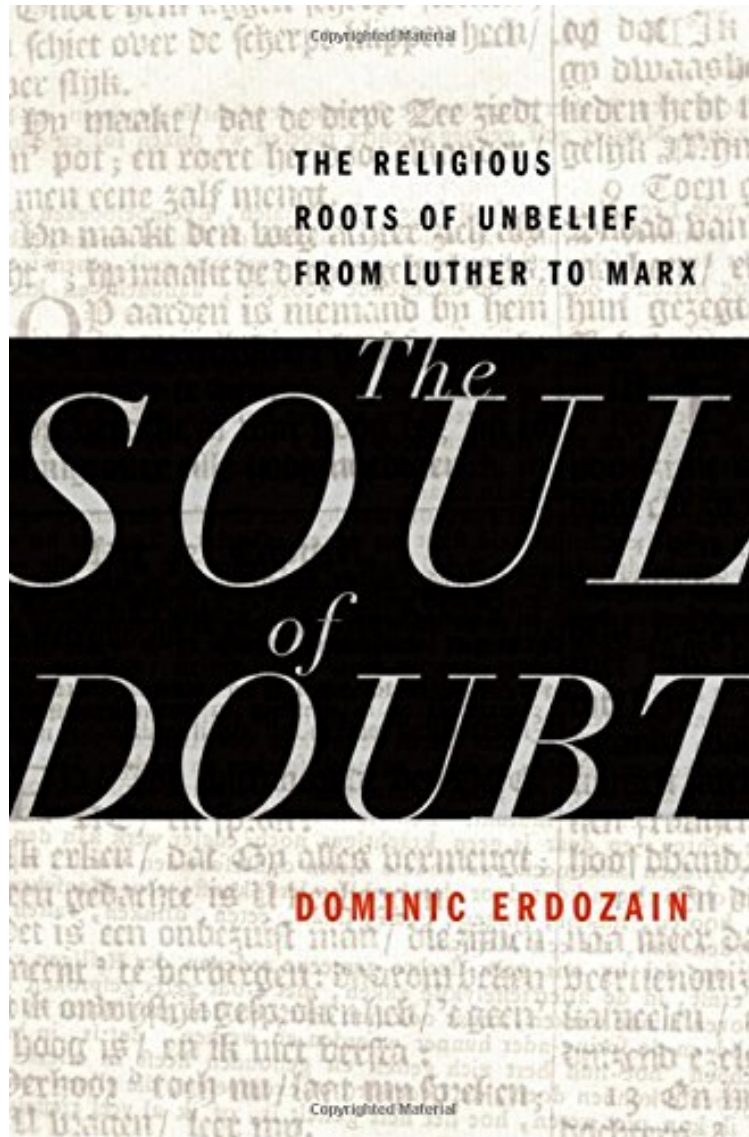


(Ebook pdf) The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx

The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx

Dominic Erdozain

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Dominic Erdozain : The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A magnificent history of conscienceBy Duncan ReyburnPossibly

the most electrifying and potent book on the religious tensions within Modernity to date, Dominic Erdozains 'The Soul of Doubt' could well have been called 'A History of Conscience: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx.' As something that reads like a philosophical whodunit, it provides a thrilling and masterful account of the way that a number of individuals have responded to the pressures of religious orthodoxy and various strains of monstrously self-righteous (usually Calvinist) dogmatism. Erdozain argues, with precision and great fidelity to his (many) sources, that doubt is not predominantly a secular or purely atheistic attitude towards the world, but is a profoundly Christian posture; or, as Erdozain writes, The secular critique of Christianity was a burning product of the religion it dared to appraise; we know that even the Bible continues to justify its critics. He remarks elsewhere in a blog for Oxford University Press that the nemesis of Christian orthodoxy is Christian spirituality itself. It is the committed believer who poses the most perspicacious and acerbic questions to others who share the general framework of his or her belief. It turns out, as Erdozain demonstrates in his book with reference to figures like Luther, Franck, Castello, Spinoza, Voltaire, Bayle, Darwin, T. H. Huxley, George Eliot and Feuerbach, among others that the soil for the seeds of outrage and dissent was the very mercy and generosity proclaimed by the Jesus of the New Testament. Modernity, it is argued, is therefore not primarily concerned with the disintegration of religious ideals; rather, it is characterized by the internalization and practical value of those very ideals. In the end, religion is not a detached intellectual concern; rather, it is a matter of how love is directed or misdirected. Here, then, the usual caricature of religion as a nave and ignorant participant in a drama of skepticism is overruled with wonderful erudition. We find that the best skeptics are the faithful; the best rebellion is one that takes place within the bounds of a set of ideological coordinates. What makes Erdozains book all the more potent and compelling is its biographical focus. Erdozain allows his history to be written, not by the winner the pronouncements of institutions or state doctrines but by thoughtful people caught up in the muck of existence. Questions around persecution by the church, for instance, are therefore handled not as merely theoretical concerns, but as matters of deep and haunting existential relevance. Thus, while the measure of heresy for many proponents of hard-core orthodoxy was the individual's proclamation of allegiance to a set of strict, legal propositions, the greater heresy, for many dissenters against this brand of orthodoxy, was the inability of the establishment to display the kindness of Christ. Coercion, as Sebastian Frank wrote, is a rather foolish thing in the kingdom of Christ. Still, history exposes the way that theological formulations have often masked a human desire to play God. It is not an overstatement to say that I enjoyed every word of 'The Soul of Doubt'. Erdozain is both a scholar and a wordsmith. The content is certainly provocative, and it is a real gift to find it so well put. Look at this sentence of example: Drunk on syllogism and deduction, academic theology served as an anaesthetic for the soul, masking the effects of sin and dimming the spiritual senses. Or this one: A healthy conscience was one in which fear turned to hope, and faith did the talking. Or this one: The line between prophecy and rage may have been thin, but there can be no doubt that the fiercest criticism emerged from the hottest piety. I know it is a dangerous thing to rip such sentences from their contexts, but I do so simply to entice you. There is a wonderful energy in the writing. This, together with detailed analysis and careful scholarship, reflects the heart and mind of a scholar who cares deeply enough for his subject to really do it justice. In short, you should read this book. It is likely to change not only the way you see history, but the way you see the world you live in now. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Excellent, excellent By folmartz Most helpful book I've ever read about the Christian religion. It has clarified and settled a number of religious questions I've had for many years. The many quotations from many other authors, the attitude of Erdozain, both give it a high degree of integrity. Excellent, excellent.

It is widely assumed that science is the enemy of religious faith. The idea is so pervasive that entire industries of religious apologetics converge around the challenge of Darwin, evolution, and the "secular worldview." This book challenges such assumptions by proposing a different cause of unbelief in the West: the Christian conscience. Tracing a history of doubt and unbelief from the Reformation to the age of Darwin and Karl Marx, Dominic Erdozain argues that the most powerful solvents of religious orthodoxy have been concepts of moral equity and personal freedom generated by Christianity itself. Revealing links between the radical Reformation and early modern philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza and Pierre Bayle, Erdozain demonstrates that the dynamism of the Enlightenment, including the very concept of "natural reason" espoused by philosophers such as Voltaire, was rooted in Christian ethics and spirituality. The final chapters explore similar themes in the era of Darwin and Marx, showing how moral revolt preceded and transcended the challenges of evolution and "scientific materialism" in the unseating of religious belief. The picture that emerges is not of a secular challenge to religious faith, but a series of theological insurrections against divisive accounts of Christian orthodoxy.

"It is a great merit of Dominic Erdozain's book that it provides an approachable and well-wrought account of the development of such pluralism over the past 500 years... Writing with great verve and passion, Erdozain is tireless in assembling texts and citations to support his various interpretations."--Times Literary Supplement "The Soul of Doubt is a pleasure to read if you are at all interested in intellectual history, the roots and development of modern Western culture, and the role of religion, especially Christianity, in all that... This is a far-reaching and wide-ranging book that

covers a lot of ground. Erdozain has shed new light, a new perspective, on modernity."--Patheos"Compelling and absorbing reading. Judiciously researched and lucidly, often deliciously, argued, The Soul of Doubt is a 500-year sweep of elegant simplicity."--Christian Century" Intriguing...This is an elegantly written, well-argued book. Highly recommended."--CHOICE" This is the most important book on religious doubt in the modern West since Charles Taylor's A Secular Age." --Timothy Larsen, author of Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England "The Problem of Pleasure established Erdozain as one of the most original and provocative new voices in modern Christian history, and specifically in the history of secularisation. This tour de force of incisive argument and wide-ranging erudition confirms his reputation. Others have suggested that the most powerful critiques of Christian orthodoxy have been primarily moral, indeed religious, but no-one has pursued this argument so consistently and across three centuries." --Hugh McLeod, author of The Religious Crisis of the 1960s "This wide-ranging book offers a compelling account of the Christian roots of secularism. It skillfully blends intellectual history with the 'raw fuel' of human, historically-located lived experience, a force that Erdozain terms 'conscience.' The text sparkles with thought-provoking analogies and metaphors, and it establishes Erdozain's reputation as one of the most accomplished scholars of religion writing about the post-Reformation world." --Frances Knight, Associate Professor in the History of Modern Christianity, the University of Nottingham, UK "Erdozain's argument is as relentless as it is well substantiated and unerringly illustrated."--Christian Century"Erdozain's book accomplishes what good intellectual history should: it forces us to reconsider positions we had been taught to think were obvious." --Science, Religion, and Culture "Erdozain executes his task with skill and verve. He possesses a delightful felicitous style that makes him a pleasure to read...an impressive performance, which should be considered required reading for anyone seeking a rounded understanding of religious belief and unbelief in the early modern and modern periods...the book is undoubtedly an outstanding achievement. ... Erdozain provides an invaluable-indeed indispensable-contribution to the rich and evolving tapestry that constitutes our historical reconstruction of the relationship between religion and secularism." --Reading Religion About the AuthorDominic Erdozain is a visiting scholar at Emory University. His first book The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion was published in 2010.