Forcefully argued and methodologically sophisticated, Amsler's monograph significantly enriches, complicates, and transforms our understanding of the nature of the Jesuit enterprise in China and the social and spiritual landscape of Catholic religiosity that grew in late Ming and early Qing China.

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Ethan H. Shagan

The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. 408. Hb, \$35.00.

In this ambitious and sweeping study, Ethan Shagan explores the evolution of the category of belief from the early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. He seeks to examine not the "content of religious belief, but the category itself—what it meant to believe" in different periods throughout European history (1), adopting the approach of *longue durée* intellectual history. While arguing against scholars who have treated belief "as stable object" (1), Shagan likewise takes on historians who have argued that modernity is characterized by the decline of belief. He suggests instead that the modern world has seen a transformation in the meaning of belief, which has "become a synonym for opinion or judgment: a space of autonomy rather than a prescription for its exercise" (6). Far from being devoid of belief, Shagan maintains, the modern West can be characterized by a reduction in the role played by religion but also by a proliferation of belief that now "structures everything from political affiliation to consumer tastes, to dietary habits, enveloping us in a rich atmosphere of private ethical judgment" (292).

Shagan delineates three distinct "credulities," defined as "spaces or conditions of believing," that he separates into "medieval, confessional, and modern" (282–83). He likens the concept of "credulity" to Thomas Kuhn's notion of "paradigm" and Michel Foucault's concept of "episteme," calling it "a framework of intellectual resources and assumptions that shapes religious knowledge and its relationship to other truth claims" (282). The majority of the narrative is thus preoccupied with analyzing the category of belief within each of these frameworks and explaining the transitions between them.

Shagan begins the book by analyzing how medieval theologians approached the problem of belief and how it was related to other forms of knowledge.

Chapter one thus describes the rationalist view of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, which prioritized the knowledge and understanding of God through reason, and the fideist positions of Tertullian and Lactantius, which sometimes “required believing without or against reason and evidence” (38). Shagan argues these perspectives did not necessarily represent rival schools, suggesting that the majority of theologians agreed that Christian belief differed categorically from “profane knowledge-claims” and “consist[ed] in obedience to the Church” (49). In Shagan’s analysis, belief had little to do with “individual views of religion” but “was instead some form of participation in the collective and indubitable credenda of the Church” (62).

The first crucial transformation, according to this narrative, took place during the Protestant and Catholic Reformations (Shagan uses the contested term “Counter-Reformation” to describe the latter), when belief became exclusionary. The author argues that the Reformers and the Catholic authorities sought “to make belief *hard*” (66), drawing increasingly delimited boundaries around what they considered to be true belief. Thus, Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the rarity of such true belief and pointed to the prevalence of unbelief among the majority of Europeans. The Reformers stressed the importance of individuals understanding precisely what they believed, instituting the teaching of belief through catechisms and limiting “saving faith” to “the community of the elect” (77). Shagan disputes the notion that “Protestantism represented a turn toward interiority and individualism,” suggesting instead that the Reformation “structured a new form of authoritarianism” (124–25). Catholic authorities, in turn, defined belief as the obedience to the absolute authority of the church, insisting that “‘belief’ could not be based upon individual experience” (80). Catholic Reformers, and the Society of Jesus in particular, also set on a massive educational initiative, seeking to instruct the clergy and the laity in order to reinforce control and prevent “disobedience to the Church” (87). Thus, Jesuits like Peter Canisius wrote a dramatically influential set of catechisms to promote obedience and belief in the Holy Roman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Both Catholic and Protestant theologians contributed to developing the concept of the unbeliever, as each side identified the other as being atheists, “deny[ing] belief-status to one another” (110).

Shagan insists that the “birth of modern belief” was primarily a reaction “against authoritarian attempts to enforce belief” (127). He describes the “unbearable weight of believing” that the confessional regime produced (129): for Protestants the pressure came from anxiety about salvation and “[t]he psychic turmoil generated by predestination” (140); for Catholic believers “the problem was the necessity of an impossible obedience” (146). Shagan argues that

these pressures “would be lifted” by the end of the seventeenth century (165), as belief became “associated with sound and judicious consideration” and it became “commonplace to suggest that human beings use their own judgement to assent to religious propositions” (169). He discusses figures such as Michel de Montaigne, Giordano Bruno, and especially Tommaso Campanella, all of whom tried to “pry open new space for individual belief” (170) and to “re-inscribe belief outside the authority of the Church and instead within the sovereign judgment of the individual Christian” (176). Such a transformation involved a recognition of the probabilistic nature of belief that was based on “the persuasion of the mind by evidence” (179). Shagan highlights the role that Dutch and English Arminians along with French Jansenists played in redefining belief as “an empirical process of weighing evidence” (224) and “a product of individual ratiocination” (218). The Jesuit missionaries in the Americas also helped “dismantle the confessional project of belief from the inside” (199), by appealing to the individual judgement of indigenous population, presenting belief “as an empirical exercise” (202).

This transformation meant that religious belief became “no different from any other truth-claim” (226), as both scientific hypotheses and theological assertions—both results of sovereign judgment—gained “parallel epistemological status” (235). In fact, Shagan suggests that the language of experimental philosophy owed quite a bit to vocabulary used in historical demonstrations of the veracity of Christianity. As “boundaries between belief, knowledge, and opinion” collapsed (249), a new understanding of belief emerged. What Shagan calls “a common project of belief” involved “not agreement about what should be believed [...] but rather a second-order commitment to the autonomous judgment of the believing subject” (247). This broad consensus, in Shagan’s view, enables the co-existence of diverse perspectives in modern societies.

As work of intellectual history, this book sometimes glosses over important distinctions in context. The author jumps seamlessly between countries, continents, and centuries and does not always situate the discourses about belief in their particular social milieus. Thus, the book sometimes makes it seem as if all the thinkers discussed here were engaging in a single conversation about “what it meant to believe” rather than addressing specific concerns or taking part in particular debates. While the analysis of the different credulities offers rich and textured expositions, Shagan does not always succeed in explaining convincingly why changes happened at particular moments.

Despite these minor shortcomings, this book is to be lauded for its ambitious attempt to historicize a category that for too long has remained unquestioned

by secular and religious scholars alike. *The Birth of Modern Belief* is thus a landmark contribution to explaining the origins of how we make sense of the complex world around us.

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Ricardo D. Cubas Ramacciotti

The Politics of Religion and the Rise of Social Catholicism in Peru (1884–1935). Faith, Workers, and Race before Liberation Theology. Religion in the Americas, 18. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. xiii + 297. Hb, \$113.00.

Studies of church–state relations in Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are rare. Rarer still are analyses of the Catholic Church's behavior as a political and social actor during this period. The author, a professor at the University of the Andes in Chile, ventures into this uncharted mission with this study of Peru.

The author has so organized his monograph that a reader unfamiliar with the period and the subject can grasp the argument without much difficulty. The first section consisting of four chapters explores historical antecedents and background. The author discusses the concept of patronage in the Indies and the Bourbon regalism during the final years of the colonial era before proceeding to an analysis of the continuity of these practices within the secularization of the republican period. Strong, ultramontane clerics such as José Ignacio Moreno, Bartolomé Herrera, and others defended ecclesiastical prerogatives. Secularization was especially strong between 1884 and 1919 as the state secularized cemeteries, marriages, etc., and granted religious toleration. The Catholic Church fought back especially through the formation of different sodalities and associations. Tension continued during the years of Augusto B. Leguía's government (1919–35). Indeed, the increased influence of radical ideologies of secularization intensified the tension. The author cites as examples the life of Emilio Lisson, archbishop of Lima, and the congress of 1933.

Paradoxically, the Catholic Church became more independent despite the secular government's attempts to control it. The second section of the monograph, three chapters with the title "The Catholic Revival," explores the church's efforts to preserve and expand its presence and influence in Peruvian