

Gallica

Volume 44

THE LOGIC OF IDOLATRY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

Gallica

ISSN 1749-091X

Founding Editor: Sarah Kay

Series Editors: Simon Gaunt and Peggy McCracken



Gallica aims to provide a forum for the best current work in medieval and early modern French studies. Literary studies are particularly welcome and preference is given to works written in English, although publication in French is not excluded.

Proposals or queries should be sent in the first instance to the editor, or to the publisher, at the addresses given below; all submissions receive prompt and informed consideration.

Professor Simon Gaunt (simon.gaunt@kcl.ac.uk)
Professor Peggy McCracken (peggymcc@umich.edu)

The Editorial Director, Gallica, Boydell & Brewer Ltd., PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK

Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the end of this volume.

THE LOGIC OF IDOLATRY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

ELLEN McCLURE

© Ellen McClure 2020

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner

The right of Ellen McClure to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

First published 2020 D. S. Brewer, Cambridge

ISBN 978-1-84384-550-8

D. S. Brewer is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK and of Boydell & Brewer Inc. 668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620–2731, USA website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The publisher has no responsibility for the continued existence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Contents

No	otes on Translations	V
Introduction: The Logic of Idolatry and the Question of Creation		1
1	Idolatry and Instability in Honoré d'Urfé's L'Astrée	27
2	Descartes' Meditations as a Solution to Idolatry	74
3	Idolatry and the Questioning of Mastery in La Fontaine's Fables	114
4	Idolatry and the Love of the Creature in Sévigné's Letters	144
5	Theatrical Idolatry in Molière and Racine	182
Conclusion: The End(s) of Idolatry		211
Acknowledgments		223
Bibliography		225
Index		233

Notes on Translations

I have used the French versions of texts, even those that originally appeared in Latin, such as Calvin's *Institution* and Descartes' *Meditations*, in order to better constellate the discursive field of idolatry such as it existed in French. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are mine. Although I have left the original spelling and capitalization in the French sources I use, I have modernized spelling and capitalization in my translations into English.

Introduction: The Logic of Idolatry and the Question of Creation

"Il paraît qu'il n'y a eu aucun peuple sur la terre qui ait pris le nom d'idolâtre." (It appears that there has never been a people on earth that has claimed the name of idolater.) With these words, Voltaire transformed a term that had only recently been the source of bitter religious and civil division into an empty insult. Indeed, in the lines that follow, Voltaire illustrates that the term was used, quite simply, to denigrate religions other than one's own, asking of the "pagans,"

De quel œil voyaient-ils donc les statues de leurs fausses divinités dans les temples? Du même œil, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, que les catholiques voient les images, objets de leur vénération. L'erreur n'était pas d'adorer un morceau de bois ou de marbre, mais d'adorer une fausse divinité représentée par ce bois et ce marbre.²

How do they then view the statues of false divinities in temples? The same way, if I may express myself thus, that Catholics see images which are the objects of their veneration. The error was not in adoring a piece of wood or marble, but rather a false divinity represented by this wood and marble.

Voltaire's equation of "pagan" worship with Catholic religious practices is, as his "s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi" indicates, meant to provoke. But it is also meant to turn the reader's attention away from the central question posed by idolatry: that of the status of the material supports – the wood or marble – of religious practice, and, by extension, that of the precise relationship between heaven and earth. By dismissing the question of materiality and jumping straight to the issue of the legitimacy of that which is represented by the wood or marble, Voltaire is able to conclude that idolatry is, and always

¹ Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1964), article 'idole, idolâtre, idolâtrie', pp. 224–36, here, p. 225.

² Dictionnaire, p. 225.

has been, a cover for bigotry, for preferring one's own objects of worship to those of others.

Unsurprisingly, given the place of the Enlightenment in the unfolding of Western thought, Voltaire's dismissal of idolatry closely resembles our own. From the vantage point of a culture that celebrates materiality while viewing the subordination of that materiality to the otherworldly with deep suspicion, idolatry appears as an atavistic, regrettable concept, one that is best confined to the bloodshed and polemics that characterized the sixteenth-century religious wars and that was mercifully overcome, beginning in the period that Voltaire himself called the *siècle de Louis le Grand*. Indeed, the Taliban's 2001 destruction of the giant Buddhist statues of Bamyan, not to mention their iconoclastic campaign throughout the Middle East, appear horrifyingly foreign to the society that acclaimed the spring 2018 exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on "Fashion and the Catholic Imagination." What, then, could idolatry possibly teach us today?

Scholars have, in fact, begun to address this question, spurred on in part by the rapidity with which idolatry transitioned from cultural centrality to alien strangeness. A variety of outstanding studies and reassessments of idolatry have begun to appear, and this volume contributes to that conversation all while taking it in new directions.4 By arguing that what I call "the logic of idolatry" permeated the cultural imagination of seventeenth-century France, persisting long after the civil wars of the sixteenth century and well beyond the polemics that Catholics and Protestants continued to exchange, I trace the influence of this strange and complex concept beyond the problems addressed by art history or even religious history. Indeed, in the unique context of early modern France, where the coexistence of Catholics and Protestants was at least nominally protected by the 1598 Edict of Nantes, the discourse surrounding idolatry was fueled not only by the period's revival of Augustinianism, prominent both in Calvinism and also in Jansenism, but further inflamed by the contributions of the French Jesuit Louis Richeome, who untethered idolatry from its close association with images (and Catholics) and extended it

³ For a provocative argument that the two worlds are more alike than different, see Kathryn Lofton, *Consuming Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁴ See Jonathan Sheehan's special issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas* (67.4, October 2006) as well as Zorach and Cole, eds., *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions, and the Early Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Ellenbogen and Tugendhaft, eds., *Idol Anxiety* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icône, Economie: Les sources byzantines de l'imaginaire contemporain* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), and the exhibit and accompanying volume *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* by Bruno Latour (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), as well as the scholarly work by Olivier Christin and Ralph Dekoninck on early modern images and iconoclasm.

to any attempt to elevate human creation.⁵ Richeome's intervention therefore heralded the beginning of a century during which nearly every major writer and thinker – Catholic, Protestant, or even skeptical of Christianity – engaged with the variety of complex questions that idolatry raised, questions that were rendered even more urgent by cultural shifts that rival our own in their depth and rapidity.⁶

Part of the lingering discomfort surrounding the concept of idolatry lies in the extreme emotional pull surrounding it. As Voltaire implicitly recognized, accusing someone of "idolatry" was an effective means of unleashing a litany of defensive polemics grounded in the deep-seated and very real fear of what "idolatry" had come to represent. Tertullian's description, in the third century, of idolatry as the root of all crimes merely elaborated upon the vehement condemnation of it in the Bible, from the ten commandments to the Book of Wisdom. Despite Martin Luther's attempt to mitigate the force of iconoclasm by characterizing images as adiaphora, or indifferent to worship, Reformation leaders and their followers moved idolatry to the center of their objections to Catholic worship in language that evoked the mortal peril perceived in the elevation of created (and seductive) objects over the Creator. For Luther's contemporary Andreas Karlstadt, Catholic image worshippers were "impious whores"; over a century later, this visceral disgust remained just as potent, as evidenced in the memoirs of Charlotte-Amélie de la Trémoille, the daughter of one of the most prominent noblemen in France who had himself (along with her brother) converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. In an anecdote from her childhood, she seeks to express the deep-seated nature of her instinctual aversion to Catholic practice, noting that she used to play with two "petites camarades papistes" who gave her

- ⁵ For an astute overview of the early modern French religious climate, including the uneasy but lengthy cohabitation of Protestants and Catholics, see Joseph Bergin, *The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
- ⁶ Jan Assmann notes, following an evocation of Eric Santner's distinction between globalism and universalism, that "concern over such questions as monotheism, violence, and intolerance has much to do with the process of globalization and the conflicting universalisms of our time" (Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 57).
- 7 "all sins are found in idolatry and idolatry in all sins." Tertullian, *De Idolatria*, trans. J. H. Waszink and J. C.M. Van Winden (New York: Brill, 1987), p. 25.
- 8 "You say: I do not venerate the images of saints for their own sake but for the sake of what they represent. Ah, you impious whore, do you think God does not know your heart more profoundly and better than you? If God did not know that someone could so easily make an idol for which he feels nothing, then God would have allowed us to venerate images in names other than his own." Andreas Karlstadt, 'On the Removal of Images', in *A Reformation Debate: Three Treatises in Translation*, trans. Bryan D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1991), pp. 19–39, here p. 35.

images and told her to pray before them, which she does with a child's taste for pretty ceremonies and mystery. She continues:

Je tombai dans le péché, sans raisonner ni sans penser que cela fût plus ou moins conforme à la volonté de Dieu. Après avoir donc exercé cette terrible idolâtrie quelques quinze jours environ, ne pouvant m'en souvenir au juste, je jouois un jour avec mes poupées & comme je voulois laver un petit verre que j'aimois extrêmement, à cause de sa jolie forme, sans y faire d'effort, ni sans le heurter, un morceau me tomba dans la main, & comme Dieu m'a toujours témoigné sa bonté particulière, il me la montra aussi icy, car je puis dire que ce petit malheur fut en moy le regard de Jésus-Christ vers saint Pierre ou le chant du coq ... Je jettay mes images dans le feu, je demandai pardon à Dieu de fort bon coeur & je puis bien dire que j'ay une vraie repentance de ma faute, & que je la reconnus par la grâce de Dieu aussi fortement que si j'avois eu vingt ans: ce qui m'en a encore mieux fait juger, c'est que, depuis cela, je n'ay jamais eu une pensée de doute sur le sujet de ma religion & que j'ay abominé le papisme, ce qui a assez paru à la mort de Madame ma grand'mère & au temps du changement de religion de feu mon père. Admirez sur cela, mon cher fils, la foiblesse de notre chair.9

I fell into sin, without thinking about whether it was or was not in line with God's wishes. After having practiced this terrible idolatry for around two weeks – I can't remember exactly how long – I was playing with my dolls and, wanting to wash a small glass that I loved because of its pretty form, without trying or without banging it against something, a piece of it fell into my hand, and just as God has always shown me his special goodness, he did so here, for I can say that this small misfortune was for me the look that Jesus gave Saint Peter or the cry of the rooster... I threw my images in the fire, I wholeheartedly asked God for forgiveness, and I can say that I truly repented my fault, and that I recognized the grace of God as if I were 20 years old, and the proof of that is that ever since then, I have never had an ounce of doubt concerning my religion, and I abominated papism, as was evident when my grandmother died and when my late father converted.

Charlotte's initial and unwitting attraction to the Catholic girls' images is the vehicle for her discovery of the ultimate truth of Protestantism, a certainty that alienated her completely from her father and younger brother (who had converted with him). ¹⁰ Her disgust for Catholicism, still clear in her memory

⁹ Edouard de Barthélemy, ed., *Mémoires de Charlotte-Amélie de la Trémoille 1652–1719, comtesse d'Altenbourg* (Geneva: J-G. Fick, 1876), pp. 32–3.

¹⁰ It should be noted that Charlotte's father converted to Catholicism in part to escape

so many years later, centers on her conviction that the disordered alignment of heaven and earth, expressed through the dangerous seductiveness of a glass that cannot be seen through or used as a vessel but instead becomes an object of admiration in its own right, represents a mortal danger to her soul. Such language reflects the visceral horror that Frank Lestringant has identified as characterizing Protestant attitudes towards Catholic practice, especially around the question (not unrelated to that of idolatry) of the Eucharist, and which is often downplayed by historical accounts of the Reformation that seek its source in economic or political discontent. Such disgust was perhaps uniquely persistent in France, where, unlike in other European countries that demanded religious conformity, Protestants and Catholics coexisted uneasily side by side under the fragile yet official sanction of the Edict of Nantes, issued in 1598 and at least nominally in force until its revocation in 1685.

This book argues that the forceful (and, as we shall see, slippery) concept of idolatry exerted a deep pull on the intellectual and cultural life of seventeenth-century France. Indeed, it would not be inappropriate to characterize idolatry as the "dark matter" of the period; almost invisible to the twenty-first century Western reader, it in fact lends a curious spin to the works of the time. Reading these works through the lens of idolatry, therefore, can shed new light on questions that have continued to vex scholars. Why have attempts to explain d'Urfé's pastoral masterpiece in terms of Neoplatonism remained frustratingly incomplete? What does Descartes' insistence on the existence of a God who created everything have to do with his efforts to minimize the role of human imagination in the discovery of truth? Why is Phèdre so

a similar doubt brought on by the new religions. As he states in his manuscript Motifs de la Conversion de Feu Monseigneur le Prince de Tarente, Ecrits par luy-même vers l'Année 1671, "j'ay outre cela esté fortement persuadé que la soumission que lon rend a l'Eglise est une grand consolation a un Chretien et qu'au contraire l'Independance des nouvelles sectes cause bien du trouble et du desordre dans les ames et particulierement a l'heure de la mort dans laquelle nous avons continuellement devant les yeux tout ce qui nous peut donner le plus d'inquietude et de douleur." (p. 272, r/v) (besides that, I am also strongly persuaded that the submission that one renders to the Church is a great consolation to a Christian and that on the contrary the Independence of the new sects causes much trouble and disorder in souls and particularly at the hour of death when we have before us everything that can cause us the most worry and pain.) Susan E. Schreiner examines the role that uncertainty played in the Reformation in her Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Frank Lestringant, *Une Sainte horreur ou le voyage en Eucharistie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996). See also Bernard Dompnier, *Le Vénin de l'hérésie: image du protestantisme et combat catholique au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1985). For an account of the limitations of academic history with regard to religious themes, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

terribly undone by her attraction to her stepson? My assertion that well-known figures such as Honoré d'Urfé, René Descartes, Jean de La Fontaine, the marquise de Sévigné, Molière, and Racine were deeply conversant with the logic of idolatry may seem surprising or provocative. The neoclassical seventeenth century, *siècle de Louis le Grand*, continues to be regarded as the foundation of the French cultural canon, characterized by works seen to transcend their Christian, monarchical context to become the cornerstone of the republican, secular educational system. ¹² Consequently, while excellent studies of explicitly religious texts from the period exist and continue to be done, there has been no "religious turn" in early modern French studies to rival recent developments in English studies, wherein religious categories and frameworks are brought to bear on ostensibly non-religious literary or philosophical texts. ¹³

Bringing idolatry into the ongoing scholarly conversation regarding these works therefore also serves to complicate the narrative of progressive secularization that led to the emergence not only of art, literature, philosophy, and religion as separate spheres, but also of the autonomous, creative individual human author. The story of that emergence has been told, and told well, but by perceiving the ways in which the works considered here, and the French seventeenth century more generally, engaged with the logic of idolatry, we can appreciate how they used this logic to contemplate alternative models of human agency and artistic creation that have largely gone unnoticed. Such models not only serve to complicate what Ayesha Ramachandran has characterized as "a renewed celebration of *homo faber*" in this period; they also can point the way

- ¹² For accounts of the relationship between the seventeenth-century literary canon and French national identity forged through the school system, see the work of Ralph Albanese, including *La Fontaine à l'école républicaine: du poète universel au classique scolaire* (Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2003). See also the play *L'Entretien entre M. Descartes avec M. Pascal le jeune*, by Jean-Claude Brisville (1992), in which Descartes is portrayed as the jovial, rational counterpart to Pascal's feverish religious fervor.
- ¹³ This development in English studies was described by Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti in their article 'The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies', *Criticism* 46.1 (2004), pp. 167–90. Recent work in early modern French studies has begun to change this. See, most notably, Andrea Frisch, *Forgetting Differences: Tragedy, Historiography, and the French Wars of Religion* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburg Press, 2015), which traces the profound effects of the French religious wars into seventeenth-century French theater.
- ¹⁴ For accounts of this emergence, see the following landmark studies: A. J. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages (London: Scolar Press, 1984), David Quint, Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), and Alain Viala, Naissance de l'écrivain: sociologie de la littérature à l'âge classique (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1986).

to reimaginings of the relationship between humanity and the world that are urgently needed in today's social, political, environmental, and even religious context.¹⁵

Idolatry: An Overview

Idolatry is as old as monotheism; the close association between the two is evident in what has come to be called the second commandment, articulated first in Exodus 20:4 and then in Deuteronomy 5:8:

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.¹⁶

This is the wordiest of the commandments, and the most complex, and its slippery ambiguity combined with the severity of the direct threat that it contains fueled the debates throughout Church history that culminated in the Reformation.¹⁷ The commandment is commonly seen to condemn the worship of statues and images, an interpretation reinforced by the episode, severely punished by God, of the golden calf that follows Moses' descent from the mountain.¹⁸ Yet even this stricture almost immediately proved complicated.

- 15 See Ayesha Ramachandran's excellent *The Worldmakers: Global Imagining in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 10. In a recent essay, Victoria Kahn heralds a similar triumph of humanly authored work out of the demise of what she terms "poetic theology": "Instead of mediating divine truth, poetic theology became a vehicle of attending to poetic form. Instead, that is, of referring to a transcendent signified, poetic theology tipped on its axis and became the name of a human capacity. In the process, allegory as human invention supplanted allegory as a description of the cosmos or as the revelation of truth in history. In time, allegory became another name for the reader's construction of meaning, as well as a sign of the autonomous literary artifact." 'Allegory, Poetic Theology, and Enlightenment Aesthetics', in *The Insistence of Art: Aesthetic Philosophy after Early Modernity*, ed. Paul A. Kottman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), pp. 31–54, here, p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Biblical quotes are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- ¹⁷ For an excellent overview of the complexities inherent in idolatry, see Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit's *Idolatry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- ¹⁸ For an overview of increased attention to the golden calf episode in the early modern period, see Jonathan Sheehan, 'Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the

Those seeking to justify the use of images in religious worship pointed to other biblical episodes, such as the carefully described cherubim decorating the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:18–22) or the bronze serpent erected by Moses on God's command (Numbers 21:8–9), where God seems to express a deep appreciation for the power of images as such, and does not hesitate to use them to inspire his followers. The relationship between God and visibility would, of course, grow even more blurred when read through God's self-manifestation in the Incarnation. In other words, as Counter-Reformation Catholics would point out in their polemics, condemning any and all physical, non-verbal manifestations of God was tantamount to denying the full divinity of Christ; it also could entail a failure to properly acknowledge, and admire, the created nature of the world.¹⁹

Running through these examples and arguments is a debate concerning whether images are, as Gregory the Great argued during an outbreak of iconoclastic fervor in the seventh century, merely words for the illiterate, or whether images possess a seductive power that the abstraction of the verbal lacks.²⁰ The particular power of images – to inspire, to evoke, to transmit, to heal – was acknowledged by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, convened to counter Protestant objections to the faith practiced by Catholics. The Council singled out images for special regulation, laying out the proper placement of and attitude towards images, and recommending, among other things, that "figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust" (Session 25, second decree). In the same session, the Council also attempted to settle the longstanding and sticky question of what, exactly, is meant by the biblical prohibition of bowing down or serving images. As early

Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century', *Past & Present* 192 (August 2006), pp. 38–46. On the close link between monotheism and idolatry, see Assmann's *Of God and Gods*).

¹⁹ For a beautiful account of the ambiguous status of the material world in medieval Christianity, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011). Frédéric Cousinié's *Le Peintre chrétien: Théories de l'image religieuse dans la France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000) traces the ways in which Counter-Reformation Catholics came to emphasize the divinity of the created world as a means of defending themselves against charges of idolatry.

²⁰ In his letter to Serenus, the bishop of Marseille, in 600, Gregory stated that "For to adore a picture is one thing, but to learn through the story of a picture what is to be adored is another. For what writing presents to readers, this a picture presents to the unlearned who behold, since in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read. Hence, and chiefly to the nations, a picture is instead of reading." In Gregory the Great, Book XI, Letter 13, translated by James Barmby. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1898).

as the fourth century, following the Council of Nicaea, Basil of Caesarea articulated the influential formula that attention paid to the image is not paid to the image as such, but rather "passes to the prototype," thereby according the image a semi-transparency that protected it, ideally, from obscuring a referent that would otherwise remain inaccessible. 21 Thomas Aguinas later contributed to the discourse surrounding the appropriate attitude towards images by building on the distinction, first established by Jerome and Augustine, between dulia, the worship reserved for and accorded to God, and latria, a lesser form of respect to be afforded "excellent creatures." Aguinas's formulation, which would be marshalled by early modern Catholics in the face of Protestant critiques, served to justify not only the use of images in worship, but also the practices surrounding saints, relics, and even the Virgin Mary. Insofar as the distinction between dulia and latria was outwardly invisible and instead depended entirely on the faith accorded the worshipper's own interpretation of his attitudes, however, Protestants greeted it with skepticism and often outright derision.

While depictions of Catholic abuses and excess were fundamental to the Reformation, John Calvin's objections to the use of images, relics, and saints in religious worship were particularly vehement. For Calvin, the two-way communication between heaven and earth described by Catholics in terms of gradations such as dulia and latria represented a degradation of divine majesty and, consequently, an unacceptable compromise of the incommensurability of God and humanity. The eleventh chapter of the 1561 French edition of his *Institution de la religion chrétienne* declares this opposition plainly in its title, "Qu'il n'est licite d'attribuer à Dieu aucune figure visible, et que tous ceux qui se dressent des images se révoltent du vray Dieu" ("That it is illicit to attribute any visible figure to God, and that all of those who set up images are revolting against the true God"). Here, Calvin argues that images are much more than misguided, but ultimately harmless, human attempts to communicate with the divine. Rather, insofar as their existence undermines the only tangible and intermediary form used by God to enter into contact with humanity - Jesus Christ - images actually insult the majesty and self-sufficiency of God.²³ Moreover, as Calvin goes on to

²¹ See Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 18: 45, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 8.

²² The question of adoration, and the distinction between *dulia* and *latria*, arises in the *Summa Theologica*. II II, 84, 1.

²³ "il nous faut tenir ceste maxime: toutefois et quantes qu'on représente Dieu en image, que sa gloire est faussement et meshamment corrompue." *Institution de la religion chrestienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), vol. I, p. 120. (we must hold to this maxim: each and every time God is represented by an image, his glory is falsely and meanly corrupted).

remind the reader, images and relics are closely associated with mortality; the Book of Wisdom notes that idolatry began with a father's desire to preserve the memory of his dead son. Fabricating images of the divine, or locating the divine in images that already exist, is a heretical attribution to God of qualities that belong to fallen humanity, a criminal attempt to contain and understand God's ineffable and ultimately incomprehensible majesty: "Il reste donc qu'on ne peinde et qu'on ne taille sinon les choses qu'on voit à l'oeil. Par ainsi que la majesté de Dieu, qui est trop haute pour la veue humaine, ne soit point corrompue par fantosmes, qui n'ont nulle convenance avec elle."24 ("One only paints and sculpts what one sees with the eye. Therefore, the majesty of God, which is too great for human sight, should not be corrupted by phantoms that have no relationship with it.") Calvin's arguments in the *Institution* take direct aim at nearly all of the arguments articulated by the Church Fathers that Catholics marshalled in defense of their practices. The "nulle convenance" in the citation above contradicts John of Damascus's reassurance that honor paid to the image passes to the prototype, something that Calvin regards as impossible, given the complete lack of similarity between the two. Calvin also undercuts Gregory the Great's idea that images are merely a more practical way than text to instruct the ignorant by citing Scripture and the prophets to illustrate that all efforts to understand God through visual representation are doomed.²⁵ Finally, early in the twelfth chapter, entitled "Comment Dieu se sépare d'avec les idoles, afin d'estre entièrement servi luy seul" ("How God separates himself from idols in order to be worshipped entirely by himself"), Calvin questions the distinction between dulia and latria, asserting that the difference between them is illusory, and rests upon a dubious distinction between honor and servitude.²⁶

²⁴ Institution, I, p. 135.

²⁵ "De fait, aux passages que j'ay allégué, ce poinct est couché comme résolu: comme ainsi soit qu'il n'y ait qu'un seul vray Dieu, lequel les Juifs adoroyent, que toutes figures qu'on fait pour représenter Dieu sont fausses et perverses, et que tous ceux qui pensent cognoistre Dieu par ce moyen sont malheureusement deceuz." (*Institution*, I, p. 126). (In fact, in the passages that I have cited, this point is treated as resolved: since there is only one true God, whom the Jews adored, every figure that has been made to represent God is false and perverse, and those who think they know God through these means are sadly mistaken.)

²⁶ "Certes, comme nous avons dit, Dulie emporte servitude, Latrie honneur. Or nul ne doute que servir ne soit beaucoup plus qu'honnorer, car il nous seroit souvent dur et fascheux de servir à ceux que nous ne refusons pas d'honnorer." (*Institution*, I, p. 142). (Certainly, as we have said, Dulia implies servitude and Latria honor. That said, no one doubts that to serve is more important than to honor, since it would often be difficult and impractical to serve those whom we do not refuse to honor).

Idolatry and the Question of Creation

In insisting upon the ultimate incommensurability of God and humanity, Calvin points beyond the more commonly argued points regarding images (as opposed to text) and their worship to gesture towards the question of creation, a question central to modernity but that has been neglected in studies of idolatry. In his objection to the distinction between dulia and latria, Calvin relates the story of Cornelius the centurion, who kneels before Saint Peter, who in turn refuses this gesture of worship. The lesson that Calvin draws from this episode is that human language is itself ill-equipped to distinguish between creature and creator; we slide into idolatry merely by speaking: "Et pourquoy, sinon d'autant que les hommes ne sauront jamais si bien discerner en leur langage l'honneur de Dieu d'avec celuy des créatures. qu'en adorant les créatures par dévotion ils ne ravissent de faict à Dieu ce qui luy est propre, pour le faire commun à qui il n'appartient pas?"27 ("And why, if not because men will never be able to discern through language the honor due to God from that due to creatures, do they not, in worshipping creatures through devotion, in fact take away from God that which is his in order to give it to what it does not belong to?") Significantly, the violation that occurs here occurs not through images, but through language: the seemingly crucial distinction between words and images is rendered moot. The sinfulness of humanity is instead located in our nearly inevitable tendency to forget our status as dependent creatures, a forgetting which then implicitly compromises God's sole possession of the power to create by misattributing this power to ourselves.

Calvin's emphasis on the incommensurability between Creator and creature owes much to Augustine. Augustine's clearest articulation of this distinction occurs in his treatise *On the Trinity*, where he warns against interpreting the similarity between God and humanity (made, after all, in God's image and likeness) as in any way implying an overcoming of the vast dissimilarity between the two, even in the afterlife:

Accordingly, since there is now so great an unlikeness in this enigma both to God and to the Son of God, in which, however, some likeness has been found, we must also confess that even when "we shall be like to him," when "we shall see him just as he is" (certainly he who spoke thus was undoubtedly aware of the unlikeness that now exists), not even then shall we be equal to that nature, for a nature that is made is always less than He who made it ²⁸

²⁷ *Institution*, I, p. 143.

²⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: Catholic

The human tendency to forget, minimize, or ignore this distinction is identified as the root of all sinfulness, the "sacrilegious error of attributing to the Trinity that which does not belong to the Creator, but rather to the creature, or is imagined by mere empty thought."29 Augustine's desire to establish and maintain the essential difference between Creator and creature gives rise to his articulation of the proper attitude to be maintained towards the created world, expressed in the key distinction, articulated in the De Doctrina Christiana, between use (uti) and enjoyment (frui). Enjoyment is to be reserved for the divine source of the created world; material, terrestrial, and man-made words, objects, and institutions should properly be viewed as instruments leading towards, and reminders of, their divine creator. Sinfulness arises when humans fall into a quasi-bestial literalism, allowing themselves to be seduced by objects which they mistakenly believe to exist in and of themselves and thereby forgetting that the world (and the humans inhabiting it) are created, and therefore dependent.³⁰ Augustine's interpretation of idolatry, then, extends beyond a suspicion of images as such to encompass any incorrect interpretation of signs which ultimately have only one legitimate referent:

For what the Apostle says concerning idols and the sacrifices that are made in their honor should be understood concerning all imaginary signs which lead to the cult of idols or to the worship of a creature or its parts as God, or pertain to the concern for remedies and other observations which are not as it were publicly and divinely constituted for the love of God and of our neighbor but rather debauch the hearts of the wretched through their love for temporal things.³¹

In other words, the proper way to live in the world is to bear in mind, always, its created nature, its quasi-transparent status as an expression of God's goodness and power. To fail to do so, to become seduced by the beauty of the world or the ingenuity of our own fantasies, is to fall prey to idolatry, to voluntarily turn away from the divine source of all that is and to commit the "sacrilegious error of attributing to the Trinity that which does not belong to the Creator,

University Press, 1963), pp. 490-1.

²⁹ *Trinity*, p. 271.

³⁰ "Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition in which the thing which distinguishes us from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in the pursuit of the letter. He who follows the letter takes figurative expressions as though they were literal and does not refer the things signified to anything else." *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), p. 84.

³¹ On Christian Doctrine, p. 59.

but rather to the creature, or is imagined by mere empty thought."³² This expanded definition of idolatry places human authorship under suspicion, a suspicion that Augustine extends to his own activities in the closing lines of *On the Trinity*, which consist of a prayer asking God to deliver Augustine "from the multitude of words with which I am inwardly afflicted in my soul" before concluding with the following entreaty: "O Lord, the One God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books as coming from You, may they acknowledge who are Yours; but if anything as coming from myself, may You and they who are Yours forgive me."³³ Augustine's efforts to legitimize his own authorial production by placing his words in service to the divine mirror his suspicion of natural philosophers, whom he accused of wanting "to attribute to themselves what they saw."³⁴

Augustine's ideal of self-effacement, and the concomitant ideal of a quasieffacement of the materiality of the world, guaranteed, in a way, that humanity could always potentially be found guilty of idolatry, and that constant vigilance was needed to avoid falling into this most terrible of sins. And indeed, the ensuing centuries were characterized by complex responses to the dilemma posed by, as Caroline Walker Bynum puts it in the title of her excellent study of the subject, "Christian materiality." If Walker Bynum examines the issues surrounding "miraculous matter," which was "simultaneously hence paradoxically – the changeable stuff of not-God and the locus of a God revealed,"35 Hans Belting traces the horizon of Christian art to the ideal of the acheiropoeton, or the legendary image spontaneously generated by the holiness of the incarnated Christ, one of the most famous examples of which was the Veronica, or vera icona, said to be generated when Christ wiped his face with a cloth given to him by Saint Veronica.³⁶ As in Augustine, the impossible ideal here is one in which humanity is the observer and admirer of divine creation; the absence of human creative activity, of the artistry that almost inevitably gives rise to idolatry, guarantees that the divine presence

³² *Trinity*, p. 271.

³³ Trinity, pp. 524–5. Lisa Freinkel explores Augustine's vexed relation to authorship, suggesting, against critics like Robbins and Vance, that Augustine conceives of himself, first and foremost, not as an author but as a reader. See *Reading Shakespeare's Will: The Theology of Figure from Augustine to the Sonnets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 32.

³⁴ For a useful survey of the link between idolatry and theories of creation in early philosophy and Christian thought, see Isaac Miller, 'Idolatry and the Polemics of World-Formation from Philo to Augustine', *The Journal of Religious History* 28.2 (June 2004), pp. 126–45, here, p. 145.

³⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, p. 35.

³⁶ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

in creation will remain intact and unmuddied. This ideal, of course, was impossible to sustain, if indeed it was ever possible to realize. In his masterful study, A. J. Minnis carefully traces both the prohibitions surrounding human authorship in medieval biblical commentary and, paradoxically, the ways in which the attribution of ultimate authorship to God provided space for a complex theory of authorial role and literary form to emerge.³⁷ The hardwon, fragile equilibrium between divine and human modes of authorship that Minnis describes came under increased pressure during the Renaissance, a period whose name has become shorthand for the triumphant emergence of human flourishing and creativity. Hans Belting ties the aestheticization of art, the emergence of art as an end in itself and an expression of the individual artist, to Alberti's 1435 textbook on painting, which abandoned the idea of the image as an emanation or irruption of the sacred endowed with its own reality: "Now the image was, in the first place, made subject to the general laws of nature, including optics, and so was assigned wholly to the realm of sense perception. Now the same laws were to apply to the image as to the natural perception of the outside world... In addition, the new image was handed over to artists, who were expected to create it from their 'fantasy'."38 Georgio Vasari's Lives of the Artists, published in 1550, demonstrated the extent to which the association of art works with their human creators had intensified during the Renaissance. As Thierry Lenain points out, Vasari's adoption of religious categories and vocabulary to describe the artistic process led to the sacralization of secular art, whereby the art work became a "relique auctoriale," thereby ushering in the reversal of divine and profane that had been so feared 39

Innovations in Idolatry: the Polemics of Louis Richeome (1544–1625)

Viewing the intellectual and cultural life of this period through the lens of idolatry serves to emphasize the extent to which the triumph of human autonomy and authorship in what we have come to recognize as individual artistic expression was still an open question which elicited a variety of responses. We have already seen how Calvin, more than the other Reformers, placed the threat of idolatry at the center of a theology heavily indebted to Augustine, for whom the topic was central. The Counter-Reformation response to Calvin's attack on idolatry was largely defensive; the Council of Trent's defense of the

³⁷ A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar Press, 1984).

³⁸ Likeness and Presence, p. 471.

³⁹ Thierry Lenain, 'Les images-personnes et la religion de l'authenticité', in *L'Idole dans l'imaginaire occidental*, pp. 303–24, here p. 310.

use of religious images is unoriginal and tepid. Catholic theologians reiterated the well-worn arguments of John of Damascus, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory the Great, and Thomas Aguinas even as Protestants seized on the impossibility of reconciling these ultimately incompatible defenses of the image. And, as Emile Mâle notes, the Jesuit response to Protestant criticisms of the image was to double down defiantly on images and luxury. 40 As Frédéric Cousinié remarks in his valuable overview of early modern French conflicts over the religious use of images, the resulting interchange was less a conversation than a dialogue de sourds, with each side repeatedly and predictably marshalling the same examples (the brazen serpent, the golden calf): "La lecture de cette production littéraire confirme qu'en général, au moins pour la première moitié du XVIIe siècle, il s'agissait moins de contribuer à une réflexion nouvelle ou plus approfondie sur l'image, que d'éviter absolument de laisser une attaque sans réponse." (Reading this literary production confirms that in general, at least for the first half of the seventeenth century, these arguments were less about contributing a new or deeper reflection on the image than about avoiding, by any means possible, leaving an attack without a response.)41

This predictability was broken by the interventions of the French Jesuit Louis Richeome. In his influential *Tableaux sacrez des figures mystiques du tres-auguste sacrifice et sacrement de l'Eucharistie*, published in 1601 and dedicated to the French queen, Richeome sought to formulate a new Catholic theory of images. Richeome opens this beautiful work, where the richness of the prose vies with the sumptuousness of the illustrations, by establishing three kinds of images: those, such as palm trees or cherubim, that are visually self-evident and have no need of a verbal supplement; those, such as histories or "fictions verbales," that are given to the ear; and finally, those things or actions that symbolically represent spiritual mysteries, such as circumcision representing baptism or manna representing the Eucharist. By categorizing "images" in this fashion, Richeome follows Augustine and Calvin in blurring the distinction between word and picture. ⁴² Yet he does so not with the

⁴⁰ "La Papauté affirma ce que l'hérésie niait. Les Jésuites répondaient aux protestants en multipliant dans leurs églises les fresques, les tableaux, les statues, le lapis-lazuli, le bronze et l'or …" (The papacy affired that which heresy denied. The Jesuits responded to the Protestants by multipying in their churches frescoes, paintings, statues, lapis lazuli, bronze, and gold …). Emile Mâle, *L'Art religieux après le Concile de Trente* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1932), p. 22.

⁴¹ Frédéric Cousinié, *Le peintre chrétien: Théories de l'image religieuse dans la France du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 28.

⁴² Discussing the *Tableaux sacrez*, Ralph Dekoninck notes that "c'est de l'apport conjoint de l'écrit et de l'image, de l'union de leurs qualities respectives, que dépend la plus large réception du message spirituel, mais aussi la plus sûre, puisque l'écrit ou la parole peuvent contrebalancer les excès ou pallier les déficiences de l'image, et, inversement,

intent of casting a shadow on all figures that are not explicitly generated or authorized by the divine, but rather with the completely opposite goal of celebrating representation in its dizzying proliferation and beauty, seeing in human artistry a symbolic homage to the divine Creator.⁴³

While the unapologetic lushness of the Tableaux sacrez constituted an indirect provocation, Richeome took direct aim at the Reformers in his biting polemic L'Idolatrie huguenote figurée au patron de la vieille pavenne, published in 1608 and dedicated to Henri IV, the French king who had himself converted from Protestantism. In this work that has remained in the shadow of the more glorious *Tableaux sacrez* – in fact, Henri Bremond, who bemoans Richeome's lack of originality, fails to mention either this polemical work or its sequel - Richeome dares to upend the now-familiar, nearautomatic conversation between Catholics and Protestants around idolatry by maintaining that the Protestants are, in fact, the true idolaters, After decades of Catholic defensiveness, such an accusation had real shock value; as Richeome declares in the dedication to Henri IV that opens the treatise, his goal in writing it is that the Reformers "entendront, Dieu aydant, qu'ils ont tort, & que ce sont eux mesmes, qui tiennent, & enseignent l'Idolatrie, pensans estre le troupeau mignon du Seigneur" (will understand, God willing, that they are wrong, and that it is they who hold and teach Idolatry while thinking of themselves as the favored flock of the Lord).⁴⁴ As Richeome recognizes, in order to make this accusation, he would need to redefine idolatry, expanding it beyond its traditional association with the images that Protestants deplored

celle-ci peut donner accès à un mode de connaissance plus élevé car plus intuitif ... Il n'y a donc pas lieu de se préoccuper de la hiérarchie de ces deux modes de représentation, par les mots et par les images, puisqu'ils se trouvent tous deux dépassés par le troisième type de figure, qui est 'figure de signification'." (it is upon the conjoined contributions of the written word and the image, from the union of their respective qualities, that the widest, and also most certain, reception of the spiritual message depends, since the written or spoken word can counterbalance the excesses or remedy the deficits of the image, and, inversely, the image can give rise to a mode of knowledge that is higher because it is more intuitive ... There is therefore no reason to become preoccupied with the hierarchy of these two modes of representation, word or image, since they find themselves surpassed by the third type of figure, which is the "figure of signification".) *Ad Imaginem*, pp. 75–6.

⁴³ In the same year that Richeome published the *Tableaux sacrez* (1601), another extraordinary and richly illustrated Jesuit defense of images was published: Jan David's *Veridicus Christianus*, which posits images, properly conceived, as essential to faith. For more on the *Veridicus*, see Walter Melion, 'The Jesuit Engagement with the Status and Functions of the Visual Image', in *Jesuit Image Theory*, ed. Wieste De Boer, Karl A. E. Enenkel, and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 1–49.

⁴⁴ Louis Richeome, *L'Idolatrie huguenote figurée au patron de la vieille payenne, Divisée en huit livres & dediée au Roy tres chrestien de France & de Navarre Henri IIII* (Lyon: Pierre Rigaud, 1608), n.p.

and even destroyed. He announces the broad lines of this redefinition in the "Lettre à Messieurs de la Religion Prétendue Réformée" that follows the royal dedication and precedes the text. Instead of following a faith initiated and sustained by God and upheld by Catholic tradition, Protestants, Richeome maintains, have elevated human opinion and the "fantaisie flottante des hommes" (floating fantasy of men), thereby losing any contact with divinely sanctioned authority and truth.⁴⁵

In other words, Richeome strikes back at the Reformers by emphasizing the aspect of idolatry that touches on invention, and downplaying the relationship between idolatry and images. Building on the distinction elaborated in the *Tableaux Sacrez* between material and spiritual images, Richeome invents the concept of "spiritual idolatry," which occurs whenever humans collapse the distinction between Creator and creature, elevating their own opinion or invention to the status of divinity, and worshipping it accordingly. After noting that this redefinition allows for the categorization of Turks and Jews as idolaters, since they worship the inventions of Mohammed and the Kabbalists, respectively, Richeome offers this summary:

Mais sur toutes Idolatries, qui regnent dedans l'ame, celle qu'on appelle Heresie en l'escole Chrestienne, merite d'estre censée Idolatrie, prenant le mot d'Idolatrie en son large, avec les saincts Peres, & non si precisement que les Docteurs scholastiques: Car elle s'usurpe malignement, & superbement sur toutes erreurs le droict & le voile de divinité, & suppose ce qu'elle a forgé, comme chose divine, & saincte, & le faict honorer en titre de religion, qui est l'essence, & la vive couleur, qui forme l'Idolatrie.⁴⁶

But among all of the Idolatries that rule over the soul, that which we call Heresy in Christian schools deserved to be called Idolatry, taking the word "Idolatry" in the broad sense of the Church fathers rather than the precise sense of the Scholastics: For it usurps from all other errors the rights and veil of divinity, and supposes that what it has forged is a divine and holy thing, asking that it be honored as a religion, and that is the essence and living color of what forms Idolatry.

⁴⁵ "Et si vostre Eglise, selon leur foy, peut encor errer en corps, comme tous les membres d'icelle, & si elle est posee sur le sable, & fantaisie flottante des hommes, ne voyez vous pas, qu'elle n'est point l'Eglise de Dieu, laquelle est fondee sur le roc, qui se mocque des flots du mensonge, & de l'Enfer?" n.p. (And if your Church, according to their faith, can wander in its body like its members, and if it is placed upon the sand and floating fantasy of men, do you not see that it is not the Church of God, which is founded upon rock and which has no care for the floating of lies and hell?)

⁴⁶ *Idolatrie huguenote*, p. 25.

By rather ingeniously seizing upon the more capacious definition of idolatry espoused by Tertullian, Augustine, and Calvin, Richeome levels the charge of idolatry – still an unspeakably grave sin – at the Reformers themselves, whom he views as unmoored both from Catholic tradition and, paradoxically, from the Scripture that they claim to follow. Worse yet, Protestants could be described as *more* guilty of idolatry than the pagans themselves, since they have willingly turned away from revealed truth:

Le Payen Idolatre transfere la gloire de Dieu, qu'il ignore, aux Idoles, & Dieux estrangers, laissant le Createur, & adorant le creature, faisant un faux Dieu, & ne tenant compte du vray ... l'Heresie va bien plus avant, car d'un costé cognoissant Dieu, & le confessant, elle le mesprise en effect, & se faisant adorer à sa place, luy ravit son honneur par une trahison d'autant plus damnable, qu'il est certain, que c'est moindre mal de n'avoir point cogneu la voye de verité, que de l'avoir quitté.⁴⁷

The Idolatrous Pagan transfers the glory of God, of which he is unaware, to Idols, and foreign Gods, abandoning the Creator and adoring the creature, making a false God and forgetting the true one ... Heresy goes farther, for on the one hand knowing and recognizing God, it insults him, and by asking that it be adored in his place steals honor from him through a betrayal that is even more damnable since it is clear that it is better to never have known the way of truth than to have known it and left it.

The remaining 700 pages of Richeome's treatise are devoted, first, to demonstrating that Protestantism bears all of the marks of heresy – among which are lying, pride, cruelty, and corruption, and all of which denote the substitution of human "opinion" for divine truth – and finally, to drawing scrupulous parallels between Protestantism and pagan religion, god by god. Richeome seizes upon inconsistencies in the Reformers' writings in order to demonstrate the free-floating nature of their theology; he uses Protestant doubts concerning the Trinity to allege that their inability to conceive of a triune god demonstrates their inveterate allegiance to polytheism. Throughout all of these rather enthusiastic "proofs," Richeome remains focused on the central issue of authorship and creation. On the one hand, he reproaches his Protestant adversaries for having lost sight of the divine author and putting themselves in God's place:

vostre Foy donc, voire selon vostre confession, n'a aucun appuy, sinon l'authorité de Calvin, de Beze, & d'autres expositeurs de la Bible, que vous

⁴⁷ *Idolatrie huguenote*, p. 39.

croyez comme à des hommes subjects à erreur: vostre Foy donc est humaine, fondée sur l'authorité des hommes, sur vostre jugement, & presomption, & non sur l'authorité Divine.⁴⁸

Your faith then, according to your own admission, is based on nothing other than the authority of Calvin, Beza, and other expositors of the Bible, whom you believe as men subject to error: your faith, then, is human, founded on the authority of men, upon your judgment and presumption, and not upon divine authority.

On the other hand, he condemns Calvin for what he sees as an overemphasis on divine authorship. In the section of the treatise devoted to drawing parallels between the Protestant God and Jupiter, Richeome alleges that Calvin makes God the author of human sinfulness, since he holds (again, accordingly to Richeome) that human will after the Fall is nonexistent. In so doing, he reduces humanity to the status of beasts, trapped by their senses in the realm of the material. This Goldilocks-like logic, wherein Richeome accuses the Protestants of inappropriately elevating the creative powers of humanity against those of God before reproaching them for viewing humans as incapable of any authorship whatsoever, even that of sin, is confounding, and makes sense only if we view these positions against the equilibrium advocated for in the Tableaux sacrez, wherein the miracle of divine creation spreads throughout the universe, reflected in subsequent events and creatures like light striking a prism. Without this anchoring in Catholic faith and tradition, the Protestants, Richeome is convinced, sway wildly to and fro, unable to agree on, or even to see, humanity's proper place in the created universe.⁴⁹

In the end, and unsurprisingly, Richeome's attack did not result in a Protestant admission of heretical error. Indeed, Jean Bansilion, a Protestant minister from Aigues-Mortes in the south of France, took it upon himself to respond to Richeome point by point, pagan god by pagan god, in an almost equally massive treatise entitled *L'Idolatrie papistique opposée à l'idolatrie huguenote de Louys Richeome, Provincial des Jesuites*, published in Geneva within a year of the *Idolatrie huguenote*. Bansilion's counter-argument followed the predictable tack of opposing Protestantism, which followed divinely inspired Scripture, to Catholicism, which followed an institution composed of "hommes fautifs." Richeome counter-attacked the following year, with the *Panthéon huguenot découvert et ruiné contre l'aucteur de*

⁴⁸ *Idolatrie huguenote*, p. 414.

⁴⁹ For an overview of how the Reformation destabilized notions of divine and human creation, see Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1998), especially pp. 2–3.