience.<sup>184</sup> Yet the reliance on works in their original language also had more practical, if not political reasons, with one reviewer outlining the dilemma of anyone seeking to make a foreign-language work available in Swedish: 'such [editions] would be easy to obtain from dexterous translators; but where does one encounter publishers?'.<sup>185</sup> It appears that little had changed in Sweden since the days of Benzelius, as many learned theologians still struggled to find a market for both foreign and their own ideas in their homeland. Political pressure also explains why most Swedish contributors to the magazine chose to remain anonymous: even those well-disposed to Lindblom's cause feared the ramifications of partaking in the enterprise, with Rodhe highlighting that Tengström thus insisted that his name not feature in the publication.<sup>186</sup> The few openly named authors in the *periodical* were men of proven merit within the Swedish Church, as not least testified by the fact that their works were mostly academic and presented at Uppsala: this includes the former Swedish legationary preacher in Russia Sven Bælter (1713-1760), the reputed orientalist Carl Magnus Agrell (1764-1840) and Johan Adam Tingstadius (1748-1827), as well as the theological scholars Eric Michael Fant (1754-1817)

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<sup>183</sup> See for instance: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 93. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/2 (1798), p. 119. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>184</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 89. Rehnberg in fact recounts that Tengström thus for instance did not see the merit in a Swedish edition of two of Gottlieb Jacob Planck's works since they were of little use to most members of the clergy. See: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 415.

<sup>185</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 89.

<sup>186</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, pp. 206-207. Rodhe and Rehnberg succeeded in identifying the authors behind the most substantive articles. See: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 203. *Ibid.*, p. 205. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207. Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 305. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-309. *Ibid.*, p. 311. *Ibid.*, p. 315. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

and the aforementioned Ödmann.<sup>187</sup> Ödmann and Tingstadius were also members of the Bible translation committee that Lindblom was heading, further underlining their establishment credentials.<sup>188</sup> Even as Neologian clerics began to gain sway within Swedish Lutheranism therefore, the climate for theological expression was not quite as liberated as one would expect – as not least shown by the premature discontinuation of the *Journal för Prester* itself. The continued restrictions on theological expression in Sweden made it all but impossible for local Lutheran Enlightenment thinkers to forge their own canon of enlightened theology, relying on impulses from Germany.

Lindblom and his allies had not intended for this to remain a permanent state of affairs, however. Indeed, among the very purposes of the journal was (within the obvious limitations of legal, political, and ecclesiastical realities) to encourage the development of an original body of Swedish Protestant Enlightenment thinking. Lindblom and his collaborators pursued this aim through a variety of means: news items on open essay prize competitions, such as a contest organised by the Dutch *Society for the Defence of the Christian Religion*, were likely intended to encourage local writers to become proactive in the production of knowledge, as opposed to merely passively consuming it.<sup>189</sup> The appeals of contributing to the erection of a truly Swedish canon of enlightened theology were not merely of a practical nature – they were embedded in the very spirit of the journal's mission and were part of the reason why the orthodox clergy sought its suppression. One of Munck's principal misgivings with Lindblom thus was, as Rodhe recorded, his supposed departure from the foundations of Protestantism: 'ambition gives him well hope that our community henceforth shall not be called Lutheran, but

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<sup>187</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 51-64. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-120. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 124-126. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 288-292. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), pp. 434-437.

<sup>188</sup> See: Westling, 'Om "upplysningstidens" svenska kyrka', p. 211. *Ibid.*, p. 227. Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 257.

<sup>189</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 172-174.

Lindblomian'.<sup>190</sup> Reading the *Journal för Prester*, one may understand why he arrived at this conclusion: not only did its writers defy central tenets of Lutheran orthodoxy, they showed themselves on more than one occasion quite critical of its founding fathers, with certain contributors thus openly criticising Martin Luther's work as outdated and inaccessible to modern audiences.<sup>191</sup> In one such case, Tengström very carefully laid out the flaws of Luther's *Small Catechism*, claiming that it left both stylistically and dogmatically much to be desired: the Reformer's writings on the divine nature, original sin, Christ's work, and justification were superficial or not properly presented, a flaw Tengström attributed to Luther's work being 'more polemical than practical'.<sup>192</sup> Dogmatically, the Finnish Neologian criticised Luther for failing to offer a balanced account between the precepts of Scripture and natural law, while according too much importance to the Old Testament.<sup>193</sup> Lastly, he pointed to the absurdity of holding on to Luther's catechism whilst ignoring advances towards a 'more consummate Biblical interpretation' and a 'purer philosophy'.<sup>194</sup> A new catechism was therefore necessary: one that was not conceived as a dogmatic work, but rather intended to impart a sound understanding of ethics, as grounded in the first principles of the Christian religion revealed by Scripture.<sup>195</sup> Given this iconoclastic attitude towards Luther, Munck's concerns become more understandable. Yet this would be a reductionist reading of what Lindblom's enterprise sought to achieve.

For arguably the most prominent hallmark of the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment was its vocal commitment to the Protestant cause: Lindblom's and his associates' adherence to the curious and independent spirit of the Enlightenment was to them in full harmony

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<sup>190</sup> As cited in: Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 210.

<sup>191</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 73-74. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 271.

<sup>192</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 358. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

<sup>194</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 355.

<sup>195</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 206-208. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

with an unequivocal commitment to the foundations of the Protestant and especially the Lutheran faith. As Lundell put it, their mission was merely ‘to make the best religion even better’.<sup>196</sup> Even the critical treatment of Luther is important in this context, since it was not intended to constitute a complete repudiation of his work: Tengström thus still paid tribute to Luther’s ‘great writer’s merits in religion and Enlightenment’.<sup>197</sup> Though this may be perceived as a mere rhetorical safeguard, it seems to feed into a wider sense among Swedish and indeed German Lutheran clerics who, as Lindroth and Albrecht Beutel highlight, had developed a sense that the writings and thoughts of the Reformation leaders were imperfect and that their message needed to be adapted in line with the findings made by scholars since the sixteenth century.<sup>198</sup> This did not change Luther’s standing as a genuine authority.<sup>199</sup> To demonstrate their commitment to the origins of Protestantism, the contributors thus cited, wherever possible, Reformation figures in support of their arguments and vision: in one review, it was stressed that the approach of ‘distinguish[ing] between Religion and Theology, Christendom and System’ was justified on the grounds that ‘Luther himself recognised and made this distinction’.<sup>200</sup> Elsewhere, a reviewer hailed the wisdom of Philipp Melanchthon, Johannes Musaeus (1612-1681), and Johann Gerhard (1582-1637).<sup>201</sup> The rejection of Lutheranism was therefore by no means their aim. Rather, it was argued that the

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<sup>196</sup> Lundell, ‘Upplysningen i provinsen’, p. 56.

<sup>197</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 353

<sup>198</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 254-255. Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), p. 73.

<sup>199</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 72-73. Rehnberg in fact stressed that Tengström himself had not fallen foul of his Church’s doctrine in his appeal for catechism reform. See: Rehnberg, *Prästeståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 309.

<sup>200</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 84.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75. The reverence for Melanchthon was again in line with tendencies in Lutheran Germany, which have been highlighted by Klaus Scholder and Beutel amongst others. See: Klaus Scholder, ‘Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland’ in Heinz Liebing and Klaus Scholder (eds.), *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation – Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Berlin, 1966), p. 467. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte der Aufklärung*, pp. 73-74.

significance of the Reformation did not lie in its letter, but its spirit: to be Protestant was to be able to independently seek religious truth, unencumbered by oppressive clerical authority. This was in fact explicitly stated by Åström who took great exception to (excessive) theological censorship on these very grounds: 'The first principle of Protestantism is: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. This was [the tenet] that drove the Reformation'.<sup>202</sup> The conception of the Reformation as a liberation of the theological mind permitted him to denounce the flagrant misuse of censorship laws that amounted to a *de facto* 'Protestant inquisition' as inherently un-Protestant and a betrayal of the Reformers' ideals:

[T]his is what, more than even dogma and church customs, constitutes the characteristic difference between the Protestant and the Catholic Church ... If it ceases to be observed in a Protestant country, it is then transformed into a Popish [one], even if it may not revere the Virgin Mary or does not believe in transubstantiation and purgatory.<sup>203</sup>

Whilst the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment movement thus indeed wanted to abandon orthodox precepts, it did so explicitly in the name – not in contradiction of – the Reformation Church. The root cause of Protestantism's ills was, in the eyes of most authors, the excessive uniformity of the Church which was contrary to their religion's ethos: one example of this are the writings of Bælter on the dearth of proper preaching in Sweden. He blamed this state of affairs on the use of antiquated centrally issued pericopes, as this practice failed to take account of both the specific abilities of local clergymen and the general circumstances of parishes.<sup>204</sup> Consequently, sermons were often incomprehensible, not relatable to the lives of the audience, or both.<sup>205</sup> To improve

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<sup>202</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 328. Åström likewise cited Luther twice in support of his contention that Protestantism was synonymous with the free pursuit of religious truth. See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 331. *Ibid.*, p. 336. Given that Åström's piece had previously been published in *Läsning i blandade ämnen*, it is imaginable that it served as an inspiration to Lindblom – who himself liked to quote Paul in his speeches – when founding the journal. See: Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, p. 17.

<sup>203</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 329.

<sup>204</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 62-64. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 31.

<sup>205</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 62-64. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 35-38.

the situation, Bælter suggested to discard the pericopes and instead delegate the responsibility of selecting appropriate biblical passages to local figures more attuned to the clergy's skills and the needs of their congregations.<sup>206</sup> This would be a reform in the spirit of 'proper Protestant self-reliance'.<sup>207</sup> Leopold echoed these concerns, arguing that the strict corset of orthodox practice was an important factor in the preaching malaise, as it forced pastors to learn the multiple sermons they held every week by heart, for instance.<sup>208</sup>

By far the most crucial fields where orthodoxy had obscured Protestantism's true ambition, however, were two disciplines which Rodhe previously identified as the clearest sign of independent initiative by Swedish Enlightenment theologians: biblical exegesis and Church history.<sup>209</sup> Especially the former had, as many historians of Gustavian Sweden remarked, enjoyed a renaissance in Sweden more widely, as the popular German Enlightenment ideal to consider the Bible a historic document began to take hold in Sweden.<sup>210</sup> At the forefront of this change were none other than two collaborators of Lindblom: Ödmann and Tingstadius. The two scholars were instrumental in championing a watershed in Swedish biblical scholarship by analysing Scripture using methods of modern historical linguistics.<sup>211</sup> In doing so, Tingstadius 'dealt the *coup de grâce* to the orthodox doctrine of Biblical inspiration', as Lindroth put it.<sup>212</sup> Yet the increased interest in the history and historicity of Scripture was by no means intended to undermine its significance to the Christian faith. Far from it, the significance

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<sup>206</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), pp. 45-46. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>207</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/1 (1799), p. 51.

<sup>208</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 2. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>209</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 197.

<sup>210</sup> See: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 253-257. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 177.

<sup>211</sup> For a more detailed summary of their work, see: Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, pp. 254-257. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', p. 161.

<sup>212</sup> Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV*, p. 255.

of revelation was heavily stressed across the periodical: two pieces on hymnal reform thus stressed the need to be rooted in the Bible and offer practical moral teaching instead of sterile dogma or mystic fantasy.<sup>213</sup> What the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theologians – in keeping with their brethren in the Holy Roman Empire especially – sought to achieve was to enable believers to access the unadulterated truth of its message. The emphasis on Church history fits into a similar pattern of encouraging Protestant emancipation: not only were all major reforms justified on the basis of historical precedent, but biblical history also featured large across the journal.<sup>214</sup> This was not coincidental, as Carl von Rosenstein emphasised: ‘Church History is a science which, if it is correctly conducted, is both pleasant and useful for all knowledgeable. It is not only important for theologians, but even philosophers and statesmen’.<sup>215</sup> This renewed attention to Scripture and Church history fundamentally served the same purpose: to escape the straitjacket of orthodox school philosophy and build a simpler Christianity in its stead – or, as Åström put it, ‘to cleanse religion from human additions and establish it in its primal divine simplicity and original purity’.<sup>216</sup> In a similar vein, Bælter pointed out that ‘the early Christians, during the manifold oppression and persecution that were visited upon them’ arguably paid less attention to ‘such fruitless prescriptions for their devotional exercises’.<sup>217</sup> The informality of the first Christian congregations was here explicitly contrasted with the cumbersome regulations of orthodoxy. Whilst again following the example of German Protestant Enlightenment, biblical and church historical scholarship were two fields where Swedish writers could contribute genuinely original insights through their own research by respected figures.

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<sup>213</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 18. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 226.

<sup>214</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), pp. 79-93. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), pp. 283-287.

<sup>215</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 196.

<sup>216</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 328.

<sup>217</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/1 (1797), p. 54.

Rodhe was therefore correct to emphasise that there were original features to the Swedish religious Enlightenment and warn ‘not to immediately come to the judgment of “made in Germany”’.<sup>218</sup>

Of further critical interest in this context is the fact that this understanding of Protestantism was explicitly linked to the conception of Enlightenment that the *Journal för Prester* promoted. This becomes very clearly evident in the aforementioned review of Baumgarten-Crusius and its author’s rejection of the classical divide between orthodox and heterodox Lutherans. They did so in two ways: first, by casting aspersions on the employment of the terms themselves, referring to both ‘so-called Neologians’ (*så kallade Neologer*) and ‘so-called orthodox [Lutherans]’ (*så kallade orthodoxer*).<sup>219</sup> Secondly, by embracing theologians of the supposedly ‘other side’ of the theological divide such as Morus.<sup>220</sup> Theirs was therefore not a rejection of orthodoxy *per se* than Baumgarten-Crusius in specific. The implication was that it was a mindset that divided them and the German Lutheran, rather than the subscription to a particular movement or set of theological beliefs. Consequently, the reviewer framed their disagreement with Baumgarten-Crusius as one between ‘enlightened theologians’ (*uplysta theologer*) and implicitly unenlightened theologians.<sup>221</sup> Whether one believed in Protestant freedom or Catholic bondage. Briefly put, the reviewer considered Protestantism to be Enlightenment. This was not a view they held exclusively: in fact, there is an explicit employment of a vocabulary of ‘religious Enlightenment’ throughout the *Journal för Prester*, with certain contributions thus invoking an ‘Enlightenment of Religion’ (*Religions-uplysningen*) or ‘Christian Enlightenment’ (*christlige uplysningen*).<sup>222</sup> This is of

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<sup>218</sup> Rodhe, *Jacob Axelsson Lindblom såsom Biskop i Linköping*, p. 144.

<sup>219</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 58 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>222</sup> See amongst others: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 100. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 169. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 332. *Ibid.*, p. 342. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

particular interest since it fits impeccably with the thesis developed by Christensson that 'the normal enlightened Gustavian held it to be the truth ... that the Enlightenment in its character was a Protestant phenomenon'.<sup>223</sup> According to this interpretation, Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theologians perceived themselves to be engaged in 'a continuation of Luther's work' (Christensson) in the struggle against the reactionary forces of Catholicism.<sup>224</sup> The criticisms of Luther in the journal were thus indeed not intended as repudiation, but a preservation of his (enlightened) legacy against its enemies – whether medieval or modern, straightforwardly Catholic or cloaked in Lutheran clothing. In this spirit, they were also again following the example of German Lutheran theologians: as Beutel stresses, German Neologians developed a similar vision of the Enlightenment as a 'new Reformation', as Spalding himself had put it, that sought to free religious belief from the shackles of human authority in a similar fashion as Luther and Melancthon in the sixteenth century.<sup>225</sup> Yet it was this ideal that arguably spurred on Lindblom and his allies to embark on their grand reform efforts, as not least exemplified by the *Journal för Prester* itself: they ultimately did not simply intend to transplant German ideas into the Swedish arena but to encourage the growth of an independent, inquisitive movement of Enlightenment theology in Sweden that could renew the local Protestant Church.

However, the fervent belief in enlightened Protestant 'freedom' (*frihet*) or 'self-reliance' (*sjelvständighet*) evidently put the Swedish Neologians at odds with a central plank of

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<sup>223</sup> Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, p. 41. The enlightened undertones of much of the Protestant polemic against Catholicism has been acknowledged by a many other historians, including Rehnberg, even if he did not link it explicitly to the notion of a 'Protestant Enlightenment'. See: Rehnberg, *Präteståndet och Religionsdebatten*, p. 139. Lundell discusses the expression of anti-Catholic sentiment by enlightened writers of late eighteenth-century Sweden too. See: Lundell, 'Upplysningen i provinsen', pp. 61-62.

<sup>224</sup> Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, p. 12. For a fuller explanation of Christensson's thesis of Sweden's 'Protestant Enlightenment', see: *Ibid.*, pp. 38-48.

<sup>225</sup> As cited in: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte der Aufklärung*, p. 74. See also: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte der Aufklärung*, pp. 70-74.

the Scandinavian kingdom's *raison d'être*: the rigid demand of Lutheran unity among Swedes. Though the sympathies of Lindblom and many of his collaborators tended, as evidenced, towards greater liberty in religious matters, ecclesiastical *realpolitik* long prevented them from taking this attitude to its logical conclusion – again, as had been the case of Benzelius before them. In his speech to the *prestmöte* of Linköping in 1793, Lindblom thus emphasised that it was the solemn obligation to correct members of the flock who had fallen into error: it was pivotal, that the clergy did 'not leave any proven means of Christendom unused to call the misled back and return him to the truth'.<sup>226</sup> A similar stance was expressed in the *Journal för Prester*, where Åström accepted that the prohibition of certain strands of theological opinion was necessary and did not infringe on the liberty of Protestants to exercise their freedom of conscience and opinion in principle.<sup>227</sup> Thus, he argued, his opposition was to the 'abuse' (*missbruk*) of theological censorship, not its principle nor its reality in Swedish law.<sup>228</sup> It is hard not to consider this a mere lip service intended to appease authorities, given that both Lindblom and Åström strongly repudiated the use of force in trying to root out wrongful conceptions of religion, both on practical and theological grounds. Lindblom thus argued that the expulsion of dissenters was both only likely to harden their resolve and contrary to the spirit of Christianity, citing Isaiah in support of this belief: 'God, the forbearing, ... spreads out his hands all the day unto a rebellious people'.<sup>229</sup> His local clergy were to hate apostasy, not the apostate. In this spirit, Lindblom encouraged his fellow clergymen to approach dissenters with benevolence, not opposition. Åström followed a highly similar reasoning in his essay on theological censorship, highlighting the absurdity of strict uniformity laws which implied the one true religion was too weak to guard itself against

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<sup>226</sup> Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, p. 30.

<sup>227</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 331-332.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

<sup>229</sup> Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, pp. 30-31.

human error.<sup>230</sup> Keeping with his insistence on freedom of thought as the cornerstone of Protestantism, he went even further than Lindblom: 'Once one permits public limitation of what one believes, both religion and morals and the constitution of the state are in danger.'<sup>231</sup> The only instances where Åström saw intervention by the authorities justified were outright unbelief, sectarian mysticism, and Catholic sedition – and not because of their inherent theological falseness, but the pragmatic risk they posed to the stability of the state, society, and (Protestant) liberty.<sup>232</sup> Instead, both Lindblom and Åström concluded that the only authority to rule over the spiritual transgression of a dissenter was God Himself.<sup>233</sup> While it is clear that they strongly disliked the forced compliance Lutherans were subjected to by their church, it would be wrong to view their opposition to error as insincere. They did believe in a (broad) Protestant consensus that rejected divisive sectarianism, however. Their stance is perhaps best summarised by Göransson who argued that the religious reformers of the late eighteenth century were more interested in unity in faith than dogma: adherence to the true Christianity was thus to be shown by a righteous mindset rather than subscription to a particular set of doctrinal articles.<sup>234</sup> Whilst this notion of Protestantism, as Hessler and Göransson equally wrote, did not exclude those of the Reformed creed any longer, it was equally by no means an expression of support for apostasy.<sup>235</sup> Protestant freedom could only be guaranteed within a Protestant Sweden, since any abandonment of the Reformation faith implied the subscription to an authoritarian creed which did not share Protestantism's founding principle and was likely to actively undermine it. This stance of 'intolerance towards the intolerant' was therefore not as intellectually consistent as it may strike at first, nor was

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<sup>230</sup> *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 343.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>233</sup> See: Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut*, p. 31. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 331.

<sup>234</sup> Göransson, 'Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet', pp. 97-98.

<sup>235</sup> Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, p. 225. Göransson, 'Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet', p. 107.

it a concession to cynical socio-political realities: it was an earnest belief in the need to protect the moderation and freedom that were, in their eyes, the defining characteristics of Protestantism.

The mission of Jacob Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester* was therefore not merely to regurgitate German ideas in the Swedish language. Instead, they sought to build an innovative Swedish branch of Enlightenment theology suited to the specificities of the Scandinavian kingdom. In this spirit, they were sustained by one central idea they had adopted from the German Lutheran Enlightenment: that their pursuit was a continuation, if not ultimate fulfilment, of the Reformation. The *Journal för Prester* therefore encouraged not only a religious Enlightenment as such – it strongly championed a specifically *Protestant* Enlightenment, to the exclusion of other faiths that did not share the Reformation creed's liberal understanding of religion. This vision, however, was too radical to be met with acclaim by the orthodox forces within the Swedish Lutheran Church which were still the dominant faction by the time of Lindblom's first initiatives.

## Conclusion

Lindblom's career and the *Journal för Prester* spark interest in more than one respect: for one, they shed light on the changes and continuities in late-eighteenth century Swedish religious, political, and intellectual life. Neither of them would have been possible without the liberties in reasoning brought about by either the *frihetstidens* or the Gustavian governments. The former laid the ground for a conception of Enlightenment that did not stand in conflict with Christianity, whilst according greater scope to reason and this-worldly utility in Sweden's intellectual circles. The latter offered an opportunity to widen philosophical inquiries to scrutinise hitherto sacrosanct notions of divinity and church authority by opening the door to the writings of the French *philosophes*. Both

impulses were critical for enlightened clergymen such as Lindblom who had known both intellectual climates intimately, in addition to their exposure to orthodox Lutheranism: they permitted them to put forth a vision of enlightened Protestantism that combined elements from both traditions. Yet the limitations of both systems and their initiatives were – at least in the 1790s – the reason why neither the Bishop of Linköping nor his publication could tap into their full potential. Both the parliamentary and the absolutist regimes had not succeeded in sufficiently challenging the Swedish Lutheran Church's foundations to clear the way to forge a public sphere in which Lindblom's religious ideas and his periodical could have flourished. This should not minimise the impact of his activism: through the *Journal för Prester*, Lindblom succeeded in creating a forum for ideas that sought to challenge the existing ecclesiastical and theological order from within. This was a watershed when considering the success of the orthodox Lutheran establishment in maintaining an iron grip on the Swedish Church and its teachings, be it through coercive legislation or the creation of an intellectual framework that had sought to stifle the scope of critical reason by co-opting it. Yet the ecclesiastical environment they inhabited shaped the direction of Lindblom's reasoning and that of his collaborators when it came to developing Sweden's Protestant Enlightenment: faced with a dearth of domestic works, the Swedish Neologians relied on German Enlightenment theology for their own intellectual journeys and publishing enterprise. Most importantly, however, there was no question that the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment was to abandon its confessional heritage in favour of a universalist creed of the kind pursued by especially Leibniz. Instead, following the example of their German brethren, they expressly based themselves upon the philosophical example set by the sixteenth-century Reformers who had founded the faith upon which the Swedish state and social fabric relied. Their conception of *uplysning* was therefore, just as

Christensson contends, inseparable from their denomination.<sup>236</sup> Indeed, it became one and the same to them – earning them the title of ‘the new Reformers’.<sup>237</sup> This belief in a distinctively Protestant Enlightenment, open to those of the Reformed persuasion but still deeply sceptical of any theological regime akin to that of papal Christianity in thought or conduct, was not mere *realpolitik* but deeply held conviction. As such, it lies uneasy with the supra-confessional conceptions of ‘Religious Enlightenment’ devised in modern historical scholarship. At the same time, however sincerely the Swedish Lutheran Enlightenment theologians professed their loyalty to their confession, it could still not allay the fears of an established orthodox Lutheranism wary of the undermining of its creed. Whilst their ability to suppress novel ideas in theological reasoning within Sweden forced Lindblom and the *Journal för Prester* to largely rely on German inspirations for their project, their ascent demonstrates that Munck and his allies neither managed to prevent the incursion of an enlightened religiosity into Sweden, nor its ascendancy within the Church’s structures. This became especially evident in 1805, when Lindblom was installed as Archbishop of Uppsala and subsequently, in 1809, when the deposition of Gustavus IV Adolphus led to what Swedish historians such as Hessler, Göransson, and Gladh have considered the triumph of the kind of Protestant religion championed by Lindblom and his collaborators a decade earlier in the *Journal för Prester*: the ideal of the *enhetskyrkan* fell, granting Swedes at last the option of leaving the Lutheran Church without facing the loss of citizenship.<sup>238</sup> Lindblom thus fed into and spurred on a growing momentum within the eighteenth-century Swedish Church that, as Hessler and Göransson outlined, had slowly but surely begun to abandon the idea of total confessional unity in favour of a Christianity where genuine Protestant faith

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<sup>236</sup> See: Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, pp. 38-48.

<sup>237</sup> As cited in: Gladh, ‘Jacob Lindblom’. See also: Hessler, *Stat och religion*, p. 219.

<sup>238</sup> See: Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 224-227. Göransson, ‘Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet’, pp. 101-104. Gladh, ‘Jacob Lindblom’.

was more important than enforced subjection to theological authority.<sup>239</sup> Belatedly, the Swedish Protestant Enlightenment – building upon its German role model – was able to celebrate its victory over the forces of ‘catholic’ Lutheran orthodoxy it had set out to combat.

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<sup>239</sup> Hessler, *Stat och Religion*, pp. 224-227. Göransson, ‘Konfessionalism, Religionsfrihet, Statskyrklighet’, pp. 85-86. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-101.

## Conclusion – Attempting to Answer the Question: What is Protestant Enlightenment?

What, if anything, was the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’? Echoing Johann Friedrich Zöllner’s famous query in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, this was the question at the outset of the thesis. It was posed in light of a historiography that had scrutinised the concept of the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ from a variety of angles, with one common leitmotif, however: that it was supposedly too narrow. Whereas scholars such as William Bulman have suggested widening the notion of ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ to include more conservative thinkers, others such as David Sorkin have proposed to marginalise it in favour of a broader category of ‘Religious Enlightenment’ that spanned all major confessions and religions in eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>1</sup> Whilst especially Sorkin has not negated previous definitions by historians of the Enlightenment or Protestant Christianity and indeed upheld many of their findings, the emergence of the ‘Religious Enlightenment’ narrative has certainly questioned the usefulness of thinking about a uniquely Protestant model of enlightened religion.<sup>2</sup> Against this state of affairs, this thesis has sought to establish whether it is not only still possible to speak of a coherent and definable ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ that extended across the European Reformation Churches during the long eighteenth century, but indeed necessary to discuss it separately from a Catholic or Jewish Enlightenment. This necessitated two

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<sup>1</sup> See: William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment - Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 4-13. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-205. William J. Bulman, ‘Enlightenment and Religious Politics in Restoration England’, *History Compass*, Vol. 10/10 (2012), pp. 752-753. *Ibid.*, pp. 757-758. William J. Bulman, ‘Secular Sacerdotalism in the Anglican Enlightenment, 1660-1740’ in Anton M. Matytsin and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Let There Be Enlightenment – The Religious and Mystical Sources of Rationality* (Baltimore, 2018), p. 206. David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment – Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5.

feats: first, the ascertainment of what united enlightened Protestants during this period in their thought and faith, based on existing scholarship and a review of the central works of enlightened theology. Secondly, an analysis of whether currents of enlightened theology within England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden were sufficiently coherent, interconnected, and grounded in Reformation values as to represent a transnational movement of 'Protestant Enlightenment'.

## A Definition of Protestant Enlightenment

Since the days of Luther and Calvin, a secret reformation has been silently working in the bosom of the reformed churches; many weeds of prejudice were eradicated; and the disciples of Erasmus diffused a spirit of freedom and moderation. ... the web of mystery is unravelled by the Arminians, Arians, and Socinians, whose number must not be computed from their separate congregations. And the pillars of revelation are shaken by those men who preserve the name without the substance of religion, who indulge the license without the temper of philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

Thus described one of the period's foremost historians, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), the transformation that the Protestant Churches of Europe underwent during the Enlightenment. His understanding of events has since been echoed by many Enlightenment historians, from Ernst Troeltsch and Ernst Cassirer over Hugh Trevor-Roper and John Pocock to Albrecht Beutel, David Sorkin, Helena Rosenblatt, and Sarah Mortimer: just as Gibbon, they believed that the eighteenth century saw the rise of a 'rational theology' brought about by Dutch Arminians and Anglican latitudinarians that had Erasmus of Rotterdam as its 'father'.<sup>4</sup> This verdict can broadly be maintained: if

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Abridged Edition*, ed. David Womersley (London, 2005), pp. 689-690.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 690. See: Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band: Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, ed. Hans Baron (4 vols., Darmstadt, 2016), pp. 370-372. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, transl. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 2009), pp. 137-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, p. 187. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (Indianapolis, 2001), p. 191. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-205. John Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce: The Conservative Enlightenment in England' in Lester G. Crocker (ed.), *L'Età dei Lumi: studi storici sul Settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi, Vol. I* (2 vols., Naples, 1985), pp. 553-554. *Ibid.*, pp. 557-558. John Pocock, 'Post-Puritan England and the Problem of Enlightenment' in Perez Zagorin (ed.), *Culture and Politics – From Puritanism to the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1980), p. 93. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

there was one fundamental influence that may be detected among thinkers from across the Protestant Enlightenment, it is that of Erasmian theology. This inspiration was likely often mediated through Arminian theologians yet on many occasions also through the sixteenth-century humanist's own writings. The debt professed to Erasmianism crystallised itself in far more than a simple irenic spirit and commitment to an essential, practical Christian faith centred around ethics. The most significant Erasmian stamp on the Protestant Enlightenment was the restoration of free will and thus human agency to Anglican and Lutheran theology: from the Cambridge Platonists and Leibniz to Butler, Spalding, and Lindblom, there was a widespread recognition that believers were not dependent on the inscrutable divine will in matters of salvation, but that they were able to influence their fate by means of their own powers of judgment. The strong distaste for the anthropological pessimism of Augustinian theology was perhaps the strongest unifying trait of enlightened Protestants in England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden – and has thus rightly been identified in most histories of the Protestant Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> However, this confidence in humanity and its faculties was sustained by a much broader metaphysical framework universal to all enlightened Protestants: of particular centrality was an intellectualism that, as John Henry and Peter Harrison have

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Albrecht Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung – Ein Kompendium* (Göttingen, 2009), pp. 69-70. *Ibid.*, p. 73. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 7-8. *Ibid.*, p. 65. David Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety' – *The Religious Enlightenment in Central and Western Europe, 1689-1789* (Southampton, 2002), p. 9. Helena Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment' in Brown, Stewart J., and Tackett, Timothy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660–1815* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2006), pp. 284-285. Sarah Mortimer, 'Religion and Enlightenment', in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (eds.), *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Chichester, 2016), pp. 346-350.

<sup>5</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 140-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160. Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert – ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zurich, 1981), pp. 87-88. *Ibid.*, p. 143. Georg Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie – Forschungsskizze zu einem Topos der anthropologischen Wende', *Kerygma und Dogma – Zeitschrift für theologische Forschung und kirchliche Lehre*, Vol. 63 (2017), p. 43. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. Wolfgang Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1989), p. 97. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 68-70. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73. The rejection of Augustine was, of course, a leitmotif of Enlightenment. See: Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism* (2 vols., New York and London, 1995), p. 32. Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment – The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790* (Milton Keynes, 2020), p. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

highlighted, stood at the very beginning of the seventeenth-century re-conception of Christianity and established the existence of a God defined by absolute goodness.<sup>6</sup> This was crucial since it permitted theologians to establish a universe governed by objective notions of good and evil, as well as a perfect harmony which subverted several preconceptions of orthodox Protestantism: if God had created the universe in a spirit of infinite benevolence, this rendered the notion of an inherently corrupted humanity difficult to maintain. In addition to an Erasmian spirit, the Protestant Enlightenment thus harnessed the seventeenth century's scientific and philosophical advances to forge a theology whose hallmark was a much greater cosmological and anthropological optimism. All the key features of Protestant Enlightenment as defined by historians – a basic, ethical, and practical faith marked by a reconciliation of reason and revelation – flowed from these premises.<sup>7</sup>

The strong uniformity among Protestant Enlightenment thinkers should not obscure the divergencies among them. For one, not every Protestant Church experienced Enlightenment at the same time: whereas England's had its origins in the 1660s, Lutheran Germany saw its foundations laid by Leibniz from the 1680s onwards. Sweden, in turn, only cautiously began to engage with enlightened theology in the eighteenth century, before embracing it in the wake of Gustavian enlightened absolutism. Beyond these circumstantial factors, however, there were substantive differences in thought that need to be addressed. This thesis focused on two major phases to the Protestant Enlightenment which overlapped and dominated discourse for varying periods within the Churches analysed: an early expression, beginning in the 1660s and reaching well until the mid-eighteenth century in the Lutheran world, that was largely built on an

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<sup>6</sup> John Henry, 'Religion and the Scientific Revolution' in Peter Harrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Religion and Science* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 48-49.

<sup>7</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 11-19. Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety', p. 11-20. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 284.

amalgam of Platonism and rationalism whilst being comparatively more conformist in its defence of key doctrines, even if it advocated a greater reduction of them. This was represented by the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz, and Wolff. The second, beginning in the early eighteenth century and lasting until the advent of Kantianism, was mostly indebted to an empiricism inspired by Newton, Locke, and especially Shaftesbury. It was also (even) more willing to discard dogmatic precepts and mysteries than its predecessors. Butler, Spalding, and Lindblom stand out as some of its principal representatives. Despite their differences, there is little doubt that there was an essential continuity between the two stages of Protestant Enlightenment, as not least many historians have confirmed.<sup>8</sup> Most significantly, however, it is very much possible to argue that the succession from a rationalist to an empiricist Protestant Enlightenment was not a rupture, than an evolution or indeed a necessity: it is notable that both within Anglicanism and Lutheranism, Enlightenment first began with a rationalist expression before shifting to an empiricist one. Whilst this may of course be attributed to a belated impact of Newtonian and Lockean ideas in especially Lutheran Europe, there is much to say for Troeltsch's thesis that the rationalist Christianity put forth by the Cambridge Platonists, Leibniz, and Wolff enabled later theologians to integrate empiricism into the Protestant edifice of theology by successfully re-balancing the relationship of philosophy and theology: by proving the necessary metaphysical harmony of reason and revelation, these rationalist philosophers were able to undermine the primacy of dogmatic authority within the realm of theology to a hitherto unseen degree.<sup>9</sup> This was naturally not their primary intention, as not least Troeltsch acknowledged: especially Wolff had intended to sustain the integrity of Lutheran doctrine with his system and was often used for this

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<sup>8</sup> See: Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 191. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 116. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-146. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 113. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 61. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, pp. 371-372.

purpose to occasional extremes by conservative Swedish Lutheran theologians.<sup>10</sup> However, in keeping with Troeltsch's thesis, their confidence in the mind's powers as an autonomous source of knowledge in perfect harmony with revelation may have enabled theologians such as Butler and Spalding to adopt an empiricist epistemology that carved out an even greater role for reason in theology.<sup>11</sup> Briefly, by opening the door to a metaphysical and epistemological critique of orthodox dogma, the rationalist Protestant Enlightenment theologians created the preconditions for the more radical attack on it by their empiricist successors.<sup>12</sup> This was indeed the opinion of Karl Barth who claimed that the true intellectual revolution in German Protestant theological thought was brought about by Wolff, not the Neologians who simply took his ideas to a logical conclusion by scrutinising essential dogmatic concepts.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, the turn towards empiricism and thereby a sensualism which certain historians have believed to be a sign of a permeable border between enlightenment and enthusiasm was likely prompted by pragmatic considerations: as the Protestant Enlightenment shifted from an erudite to a more overtly ecclesiastical phenomenon, a greater simplification became necessary so as to not to fall into the trap of the rigid scholastic orthodoxy of prior days.<sup>14</sup> This is particularly sustained by the fact that there was (in no small part thanks to the influence of Shaftesbury) no substantive shift in the actual metaphysical premises underpinning

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 371-372. See also: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 124-125. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 136-140. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 328-330. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 71-72. *Ibid.*, p. 191. Tore Frängsmyr, 'Christian Wolff's Mathematical Method and its Impact on the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36/4 (1975), p. 664. Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria III – Frihetstiden* (4 vols., Stockholm, 1997), p. 524. *Ibid.*, pp. 550-552.

<sup>11</sup> Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften – Vierter Band*, pp. 371-372.

<sup>12</sup> This may offer a novel way to conceive the understanding of the three rivalling schools of Enlightenment philosophy identified by Jonathan Israel and Sorkin. See: Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 8-11. *Ibid.*, pp. 447-562. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 20-21. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-59. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-65. *Ibid.*, p. 89. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-146.

<sup>14</sup> Of crucial importance in this context is the importance of 'popular Enlightenment' (*Volksaufklärung*) to Neology that has Church historians such as Beutel have emphasised. See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 146-151.

the endeavour of empiricist Protestant Enlightenment theologians and their continued opposition to enthusiastic faiths such as Pietism and Methodism. The ‘sentimental turn’ towards a more ‘emotional’ as opposed to a purely ‘rational religion’ invoked by historians such as Rosenblatt and Ritchie Robertson may thus have been informed by a very practical desire to render the central message of enlightened Protestantism accessible to a broader lay public.<sup>15</sup>

Surveying the period, it appears implausible to dismiss the classical account of an enlightened Protestantism defined by Erasmian theological ideas to the exclusion of more orthodox or enthusiastic theologians: enlightened religion was not defined by a simple appeal to ‘reason’ or a vague rejection of religious fanaticism but a commitment to particular theological tenets and crucially, a metaphysical framework that conservative and enthusiastic Protestants could hardly abide by since it undermined essential precepts of their respective theologies. One must hence not confuse a socially or politically progressive religious movement – as typified by Pietism and Methodism – with a propensity for Enlightenment in general. As Ian Hunter highlights, the Lutheran Pietism of theologians such as Budde was inspired by a voluntarist theology that was incompatible with Leibnizian-Wolffian Enlightenment theology.<sup>16</sup> Given that Neology was also built on intellectualist foundations, its overlap with Pietism remained equally limited. Similar considerations apply to orthodox ideas based on ‘rational argument’ and the selective appropriation of enlightened ideas more generally: Bulman’s case for a neo-Laudian Tory Enlightenment within the English Church becomes questionable again when considering the classically Augustinian anthropological pessimism that marked

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenblatt, ‘The Christian Enlightenment’, pp. 292-293. *Ibid.*, p. 297. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 249-252.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments – Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle, 1690-1730’ in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon, 2004), pp. 585-586. *Ibid.*, p. 588.

the theologies of its key proponents.<sup>17</sup> All of these currents are simply not compatible with the ideas of the Protestant Enlightenment theologians whose creed was defined by a set of values and beliefs that emphasised the fundamental benevolence of God, the harmony inherent to Creation, and the agency of humans by means of their free will – amplified by a greater confidence in the powers of abstract human reason at the expense of ecclesiastical authority. For it were these beliefs that ultimately made it ‘enlightened’, if one understands it to mean as many scholars have done: a scepticism of tradition and authority informed by a belief in humanity’s ability to attain felicity and improvement by virtue of one’s own reasonable efforts.<sup>18</sup> If it means anything therefore, the ‘Protestant Enlightenment’ that spanned the Churches of England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden must be associated with a growing confidence in human freedom and potential.<sup>19</sup>

### A Confessional Enlightenment?

Yet while there is thus very much reason to believe that Enlightenment among Protestants may be clearly defined along criteria that permit observable limits to a ‘spectrum’ of enlightened religiosity and Enlightenment, as advocated by some historians, this still leaves the charge of how ‘Protestant’ this religion truly was.<sup>20</sup> This has indeed recurrently been the objection of early modern Protestants and Enlightenment historians: though certain ideas were peculiar to (enlightened)

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<sup>17</sup> Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 132-135. *Ibid.*, p. 140. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.

<sup>18</sup> This is broadly in line with John Robertson’s, Kieron O’Hara’s, and Ritchie Robertson’s understanding of Enlightenment. See: John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment – Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 28-33. Kieron O’Hara, *The Enlightenment – Beginner’s Guide* (London, 2018), p. 25. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. xv. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-41. It also echoes Barth’s view of the ‘absolutist human’ as the leitmotif of the period and the German theology of the era. See: Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 19-21. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>19</sup> At the same time, its conviction that human reason could confirm at least essential Christian doctrinal truths distinguished them from enlightened deists or, as Hunter demonstrates, Christian voluntarists such as Christian Thomasius (1655-1728). See: Hunter, ‘Multiple Enlightenments’, pp. 585-587.

<sup>20</sup> See: Bulman, ‘Secular Sacerdotalism’, p. 206. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 19.

Protestants, this did not signify that they were necessarily peculiarly Protestant.<sup>21</sup> Even if one does not wish to go as far as Cassirer and Barth in claiming that Protestant Enlightenment theologians almost did away with Reformation theology altogether, there are strong grounds to contend that enlightened Protestants were largely forsaking certain foundational ideas of their confession.<sup>22</sup> Historians have thus rightly highlighted the rejection of Luther and Calvin's Augustinianism in favour of a theological Erasmianism; the attempts of re-union with Catholicism by Leibniz; or the abandonment of the principle of verbal inspiration in exegesis that had underpinned the ideal of *sola scriptura*.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, much of the philosophy underpinning the Protestant Enlightenment was not exclusive to Anglicanism, Lutheranism, or indeed Calvinism: aside from Erasmus, the cross-confessional appeal of the ancient thinkers (e.g. Plato, Cicero) and 'moderns' (e.g. Descartes, Shaftesbury) upon which the Protestant Enlightenment drew is evident. These were philosophers consulted by eighteenth-century thinkers of various faiths and persuasions, not all of whom were affiliated with the Enlightenment, let alone its Protestant expression.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, their own theorists were often influential to other religions: Sorkin has already highlighted how much the Catholic and Jewish Enlightenments were grounded in Anglican and Lutheran

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<sup>21</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160. *Ibid.*, p. 187. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 181. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-190. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207. *Ibid.*, p. 211. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-218. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5. *Ibid.*, p. 11. Rosenblatt, 'The Christian Enlightenment', p. 284. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>22</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 145.

<sup>23</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160. *Ibid.*, p. 187. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, p. 69. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-88. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-145. Raatz, 'Die Erbsündenkritik der protestantischen Aufklärungstheologie', p. 43. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. Gericke, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 97. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 68-70. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Beutel, 'Aufklärung', p. 115. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 182-183. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-199. Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria IV – Gustavianska Tiden* (4 vols., Stockholm, 1981), p. 235.

<sup>24</sup> See amongst others: Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, pp. 31-203. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-109. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-313. *Ibid.*, p. 383. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 17-31. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43. *Ibid.*, pp. 114. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Enlightenment thinking.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, it may be objected that Protestant Churches experienced Enlightenment, if they did at all, in various degrees of intensity and length – suggesting that Protestantism was not inherently well-disposed towards theological innovation, as was Cassirer's and Trevor-Roper's argument.<sup>26</sup>

The latter charge can be responded to most straightforwardly: Protestantism was in and of itself not a religion of Enlightenment. Observing trends in England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Sweden, the importance of circumstance in aiding the ascendancy of a native Protestant Enlightenment becomes especially evident. Generally, Protestant Churches which experienced an Enlightenment tended to have experienced a fundamental crisis of orthodoxy, often but not always exacerbated by civil warfare. As seen, the role of the English Civil War and especially the Thirty Years' War in fostering a desire for a more tolerant, irenic religion has long been recognised in scholarship.<sup>27</sup> However, beyond a general desire for (religious) peace, the Anglican and German Lutheran Churches were facing a loss of political and theological authority that was at least equally decisive in permitting new ideas to flourish: the curtailment of the clergy's autonomy and thereby authority by secular rulers; the rise of heterodoxy amidst the chaos of domestic conflict; and the entrenchment of confessional diversity in Europe made the model of orthodox Protestantism that had dominated the early seventeenth century no longer viable. This created an opening for enlightened theology to (further) develop, spread, and most crucially, find a hearing with secular authority. How

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<sup>25</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 9-10. *Ibid.*, p. 168. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219. *Ibid.*, p. 229. *Ibid.*, p. 231. *Ibid.*, p. 271. Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety', pp. 10-11. See also: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 170. *Ibid.*, p. 174. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>26</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 160. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 203-205. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-218.

<sup>27</sup> See: Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 37-41. Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006), p. 64. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 25. *Ibid.*, 115-119. Mortimer, 'Religion and Enlightenment', p. 345. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. xii-xiv. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-13. *Ibid.*, p. 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-205. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 84-86.

important these circumstances to the emergence of Protestant Enlightenment were can be observed in the case of Sweden: it is not an exaggeration to claim that it was the relative political stability enjoyed by the Scandinavian kingdom during the seventeenth century that permitted the Swedish clergy to tighten religious orthodoxy and thus preclude the ascent of an enlightened Lutheranism within their Church. Though the Swedish Church saw itself subjected to lay authority too by the end of the century, this proved to be both of little consequence and short duration: as seen, once the Caroline autocracy gave way to the Age of Liberty, the Swedish clergy in fact regained its autonomy and re-asserted its orthodoxy across the kingdom, even as other spheres of thought and life were liberalised.<sup>28</sup> Only when Gustavus III's absolutist designs curtailed the clergy's independence once more did enlightened Protestantism gain a foothold in Sweden. This confirms Sorkin's thesis that state patronage was a critical, if not the central, structural factor for the emergence of enlightened theologies.<sup>29</sup> Beyond the direct promotion of a clerical faction, however, the creation of an environment that facilitated the development of new ideas, especially in theology, was equally important: Lindblom was thus elevated by Gustavus III to a position of authority within the Swedish Church but not presented with a theological programme to pursue by the king. This was not only true of Sweden, but England and Lutheran Germany too: the impulse for theological reform rarely if ever came from secular rulers but tended to have its roots within Churches. There needed to be a domestic faction of enlightened clerics sufficiently established for monarchs and princes to promote them. For any Protestant Enlightenment to flourish within a given polity or Church therefore, it needed at least three ingredients: the clergy's subjugation to secular authority; a sufficiently liberal

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<sup>28</sup> See: Harry Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplysningens Tid' in Harry Lenhammar (ed.), *Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5. Individualismens och Upplysningens Tid* (8 vols., Trelleborg, 2017), pp. 34-36. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42.

<sup>29</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 18-19.

intellectual environment that permitted enlightened schools of theology to develop; and only lastly, state patronage.<sup>30</sup> At the seventeenth century's close, these conditions were more likely to arise within Protestant polities which did not have to contend with the papacy over ecclesiastical authority. As Trevor-Roper famously put it, '[i]ntellectual life was undeniably freer, heresy was undeniably safer in Protestant than in Catholic countries' during the period in question.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, this was not only due to historical fortune but the very nature of Protestantism that deliberately intended to carve a greater role for secular control over churches (even if its limits were hotly debated).<sup>32</sup> Sweden, therefore, constitutes insofar an anomaly as that it was unusual for an eighteenth-century Protestant state to have offered its clergy such a degree of independence, authority, and thus a monopoly over religious policy.

Nonetheless, the necessary demotion of orthodox clergy may still suggest that Protestant Enlightenment occurred in opposition rather than in tune with Reformation religion. Crucially, however, the leading lights of Protestant Enlightenment did not themselves believe that they were abandoning their confession's legacy and theology – to the contrary. Particularly as the Protestant Enlightenment progressed, it turned into an explicitly and unapologetically 'Protestant' phenomenon, as historians of enlightened Lutheranism such as Beutel and Jakob Christensson have highlighted: there was a genuine sense among enlightened Protestants that they were not repudiating but perpetuating the Reformation and its ideals.<sup>33</sup> This was naturally partly due to a political

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<sup>30</sup> A confessionally diverse society was also an important factor in England and Lutheran Germany yet crucially not highly relevant in Gustavus III's Sweden and thus arguably not essential.

<sup>31</sup> Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 181. See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 181-183. Ritchie Robertson has also stressed the structural importance of the Reformation as '[a]n essential precondition for the Enlightenment'. See: Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 37-38. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> See: Lucian Hölscher, *Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland* (Munich, 2005), pp. 41-42. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 224-225. Sorokin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 152-153. Lenhammar, 'Sveriges kyrkohistoria – 5.', pp. 38-39. Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenments', pp. 578-579.

<sup>33</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 70-74. Martin Greschat, 'Die Aufklärung. Einleitung' in Martin Greschat (ed.), *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte – Bd. 8, Die Aufklärung*

identity that encouraged a general anti-Catholic sentiment: in England and Sweden, citizenship and confession were so closely tied together that affirmations of faith and doctrine were required and intended to offer a separation from Roman Christianity.<sup>34</sup> The depiction of Protestant values as diametrically opposed to ‘popish tyranny’ was therefore often a defence of the body politic against a Catholic ‘Other’. However, this did not have to signify that their belief in Protestantism’s uniquely enlightened potential was not genuine. This is not least shown by the stern warnings of enlightened Protestants such as Johan Åström against orthodoxies in their own churches that reminded them of the Catholic Church in their reliance on dogmatic authority and desire to exert control over the consciences of believers.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, that the commitment to Protestant values was not merely lip-service or polemical exaggeration may arguably be seen when comparing the radicalism of especially later Protestant Enlightenment thinkers with the relative conservatism of their Catholic counterparts: this becomes clearest on the question of toleration and internal dissent. To enlightened Protestants, connivance at theological difference – within reasonable limits to avoid social upheaval – was, as seen with the Swedish Neologians, an end in itself: it enshrined the freedom of conscience that stood at the heart of the Reformers’ effort in the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> To enlightened Catholics, it was all too often a means to an end, a pragmatic tool to eventually return to a united and universal Roman Church – as not least Sorkin has conceded.<sup>37</sup> On the

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(14 vols., Stuttgart, 1983), p. 35. Jakob Christensson, *Lyckoriket – Studier i Svensk Upplysning* (Stockholm, 1996), pp. 38-48.

<sup>34</sup> See: Paul Douglas Lockhart, *Sweden in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 12. Febe Crafoord, “*Läter all ting ährliga och skickeliga tilgå*” – *Prästerskapet i 1600-talets Sverige* (Stockholm, 2002), p. 268. Michael Maurer, ‘Strukturen der Toleranz und ihre Grenzen – England, Schottland und Irland (1689-1829)’ in Albrecht Beutel, Volker Leppin, Udo Sträter, and Markus Wriedt (eds), *Aufgeklärtes Christentum – Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 2010), p. 156. *Ibid.*, 158. Greschat, ‘Die Aufklärung’, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> See: *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 329.

<sup>36</sup> See: Jacob Axelsson Lindblom, *Tal vid Prestmötets slut i Linköping d. 12 Sept. 1793* (Linköping, 1794), p. 31. *Journal för Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 331. See also: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 72.

<sup>37</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 234.

Anglican side, Bulman made it his central argument that similar beliefs also underlaid his Tory Enlightenment thinking.<sup>38</sup> This difference shows that their belief in Protestantism as a 'religion of freedom' (Cassirer) was not merely earnest but arguably enabled by an understanding of their faith's intellectual foundations that Catholicism lacked: as Beutel has shown, the Reformation was thus for most enlightened German Lutherans defined by a repudiation of collective (religious) authority and empowerment of the individual Christian.<sup>39</sup> There is much to be said for extending this understanding to England and especially Sweden, making it the fundamental belief sustaining the Protestant Enlightenment especially in its later stages. It would also account for much of the innovative potential of enlightened Anglican and Lutheran theology, including when comparing it with the restraint of enlightened Catholics. By contrast, the only authority that remained supreme for enlightened Protestants was revelation. No Protestant Enlightenment theologian considered Scripture dispensable, to the contrary: whilst they did substantively change their approach to examining its contents, they accorded it a primacy that was especially on the Lutheran side, as Klaus Scholder amongst others stressed, strongly rooted in the archetypally Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*.<sup>40</sup> When Barth therefore argued that only adherence to the Bible prevented the total subversion of Protestant theology during the eighteenth century, he misunderstood the Protestant Enlightenment's mission, as it was deliberately seeking a more authentic relationship with Scripture.<sup>41</sup> Whilst Barth and Cassirer were thus insofar correct that the Protestant Enlightenment did occasionally abandon the letter of the Reformation

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<sup>38</sup> Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. xiv. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-8. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158. *Ibid.*, p. 199. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>39</sup> Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 160. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Scholder, 'Grundzüge der theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland' in Heinz Liebing and Klaus Scholder (eds.), *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation – Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Berlin, 1966), p. 472.

<sup>41</sup> Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie*, pp. 108-110.

and its theology, there cannot be any doubt that it pioneered its spirit (or more precisely a particular interpretation of it) as a matter of principle.<sup>42</sup> In fact, many of its overlaps with Pietist and Methodist theology may thus arguably rather be traced back to a common Reformation heritage than a nexus with Enlightenment.

Beyond this intellectual commitment to Reformation ideals, it is again crucial to highlight that the Protestant Enlightenment was a transnational phenomenon that went beyond a common canon of ideas: many of its proponents were not working in isolation from one another but reviewed work from abroad and often felt themselves to be engaged in a common Protestant goal. This was most obvious within Lutheranism since Swedish Enlightenment theologians took most of their cues from their German counterparts. Yet even across confessions, the exchanges among Protestant Enlightenment thinkers were significant, as not least shown in Spalding's thirst for English books. Throughout the long eighteenth century, there was a vibrant reception of ideas among enlightened Protestants. At its height, this culminated in a deliberate and explicit intention to further the cause of an 'Enlightenment of Religion' or 'Christian Enlightenment', to cite the *Journal für Prester* once more.<sup>43</sup> Yet one must equally concede that this Protestant Republic of Letters was often decidedly one-sided: just as German Lutherans often took little note of their Swedish brethren's work, Anglican theologians were not likely to follow developments among German Lutherans. However, this should not be taken as proof against the existence of a coherent 'Protestant Enlightenment', rather than confirmation of a common trend in eighteenth-century Europe: John Robertson thus noted that, despite the literary transfer between Scots and Neapolitans being decidedly unilateral, this was no impediment to them sharing in the

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<sup>42</sup> See: Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 138-141. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160. Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert*, pp. 138-140. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>43</sup> See: *Journal für Prester*, Vol. 1/3 (1798), p. 100. *Journal für Prester*, Vol. 2/2 (1799), p. 169. *Journal für Prester*, Vol. 2/3 (1799), p. 332. *Ibid.*, p. 342. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

same Enlightenment.<sup>44</sup> The one-sided dynamics within the Protestant Enlightenment's Republic of Letters may be explained through multiple factors: first, an increasing 'nationalisation' of erudition in Enlightenment Europe. The rise of the vernacular at the expense of the universal languages of learning of Latin thus erected new language barriers that hindered the dissemination of the new theology across borders. This was not an insurmountable obstacle, as Spalding's translation work and the promotion of German Enlightenment theology by the *Journal för Prester* demonstrate. Yet especially in countries with a highly developed learned infrastructure of their own, erudite debates and exchanges appear to have occasionally turned inward. This was a dynamic that was arguably affecting theology disproportionately, given that ideas and disputes were often concerned with the state of individual Churches, confessions, or at least polities. It is hence not surprising that the Swedish Neologians took a far higher interest in the writings of their German confessional brethren than the works of Anglican theologians, whereas English Protestants seemed to take less note of the ideas produced among Lutherans. The dynamics and dilemmas of this Protestant Republic of Letters are perhaps nowhere better summarised than in a letter sent by Spalding in 1780:

Certainly however, your expressed bewilderment that I, [as an] author, am not more well-known in England will bewilder compatriots and foreigners; one may attribute it to an overly strong love of the fatherland; ... And I will confess in a sober seriousness that ... the lack of awareness among the English of an author who is German or only writes in German does not appear particularly strange to me. I am in this respect in a quite similar situation. There hangs a quite fine copperplate engraving of Uppsala's last Archbishop Troilius [*sic*] at mine and I know to this hour not of a single word this man has written.<sup>45</sup>

In Spalding's mind, it was only evident that the intellectually 'self-sufficient English', as he himself phrased it, would take less of an interest in the learned activities of their German counterparts, especially since the latter were in his view still greatly reliant on

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<sup>44</sup> Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 9. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Johann Joachim Spalding, *Briefe*, ed. Albrecht Beutel and Olga Söntgerath (Tübingen, 2018), no. 160.

the wisdom produced abroad.<sup>46</sup> The existence of a pan-Protestant consciousness among enlightened theologians in England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden thus appears to have been greatly dependent on the degree to which they were influenced from the outside: as many historians have shown, Lutheran Germany and especially Sweden could for long not boast the same scholarly infrastructure as England and thus built many of their own theologies on those produced abroad.<sup>47</sup> In Lutheran Germany, Leibniz and Spalding thus engaged with the works of the Cambridge Platonists and Butler, whereas Sweden largely imported Wolffianism and Neology from Germany. At the same time, this did not mean that Lutheran Enlightenment was essentially an offspring of Anglican Moderation: beyond the fact that, as many historians have highlighted, Calixtian theology was crucial in offering a ‘homegrown’ inspiration to enlightened Lutherans such as Leibniz, most took English ideas as a starting point to develop their own original theologies.<sup>48</sup> These caveats notwithstanding, however, the debt owed to foreign ideas created a transnational sense of a common mission that shines through especially among German and Swedish Lutherans in the eighteenth century’s latter half.

### Protestant Enlightenment, Religious Enlightenment(s), and the Enlightenment

To answer the question in the thesis’s title, there thus was, undoubtedly, one Protestant Enlightenment spanning England, Lutheran Germany, and Sweden from roughly 1660 well beyond 1800. It drew on a common intellectual foundation, took inspiration from

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<sup>46</sup> Spalding, *Briefe*, no. 160.

<sup>47</sup> See: Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 42. Marsha Keith Schuchard, ‘Leibniz, Benzelius, and the Kabbalistic Roots of Swedish Illuminism’ in Allison P. Coudert, R.H. Popkin, and G.M. Weiner, (eds.), *Leibniz, Mysticism and Religion* (Dordrecht and London, 1998), p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> For the relevance of Calixt in the German Lutheran Enlightenment, see: Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz – An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 48-50. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 69. *Ibid.*, p. 103. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 36.

among its participants, and often cast itself in explicitly Protestant terms. Indeed, especially in the later stages of the eighteenth century, some enlightened Protestants sought no less than a 'new Reformation' (Spalding) that they conceived as the final liberation of the Christian conscience from the shackles of ecclesiastical and dogmatic authority.<sup>49</sup> Even if it differed in its timeline, expression, and even methodology between and within confessions, Churches, and countries, it was undoubtedly of one mind and substance. Most significantly, it stood in contrast with other models of enlightened faith, on account of its uniquely Protestant foundations. This does not mean that it had an exclusive claim to theological Enlightenment, nor that there was no overlap with the Enlightenments of other confessions: the exchanges with Jewish *Haskalah* thinkers are equally well-documented by historians as the existence of Catholic clergy and theologians who sought to reform their Churches in line with enlightened precepts, even if their priorities occasionally diverged.<sup>50</sup> Extending this insight to the state of Enlightenment scholarship more generally, this presents a case for the concept of a 'Religious Enlightenment' to remain currency that should not, however, supersede but complement notions of a Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish Enlightenment. Rather than to think of a 'spectrum' that may be overly open-ended, one could thus conceive a genealogical tree of Enlightenment: rooted in similar foundations, interconnected but branching off and combining with other strands of ideas along the way. This would be an elegant means of preserving the diversity of the 'multiplicity of Enlightenments' bestowed upon scholarship by Pocock whilst avoiding both the risk of excessive fragmentation and narrowness feared by historians such as Sorkin and that of a possibly

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<sup>49</sup> As cited in: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup> See: Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 170-181. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 9-11. *Ibid.*, p. 168. *Ibid.*, p. 173. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219. *Ibid.*, p. 229. *Ibid.*, p. 231. *Ibid.*, p. 271. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 170. *Ibid.*, p. 174. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

limitless Enlightenment that John Robertson warned against.<sup>51</sup> It would permit appreciating the uniqueness of particular branches whilst always being able to trace them back to a common root that is, as not least Ritchie Robertson has recently re-emphasised, perhaps still best embodied by Immanuel Kant's immortal words: '*Sapere aude*'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See: Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, pp. 4-5. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20. Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, p. 16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>52</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?' in *Kant Werke – Bd. 9: Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik – Erster Teil*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (10 vols., Darmstadt, 1983), p. 53. Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. xvii-xviii. *Ibid.*, p. 779.

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