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The Religious Rationalism of Benjamin Whichcote

MICHAEL B. GILL

1. INTRODUCTION

MOST PHILOSOPHERS TODAY have never heard of Benjamin Whichcote (1609–83), and most of the few who have heard of him know only that he was the founder of Cambridge Platonism.¹ He is well worth learning more about, however. For Whichcote was a vital influence on both Ralph Cudworth and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, through whom he helped shape the views of Clarke and Price, on the one hand, and Hutcheson and Hume, on the other. Whichcote should thus be seen as a grandparent of both the rationalist and the sentimentalist strands of eighteenth century British ethical theory. In this paper, I will elucidate the particular ethical positions of Whichcote's that played such an important role.

Whichcote's thought is interesting in its own right, moreover, as a lens for examining the implications of certain prevalent religious and moral commitments. In what follows, then, I will also seek to show that Whichcote's profoundly theistic view of human nature is ultimately incompatible with the belief that is fundamental to his Christianity. Perhaps the idea of an irresolvable conflict between Whichcote's Christianity and his theism sounds at first a bit paradoxical. I hope, though, that by the end of this paper it will be clear how, for many seventeenth century rationalists, such a conflict was virtually inevitable.²

¹An important recent work on Whichcote is Chap. 4 of Frederick Beiser's *The Sovereignty of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Chap. 10 of J. B. Schneewind's *The Invention of Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) is also a noteworthy contribution. Beiser, Schneewind and Stephen Darwall's *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought'* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) all do an excellent job of explaining the seventeenth century philosophical context of Whichcote's thought.

²All references to Whichcote, unless otherwise noted, are to Benjamin Whichcote, *The Works* (first published in 1751 [London: J. Chalmers]; reprinted in 1977 [New York: Garland Publishing,

2. RELIGION IS RATIONAL

The most central claim of Whichcote's, the thought around which all his other thoughts coalesce, is that *religion is rational*.³ To understand Whichcote, therefore, we must determine what this claim amounts to.

We can begin by noting that religion, for Whichcote, constitutes all and only those things necessary for salvation.⁴ So when Whichcote says that religion is rational he is maintaining that everything one needs to do in order to achieve heavenly eternal life is rational to do. If something is not rational to do, conversely, then it must not be part of religion and so one could refrain from doing it and yet still achieve salvation.

Let us say that this view—that religion consists of all and only those things necessary for salvation—is of the *form* of religion. Whichcote also has a view of what we can call the *content* of religion, i.e., a view of the particular rational things one must do in order to achieve salvation. Indeed, as one would expect, the lion's share of Whichcote's sermons concerns religion's content. We will discuss Whichcote's account of the content of religion below, in sections 5, 6, and 7. First, however, let us examine what he means when he insists on the *rationality* of religion.

Whichcote's rationalism should initially be viewed against the backdrop of voluntarism. According to voluntarism, God has arbitrarily decided to reward certain actions and punish others. There is, on the voluntarist view, nothing intrinsically right about the actions God rewards and nothing intrinsically wrong about the actions God punishes. He just as easily could have made a different decision, could have rewarded the actions He now punishes and

Inc.]). The first (Roman) numeral of each reference refers to the volume (I-IV) of the *Works*, the second (Arabic) numeral refers to the page number of that volume. It should be noted, however, that it is quite possible that some of the sermons collected in the 1751 *Works* (or some passages of them anyway) were not in fact Whichcote's, and thus that I have at times attributed to Whichcote some things that he himself did not say. It is also quite possible that Whichcote's views changed over time, so that some of the irresolvable conflicts that I discuss in sections 5–9 are in fact indications not of one internally inconsistent position but of Whichcote's evolution from one position to another. It is quite possible, as well, that Whichcote had different audiences for different sermons and that consequently he was at times forced by circumstances to use ways of expressing himself that he would not have used had he always been able to speak perfectly freely and philosophically. Unfortunately, I have been unable to formulate any reasonable and historically principled hypotheses as to the authenticity, date and audience of the various sermons in the 1751 edition.

³See I 37, 363; III 97, 105. There are two ways of understanding the claim that "religion is rational." One way is as a predication claim—i.e., religion has the property of being rational, which property other things might have as well. The other way is as an identity claim—i.e., rationality and religion are exactly the same thing. For the most part I will be taking Whichcote to be making the predication claim. There are places, however, in which Whichcote certainly seems to be making the stronger, identity claim (e.g., IV 144).

⁴See II 141.

punished the actions He now rewards. And if God had made a different decision, it would have been right for us to perform actions it is now wrong for us to perform and wrong for us to perform actions it is now right for us to perform.

Whichcote adamantly opposes this voluntarist position. He claims instead that some actions are intrinsically right and others are intrinsically wrong, and that it is the intrinsic rightness or wrongness of an action that makes it rational or irrational to perform, not God's will.⁵ Whichcote acknowledges that God rewards people for performing intrinsically right actions and punishes them for performing intrinsically wrong ones (although, as we shall see, he just barely acknowledges such reward and punishment). But he thinks God does this because the actions are antecedently right or wrong. So for Whichcote, what makes an action rational or irrational to perform is an intrinsic feature of it, one that God Himself could not alter—a feature that is essential to the action in the same way that the feature of having interior angles that add up to one hundred and eighty degrees is essential to a triangle.

Now this anti-voluntarist aspect of Whichcote's rationalism, as I've just described it, is more an ontological position than an epistemological one; it is a claim concerning the nature of actions, not a claim concerning our beliefs about the nature of actions. So let us now turn to look at what we could think of as the epistemological side of Whichcote's rationalism, at his view of religious belief.

One position that could be taken that is consistent with the anti-voluntarism I've so far described is what we can call a supra-human rationalism. According to this supra-human rationalism, actions are intrinsically right or wrong, but human beings (perhaps because their rational faculties have been corrupted by the Fall) are incapable of comprehending these qualities of intrinsic rightness and wrongness. So while in every case there is a way to conduct oneself that is intrinsically right, one will not always be able to compre-

⁵See I 71, 139–40, 199, 232, 252. For discussion of the historical importance of Whichcote's anti-voluntarism and his belief in the rationality of religion, see Beiser, 135–83, and Schneewind's "Voluntarism and the Foundations of Ethics" (*Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* [1996]: 25–42).

I should note that the view I attribute to Whichcote here is one according to which religious truths can be characterized independently of the exercise of human reason (see, e.g., II 151–2 and IV 194). Now Darwall has argued that while such a view is one that Clarke would have endorsed, Cudworth would have resisted it, since Cudworth held that "ethical propositions are made true by what would emerge from the exercise of practical reason, rather than that reason perceives ethical facts whose truth is independent of reason's exercise" (Darwall, correspondence; see also Chap. 5 of Darwall's *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought'*, e.g., 114 and 126–30). Therefore, if Darwall is right about Cudworth (and he mounts an impressive case for his interpretation), Whichcote is in at least one important respect closer to Clarke than is Cudworth. See also note 40 below.

hend what makes that conduct right. One might, as a consequence, sometimes be in a position in which one ought to do something the underlying reason for which one cannot understand. Religion is in a sense still rational, according to this position, but the rationality of it is not always transparent or accessible to human beings.

This supra-human rationalist position is not Whichcote's. For Whichcote holds that the rationality of religion is transparent or accessible to all humans, that everyone can come to comprehend the intrinsic rightness of the conduct required for salvation.⁶ According to Whichcote, that is, the underlying reason one ought to act in a certain way is something one will always be able to understand.

We can gain a clear view of this commitment of Whichcote's to the accessibility of the rationality of religion by looking at three related claims that he makes throughout his sermons. These claims may very well be the most distinctive of Whichcote's in that they seem to capture best the overall spirit of his thought and to have been the main sources of inspiration of those for whom he was a vital influence.

3. DEIFORMITY, AUTONOMY AND THE INTERNALITY OF HEAVEN AND HELL

The first and most fundamental claim of Whichcote's that helps elucidate his commitment to the accessibility of the rationality of religion is what we can call the "deiformity claim,"⁷ according to which human reason and divine reason are of just the same form—according to which the mind of man is made in the "image of God,"⁸ is "God-like,"⁹ is "the candle of the Lord."¹⁰ Whichcote believes, of course, that human reason is finite while divine reason is infinite.¹¹ But his deiformity claim asserts that the nature or essential character of human and divine reason is just the same. Indeed, Whichcote seems to believe that human reason is in a sense identical to the reason of God—that by "imitat-

⁶In saying that Whichcote believes that religion is accessible to all humans, I do not mean to imply that he thinks that humans can access all the truths that there are. Whichcote would acknowledge that there are some truths that are beyond the reach of human reason. What I mean to say, rather, is that Whichcote believes only that all the truths that constitute *religion* are accessible to all humans. Whichcote's most fundamental reason for this belief, I think, is his anti-Calvinist commitment to the principle of ought-implies-can (see, e.g., I 205–7 and 220–1)—i.e., he holds that we cannot be required to do anything that it is not possible for us to do, that religion (by definition) comprises things we are required to do, and therefore that all religious truths are such that it is possible for us to access them.

⁷See II 247–8; IV 58, 188, 247–8, 314.

⁸See I 261, 302; II 60, IV, 388, 418, 433.

⁹See I 222; II 189; IV 155.

¹⁰See I 172, 193, 298, 371; II 11, 132; III 144, 150, 187, 243, 373; IV 298.

¹¹See I 31, 33–4, 311.

ing God” through the use of our reason we actually come to “partake of” or “participate in” the “divine nature” itself.¹² God, however, clearly understands the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of actions. And so humans too can come to understand the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of actions. For by using their rational faculties, as the deiformity claim has it, humans become God-like—become one with God Himself.

This assertion of the deiformity of human reason also explains the second claim of Whichcote’s that helps elucidate his commitment to the accessibility of the rationality of religion. According to this second claim, which we can call the “autonomy claim,” religion is a law that we can give to ourselves—a law that we can come to know without anyone else’s help but simply because it “of itself commands, and by its nature and quality recommends itself to us.”¹³ We can be sure that this law is internally accessible to each of us, moreover, just because each of us is deiform and so in possession of a rational faculty into which the law is as inextricably woven as it is into the divine nature itself. As Whichcote puts it, “For such a nature as the nature of man is, intellectual nature, it gives a law to itself, and carries a law with it, and is made with the law, and the law is in its own bowels, and is never extirpated while it continues in being: the law of reason is inherent to human nature.”¹⁴ Since the law is “inherent to human nature,” one need not look outward to determine what one must do in order to achieve salvation. One can, rather, always look within and discern the way to salvation on one’s own.

But the fact that one *can* look within to determine what must be done in order to achieve salvation still leaves open the question of whether one *needs* to look within in order to achieve salvation. For one could hold that the law’s being inherent to human nature is important merely because it makes religion more convenient for us. According to this “autonomy-as-convenience” way of thinking, one *need* not look within in order to conduct oneself religiously. One could be equally religious by heeding the commands of an external authority, just so long as those commands were themselves in line with the law. It would not matter, then, whether one performs the actions religion requires as a result of intellectually comprehending the intrinsic rightness of them or as a result of having obeyed an external authority. For the essence of religion would consist not in giving the law to oneself but simply in acting in accordance with the law—a copy of which, conveniently enough, has been stowed in one’s “bowels.”

Whichcote does not hold to this autonomy-as-convenience way of thinking.

¹² See I 32, 53–4, 215, 233; II 3, 61, 189, 201–4, 311; IV 299.

¹³ IV 436.

¹⁴ IV 434. See III 104.

Giving the law to oneself is, for him, not merely one of the ways in which one can conduct oneself religiously but in fact the only way. As he puts it,

[F]or nothing is *virtue*, but what is *the product of a mind actually considering, and a man's choice upon deliberation and consideration*: . . . because a man is to use the principles of God's creation; he is to consider, and he is to make use of his reason; and *that* is first to be set on work, to discover the way, and to discern the difference of things.¹⁵

Whichcote believes that conducting oneself merely in accordance with "the way" or "the difference of things" is not sufficient. One's conduct must, as well, result from one's having used one's "reason" to "discover the way," to "discern the difference." As he says elsewhere, "It is a vain thing for a man to call that an action of religion, which is not an act of understanding."¹⁶

Why is autonomy so important for Whichcote? Why does he think that religion consists not merely in performing actions that are intrinsically right but also in performing those actions as a result of understanding their intrinsic rightness? What we have already said about the deiformity claim points to the answer. Whichcote believes, as we've seen, that in using their rational faculties humans can become "God-like," can come to participate in the divine nature. He also believes that the "business of religion" is to "imitate and resemble"¹⁷ God, to make ourselves into "partakers of the divine nature."¹⁸ As he explains, "For, *this* is our religion, a divine participation, and to imitate him whom we worship."¹⁹ But God gives the law to Himself; His actions are the product of nothing but His understanding of the intrinsic "difference of things." In order to become God-like, therefore, a human too must use his rationality to give the law to himself; a human's understanding of the intrinsic "difference of things" must guide his conduct as well, if he is to partake of the divine nature. For we do not resemble God simply by performing right actions—as such actions could result from all sorts of irrational or base motives which God Himself does not possess. We resemble God, rather, when (or to the extent that) we perform right actions as a result of *understanding* their rightness—when (to the extent that) our conduct flows from that part of us that is deiform.

The third claim of Whichcote's that illuminates his commitment to the accessibility of the rationality of religion grows out of his deiformity and autonomy claims but, if anything, delineates that commitment even more sharply.

¹⁵ III 339. See also I 155–6, 313–4; III 16, 209; IV 143, 337. Many of Whichcote's statements of the importance of thinking for oneself (which I am grouping under the heading of the "autonomy claim") are made in the context of his sharply criticizing what he took to be the Catholic Church's demand of unthinking "credulity."

¹⁶I 152.

¹⁷I 32.

¹⁸I 54.

¹⁹I 311.

According to this third claim, which we can call the “claim of the internality of heaven and hell,” the worst part of hell is not the external torment of being placed in a lake of fire but rather the internal torment of knowing that one has done wrong. What is really hellish, that is to say, is not the “misery and harm” that “proceed from *abroad*,” but the bite of conscience and self-condemnation, which “do arise from *within*.” Conversely, heaven consists chiefly not in externally bestowed benefits but in one’s participating with the divine nature, which participation is one and the same with one’s acting from the law. Indeed, the internal aspects of heaven and hell are so much more significant than the external aspects, according to Whichcote, that even if “omnipotence itself should load me with all burdens, if I am innocent within, I shall be able to bear it,”²⁰ while an “unregenerate” person “cannot be happy” even if (*per impossible*) he is “in heaven.”²¹ As Whichcote explains

All misery arises out of ourselves. It is a most gross mistake; and men are of dull and stupid spirits, who think that that state which we call *hell* is an *incommodious place* only, and that God by his sovereignty throws men therein: for hell arises *out of a man’s self*; and hell’s fewel is *the guilt of a man’s conscience*. And it is impossible that any should be so miserable as hell makes a man, and as there a man is miserable; but by his own condemning himself: and on the other side, when they think that heaven arises from any *place*, or any nearness to God or angels; this is not principally so: but it lies in a *refined temper*, in an *internal reconciliation to the nature of God, and to the rule of righteousness*. So that both hell and heaven have their foundation *within men*.²²

Whichcote goes on to maintain, moreover, that the internal aspects of heaven and hell accrue to all right and wrong conduct immediately, “even in this world,” and do not flood in only after one has passed on.²³ As he puts it, “Heaven as it denotes a *state*, we lay title to now . . . [H]eaven and hell *moral*, as they denote a *state*, are things that we are well acquainted with in this world . . .”²⁴ Whichcote does not deny that each of us will, after death, abide in a heavenly or hellish *place*. But he does not speak much about heaven and hell as places—because, first of all, he has not seen such places and so cannot be sure what they are like; and secondly, because the mental *states* of heaven and hell are both knowable here and now and are far and away more important. So for Whichcote there is a very real sense in which we can achieve heaven on earth (“*heaven present*”²⁵) through righteousness, and hell on earth through unrighteousness. This position, though, is just what we should expect from

²⁰ III 139.

²¹ III 86.

²² III 139–40. See also I 39, 230; II 107–8, 126–7, 195; III 216–7, 227, 232, 335–7, 354–9.

²³ I 324.

²⁴ II 156–7.

²⁵ II 196.

someone who believes both that one can act righteously by exercising one's reason and that by exercising one's reason one can become God-like—just what we should expect from someone who believes that one can, here and now, participate with the divine nature.

Now this belief of Whichcote's that heaven and hell are states "we are well acquainted with in this world" reveals clearly his commitment to the transparency or accessibility of the rationality of religion. For one's acquaintance of heaven and hell presupposes one's understanding of righteousness and unrighteousness. Indeed, the states of heaven or hell just *are* the understanding of the righteousness or unrighteousness of one's conduct; they are two names for the same thing. So for Whichcote, anyone to whom religious dictates apply—anyone, that is, who can achieve heaven or hell—must be able to understand those dictates, for heaven and hell are in the most important sense states of understanding. Or as Whichcote himself puts it, "[W]e are as capable of religion, as we are of reason."²⁶

We might wonder at this point why Whichcote hangs on at all to the idea of heaven and hell as places, why he doesn't do away entirely with the external aspects of heaven and hell. For it seems as though he thinks the internal aspects are both necessary and sufficient motivations for religion. Indeed, at one point, he says explicitly that we ought not to talk much of heaven as "a place of rest and content" and of hell as "a place of *fire and brimstone, weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,*" as such talk leads us away from concentrating on what is really important, which is our present "frame and temper of mind."²⁷ It seems to me, consequently, that the external aspects of heaven and hell are philosophically idle in Whichcote's thought, vestigial notions that could be excised without any significant side-effects.

One might then be tempted to go further, however, and make the more radical suggestion that God Himself is vestigial in Whichcote's account of heaven and hell. Whichcote does say that hell consists of being "refused"²⁸ by God, and that heaven consists of being "fully reconciled"²⁹ unto Him. But more often than not Whichcote emphasizes the hellish misery of a guilty conscience, and the heavenly contentment of being able to "reflect with satisfaction upon what we have done,"³⁰ which misery and contentment are "none of God's creature" (i.e., not of God's creating).³¹ One might claim, as a result, that Whichcote's talk of being "refused" or "reconciled" to God is best taken

²⁶ I 37.

²⁷ II 196–7.

²⁸ II 370. See also III 106.

²⁹ III 167. See also I 215; II 195.

³⁰ I 36.

³¹ II 140. See also III 339; IV 434.

metaphorically, as a vivid way of picturing internal states that even an atheist could acknowledge. And one might next be tempted to make the same kind of suggestion about Whichcote's autonomy claim, maintaining that it too can be disengaged from its theistic trappings. For while Whichcote does suggest that what is important about giving the law to ourselves is that by doing so we come to partake of the divine nature, he also says that what is wrong with our not acting from the law is that we thereby fail to have "reverence"³² for ourselves, that we thereby violate our own "integrity"³³ and are not "true to"³⁴ who we really are.³⁵ And one might take these statements about reverence for ourselves, integrity and the like to be primary, and thus to hold that Whichcote's autonomy claim is at its base a claim about self-respect, which is something even an atheist could embrace.

Certainly some of his Puritan and Calvinist contemporaries thought that rationalism of the sort Whichcote advanced had such irreligious implications.³⁶ Those who, several decades later, would accuse Shaftesbury and the Deists of atheism would also have found aspects of Whichcote's rationalism religiously repugnant, for many of the ideas of Shaftesbury and the Deists that caused the greatest uproar develop out of Whichcote.

It would, nonetheless, be a mistake to think that significant aspects of Whichcote's rationalism admit of a non-theistic reading—a mistake to think that Whichcote's claims about autonomy and the internality of heaven and hell could be separated from the deformity claim and still be recognizably his. For Whichcote believes that the only possible explanation for the fact that humans possess a conscience and the law within (which possessions the claims about heaven and hell and autonomy presuppose) is that they were created by God. Whichcote believes, that is, that it is strictly speaking inconceivable that humans could possess conscience and the law within were it not for the existence of a perfectly good and truthful being.³⁷

³² IV 435.

³³ I 12. See also II 141.

³⁴ III 139.

³⁵ III 340.

³⁶ Thus Whichcote deems it necessary to respond to those "who oppose in religion, matters of reason, and points of *faith*" (II 241). See also I 370-1 and II 204.

³⁷ Whichcote does not present extensive arguments for this belief, but in *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* Cudworth does, and I think that from what Whichcote does say (at, e.g., II 106, 160, 188-9; III 187) it is clear that he has in mind the kind of position Cudworth advances. (For discussion of Cudworth's position, see Chap. 5 of Darwall's *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought'*.) One of the key similarities between Cudworth and Whichcote that strongly suggests they have the same view of the existence of our moral ideas' presupposing the existence of a perfectly good and truthful being is their commitment to a Platonist understanding of Form-like innate ideas. Oddly, however, Whichcote at times seems to endorse a "rasa tabula" view of the mind (see II 4, 13; III 215), which would seem to militate against, in particular, innate ideas and,

So any view of conscience³⁸ and the law within that eschews entirely the idea of one's participating with God's nature is one that lacks essential elements of Whichcote's view of these things; any account of human rationality that is compatible with atheism will be incompatible with Whichcote's account. For Whichcote's theistic statements, and in particular his deformity claim, are not merely extraneous packaging in which his accessible rationalism arrives; they are essential to the rationalism itself. This is worth underscoring, I think, because on the surface many of Whichcote's ideas might seem to be able to make themselves perfectly at home in later non-theistic ethical views. And indeed Whichcote certainly should be seen as an ancestor of later "internalist" and autonomy-based views that emphasize the importance of integrity, self-respect and being able to bear one's own survey. But what grounds all of Whichcote's ideas—what undergirds the importance he places on integrity, self-respect and the like, and what gives his overall thought the coherence it possesses—is a deeply theistic view of human nature which many later ethicists would not be able to call upon for support.³⁹

4. RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

Let us now turn to a different question raised by Whichcote's commitment to the accessibility of the rationality of religion—namely, the question of what it is like to understand the requirements of religion. For while we've seen that Whichcote believes that each of us can reach an understanding of all religious requirements, we have not yet determined what he thinks such an understanding consists of.

A recurring theme in Whichcote's sermons is opposition to enthusiasm, and when this anti-enthusiasm is his chief concern, the characteristic of understanding that seems most important to Whichcote is its calmness, i.e., its contrast with the tumultuous roiling emotion of an enthusiastic epiphany.⁴⁰ Indeed, in a few

in general, the theological Platonist explanation of the existence of our moral ideas that he almost always otherwise seems to endorse. I tend to think Whichcote just did not see clearly all the implications of accepting a "rasa tabula" view of the mind.

³⁸As Whichcote puts it, "Conscience is God's Vice-gerent, the God, dwelling within us" (Aphorism 1058 in Whichcote's *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* [edited by Samuel Salter, 1753]); see also I 42, 94–6, 102–19, 152, 200–2, 213, 244, 294–5; II 200. For an account of Whichcote's view of conscience and its theological underpinning, see Beiser 155–6 and 162.

³⁹I believe that this deeply theistic view of human nature also grounds the ethical ideas of almost all the other British moralists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

⁴⁰Whichcote criticizes enthusiasm at, e.g., II 15–9, 24, 240–1, 261 ff. Whichcote's blanket opposition to enthusiasm is perhaps the single most conspicuous difference between him and Cudworth, as Cudworth endorses (albeit in a carefully circumscribed way) some types of enthusiastical experiences. Cudworth thinks of reason as being much more of an intuitive faculty than does Whichcote (see especially Cudworth's "Sermon Preached before the Honorable House of Commons," in *The Cambridge Platonists*, edited by Gerald R. Cragg [New York: Oxford University Press,

places Whichcote says things that might seem completely compatible with the view that the source of our “understanding” of religion is what Hume would later call a calm passion.⁴¹ In other places, however, it is clear that Whichcote’s understanding of understanding is more rationalistic than that.⁴²

There are two different ways in which one could conceive of the understanding of religious requirements that Whichcote believes every person is capable of. To understand a requirement could be, first, to realize that it is as demonstrably certain as the most fundamental of mathematical truths. Or it could be, second, to realize that the balance of evidence on the whole tips in favor of it—to realize that the putative requirement, like a putative event that one has more evidence for than against, is more likely than not to be a true one. Whichcote does not clearly distinguish these two conceptions of understanding. There are, however, compelling reasons for attributing to him the first, very strongly rationalistic conception, the one according to which religious understanding is akin to mathematical knowledge.⁴³

This very strongly rationalistic conception of demonstrably certain understanding is, most importantly, demanded by Whichcote’s deformity claim, which is the cornerstone of his views of religion and human nature in general. For the deformity claim tells us that when we fully exercise our rational faculties we become God-like. But God is as certain of religion as one can possibly be about anything. If, therefore, our understanding of religion is truly God-like, then we, too, will be as certain of it as one can possibly be. Thus religion will be entirely “clear” and “intelligible” to our rational faculty. As Whichcote puts it,

[A]ll principles of religion are founded upon the surest, most constant, and highest reason in the world. *There is nothing so intrinsically rational as religion is*; nothing so self-evident, nothing that can so justify itself, or that hath such pure reason to commend itself, as religion hath; for it gives an account of itself to our judgments and to our faculties.⁴⁴

1968]). The religious certainty Whichcote thinks we can achieve is therefore more rationalistic than is the (more emotional, closer to mystical) religious certainty that Cudworth thinks we can achieve. Whichcote’s view is, thus, in this respect as well more similar to Clarke’s than Cudworth’s is. See note 5 above.

⁴¹ See, for instance, I 1–20, 128.

⁴² See especially II 232.

⁴³ Whichcote, as we shall see in section 6, makes it very clear that the moral part of religion is such that we can attain mathematical certainty of it, writing, “In *Morality* we are as sure as Mathematics” (Aphorism 298 in Whichcote’s *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*) and proposing to produce a “demonstration in morals, that is as clear and as satisfactory as any demonstration in the mathematicks” (IV 307). We will look at his commitment to the certainty of the instituted part of religion in sections 7–9.

⁴⁴ I 71.

Now Whichcote's deformity claim and his corresponding view of the power of the human rationality should not be pushed too far. For, of course, Whichcote believes that human rationality has limitations that the reason of God does not have. But I think that for Whichcote these limitations restrict only the *quantity* of things humans can understand, not the *quality* of understanding that humans can achieve.⁴⁵ There are, that is to say, some things that God fully understands that we cannot comprehend. But there are also some things that we can comprehend. And our understanding of these latter things will be just the same—just as clear, just as full—as God's understanding of them. And religion, for Whichcote, comprises things humans can comprehend; it comprises things of which we can achieve God-like understanding. It is this view of human rationality as limited but nonetheless capable of divine certainty on matters of religion that seems to underlie Whichcote's claim that we are required to believe not in all of God's attributes but only in two of them—not in God's "omnipotency, eternity, ubiquity" but only in His goodness (or "holiness" and "righteousness") and His truthfulness (or "truth" and "faithfulness").⁴⁶ For the reason Whichcote gives for this claim is that these latter two attributes are the only ones that we can fully understand and thus imitate⁴⁷; the other attributes, in contrast, we "cannot comprehend" and so are not part of religion's "ground and foundation."⁴⁸

It seems, then, that his deformity claim commits Whichcote to the view

⁴⁵I have taken this point directly from Craig's discussion of what he calls "the Similarity Thesis" or "the Image of God doctrine" in Chap. 1 of *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987; see especially 13, 19, 21, 29). I should note, though, that it might be thought that I have overstated the similarity between human and divine reason. For, as Beiser puts it, "the human intellect perceives things discursively, going gradually from part to whole, whereas the divine intellect perceives things intuitively, proceeding from the whole to the parts. They both have the same object, but they have different ways of conceiving it. This could be described as a difference in degree; but also in kind" (Beiser, correspondence). I can only say in response that Whichcote's suggestions of the actual *identity* of human and divine reason seem to me to warrant attributing to him the view that the particular things humans can know (although they constitute only a proper subset of what God knows) they can know with just the same certainty that God knows them; such suggestions seem to me to warrant attributing to Whichcote the view that while the (discursive) manner in which humans come to know things is not the same as the (intuitive) manner in which God knows them, the "manner of knowing itself" (Craig, 29) is the same in both the human and divine intellect (or, as Schneewind puts it, for Whichcote "our minds and God's are not really separate" [Schneewind, 197]). That Cudworth's epistemology is grounded upon an equally strong claim of the similarity of human and divine reason seems to me to constitute additional evidence for interpreting Whichcote in this way (see Cudworth's *A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* [London: Thomas Tegg, 1845], 580–1, 626–7, 642).

⁴⁶I 381. See also I 32.

⁴⁷II 385. See also III 301.

⁴⁸I 381–2. See also IV 203–4.

that those things that are indispensable for salvation will also be self-evident, perfectly obvious, demonstrably certain. As Whichcote puts it,

The judgment upon which religion is grounded, is not a light, or a *moveable opinion*. For though there are things within the latitude of religion, that are subject to disputation, and have an uncertainty, yet I do not account any thing but these, in a strict sense, *religion*, or *that which makes a good man here, and a happy man hereafter*; that which makes him holy here, that he may be blessed hereafter. The judgment is not grounded upon things that are moveable, doubtful and uncertain; but things evident and demonstrable, or that have very great assurance. For if the things of religion be not of this nature, but doubtful and uncertain, they are not necessary.⁴⁹

Whichcote's view of the Bible's role in religion confirms this interpretation, according to which our understanding of religion is akin to our understanding of the most fundamental mathematical truths. For Whichcote maintains that true religion requires acceptance of only those parts of the Bible that are "clear, full, and *perspicuous*" and that, consequently, religion does not require acceptance of the parts of the Bible that are not "perspicuous," such as "matters of *ancient records*, the history of former times," "matters of deep *philosophy*, as also matters of *philology*" and "matters of *prophecy*."⁵⁰ Now I do not think that Whichcote means to imply that what the Bible says about history, prophecy and philosophy are false. Indeed, it seems more likely that Whichcote believes that the balance of evidence tips in favor of most of the Bible's historical, prophetic and philosophical claims. But these claims "do not belong to the business of religion," nonetheless, because they are not such that we can "fully understand them."⁵¹ This is in contrast to those things that do belong to "the business of religion" which are all such that they "are easily learnt" and "easy to be understood."⁵²

But the best evidence of all that Whichcote believes that religion comprises principles as demonstrably certain as the fundamentals of mathematics is his account of the content of religion, i.e., his account of the particular substantive principles that one must live by in order to achieve salvation, and in particular his distinction between the instrumental part of religion and the moral part of religion. So let us turn to that topic now.

5. THE INSTRUMENTAL PART OF RELIGION

What Whichcote calls the instrumental parts of religion are nuts-and-bolts churchly procedural matters such as "*prayer, hearing of sermons, receiving the sacra-*

⁴⁹ II 141.

⁵⁰ I 179

⁵¹ I 179–180.

⁵² I 180.

ments," the keeping of "the Lord's day" and the organization of "this ministerial office."⁵³ There was, of course, fierce disagreement in seventeenth century England about these things, but to Whichcote's mind it was all tragically much ado about next to nothing.⁵⁴ For he thinks that while some procedures might help some people become more religious, they are in the end simply dispensable aids, neither necessary nor sufficient for salvation. Such procedures, as Whichcote sees it, are all simply, "about religion," and "not of the essence of religion" or "the state of religion" itself.⁵⁵

Whichcote supports the claim that following certain procedure is insufficient for true religiosity by pointing out that "you may pray, and hear the word, and receive the sacrament, and be wicked still" (IV 187). More important for our purposes, however, is how Whichcote argues that following procedure is unnecessary for true religiosity. For he seeks to establish that procedures are merely instrumental and thus dispensable by pointing out that while the "great, momentous, and weighty things of religion" are perfectly "clear, and perspicuous" to all "good men," the correctness of procedures is not "so clear and plain" and "good men may happen to be otherwise-minded" about them.⁵⁶ Whichcote argues for the mere instrumentality of procedures, that is, by pointing out that we cannot be absolutely certain of which ones to perform. Whichcote can make such an argument, however, only because he thinks that something can be essential to religion only if we can be absolutely certain of it—only because he thinks that everything that is necessary for salvation will be perfectly clear to all decent people.⁵⁷ Or as he puts it, "So that *that* hath but little or no place in religion, and is very mean and low, which is doubtful and uncertain; which is not of unquestionable good report."⁵⁸

What, then, is "of unquestionable good report"? What does Whichcote think is religiously certain and thus indispensable? Well, what Whichcote usually has in mind when he speaks of what is of "unquestionable good report" is what he calls "the moral part of religion." That is to say, Whichcote usually claims that churchly procedures are dispensable and uncertain in the context

⁵³ IV 116. See also IV 65–8, 80, 116–7.

⁵⁴ See I 378; II 1–40, 141, 325–6, 362. Whichcote's discussion of these matters marks a major contribution to the movement toward latitude or religious tolerance in England.

⁵⁵ II 391. See also II 320–9; IV 180–3.

⁵⁶ II 2.

⁵⁷ See II 3; III 60. What do I mean by "decent people"? I mean all those who, as Whichcote puts it, "have not neglected or abused their faculties" (IV 117) nor engaged in "gross self-neglect and faction" (II 23; see also I 43; II 64; III 166). Whichcote thinks, in other words, that the only people who do not realize the essentials of religion (or the moral part of the essentials of religion, anyway) are easy-to-identify "monsters" (III 30–2, 211) who have obviously utterly perverted and destroyed their natural principles.

⁵⁸ IV 117.

of drawing an explicit contrast between those procedures and morality, which he thinks is indispensable and certain. So let us now look at Whichcote's view of these two aspects of morality, first at its indispensability and then at its certainty.

6. THE MORAL PART OF RELIGION

Whichcote makes it particularly clear that he believes that morality, unlike churchly procedural matters, is indispensable to religion in his sermons entitled "The Moral Part of Religion reinforced by christianity." As he remarks in one very typical passage, morality comprises

things that are *good in themselves*, and sanctify by their presence, and are necessary and indispensable. They are not means to higher ends; but ends themselves. There cannot be a relaxation or commutation in these particulars, upon any account. But the intellectual nature is necessarily and unavoidably under an obligation to [them]. Of all the *instrumental parts of religion*, you cannot say so of them, put them altogether: for all the other things in religion are but in order to these. These are the things that make men *God-like*; these are the things that are *final* and *ultimate*; these are the things that do sanctify human nature by their presence.⁵⁹

Whichcote also repeatedly maintains that while one can be "sincere and honest"⁶⁰ regardless of the churchly procedures one does (or does not) follow, one will inevitably be damned for immorality.⁶¹ Indeed, the very reason Whichcote uses the cumbersome term "the moral part of religion" instead of simply "morality" is to emphasize that what he is talking about is "essential to religion"⁶² and not simply "some external ornament."⁶³

To see that Whichcote believes that morality is demonstrably certain it will be helpful first to give a brief overview of his account of the content of morality. That account is, as well, of some independent interest as it anticipates many of the ethical views that rationalists such as Clarke, Balguy and Price would later advance.⁶⁴

Whichcote's account of the content of morality begins from the familiar rationalist claim that all of morality is grounded in the self-evident principle that actions be "fit and just" or "fair and equal."⁶⁵ Whichcote (again, like many of the other rationalists) does not spend much time explaining this principle of

⁵⁹ II 237. See also I 145 and IV 187.

⁶⁰ II 1-20.

⁶¹ II 56-8, 237.

⁶² I 145. See also IV 112.

⁶³ II 60. See also II 54, 390; III 262-3, 282.

⁶⁴ See Beiser, Darwall and Schneewind for discussion of this type of ethical view in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

⁶⁵ See I 71, 252; II 212

fitness, probably because he thought of it as so obvious and fundamental that it neither needed nor admitted of explanation. He does provide some glosses, though, maintaining in a couple of places that the principle of fitness “consists in this; the congruity and proportion between the action of an agent and his object. He acts morally that doth observe the proportion of an action to its object; that is, he doth terminate a due action upon its proper object.”⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Whichcote says that all moral actions are instances of “*giv[ing] every one their own.*”⁶⁷

Whichcote does not leave matters at this very general level of fitness, however. He goes on to derive from that general principle specific rules of conduct, formulating “demonstration[s] in morals, that [are] as clear and as satisfactory as any demonstration in the mathematicks.”⁶⁸ What these demonstrations result in are extensive and numerous lists of the various very particular duties we owe to God, to other people, and to ourselves.⁶⁹ And what is most important for our present purpose is that it is clear that Whichcote thinks that these various duties, which can be applied to every situation in which we could ever find ourselves, are just as demonstrably certain as the fundamental moral principle of fitness from which they are all derived. Morality, as Whichcote understands it, comprises “things that are necessary at all times, and these are the things that are self-evident; no sooner is a man told of them, but he knows them to be true.”⁷⁰ Or as he puts it elsewhere,

And all these things are evident in themselves, and demonstrable, and the man may be sure of them, and there is no question about them, neither is there any difference or controversy in the world about them; and these are the great points of righteousness towards God, and this do we understand by *moral duty*, and this comes within the compass of the *moral part of religion*.⁷¹

Whichcote frequently emphasizes the self-evidence of morality by pointing out that the very same lists of moral duties (in contrast to churchly procedural

⁶⁶ II 236.

⁶⁷ II 52.

⁶⁸ IV 307. See also note 43.

⁶⁹ See I 253–256, 383 ff; II 51 ff, 204–43; III 128, 141, 381; IV 351–60, 408–14. Whenever Whichcote talks about duties to God (or the duty to act “Godly”), duties to other people (or the duty to act “Righteously”), and duties to ourselves (or the duty to act “Soberly”), he is talking about the moral part of religion. It is interesting and important to keep in mind that Whichcote thinks that our duties to God (the duties to act “Godly”) are moral duties. It is also interesting and important to note that the duties Whichcote believes he can demonstrate from the three general duties (of godliness, righteousness and sobriety) are very specific, including those of parents and children, of husbands and wives, masters and servants, and even of men to their horses and dogs (I 253–6).

⁷⁰ II 238.

⁷¹ II 53.

matters) “have been universally acknowledged in all ages,”⁷² that all people in all “successions of time” have agreed on them.⁷³ Indeed, in many different sermons Whichcote says very explicitly that there have been heathens who have realized fully the moral part of religion, even though they lived “without the pale of the church.”⁷⁴ For the moral principles are “knowable by natural light,” and

to these God made man, and we are naturally under the obligation of them: these are the great materials of natural knowledge; and if any man say he doth not know these things, I will tell him he hath lived downward, backward; he hath lived to make himself less; he hath lived idle in the world; he hath neglected God’s soil, he hath sown no seed, and therefore hath no hopes of any crop: for all men universally are under obligation in these matters; and men of any education, even the heathens themselves, have acknowledged these.⁷⁵

Whichcote’s high moral esteem of non-Christians was exceedingly controversial in his day. But it is just what his commitment to the accessibility of the rationality of religion should have led us to expect. For that commitment involves the idea that the law of religion is inextricably woven into human nature itself, wherever and whenever it exists, within the pale of the church or without.⁷⁶ Or as Whichcote puts it, morality is so deeply rooted in humans’ “intellectual nature” that it is as impossible for a human to lack “the principles and grounds” of morality “as it is impossible for the water to be without its

⁷² II 204. (But recall the qualification mentioned in footnote 57, which makes it clear that Whichcote thinks that there are some “moral monsters”—people who have engaged in “gross self-neglect”—who have not acknowledged the moral principles acknowledged by all persons “of any improvement and indifferency.”)

⁷³ II 233. See II 63; III 106. It is important to keep in mind that these moral ideas that all decent people have agreed upon include duties to God—i.e., that Whichcote believes that even the heathens (the decent ones, anyway) had the correct understanding of all of their moral duties to God.

⁷⁴ IV 124–5. See also III 30–1 and IV 289–90. Also relevant in this regard is the correspondence between Whichcote and Tuckney, in which Tuckney admonishes Whichcote for his admiration of the heathen philosophers and Whichcote responds by writing, “The time I have spent in philosophers I have no cause to repent of, and the use I have made of them I dare not disown. I heartily thank God for what I have found in them . . .” (Whichcote’s Second Letter to Tuckney, printed in Whichcote’s *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, edited by Samuel Salter, 1753). I believe, as well, that it is revealing that the Biblical quotation that Whichcote constantly cites in his discussion of morality is “Titus” 2:12, which is where the phrase “soberly, righteously, and godly” occurs, from which Whichcote derives his three classes of moral duties. For the “Titus” passage as a whole (lines 11 to 14) seems to me on its most natural reading to suggest that the duties of sobriety, righteousness and godliness are things that we have been taught only through the grace of God and the sacrifice of Christ. Yet, Whichcote makes it perfectly clear over and over again that he thinks that these three classes of duties are such that one can realize them simply through natural light, within the pale of the church and without, after Christ and before. (But see II 132.)

⁷⁵ IV 289–90.

⁷⁶ See IV 109, 112, 289.

natural quality that belongs to it, or the sun without light, or fire without heat."⁷⁷

7. THE INSTITUTED PART OF RELIGION

So for Whichcote morality is necessary in two senses of the term—both indispensable to religion and demonstrably certain. Indeed, part of what I have tried to show is that for Whichcote something's being necessary in the sense of being indispensable implies its also being necessary in the sense of being demonstrable.

But is morality sufficient? Does it constitute not only part of "the business of religion" but all of it?

At times, Whichcote sounds as though he thinks morality is sufficient, that it does constitute all of the business of religion.⁷⁸ Note, however, that if morality were sufficient, it would then be possible for people to be fully religious—and so to achieve salvation—without accepting Christ. Indeed, if morality as Whichcote conceives of it were sufficient, then the sacrifice of Christ would be strictly speaking superfluous, since people in all ages and times—before Christ as well as after—have been able to realize completely their moral duty. What distinguishes a distinctly Christian life from the way of life of the "better sort" of heathens would then look to belong to the instrumental part of religion at best.

This position that morals are sufficient for religion is one that Whichcote clearly wants to reject, his occasional comments about the all-importance of morality notwithstanding.⁷⁹ He wants to maintain, rather, that accepting that

⁷⁷ II 59.

⁷⁸ See I 37, 40–1; II 60–1; IV 69, 351. Whichcote says things that, taken in isolation, might give the impression that he thinks morality is sufficient for salvation when he is contending with those who would afford morality no religious importance—when he is trying to persuade, that is, those who would demote morality to the level of mere "civility" (II 60).

⁷⁹ Schneewind errs, consequently, in attributing to Whichcote the view that "[m]orality suffices to win salvation" and that the "one part of religion in twenty that comes by institution . . . has . . . merely instrumental value" (Schneewind, 196–7). Cragg encourages this same mistake when he maintains that Whichcote believed that "the moral element in the Gospel [is] supremely important" and that "[b]oth the institutions and the prescriptions of organized religion must . . . serve moral ends or they would cease to be religious instruments" (Cragg, 1968, 20). That Schneewind and Cragg mischaracterize Whichcote in this regard is clear from the fact that Whichcote explicitly contrasts what he calls the "instrumental part of religion" with both the moral *and instituted* parts (see footnote 82). Now it might seem as though this mischaracterization is of minor importance—a reflection simply of the difference between the way in which we today tend to use the word "institution" (to refer to the parts of organized religion that Whichcote calls "instrumental") and Whichcote's semi-technical use of the word (to refer specifically to the acceptance of Jesus Christ). But really the mischaracterization is more serious than that, for it obscures the most central problem of Whichcote's thought—namely, the problem of reconciling rationalism and distinctly Christian commitments. (But see footnote 103.)

Christ died for our sins is just as indispensable to religion as morality. As he puts it, "For there is no other way of acceptance with God for fallen man, but through Christ; by Christ only we are recommended."⁸⁰ Whichcote even says at one point that those who do not accept Christ will "be punished, in the lake of fire and brimstone, which burns for ever,"⁸¹ availing himself of the traditional hellish imagery that he almost always otherwise eschews.

The acceptance of Christ is what Whichcote calls "the instituted part of religion."⁸² And it is this, of course, that distinguishes Christians from heathens—this that is "the spiritual point" that marks "the difference between men."⁸³

Now for Whichcote the instituted part of religion is like the moral part in that it is not merely "about religion" but integral to "the state of religion" itself; both the moral and instituted parts, that is to say, are "*necessary and fundamental*."⁸⁴ But the instituted part also differs from the moral part in a very significant respect. For humans can discern the moral part of religion entirely by "natural light," without the benefit of any external assistance, wherever and whenever they may live.⁸⁵ Humans would not know to accept Christ, however, were it not for the scriptural revelation that tells of His life and death. As Whichcote explains, the "*use we are to make of Christ . . . [is a] matter, which otherwise than by revelation, could never have been known . . . A man might have thought thousands of years, and never have thought of this way.*"⁸⁶ So in order to discern the duty that constitutes the instituted part of religion, humans cannot rely on their rational faculty alone (as they can to discern morality) but require the "superaddition" of the gospel. Thus, at the end of a sermon in which he has argued for the demonstrable certainty and indispensability of the principles of morality, Whichcote concludes, "And this is that which we understand by the *moral part of religion*: and to this, the gospel *superadds the going to God in, and through Jesus Christ.*"⁸⁷

This claim that it is indispensable to religion to accept Christ as He is described in the "superaddition" of the gospel does not, however, seem to fit well with the rationalism we've so far attributed to Whichcote. It does not seem to fit, for instance, with Whichcote's commitment to the accessibility of the

⁸⁰ II 293. See also I 385; II 62, 306.

⁸¹ II 293.

⁸² For a clear statement of Whichcote's view of the three parts of religion—the instrumental, the moral and the instituted—see II 235–9. For the distinction between the moral and instituted parts, see III 20–29, 120–3; III 251–2, 377.

⁸³ II 292–3.

⁸⁴ I 383.

⁸⁵ IV 289. See also III 20–1.

⁸⁶ II 285–6. See also II 240, 286, 312–26, 362; III 19.

⁸⁷ II 62.

rationality of religion, as that commitment involved several claims that gave us to believe that the human rational faculty was capable—simply by natural light, without any external assistance—of discerning religion. Nor does it seem to fit with Whichcote's views of the unimportance of believing in large parts of the Bible and of the mere instrumentality of churchly procedures, as those views seemed to imply that something can be indispensable to religion only if it is self-evident and demonstrably certain—and it is difficult to see how the need to accept Christ can be self-evident and demonstrably certain if we require the historical narrative of the gospel in order to learn of it. All the other aspects of his rationalism seem to imply, in other words, that religion includes only those things each of us can determine through the use of his rational faculty on his own, but Whichcote's claim that we must accept that Christ died for our sins seems to imply that religion includes the belief in an event as related to us in an externally delivered document, which belief we could never come to through the use of our rational faculty alone.⁸⁸

8. THE PROBLEM OF THE SUPERADDITION

Let us call this apparent difficulty of reconciling rationalism with the need of the gospel "the problem of the superaddition."⁸⁹ This problem is hardly unique to Whichcote. Almost all of the British ethical rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had to contend with it in one way or another, and the belief that the problem could not be solved is, I believe, the chief motivation behind Deism. I think, moreover, that examining the problem within the context of Whichcote's thought is especially worthwhile—because it is there that the problem makes one of its earlier and more influential appear-

⁸⁸I should mention that there are a couple of passages—i.e., I 155 and I 176—in which Whichcote seems ready to abandon his strong commitment to rationalism in order to accommodate his strict grace-needing understanding of Christianity—i.e., places in which Whichcote suggests that our acceptance of Christ cannot and need not be entirely rational, that we ought to accept Christ because revelation says we ought to even though we cannot fully understand why. Now it turns out that both of these passages are succeeded by passages—i.e., I 155–6 and I 179–80—that seem to *affirm* the strong commitment to rationalism Whichcote elsewhere endorses. Still, I must acknowledge that I find it very difficult to see how to reconcile I 155 and I 176 (at least when these passages are looked at in isolation) with my account of Whichcote's rationalism overall. For similar difficulties for my account, see II 135, where Whichcote says that Christ's "doctrine transcends all the principles of morality and virtue, that the world was ever acquainted with before." Is it possible that these passages are inauthentic, or that Whichcote was obliged to put them in his sermons because of the particular audience to which he was preaching? (For the opposite type of difficulty—i.e., of reconciling my account of the instituted part of religion with certain rationalistic statements of Whichcote's that seem to imply the dispensability of the Gospel, see footnote 103.)

⁸⁹For a similar discussion of what I am calling the problem of the superaddition, see Beiser, 164–5, 175–83.

ances,⁹⁰ and because the ardor of both Whichcote's rationalism and his Christianity places the problem in particularly clear focus.

Whichcote's attempted solution to the problem of the superaddition seems to me to have three parts.

The first part consists of attempting to establish that there necessarily had to be some mediation between God and humans, because the existence of such mediation follows deductively from the nature of God and the nature of humans. It follows, first of all, because humans are all sinful, which makes them incapable of being immediately united with God, and, secondly, because God is good, which ensures that He will provide humans the opportunity to become united with Him.⁹¹ Whichcote argues, that is, that since there must be an opportunity for union, and since that union cannot be immediate, there must be a mediator.⁹² (Whichcote has serious difficulties explaining the sinfulness of all humans that necessitates a mediator, as his commitment to the deformity of human rationality militates against a fully robust lapsarianism; but let us leave that difficulty to the side for now.⁹³)

⁹⁰ See Shaftesbury's introduction, III vi–viii.

⁹¹ At least part of the justification for the claim that God will provide an opportunity for us to become united with Him is that since God is good He will always abide by the principle of ought-implies-can (I 205–21). But Whichcote also says, in some places, that while it was right of God to provide us an opportunity to become united, it would not have been wrong for Him not to provide us with this opportunity (I 29; III 355; IV 159–64). I must acknowledge that I find this latter claim very difficult to reconcile with Whichcote's commitment to ought-implies-can in particular and with his view of the will of God in general (see, e.g., I 251; II 243–4).

⁹² As Whichcote explains it, “[W]e are all of us under an universal forfeiture, we have prejudiced the interest we have in God as our creator; we cannot have confidence in the relation to God as the original of our being, because we have given him offense; we have forfeited our happiness, by consenting to iniquity; we have worsted our faculties, and marred our spirits. In this case of general necessity, divine goodness hath declared itself, in finding out a way, and recommending it to us; a way, in which if we come to God, we shall not be refused, but find acceptance . . .” (II 305). “God had a mind to save his creature from the beginning, and this antecedently to Christ's coming. For though reconciliation was wrought by Christ, it was contrived by the wisdom and goodness of God: his goodness did move God to find out a way: he had it first in his thoughts: it is the glorious product of infinite wisdom and goodness in conjunction” (II 275). See also I 74–5, 217–8, 224, 265, 288; II 73–97; III 23, 28; IV 155–76.

⁹³ It is, for starters, difficult to reconcile a robust spirit of original sin with Whichcote's belief that we can be acquainted with heaven in this life (see section 3). It would also seem that Whichcote would have to say that the sinfulness that creates the need for mediation is immorality—i.e., that the human need for mediation is parasitic on, or posterior to, the human failure to satisfy the moral part of religion (cf. II 131–5). But this account of the need of mediation seems not quite to capture the spirit of original sin that a strict grace-needing Christianity seems to require. Furthermore, Whichcote himself seems to think that some humans, while perhaps not morally perfect, have done a pretty good job of realizing the moral part of religion. It is this problem, I think, that bedevils Whichcote's apparently inconsistent discussions of whether God's command to Adam not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge was intrinsically right or a “positive” injunction. Whichcote is pushed towards saying that this command was intrinsically right by his view that God is entirely rational and non-arbitrary (I 252; II 277–8). But he is pushed towards

The second part of Whichcote's attempted solution consists of attempting to establish that it is Christ and Christ alone who must be the mediator between God and humans. The reason Whichcote gives for why Christ and Christ alone must be the mediator is that it is only Christ, as both human and God, who has the peculiar nature that is capable of—or fit to perform—such a mediation. As Whichcote puts it, "Christ is a *middle person*, in the order of being; and therefore of himself fit to be a mediator between God and man. He unites heaven and earth in his person, and therefore is a fit person to reconcile God and man in his office."⁹⁴

These first two parts of Whichcote's solution are, then, supposed to show that Christ's dying for our sins was something that *had* to occur, and that consequently accepting Christ is necessary. They are supposed to imply, that is, that the natures of God, humans and Christ made the sacrifice of Christ and the corresponding indispensability of the acceptance of Him ineluctable in the same way that the nature of a triangle makes it ineluctable that the triangle's interior angles add up to one hundred and eighty degrees—that the sacrifice and the indispensability of the acceptance of Christ, no less than the fact of the sum of a triangle's interior angles, admit of demonstrative proof.

These first two parts do not constitute a full solution to the problem of the superaddition, however. For in order to solve the problem, Whichcote needs to show more than just that our accepting Christ is necessary. He also needs to show that the necessity of accepting Christ is both such that we would never have thought of it without the benefit of gospel-revelation (else there would have been no need of the superaddition) and such that we can now understand it as fully as we understand the fundamentals of mathematics (else the acceptance of Christ will fail to meet the criterion of accessibly demonstrable certainty that Whichcote sets for religious indispensability). But how can Whichcote make plausible the idea that a principle that we can come to know not through the use of our reason alone but only through revelation can be fully understandable and certain to us in the same way as principles that we can discern through the use of our reason alone?

The answer to this question constitutes the third part of Whichcote's attempted solution to the problem of the superaddition. This third part can be called the *Now-it's-clear* response. Here is one of Whichcote's fullest and clearest statements of it.

saying that this command was a positive injunction by his view that humans can on their own pretty much realize the moral part of religion (IV 185–6).

⁹⁴II 300. See also II 134–6, 247–9, 276–84, 291. Whichcote also points out in numerous places that Christ was foreshadowed by scripture. Clearly, however, because of his anti-voluntaristic rationalism, Whichcote cannot rely simply on scriptural foreshadowing to argue for the rationality of accepting scripture.

Now this same knowledge of divine and heavenly things, is of a double sort. Those things that are knowable by natural light, as the moral part of religion . . . [and t]he other notices of divine revelation, [which] are as knowable and intelligible as these; that God doth pardon sin upon Christ's mediation and intercession, upon the terms of the covenant of grace, that is, that he will certainly pardon sin to all that repent and believe the gospel, and that he will accept of their weak and imperfect obedience, and will take it in good part, and accept them to all intents and purposes, as much as if a man were invested with full power of man in the moment of his creation, and that he did compleatly and exactly fulfil all righteousness. And though some men do pretend that religion is not intelligible, they dishonour God very much; for that which God hath now revealed, is as plain and as intelligible as any other matter . . . And it is no more a mystery that God (in and through Christ) will pardon sin to all that repent if they have done amiss, than it is a mystery that a man that is rational and intelligent ought to live soberly, righteously and godly: and I do understand it as well that I ought to repent and believe the gospel, as I understand that I ought to love and fear God. All religion is now intelligible: the moral part of it was intelligible from the creation: that which was pure revelation by the gospel, is intelligible ever since, and not a mystery. Therefore we be-fool ourselves to talk that religion is not knowable, and we cannot understand it: for understand it we may, if we will; for if it be revealed, it is made intelligible; if not intelligible, it is not revealed.⁹⁵

In this passage, Whichcote maintains that the moral and instituted parts of religion are now both equally certain to us—they are both “intelligible,” non-mysterious, and fully understandable and in just the same way. The only difference is that in order to discern the instituted part we needed some help that we did not need in order to discern the moral part. The relationship between the principle of the gospel-revelation and human beings looks then to be much the same as the relationship between a successful mathematical proof and a mathematician who understands the proof but was unable to formulate it by himself. The mathematician accepts the proof not because someone else tells him to or because it is printed in a book but because he himself realizes that it must be correct—because he himself fully understands it. Still, it took the proof's being told or printed for the mathematician to come to that understanding. In the same way, the principle of the gospel-revelation is now as certain to us as the most fundamental principles of morality (indeed, as certain to us as the most fundamental principles of mathematics) and that is why we should live our lives by it. Still, we could not have figured out that principle entirely by ourselves, even if it is the case that we know it to be true as soon as we are told of it.⁹⁶

This third part of Whichcote's attempted solution to the problem of the superaddition is a tricky balancing act. For if, on the one hand, all humans see

⁹⁵ IV 289–91. See also II 104, 136; III 24, 42–3, 88.

⁹⁶ The three parts of Whichcote's solution to the problem of the superaddition all seem to be suggested at I 387–91. The three parts are all pretty clearly explained at III 184.

the obvious certainty of the principle of the gospel as soon as they are told of it, then it might begin to seem doubtful that no human could have figured it out on his own without the assistance of revelation. But if, on the other hand, no human could have figured out the principle of the gospel on his own, then it might begin to seem doubtful that all humans will see its obvious certainty as soon as they are told of it. It would seem, then, that what Whichcote must show is that the principle of the gospel is like an answer that humans before revelation had a murky awareness of but could never quite formulate, a solution that was on the tip of their tongues—like something that remains just beyond our ken until someone else suggests it and we instantly snap our fingers and say, “That’s it! Of course, how obvious! Now we see it. Now it’s clear.”

How did Whichcote try to pull off this balancing act? How did he try to make plausible the idea that the principle of the gospel was too much for us to figure out on our own but not too much for us to see the certainty of it as soon as it has been proposed? He did so by trying to show that people before revelation anticipated aspects of the principle of the gospel but could not quite formulate it completely. More specifically, Whichcote argued that the best of the heathens realized the need for some “mediator” between themselves and God but were unable to fix upon the right “mediator,” namely, Christ. As Whichcote puts it, “The most refined philosophers have discoursed excellently in this case, of the necessity of a mortal creature going to Deity by a mediator. But for want of knowing by whom to go, they did err in the *medium*, and did fancy either angels, or glorified spirits to be their mediators” (II 307–8). Or as he puts it elsewhere

Those men that have been the wisest of men among the philosophers, they had a great conceit of this truth, of a *mediation* between God and man; and thought the pure deity was so high and lofty, so pure and abstract, that we, in our meanness, could not have access. (*Platon Symp.*) They thought thus, that had not this light of scripture: which I take notice of here to abase the arrogancy of some that are born within the pale of the church. The heathen did conceive, that it was too much for us in our meanness to approach supreme and sovereign Deity. Therefore they conceived a sort of *middle powers*, which were either angels, or glorified spirits, and were called *Daemons*.⁹⁷

So it would seem that Whichcote believes that the need for a mediator between God and human is discernible by the natural light of reason alone, as evidenced by the fact that the better sort of heathens came to see that need. Once people learn of Christ, moreover, they realize that He and only He is capable of performing that mediation. Indeed, once they learn of Christ, people see that it is demonstrably certain that He and only He mediate between God and humans. And, of course, if the heathens had had the benefit of the gospel, they too would

⁹⁷II 302. See also II 307–8, 172–3, 317; III 88; IV 152.

have seen with perfect clarity that their mediator must be Christ. But they did not have the benefit of gospel, and thus they “erred.” And so, too, do those of us after revelation err if we do not accept Christ as mediator, and in a most significant way, for “a fallen creature, that is not accepted of God in Christ is rejected for ever.”⁹⁸

Does this solution to the problem of the superaddition succeed? Does Whichcote manage to pull off his balancing act? I don’t believe so. For I don’t see how Whichcote can successfully balance both his rationalism and his belief that it is indispensable that humans accept as a mediator between themselves and God a certain individual, someone who lived and died at a particular place and time in history, and not simply the idea of a mediator in general. This is because it seems to me that Whichcote’s rationalism allows him to claim only that it is indispensable that humans accept those aspects of a mediator that are demanded by the demonstrative proof of the indispensability of a mediator. But the only aspects demanded by the demonstrative proof are aspects that are untethered to any particular place and time. For what is demanded by the demonstrative proof is that the mediator be a “middle person”—both God and human—not that he live and die at a particular place or time. So if someone, as a result of drawing out the necessary implications of his own nature and the nature of God, accepts that there must be a mediator between himself and God, and believes that that mediator must be a middle person, it would seem that he is doing all that is (rationally) necessary for his salvation, whether he believes that the events recounted in the gospel-revelation are true or false. It would seem, that is, that Whichcote’s rationalism commits him to holding that what is indispensable is only that one have in mind the idea of a mediator as possessing a certain characteristic, not that one think that one’s idea of a mediator was embodied by a certain individual who lived and died at a particular place and time.

9. GOD’S SECRET

I can, I think, best explain the intractability of Whichcote’s superaddition problem by looking at his use of the “secrets” of God’s will. Now as we’ve seen, Whichcote believes that it was always possible for humans to discern through the natural light of reason alone that God would send a mediator. Without the superaddition of revelation, however, humans could not determine who the mediator would be, or where and when the mediator would live and die. And the explanation Whichcote offers for humans’ inability to determine these things is the fact that before revelation they were God’s secrets. As he puts it, “[T]hat which God hath now revealed, is as plain and as intelligible as any

⁹⁸II 300. See also II 318–22.

other matter: the mysteries of religion were the secrets of his will before they were revealed, but after they are told us, they cease to be mysteries."⁹⁹

But why couldn't humans have figured out God's secrets on their own? Why was that which is now "plain and intelligible" once "mysterious"?

One possible explanation of this prior mysteriousness (of, that is, humans' inability to determine on their own where and when God would send a mediator) is that God's decision to send a mediator to a particular place and time was undetermined by any constraints whatsoever—that while His goodness made it necessary that He would send a mediator, His decision as to where and when to send it was purely arbitrary. Whichcote cannot avail himself of this explanation, however. For, first of all, it offends against his view of God as perfectly and entirely rational, as having as motives only rational considerations.¹⁰⁰ And, secondly (and relatedly), it offends against Whichcote's belief that religion is rational, that nothing arbitrary can be part of religion. So even if (*per impossible*) God's decision to send the mediator to a particular place and time were arbitrary, that decision could still not imply any religious duties (such as accepting as mediator a certain individual who lived and died at a particular place and time).

The other possible explanation for humans' inability to determine (without revelation) God's decision to send a mediator to a particular place at a particular time is that God's will in that case was guided by considerations that are entirely rational but beyond the ken of the human intellect. At first glance, this explanation might seem to be one that Whichcote can adopt, since Whichcote acknowledges that there are certain aspects of the infinite intellect of God that the finite intellect of humans cannot comprehend. But the superaddition of revelation did not expand the intellectual capacity of human beings (as Whichcote's glorification of the Greek philosophers clearly attests to); the revelation did not enlarge humans' rational faculties so that they could comprehend what was before beyond them. So if God's decision to send a mediator to a particular place and time was once out of reach of human understanding, then out of reach it will remain. Recall, though, that Whichcote believes (as we saw in sections 4, 5, and 6) that true religiosity includes only those things we

⁹⁹IV 290. See also I 168–9, 223–4; III 166–7, 182, 191, 351.

¹⁰⁰Indeed, Whichcote seems at times to say that it's not possible for God to act arbitrarily. He even says at one point that God is so rational that He does not have free will at all, writing, "*Free-will*, which we so much contend for, and brag so much of, it is not absolute perfection, and we need not be so proud of it. For free-will, as it includes a power to do wrong, as well as right, is not to be found in God himself; and therefore is not perfection in us. For this is true of God, that all his ways are ways of righteousness, goodness and truth; and there is not in him a power to do otherwise than is just and right" (I 251; see also II 243–4).

can fully understand. Whichcote's reason for restricting religion to only that which we can fully understand, moreover, is not peripheral to his thought but absolutely central. For the very core of Whichcote's religious rationalism (as we saw in section 3) is the idea that to be religious is to be God-like—to live by those principles about which one is divinely certain and in so doing participate in the mind of God. But we are not God-like when we live by a principle we do not understand, and this non-God-likeness of ours would not be mitigated by the fact that the principle is one that God Himself can understand. It would seem, then, that even if God's decision to send a certain individual as mediator was entirely rational, it still cannot be a religious duty to accept that certain individual if the rationality of God's decision once was—and therefore will remain—beyond human comprehension.

Whichcote, in sum, deploys the notion of God's secrets in an attempt to make sense of the idea that what the superaddition reveals was mysterious before but intelligible now. It seems, however, that if what the superaddition reveals truly was mysterious before, it cannot be fully intelligible now, and that if it is fully intelligible now it could not have been truly mysterious before. But Whichcote's rationalism implies that if what the superaddition reveals is not fully intelligible now, then it is not indispensable to religion to accept it, which in turn implies that the distinctively Christian aspect of religion is dispensable. And Whichcote's rationalism also implies that if what the superaddition reveals was not truly mysterious before, then the superaddition itself was not indispensable to religion, which once again implies that the distinctively Christian aspect of religion is dispensable. So in either case, the problem of reconciling his Christianity with his rationalism remains.

One might wonder, though, whether I am overemphasizing the importance of the particular place and time of Christ's life and death. Perhaps, it might be thought, all that is really important is that humans accept that the mediator between themselves and God has the characteristics attributed to Christ in the gospel-revelation, and that it is not important that they believe that any historically situated event actually took place.

The problem with interpreting Whichcote in this way is that it conflicts with his belief that although the "wisest of men among the philosophers" have "the *very notion*" of a mediator, they nonetheless fail to be fully religious because "they mistake in the person."¹⁰¹ For the "mistake" Whichcote is talking about here must be the failure to accept as mediator a certain historically situated individual. It is, as well, this same failure that Whichcote must have in mind when he warns against "the great sin" of "false mediation," which is a sin

¹⁰¹ II 302.

committed by people who accept the need for a mediator but who do not "come unto the one God, by the one Lord *Jesus*."¹⁰²

Those textual points aside, moreover, it is difficult for me to see how Whichcote could allow that people both can fail to believe that the mediator between themselves and God is a certain historically situated individual and can still be fully religious. For allowing that people who fail to accept a certain historically situated individual can still be fully religious would seem to commit Whichcote to also allowing either that the Greek philosophers were Christians or that non-Christians can be fully religious. And allowing either of those possibilities would seem to commit Whichcote to allowing that the salvation of humans did not require the sacrifice of Christ. But this Whichcote could never allow. As he says, "[F]or Christ is not only of convenience, but down-right necessity. If a man could have come to God in another way, the son of God needed not to have died."¹⁰³

¹⁰² II 318–323. We should distinguish here between two types of mediator-related mistakes. One mistake is to accept as mediator a particular individual who is not Jesus. The other mistake is to accept the idea of a mediator but to deny that that idea has been embodied by Jesus or anyone else. The first type of mistake is committed by, say, a Jew at the time of the Exodus who worships a Golden Calf or by a twentieth century New Age Pagan who worships tree-spirits. The second type of mistake is committed by, say, a modern day Jew who thinks the Gospel is a fiction and is thus still waiting for the Messiah or by someone who thinks the idea of mediation on its own can somehow suffice and that this idea neither needs to be nor has been embodied. (Which of these mistakes did the wisest of the Greek philosophers commit? Hard to say. Some of what Whichcote says suggests one answer, and some of what he says suggests the other.) The first type of person is clearly making a mistake, as such a person has beliefs about the mediator that offend against reason. The problem I am trying to bring out, however, is how Whichcote can justify the view that the second type of person is also guilty of a mistake. I am asking, that is, not how Whichcote can justifiably condemn someone who believes irrational things about the mediator (that's easy for him), but rather how Whichcote can justifiably condemn someone who accepts only those aspects of mediation that can be discerned by the natural light of (revelation-less, superaddition-less) reason alone. (For clear evidence that Whichcote thinks this second type of mistake really is a mistake, see his criticism of the "meer naturalists," II 312–4.)

¹⁰³ II 301. I should note that there are some very important types of remarks in Whichcote's sermons that I have given short shrift here (see I 40, 168–9, 382; III 157, 285; IV 285). These remarks strongly suggest that Whichcote thought that the wisest of the Greek philosophers did do everything in their rational power to live as they ought and that consequently they would not be damned. (This belief seems in fact to be demanded by Whichcote's ardent commitment to ought-implies-can; see I 205–21.) There are in Whichcote's sermons intimations of two different kinds of explanations for this non-damnation of the Greeks.

The first explanation goes this way. What the Greeks wrote indicates perfectly clearly that if they'd had revelation they would have accepted Christ. The Greeks had, in other words, the disposition that Christianity requires—namely, to accept Christ upon being informed of Him. And this disposition is all that is truly religiously important (for this disposition is within one's control, while one's being exposed or not exposed to the superaddition is not within one's control). Plausible though this explanation might seem, there are nonetheless two problems with it. First of all, it still does not establish why it is rationally demanded that one accept the historically situated person described in the Gospel; it still does not justify Whichcote's belief that one offends against reason if one believes only in the idea of a mediator and not in a certain individual. Secondly, if this *disposition* to

It thus seems to me that the problem of the superaddition proves sharp enough to sever Whichcote's deeply theistic rationalism from his Christianity.

10. CONCLUSION

In his preface to Whichcote's sermons, Shaftesbury speaks of those who

have been afraid, least by advancing the principle of good nature, and laying too great a stress upon it, the apparent need of *sacred revelation* (a thing so highly important to mankind) should be, in some measure, taken away. So that they were forced in a manner, to *wound virtue* . . . rather than admit a sort of rival (in their sense) to the faith of divine revelation: feeling that christianity (they thought) would, by this means be made less necessary to mankind . . .¹⁰⁴

Shaftesbury then goes on to praise Whichcote as just the right "man to oppose this current"¹⁰⁵—as just the man who can show how to affirm both the natural goodness of human nature and the distinctly Christian gospel-revelation.

Whichcote certainly tried to do what Shaftesbury describes. He certainly tried to show that "to speak of natural light, of the use of reason in religion, is to do no disservice at all to grace."¹⁰⁶ But he did not succeed. For Whichcote affirms human nature by glorifying—indeed, by deifying—human rationality. And this deification of reason in the end obviates the need of grace.

But we have, I believe, much to gain from understanding Whichcote's "good-natured"¹⁰⁷ failure, as such an understanding produces valuable insight

accept Christ upon being informed of him were all that was religiously important, then Christ need never have died for our sins. But Whichcote insists on the need of the sacrifice's actually occurring.

There is, however, a second explanation for Whichcote's suggestion that the Greeks would not be damned, and this explanation soft-pedals the need of Christ's sacrifice's actually occurring (see, e.g., II 1 36–9, 239). According to this second explanation, accepting merely the idea of the mediator is strictly speaking religiously sufficient. But it is exceedingly difficult for human beings to accept this idea on its own, without having some embodiment for the mind to latch onto. The idea here is that humans can't help but realize how sinful they are in comparison to God and thus find it exceedingly difficult not to despair about the possibility of having the opportunity to be reconciled. It is possible not to despair, as the very wisest of the Greek philosophers showed, but for the vast majority of human beings it is nonetheless exceedingly difficult. Once people start to despair, however, they tend to sin more and more, as they come to think that all is lost anyway, and then really do make themselves into unsalvageable beings. The story of the Gospel is, then, strictly speaking dispensable but nonetheless very important as it provides the assurance that most humans would otherwise lack, and in so doing keeps them from giving in to sin-producing despair. (This seems to be what Schneewind had in mind when he says that "the one part of religion in twenty that comes by institution . . . has . . . merely instrumental value. It helps soothe the troubled mind by holding out the promise of assistance in virtuous living and forgiveness for sin" [Schneewind, 197].) This way of thinking of the superaddition is probably consistent with Whichcote's rationalism, but I have doubts about whether it is consistent with the strict grace-needing Christian view that he usually presents.

¹⁰⁴ III vii.

¹⁰⁵ III viii.

¹⁰⁶ I 371. See also I 370–1.

¹⁰⁷ III ix.

into the seventeenth and eighteenth century disputes over the role of reason, the internal accessibility of virtue, and the goodness of human nature. Listening closely to Whichcote's sermons attunes us, just for a start, to hear in phrases that might have otherwise sounded humdrum the buzz and crack of controversy. In light of the weighty implications of Whichcote's endorsement of the rational and moral powers of the pre-Christian philosophers, the term "Cambridge *Platonism*," for instance, no longer seems to be an innocuous academically philosophical moniker; Clarke's intention to vindicate the Christian and rationalist commitments that gave rise to the problem of the superaddition can be gleaned (after our examination of Whichcote) simply from the title of his *Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*; and Tindal's approach to the problem—namely to deny that a superaddition is strictly necessary for salvation—is now present in the very title of his *Christianity as old as the Creation: or The Gospel, a republication of the religion of nature*.

We can also gain from the study of Whichcote valuable insight into the origins of modern ethical theory. For the problem of reconciling an accessible morality and a distinctly Christian religion was central not only to Whichcote but to seventeenth century British thought in general. If we obscure this problem, consequently, we risk giving the impression that what most secular philosophers today think of as modern ethical theory had a much easier birth than it did in fact have—that non-theological ethics was developed quite quickly, almost suddenly, at the beginning of the Enlightenment (albeit by people who also happened to have various Christian beliefs). The truth, however, is that many of the early modern ethical views that are the ancestors of the non-theological secular ethics of later centuries were inextricably linked to a commitment to what Whichcote calls the "instituted part of religion," and the disengaging of the one from the other was a long and difficult (some might say, painful and ultimately fatal) process.

I hope, moreover, our discussion of Whichcote helps us to appreciate the extent to which theistic beliefs grounded the confidence many early modern ethical philosophers placed in human reason. For such understanding will sharpen the realization that those without such theistic beliefs must either find some other ground for their confidence in reason or find something other than reason in which to ground their ethics.¹⁰⁸

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