In the first of the eleven papers in this volume the editors write: “To assume that heterodoxy was the harbinger of secularism discounts not only its doctrinal and intellectual complexity, but what made it so attractive and exciting to its exponents.” They go on to point out that heterodoxy has generally been studied by Anglophone historians “in the context of natural philosophy, and not moral or political philosophy.” If we look at what European historians have produced this would seem to be a serious shortcoming peculiar to the English-speaking world—even if there are a significant number of exceptions. The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy 1600–1750, at all events, sets out to correct this tendency.

In his paper on Grotius Hans Blom illustrates the apparently paradoxical situation in early seventeenth-century Holland where the Calvinists or Contra-Remonstrants insisted on complete orthodoxy within the church but were indifferent to, not to say tolerant of, heterodoxy outside it. The Remonstrants or Arminians aimed, rather, at a unification of Christians. Grotius had once pleaded for a natural and secular basis for civil life, and it was with this conviction in mind that, in his Mare liberum of 1609, he made his greatest and most original contribution to political thought. Gradually, however, he lost faith in the original separation between nature and revelation and, in his later years, shared an eirenic project with the Arminians. But, as Sarah Mortimer shows, Grotius’s development was also strongly affected by his engagement with the Socinians. In various works, including his De jure belli ac pacis of 1625, he defended the doctrine of atonement which they had rejected. Grotius was answered by the Socinian leader Johan Crell and the ensuing debate contributed to the far broader discussion “about how human beings might exchange natural right for civil society—and about the consequences of doing so for religious belief.”

One of the most important contributions to this debate was by Thomas Hobbes, studied here by Justin Champion. Hobbes regarded the visible churches with their corrupt institutions as the ‘kingdom of darkness’ (the title of Champion’s article). “For the last twenty years of his life,” writes Champion, “Hobbes’s concern to secure a private sphere of individual judgement from interference by a persecuting clerical authority was, in effect, a defence of heterodoxy. In doing so he did not retreat from his views on the power of the civil sovereign, but rebutted the arguments with which the resurgent clericalism of
the Restored regime attempted to capture the legislative power of the state to its own ends.

In ‘Henry Stubbe, Robert Boyle and the idolatry of nature’ Martin Mulsow discusses the debate provoked by the miracle healer, Valentine Greatrakes, who effected a number of cures and about whom Henry Stubbe wrote a treatise in the form of a letter to Boyle, while William Poole analyses the interest taken by the Royal Society in China. On account of both its political system and its cultural tradition China “exemplified the notion of heterodoxy.” Some members of the Society were intrigued by Chinese history, which had given rise, particularly in Catholic Europe, to heated arguments about chronology. There was also an interest, expressed, among others, by John Webb in an essay which appeared in 1669, in the Chinese language connected with the possibility of creating a universal language such as the one attributed to Adam. Isaac Vossius and Robert Hooke, moreover, brought China into the debate about the ancients and the moderns.

Sami Savonius-Wroth examines the cases of Locke and Bayle. They had originally been in agreement on the need for toleration dictated by the human disposition to love the truth, but during his exile in the United Provinces in the late 1680s Locke was drawn by the Huguenot Arminian followers of Jean Le Clerc and reached the conclusion that an active commitment to religious truth was more important than toleration. In ‘Spinoza and the religious Radical Enlightenment’ Jonathan Israel discusses some of the reactions to Spinozism in different parts of Europe—the split which it brought about among the Dutch Collegiants and its affinities with Unitarianism in England. Enrico Nuzzo studies Giambattista Vico and Paolo Mattia Doria, two exponents of what he calls “the moderate Enlightenment” in Catholic Europe. They both, albeit to a different extent, looked back to ‘ancient values’ in their opposition to the materialistic and imperialistic direction which the modern states seemed to be taking. “They express a ‘nostalgic’ yearning for the public, communitarian virtues of antiquity, for a world whose customs are still simple and uncorrupted” also to be found in the writings of Rousseau and other “protagonists of high Enlightenment.”

One of the most fascinating pieces in the book is Brian Young’s examination of the sacred historian Conyers Middleton, often taken as a deist but rather, as Young argues, a somewhat heterodox Anglican who held that the force of Christian revelation was to be found in its closeness to natural religion and who tried to free Christianity of its belief in miracles and dogmas such as the teaching of the Trinity. “It is certain,” Young concludes, “that for heterodox writers who wrote after Locke, it was no longer true to say with him that ‘every Church is orthodox to itself’: heterodoxy had itself become an identity, both