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978-0-521-87559-2 - The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science

Peter Harrison

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THE FALL OF MAN AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENCE

Peter Harrison provides a new account of the religious foundations of scientific knowledge. He shows how the new approaches to the study of nature that emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were directly informed by theological discussions about the Fall of Man and the extent to which the mind and the senses had been damaged by that primeval event. Scientific methods, he suggests, were originally devised as techniques for ameliorating the cognitive damage wrought by human sin. At its inception, modern science was conceptualised as a means of recapturing the knowledge of nature that Adam had once possessed. Contrary to a widespread view which sees science emerging in conflict with religion, Harrison argues that theological considerations were of vital importance in the framing of the new scientific method.

PETER HARRISON is the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion, University of Oxford. He is author of *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (1990, 2002) and *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (1998, 2001).

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For Grace

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We desire truth, and find within ourselves only uncertainty . . .
This desire is left to us, partly to punish us, partly to make us perceive from whence
we have fallen.

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, §401

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	I
1 Adam's Encyclopaedia	17
Science in paradise	19
Falling into ignorance	21
Inheriting error	28
Carnal knowledge and the divine light	34
Baptising Aristotle	41
2 Augustine revived	52
Luther and the putrid philosopher	54
Depravity and doubt	59
Augustinus	66
The sceptical hypothesis	73
3 Seeking certainty in a fallen world	89
Vestiges of heavenly light	93
Mathematical certainties	103
Adam, Moses, Hermes, Solomon	107
Inspiration, experience, and experiment	125
4 Dethroning the idols	139
Self-knowledge and the sciences	141
The dominion of mind	155
The fallen body	162
Intellectual idolatry	172
5 The instauration of learning	186
'Knowledge shall be increased'	188
Reversing Babel	191
Solomon's House	198

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-87559-2 - The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science
Peter Harrison
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii

Contents

The limits of reason	216
Anthropology abandoned	233
Conclusion	245
<i>Bibliography</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	292

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87559-2 - The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science

Peter Harrison

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Peter Harrison

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

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Abbreviations

ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , 9 vols. (Edinburgh, 1990)
AT	<i>Œuvres de Descartes</i> , ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 13 vols. (Paris, 1897–1913)
<i>BJHS</i>	<i>British Journal for the History of Science</i>
CHLMP	<i>The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy</i> , ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge, 1982)
CHMP	<i>The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy</i> , ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, 1970)
CHRP	<i>The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy</i> , ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1988)
CSM	<i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes</i> , tr. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1985)
FaCh	Fathers of the Church, Washington DC, 1932–
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> , ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia, 1957)
NPNF I	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I</i> , ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (Peabody, MA, 1994)
NPNF II	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II</i> , ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (Peabody, MA, 1994)
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , Series Graeca, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–1912)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , Series Latina, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–1905)
SCG	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa contra gentiles</i> , tr. English Dominican Fathers (New York, 1924)
ST	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i> , Blackfriars edn, (London, 1964–76)