

Science, Religion, and the Rise of Biblical Criticism

with James C. Ungureanu, "Introduction to the Symposium on Science, Religion, and Biblical Criticism"; Paul C. H. Lim, "Spirit, Superstition, and Science: Use of Scripture in the Early Boyle Lectures, 1692–1710"; Diego Lucci, "The Biblical Roots of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity"; Jon W. Thompson, "The Naturalization of Scriptural Reason in Seventeenth Century Epistemology"; James C. Ungureanu, "From Divine Oracles to the Higher Criticism: Andrew D. White and the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom"; Nathan Bossob, "Scientific Uniformity or 'Natural' Divine Action: Shifting the Boundaries of Law in the Nineteenth Century"; Stuart Mathieson, "The Victoria Institute, Biblical Criticism, and The Fundamentals"; and Samuel Loncar, "Science and Religion: An Origins Story."

FROM DIVINE ORACLES TO THE HIGHER CRITICISM: ANDREW D. WHITE AND THE WARFARE OF SCIENCE WITH THEOLOGY IN CHRISTENDOM

by James C. Ungureanu

Abstract. Historians of science and religion have given little attention to how historical-critical scholarship influenced perceptions of the relationship between science and religion in the nineteenth century. However, the so-called "cofounders" of the "conflict thesis," the idea that science and religion are fundamentally and irrevocable at odds, were greatly affected by this literature. Indeed, in his two-volume magnum opus, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), Andrew D. White, in his longest and final chapter of his masterpiece, traced the development of the "scientific interpretation" of the Bible. In this article, I argue that developments in biblical criticism had a direct impact on how White constructed his historical understanding of the relationship between science and religion. By examining more carefully how biblical criticism played a significant role in the thought of White and other alleged cofounders of the conflict thesis, this article hopes to relocate the origins, development, and meaning of the science–religion debate at the end of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Andrew D. White; biblical criticism; "conflict thesis"; deism; neology; Protestantism; rationalism; romanticism; science and religion

James C. Ungureanu is Historian-in-Residence in the George L. Mosse Program in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; e-mail: j.ungureanu@uq.edu.au.

More than any other alleged “cofounder” of the “conflict thesis,” Andrew D. White was irrevocably influenced by German historical-critical scholarship. This influence is especially evident in his magnum opus. In his last and longest chapter of *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), White described in striking detail the “laws governing the evolution of sacred literature,” offering essentially what biblical scholar and theologian Hans Frei put in another context, “an analysis of analyses of the Bible” (Frei 1974, vii). White ranged over what he beguilingly called the history of the “scientific interpretation” of the Bible (White 1896, 2:288–396).

White had indeed studied under some of the most prominent critics during his student days in Germany, particularly at the “free” University of Berlin. It was there where he found an ideal model to emulate in founding his own Cornell University. He later wrote, “there I saw my ideal of a university not only realized, but extended and glorified” (White 1905, 1:291). He was also deeply affected by American church historians, such as Philip Schaff (1819–1893), who had also studied in Germany (Clark 2011). Indeed, a German education had become quite fashionable for many American students of theology and history in the middle of the nineteenth century. The influence of German ideas on American intellectuals and educational reformers like White cannot be overstated. The University of Berlin, which was established under the leadership of Prussian philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1810 became paradigmatic. As Thomas A. Howard observes, Berlin’s guiding principles were “in many respects antithetical to the lingering confessionalism that had justified theology’s institutional centrality in the post-Reformation period” (Howard 2006, 131). Berlin had infused the historical sciences with an air of historicism or “developmentalism.” This view of history, and especially its nonsectarianism, greatly appealed to White.

As I have argued elsewhere, White rejected the conventional view of the conflict between “science and religion.” Rather, he believed that conflict occurred between contending theological traditions (Ungureanu 2019). But this view only makes sense if we understand the dramatic changes in theology that occurred in the nineteenth century. Part of that profound change came from the advent of historical-critical scholarship. Thus, in order to better understand the nature of the conflict between “science and religion” during the Victorian period, we need to grasp more clearly what biblical critics were doing. White may, therefore, serve as a guide, for his longest and most detailed part of his *A History of the Warfare* is devoted entirely to the rise of biblical criticism. What I want to emphasize here is that historical-critical scholarship played a central role in how thinkers like White redefined “religion,” and, in turn, defined his understanding of the relationship between science and religion at the end of the century.

It should be immediately pointed out, however, that early biblical criticism was not antireligious in origin or character. In fact, as we shall see in detail below, many of the founders of the discipline saw themselves as “reformers” of religion rather than its opponents. The crucial point, of course, is how these reformers defined “religion.” The rise of biblical criticism is a good example of historical irony. Criticism of the Bible originated in the opposition between church dogma and the new liberal political philosophy of emergent modern Europe. Indeed, as many have shown, historical-critical scholarship was never as neutral or objective as its proponents claimed (Kümmel 1972; Reventlow 1985; Baird 1992). That is, biblical criticism emerged from thinkers who wanted to challenge the cultural authority of orthodox Christianity, adopting and adapting the Protestant critique of Roman Catholicism in which dogma and doctrine was seen as a corruption of the original, simple, and pure message of Jesus and the Apostles. Champions of the new criticism thus viewed the Bible as a fully human (i.e., natural) work. Combined with this naturalistic explanation of the biblical text was a conception of history that evolutionary ideas greatly abetted. Historical events, accordingly, were always conditioned by what had gone before, and the religious consciousness was simply the reflection of a given time and place. As we shall see, this is the exact approach White took in his own “analysis of analyses of the Bible.”

THE “SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION” OF THE BIBLE

In the concluding chapter of *A History of the Warfare*, White sought to trace the movement from “divine oracles to the higher criticism.” He begins his account by describing the “laws governing the evolution of sacred literature.” Here, he explicitly refers to French philosopher Auguste Comte’s (1798–1857) social theory of “Law of Wills and Causes,” found in his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–1842), which was translated and condensed into English in 1853 by Harriet Martineau, sister of famous Unitarian preacher James Martineau (Comte 1853). For Comte, history was not simply descriptive but prescriptive. Borrowing the “philosophy of history” from his master, Henri de Saint-Simon (Löwith 1949, 67–91; Manuel 1962; Olson 2008, 41–61), Comte proposed a theory which underscored the importance of change, explaining how each branch of science had emerged out of supernatural beliefs before attaining empirical status. Comte believed that the mind passed through three progressive stages. The first of these stages is the “theological,” in which the forces of nature are personified as gods; then, the “metaphysical,” a transitional phase in which the gods are replaced by abstract transcendental entities and causes; and finally, the scientific or “positive” stage, in which all the dynamics of nature and society are understood as conforming to natural laws (Bourdeau et al. 2018).

White not only makes explicit reference to Comte but also appropriates his tripartite theory in his narrative of the evolution of the interpretation of Scripture. But as Charles Cashdollar has emphasized, most of Comte's Anglo-American disciples never fully adopted Comtean positivism but were selective, borrowing certain elements that suited their needs (Cashdollar 1989). For White, in the "older interpretation," men explained everything by "miracle and nothing by law." Central to his hermeneutical law of development, White believes that allegorical readings emerged when men reached "higher plans of civilization." When literal interpretation clashed with new knowledge or progress in moral feeling, theologians took refuge in mystical or "oracular" interpretations (White 1896, 2:290–94). But such interpretations, according to White, were prodigious structures of "sophistry."

THE PARADIGM SHIFT

This "oracular" interpretation continued for centuries until the fifteenth-century revival of learning. White gives credit in particular to Christian humanists Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) and Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536). Valla, of course, was the famous fifteenth-century Italian monk known for debunking the so-called "Donation of Constantine," which purported to make the pope the feudal overlord of the western half of the Roman Empire. According to White, in Valla, we see "the spirit of modern criticism" (White 1896, 2:303). In 1504, Erasmus had rediscovered Valla's work, which remained untouched for nearly a century. He included it in his *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* of 1505, which formed the basis for his own three decades long work on the biblical text. Erasmus was in fact one of the first scholars to view the biblical text as dynamic, subject to corruption, and even deliberate intervention. He also shocked the theological world by openly criticizing Church dogma. According to the Dutch humanist, the conflict between old views and new have "born the thunders and lightnings which now shake the world" (Erasmus 2013, 96; cf. Rummel 2004, 28–38). As the "wars of religion" engulfed Europe, Erasmus's warning about the dangers of dogmatism became tragically prophetic.

But again, it should be noted that both Erasmus and Valla applied the techniques of textual criticism to the Bible in hopes of restoring the sources of "primitive" Christianity. As Anthony Grafton has shown, Renaissance humanists began to assume critical postures toward traditional learning and church doctrine in attempts to "purify" contemporary culture, clearing away dubious learning and exposing its corrupt sources (Grafton 1991). At the same time, from Erasmus and Valla, biblical scholarship spread widely over the course of the sixteenth century, eventually producing what Jonathan Sheehan has called the "Enlightenment Bible,"

a “post-theological” book divorced from its sources of revelation and its agreed-upon creedal verities (Sheehan 2005).

Indeed, for White, the work of Erasmus and Valla was merely the beginning. Despite his massive library on the Reformation, which consisted of over 30,000 volumes, White believed the work of the reformers was only one step in the evolution of “biblical science.” “As we now look back over the Revival of Learning, the Age of Discovery, and the Reformation,” he wrote, “we can see clearly that powerful as the older Church then was, and powerful as the Reformed Church was to be, there was at work something far more mighty than either or than both; and this was a great law of nature—the law of evolution through differentiation” (White 1896, 2:314).

Obedient to this law, White goes on to say, “there now began to arise, both within the Church and without, a new body of scholars—not so much theologians as searches for truth by scientific methods.” Here, he cited the work of such thinkers Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676), Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677), Richard Simon (1638–1712), and others as precursors to the “scientific interpretation” of the Bible (White 1896, 2:311ff.). White praised, for example, Grotius’s 1625 classic *The Rights of War and Peace*, in which he argued that all nations should be governed by laws that are ultimately based on natural law, a “most blessed gift of God to man.” But in this work, Grotius also provocatively contended that “the Law of Nature is so unalterable, that God himself cannot change it” (Grotius 2005, 1:155). He also believed there are certain ideas common to all rational men, and that these ideas could be discovered by reason alone, and thus need not depend on theology. In his 1640 *The Truth of the Christian Religion*, moreover, Grotius argued that God’s existence is seen in creation, not only in the providential ordering of the cosmos but also in the rise of nations and political events (Grotius 2012, 29–95). Grotius was also the author of a number of pioneering critical exegetical studies, which questioned dominant views of biblical inspiration. He not only paid close attention to the textual variants in the canon of Scripture but also approached them as ordinary, literary works. He considered each New Testament book first and foremost a product of the specific historical period in which it was written. Indeed, with “notes” on the textual, linguistic, and grammatical details of each book, Grotius pushed biblical scholarship in new directions (Heering 2003; Nellen 2007).

Grotius lived during a significant shift in history, in which long held theological assumptions were increasingly uprooted and challenged by new ideas. He was deeply involved, for example, in the theological debate of the day, siding with the Arminian position in the Dutch religious conflict after the Synod of Dort in 1619. In the end, this “miracle of Holland” was accused of heresy and died in exile. But Grotius always considered

himself a peacemaker—indeed as White himself did. The divisions that exist in Christianity, according to Grotius, are largely shaped around doctrinal controversies. His method was to promote a more “rational” Christianity. He hoped that “reason” might be able to sort out religious controversies while at the same time showing the overall truth of Christianity. As Peter Gay summarized, “Grotius reduced Christianity to a few central tenets,” rationalizing its doctrines, and championing the freedom of the will against orthodox Calvinism (Gay 1966, 300).

Unsurprisingly, Grotius’s view greatly influenced more moderate Protestants (Trevor-Roper 2001; Popkin 2003, 13, 179–218). His faith in progress, simplified theology, and commitment to tolerance greatly endeared him to White. In 1899, during the Hague Peace Conference, for instance, White had actually visited the Dutch statesman’s tomb in one of his many diplomatic missions, and even confessed that Grotius “has long been to me almost an object of idolatry” (White 1896, 2:134, 276; 1899; 1905, 2:274, 291, 316–20). Moreover, in his *Seven Great Statesmen in the Warfare of Humanity with Unreason* (1910), a work altogether ignored by historians of science, White devoted an entire chapter to Grotius. During a century torn by religious and political warfare, White wrote, Grotius appeared “at a point in time to all appearance hopeless, at a point in space apparently defenseless.” Grotius was a “man who wrought as no other has ever done for a redemption of civilization from the main cause of all that misery; who thought out of Europe the precepts of right reason in international law; who made them heard; who gave a noble change to the course of human affairs; whose thoughts, reasonings, suggestions, and appeals produced an environment in which came an evolution of humanity that still continues” (White 1910, 55).

The intellectual culture of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with its extraordinary mix of native Dutch, Jewish, and Protestant diasporic communities, was clearly a time of significant and radical biblical criticism (Israel 1995). Although certainly a more controversial figure, White also acclaimed the “God-intoxicated” Spinoza for showing that “Moses could not have been the author of the Pentateuch.” Remarkably, White believed that “in all the seventeenth century there was no man whom Jesus of Nazareth would have more deeply loved, and no life which he would have more warmly approved,” than Spinoza (White 1896, 2:317, 318). As a *Converso*, Spinoza was surrounded by Christians—but of a particular kind. He associated with, for example, Quakers, Socinians, and other more heterodox Protestants. It was in fact the writings of Grotius, La Peyrère, and others that fostered in Spinoza an unorthodoxy that ultimately led the Ruling Council of his Jewish community to expel and excommunicate him from the synagogue in 1656 (Popkins 1977).

About a decade later, Spinoza informed the German theologian Henry Oldenburg that he was busy composing a treatise on the interpretation of

Scripture. He had undertaken the task to expose the “prejudices of theologians,” clear his name from accusations of “atheism,” and to “philosophize” freely against the “excessive authority and egotism of preachers” (Spinoza 2002, 843–44). A few years later, in 1670, he published (anonymously however) his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which outlined the role of biblical criticism in the political order. Partly a response to the Jewish community that expelled him, and partly against the established Protestant Church of the Dutch Republic, Spinoza also wrote the *Tractatus* for those “enlightened” Protestants who had already made much progress toward “true freedom”—in short, to that much smaller group of heterodox believers (Erdozain 2017). As J. Samuel Preus puts it, Spinoza was an “astute reader of Protestant theology, adapting fundamental axioms of that theology...perhaps partly to mask his profoundly subversive intent, but more fundamentally to transform their meaning to conform to the new method he was proposing” (Preus 2001, 12–13).

Interestingly, Spinoza believed that methods for interpreting Scripture should be identical to methods for interpreting nature. Key here is how Spinoza’s hermeneutic complements his metaphysics. God, for Spinoza, is identical with all there is. Or as he put it in another letter to Oldenburg: “I do not differentiate between God and Nature in the way all those known to me have done” (Spinoza 2002, 768–76). That is, for Spinoza, the laws of nature are the divine laws, and conversely. “God or nature” (*dues sive natura*) are identical. So, besides concluding that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, Spinoza also contended that miracles are philosophically impossible. Because God and nature are united, the orthodox Christian is the real “atheist,” according to Spinoza, for he denies the immutability of God (Spinoza 2002, 444–56).

In his *Tractatus*, Spinoza proposed that the “universal rule for the interpretation of Scripture” is “to ascribe no teaching to Scripture what is not clearly established from studying it closely.” He argues that one must closely examine “the nature and properties of the language in which the Bible was written.” Next, one must order the “pronouncements” made in each book, noting all that are “ambiguous or obscure, or that appear to contradict one another.” Finally, one must “set forth the circumstances relevant to all the extant books...giving the life, character and pursuits of the author of every book,” thus revealing the context and the language in which it was written (Spinoza 2002, 458–59). All this leads Spinoza to conclude that the Bible is no more than a historical artifact representing the primitive views of an ancient culture unacquainted with the new scientific methodology. He offers, in short, a completely “secularized” version of biblical Jewish history, concluding that the Pentateuch represents a library of documents dating from different times, written by various authors, many anonymous, and finally compiled and put together by an editor, a considerable time after their original composition.

Spinoza is perhaps less rigorous in applying his rules to the New Testament, but nevertheless emphasized that “while the Apostles were in agreement about religion itself, they differed widely as to its foundations.” More importantly, Spinoza contended that these differences “gave rise to many disputes and schisms,” which will continue to “vex the Church until the day when religion shall be separated from philosophic speculation and reduced to the few simple doctrines that Christ taught his people” (Spinoza 2002, 503). In other words, Spinoza wanted to distinguish between the “few simple doctrines” of Christ and the “temporary” dogma formulated by Christian theologians over the centuries.

For Spinoza, dogmatic or orthodox Christianity exemplified superstition. By contrast, he believed “true” Christianity embodied the universal moral characteristics of “love, joy, peace, temperance, and honest dealing with men” (Spinoza 2002, 390). Thus, by implication, “false” Christianity is dogmatic Christianity. To save Christianity from the dogmatists, a more “rational” Christianity will emerge with a more critical evaluation of the Bible. “Everyone should be allowed freedom of judgment and the right to interpret the basic tenets of his faith as he thinks fit, and that the moral value of man’s creed should be judged only from his works” (Spinoza 2002, 393). Ultimately, Spinoza sought to work out some kind of accommodation between revelation and nature. He refused to identify Scripture with “God’s Word” as such, arguing that both the Bible and Reason show that the true Word of God (“true religion”) is to be found imprinted in men’s hearts—that is, minds. The Word of God, in other words, is “inscribed in our intellect” (Spinoza 2002, 503–09). In this sense, there could be no conflict between “revelation” and “nature,” and therefore no amount of criticism could impugn God’s Word.

Spinoza’s suspicion of the dogmatic tradition was a chief interpretative principle of the Reformation. But he carries this Reformation commitment one step further. As White also observed, “the Reformers, having cast off the authority of the Pope and the universal Church, fell back all the more upon the infallibility of the sacred books” (White 1896, 2:305). But this was an obstacle to religious progress. Church and dogma must not get in the way of a direct encounter with God’s Word. Spinoza, like Protestants before him, wanted an unmediated knowledge of the content of Scripture. He offered, in short, a reconceptualization of religion that all reasonable people can and should assent to. This common set of beliefs, moreover, could be shared by all sects of Christians, as well as by Jews and Muslims. Spinoza called for a truly ecumenical religion, “the true universal religion,” governed only the love of God and the love of neighbor (Spinoza 2002, 514–19).

THE “DEATH OF SCRIPTURE” AND THE RISE OF “NATURAL RELIGION”

Spinoza’s work influenced subsequent German, French, and English biblical critics. Although White does not mention them by name, many of the so-called English deists set the foundations for eighteenth-century criticism of the Bible on the Continent, which in turn would influence reorganizations of religious thought. With the advent of English deism, however, we also witness the “death of Scripture,” as Michael Legaspi recently put it (Legaspi 2010).

Thus, before moving on to White’s survey of eighteenth-century developments, which largely focused on German scholarship, we must briefly note important changes in seventeenth-century English religious thought. The English deists, such as Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), Charles Blount (1654–1693) John Toland (1670–1722), Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Matthew Tindal (1657–1733), Thomas Woolston (1669–1733), and Conyers Middleton (1683–1750), to name just some of the most well-known, vehemently protested against the Established Church, condemning revealed religion in general and Christianity in particular, attacking its institutions and dogma in the name of reason and “natural religion” (Byrne 1989, 1–21). As Gay noted, Spinoza’s *Tractatus* became “required reading” for the English deists, and the influence is obvious (Gay 1968, 24).

But the English deists were not so much biblical scholars as advocates of a new religious philosophy or theology. As Frei noted, “modern theology began in England at the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century” (Frei 1974, 51). For them, God was disclosed in the order of the cosmos and the laws of nature. As advocates of a natural universal religion, the deists opposed the old orthodoxy, along with the authoritarian establishment that supported it. But as a host of scholarship has demonstrated, the English deists were neither atheists nor even deists in an exclusive or final sense. Most of them in fact denied the very title. They professed belief in God, upheld the need for public worship, and even claimed they were defending “true Christianity.” The English deists did, of course, reject the Athanasian Creed and denied the divinity of Christ. They reduced religion to what they regarded as its most foundational, rationally justifiable elements. But so did Protestants.

Indeed, a closer reading reveals, as Hans Hillerbrand observes, that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century deism is best characterized as a “reform phenomenon,” with a central concern for the recovery of the “original plan of Christianity” (Hillerbrand 2008). In their view, the entire system of the Christian religion was perverted by “priestcraft,” self-seeking clergy who desired to place themselves in charge for worldly advantages. Christian doctrine and dogma, in short, were not formulations of religious

and biblical truths, but the consequences of clerical scheming. The clergy had perverted the true meaning of Scripture. The reform of Christianity, then, requires the restoration of the simple “religion” of the Gospels. As Hillerbrand comments, the deists attempted to inaugurate “both a new way of viewing Christianity, one in conformity with the new *Zeitgeist* of the incipient Enlightenment, and at the same time a fierce intra-Christian *Kulturkampf*, that ever since has pitted a liberal understanding of Christianity against a conservative one” (Hillerbrand 2008, 109).

Thus, according to the deists, sacred history, which comprised the Old and New Testaments, was unreliable. In this way, however, deists were entirely dependent upon the work of those who came before them. Although the deists no doubt “reflected and articulated a critical transition in religious consciousness” (Gay 1968, 10), their critique of church history was largely culled from Protestant polemicists (Barnett 1999; 2003). But, again, this was Protestantism of a particular kind. As Gay aptly noted long ago, “liberal Anglicanism and the dawning deist Enlightenment were connected by a thousand threads” (Gay 1966, 327). To be sure, liberal Protestantism was not deism—but it did help make the deist position possible. As nineteenth-century agnostic Leslie Stephen correctly observed, “if Protestantism was unintentionally acting as a screen for rationalism, rationalism naturally expressed itself in terms of Protestantism” (Stephen 1881, 1:79).

In short, deism needs to be understood in relation to other forms of “heterodoxy,” which included the Socinians and Arians, who of course denied the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, together with a number of other generally accepted beliefs. Indeed, more important for White’s survey of the history of biblical criticism is its more respectable counterpart—that is, those who remained within the Anglican fold but whom, nevertheless, gave recourse to reason as a litmus test for “true” or “rational” Christianity. And here he credits both John Locke (1632–1704) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727) for their boldness in “textual criticism” (White 1896, 2:310). According to Victor Nuovo, Locke should be counted a “Christian virtuoso,” who, like Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, and many other members of the Royal Society of London, were experimental natural philosophers who also professed Christianity (Nuovo 2017).

In his *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), for example, Locke argued that although religion is not contrary to reason, any divine revelation claimed by religion must be subject to the judgments of reason (Locke 1824). But with this criterion more firmly in place, he also came to reject much of orthodox Christian belief. Like many other Protestants with broadly liberal views, Locke searched for the “fundamentals” of faith by stripping layer after layer of what earlier “writers and wranglers” had added to the simple message of Christ and his Apostles (Locke 1824, 157). In

time, as Carl Becker correctly observed, more radical thinkers would embrace Locke's views because it seemed to them to demolish all orthodox belief (Becker 1932, 65).

The religious "moderation" of Locke and other Christian virtuosi was a characteristic feature of the English Enlightenment. There had been a growing trend toward the simplification and liberalization of Christian teachings in Protestant Europe. Gradually, the Bible came to be read by the Protestant intellectual elite as Spinoza and the English deists wanted it to be read: divorced from all ecclesiastical entanglements. As Basil Willey acutely noted, "it was not so much that men had rejected [Scripture] as 'false'; it was rather that as 'natural religion' came more and more to seem all-sufficient, 'revelation' began to appear, if not superfluous, at least secondary, and perhaps even slightly inconvenient" (Basil 1967, 74–75). This more "reasonable" religion of Protestantism attracted unexpected adherents. Exhausted from incessant religious and political turmoil, many began defecting to a more "common," "universal," and more "natural" religion.

"LEARNED, INDEFATIGABLE, DEEP-THINKING GERMANY"

During the following century, the English brand of Christian rationalism was extremely popular among educated Protestants on the Continent, particularly in Germany, where deist views were indeed one of the vital elements in the ferment of the *Aufklärung*. Thinkers such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), Johann Lorenz Schmidt (1702–1749), and especially Christian Wolff (1670–1754), read and translated the work of the English deists, and ultimately agreed that reason, rather than church authority or tradition, was the final arbiter of truth.

The quintessential *Aufklärer*, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), joined the deists in rejecting traditional views of prayer, divine intervention, and institutional Christianity. In his famous 1793 treatise, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, for instance, Kant criticized Christian dogmatism and hierarchy. He maintained, as he did earlier in his series of *Critiques*, that morality rests on the conception of free human beings who bind themselves through reason to unconditional laws. While he never directly invoked the name Jesus, Kant did proclaim that "the personified idea of the good principle" is found "in him from all eternity," "God's only-begotten Son," the "Word" through which all other things exist, "the reflection of his glory." In him, we have an example "of humanity in its moral perfection." In this respect, Kant's Jesus was a heroic figure, "the wise teacher," and Christianity, "a complete religion, which can be presented to all men comprehensibly and convincingly through their own reason." That is, a "natural religion" (Kant 1996, 57–215).

Later, in his 1798 *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant explicitly called for a “rational” interpretation of Scripture. He demanded nothing less than the absolute independence and complete freedom of thought and public speech for professors in the faculty of philosophy, and, especially, the end of the guardianship of theology over philosophy. The faculty of philosophy, he wrote, “must be free to examine in public and to evaluate with cold reason the source and content of this alleged basis of doctrine, un intimidated by the sacredness of the object which has supposedly been experienced and determined to bring this alleged feeling to concepts.” Moreover, when “the source of a sanctioned teaching is historical, then—no matter how highly it may be recommended as sacred to the unhesitating obedience of faith—the philosophy faculty is entitled and indeed obligated to investigate its origins with critical scrupulosity” (Kant 1996, 239–327).

From rational Christianity, we may indeed easily turn to Germany. White himself traces the next stage in the “scientific interpretation” of the Bible to the German “neologians,” such as J. D. Michaelis (1717–1791), J. S. Semler (1725–1791), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), J. J. Griesbach (1745–1812), J. G. Eichhorn (1752–1827), J. P. Gabler (1753–1826), Wilhelm M. L. de Wette (1780–1849), Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), among many others (White 1896, 2:323–32). This loose network of German theologians, pastors, superintendents, and government officials embraced the ideas of the *Aufklärung* while remaining within the church, and thus cannot be simply classified as deists. Although the neologians seemed radical and destructive enough to the orthodox, unlike the deists they were not anticlerical and did not seek the elimination of the established church. Rather, they too saw themselves as “reformers.”

But like the deists, the neologians were nevertheless suspicious of institutional religion and sharply critical of its doctrines and practices. They, thus, sought to restore what they understand to be the original and pure Christianity. This “new” teaching would transcend Christian orthodoxy, which they believed would effect “the reconciliation of the ancient doctrines with modern thought, by modifying the old to meet the new,” as one nineteenth-century commentator put it (Cobbe 1864, 58–65; cf. Carlsson 2016, 643–50). In a sense, then, the neologians affirmed with the deists the concept of natural religion, one that was regarded as the original and universal religion of humankind at its beginning. The neologians also agreed with the deists that historical Christianity had corrupted this original religion with doctrines, rites, and practices that obscured the true teachings of the first Christians. Raised in an environment where Christianity was increasingly “moralized,” the neologists believed Christianity and natural religion should focus on moral duties toward God and neighbor.

Although White does not mention him, the neologians were all profoundly influenced, both positively and negatively, by the thought of

Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768). The grandson of a scholarly Lutheran clergyman, Reimarus grew up reading Christian rationalists, such as Leibniz and Wolff, but also many of the English deists, especially Toland and Collins. Trained at the universities of Jena and Wittenberg, he became Professor of Oriental Studies at the *Gymnasium illustre* in Hamburg. In lectures and published writings, Reimarus attempted to show that Christianity was compatible with natural religion. Indeed, he argued that natural religion prepared the way for the triumph of Christianity. Privately, however, Reimarus believed that natural religion had actually replaced Christianity. As is well known, dramatist and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) had published between 1774 and 1778 several anonymous excerpts from Reimarus's private writings under the title *Fragments of an Unknown* (Talbert 1970). These excerpts were taken from Reimarus's enormous *Apology for or Defense of the Rational Worshiper of God*, which argued that reason had undermined the central claims of Christian orthodoxy. More importantly, it had also undermined the trustworthiness of Scripture, which he believed was a confused collection of ambiguous and contradictory documents.

Naturally, Reimarus viewed institutional Christianity as a fraud. The historical Jesus was a failed political revolutionary whose disciples turned him into a god. After Jesus's death, the early church invented the story of the resurrection and fabricated the doctrine of the *parousia* in order to attain worldly wealth and power (Talbert 1970, 243). As Albert Schweitzer noted long ago, in distinguishing the Christ of the early church and the "real" or "historical" Jesus, Reimarus played a key role in the development of the "quest of the historical Jesus" (Schweitzer 1968, 13–26). Indeed, after the publication of the *Fragments*, a flood of biographies or "lives" of Jesus were to follow. The "quest" and its relation to the Victorian science-religion debate deserves its own careful study, but here it is enough to paraphrase George Tyrrell's remarks at the beginning of the twentieth century, that Reimarus's Jesus clearly reflected his own personal outlook (Tyrrell 1910, 44).

During the controversy that ensued after the publication of the *Fragments*, Lessing responded that his primary objective was to uphold the right of free discussion even of the most sacred subjects (Chadwick 1956; Allison 1966; and Nisbet 2013). He contended that while the *Fragments* might embarrass the orthodox, the "true Christian" is safe. "The Christian traditions," he wrote, "must be explained by the inner truth of Christianity, and no written traditions can give it that inner truth, if it does not itself possess it" (quoted in Schweitzer 1968, 16). That is, the teachings of Christ teach an "inward truth" that existed long before the Bible, and this inward truth can be known only by "spirit and power." Accordingly, while orthodoxy may have failed, the "religion of Christ" remained.

Lessing had profoundly influenced White's own religious outlook (White 1896, 1:288, 2:192, 319; 1905, 1:39, 2:226). Perhaps even more influential on White was Lessing's 1780 *The Education of the Human Race* (Chadwick 1956, 82–98). Lessing argued that “what education is to the individual man, revelation is to the whole human race.” As such, he contended that revelation was analogous to the education of a person from childhood to adulthood. God maintains “a certain order and a certain measure in his revelation.” The Old Testament, according to Lessing, is an “elementary primer” in the education process. But just as children outgrow their first books and teachers, after a time, a maturing humankind sensed the inadequacy of the Old Testament. God would avail himself “a better and more correct measure.” With the New Testament, humankind begins moving toward “the time of a new eternal Gospel,” the last age of man, the “time of perfection.” For Lessing, Jesus was “the first reliable, practical teacher” who preached “an inward purity of heart.” History, thus, reveals a definite law of *religious* progress. No dogmatic creed, then, is final, for religion is continually evolving. Indeed, those who do not allow for its growth fail to understand the very nature of “religion.” Christianity, in short, was simply one stage in this process and would itself be surpassed by a new higher form of religious consciousness.

From Lessing, one may naturally pass to Schleiermacher, another author White read while studying in Berlin. With Schleiermacher, we begin to see the unquestioned valorization of personal experience. Generally considered the most important Protestant theologian of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher's vision was the confluence of a number of ideas and movements—evangelical piety, rationalism, idealism, romanticism, and even patriotism all left their mark on his theology. Although he lost his faith in Christian orthodoxy early in life, he developed a “mystical tendency” while studying philosophy and theology at the “freethinking” University of Halle (Schleiermacher 1860, 1:54).

Schleiermacher's *Herzreligion* (“heart religion”) was, as Karl Barth put it, a “theology of feeling,” or “awareness” (Barth 2002, 440). At the end of the eighteenth century, many intellectuals had rejected Christianity as crass superstition. Schleiermacher attempted to reconcile what he thought the best of Christianity with this skeptical critique. He, thus, constructed a theological position intended to disarm critics by placing greater weight on the religious experience of the believer than on the cognitive, presuppositional claims of religious belief. In 1799, he published *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, calling on readers to become conscious of the call of their “innermost” nature (Schleiermacher 1988, 3–17). At the root of Schleiermacher's theological vision was the redefinition of religion, neither as morality nor as belief or knowledge, but as an immediate self-consciousness or feeling of absolute dependence on God. “Religion's essence,” he wrote, “is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and

feeling” (Schleiermacher 1988, 22). If Kant called on readers to “think for yourself,” by contrast Schleiermacher called on them to “feel for yourself!”

Equally important for White was Schleiermacher’s contention that “ecclesiastical society” had become an obstacle to perceiving this deeper “religious consciousness.” Despite its origins in this feeling of total dependence, religion was never “found among human beings...undisguised,” has never appeared in the “pure state.” A mere glance at ecclesiastical history, he argued, is “the best proof that it is not strictly a society of religious people.” In other words, the “religious consciousness” almost immediately became shrouded by human contrivances (Schleiermacher 1988, 19, 21, 50, 88). Consequently, what the cultured despisers despise is not “religion” but “theological dogma.” But dogma is only the husks and not the kernel of religion, according to Schleiermacher. This dramatic separation of religion from theology contained a vision that appealed to many in his generation and the next. Christianity was being prepared for a new basis, a Christianity free from theology and free from the Bible. Because the “religious consciousness” grows and develops as society grows and develops, we should not be afraid of revising previously held beliefs. As Schleiermacher told a friend in 1829, his goal was to “create an eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and an independent and freely working science, a covenant by the terms of which science is not hindered and faith not excluded” (Welch 1972, 63).

For White, all these thinkers were “deeply religious” men (White 1896, 2:323, 328). The first “critical” biblical scholars were not Enlightenment skeptics but rather clergymen or German pietists, practitioners of a flourishing late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Lutheranism that emphasized the believer’s personal relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. As Howard has observed, “nearly all nineteenth-century liberal German theologians saw themselves not as debunkers of religion but as faithful torchbearers of the Reformation” (Howard 2000, 18).

THE “SONS OF BRITON’S GRATEFUL GERMAN PUPILS” GIVE BACK

Although England had been home to more radical traditions of interpretation in the seventeenth century, by the end of the eighteenth century, it was Germanic circles that fostered the most venturesome critical scholarship. Indeed, many Germans believed that all intellectual history culminated in themselves. But now, it was time to return the favor. As Eichhorn observed,

Now the sons of Briton’s grateful German pupils can give back to the Britons the light which was kindled for their fathers—and give it back stronger, purified and clarified. (O’Neill 1985, 143)

The German influence on Victorian culture is well documented (Davis 2007). Although early nineteenth-century Britain seemed to many insular or parochial, by mid-century, many English writers took great interest in German thought. The work of influential German neologians was also adopted and promoted, unsurprisingly, by liberal Anglicans (Forbes 1952). Indeed, the influence of German biblical criticism culminated in the notorious publication of *Essays and Reviews* of 1860. Unsurprisingly, White was particularly concerned to defend its authors (White 1896, 2:341–48). Despite its seemingly innocuous title, the “Septem contra Christum,” as they were later called by opponents, brought the full impact of German biblical criticism to England, provoking one of the greatest religious controversies of the Victorian age (Ellis 1980; Altholz 1994).

The opening essay by Frederick Temple (1821–1902), Headmaster of Rugby and later Archbishop of Canterbury, on “The Education of the World,” described the advance or progress of knowledge in history, and thus bears a striking resemblance to Lessing’s theory of progressive revelation in *On the Education of the Human Race* (Temple 1860, 1–49). Like Lessing, Temple divided history into stages, corresponding to the life of an individual—childhood, youth, and manhood. He believed society, like the individual, was capable of “perpetual development.” More importantly, Temple argued that a progressive understanding of revelation in no way demeans the status of the Bible. Its very form as a historical document, he noted, is adapted to our present state. The books of the Bible are best studied by considering them as records of the time at which they were written, and as conveying to us the highest and greatest religious life of that time.

The last and longest essay of the collection was by theologian and future Master of Balliol Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893). In his “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” Jowett believed that interpretive differences were the result of the “growth or progress of the human mind.” He maintained that the “unchangeable word of God...is changed by each age and each generation in accordance with its passing fancy.” A new critical method is needed, one that takes into account all the advances of knowledge. In other words, we need to read and interpret the Bible “like any other book.” “Doubt comes in at the window,” Jowett wrote, “when Inquiry is denied at the door.” Indeed, “the time has come when it is no longer possible to ignore the results of criticism.” Readers should, therefore, forgo the encrusted traditions of theology, dogma, and the councils. The Bible is an ancient document and not readily applicable to modern times. In this context, Jowett questioned the resurrection, reinterpreted the atonement, and espoused the benefits of a comparative study of religions. A more “rational” interpretation would “dry up the crude and dreamy vapors of religious excitement” and offer “new sources of spiritual health.” Jowett believed that Christianity was in a “false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it.” The Bible itself, according to Jowett,

revealed “progressive revelation.” Like the German neologists, Jowett proposed a progressive history of religion analogous to the kind of progress witnessed in the individual. The interpretation of Scripture, moreover, must “conform to all well-ascertained facts of history or of science.” He believed that religion and science were not in conflict, as long as “scientific truth is distinctly ascertained.” While the scientific study of the Bible may force us to relinquish belief in traditional doctrines, the essence of religion remained. By divesting the Bible from theological dogmatism, in short, Jowett hoped that “the truths of Scripture again would have greater reality” (Jowett 1860).

The main thrust of these contributions, then, was a call for a more critical and scholarly approach to the interpretation of the Bible. Yet, the essayists saw themselves as defending or redefining Christianity rather than undermining it. The agnostic Leslie Stephen, however, demurred. He argued that these “Broad Churchmen” deceived not only themselves but their parishioners. One cannot attack the Bible and ancient creeds and continue to serve the church (Stephen 1870). Despite Stephen’s warnings, White contended that most recognized the service the book rendered to “true” religion (White 1896, 2:347).

The struggle against the “scientific” interpretation of the Bible ends with the work of John William Colenso (1814–1883), according to White. Known for his *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862), Colenso, who was Bishop of Natal in South Africa, saw historical-critical scholarship as liberating believers from having to accept every passage of Scripture, and presented his works as a labor on behalf of the cause of “Truth,” as revealed by scientific investigation. According to Colenso, “very considerable portions of the Mosaic narrative” are “unhistorical” and the account of the Exodus “is not historically true” (Colenso 1862, v–xxxvi). Although his opponents attempted to remove him from office, for White, Colenso is a “righteous leader in a noble effort to cut the Church loose from fatal entanglements with an outworn system of interpretation” (White 1896, 2:355). It should also be noted that Colenso had many connections with the leading scientists of his day and was frequently invited to dine with the members of the X Club (Rogerson 2003; Barton 2018). Indeed, his defenders often compared him to scientists like Galileo, who discovered great truths that the world could not suppress. It is no surprise, then, that when he turns to Colenso and his *Pentateuch*, White declared that “Colenso is seen more and more of all men as a righteous leader in a noble effort to cut the Church loose from fatal entanglements with an outworn system of interpretation” (White 1896, 2:355).

GUIDING SOURCES

Whether or not White had carefully read all the work he cited, what is clear from his footnotes is that he followed very closely the surveys produced by Frederic William Farrar (1831–1903), Otto Pfeleiderer (1839–1908), and Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915). To cite just one example, Farrar, Dean of Canterbury, paved the way for the acceptance of higher criticism among his parishioners through his sermons. Like Colenso, Farrar had cultivated close ties with the scientific naturalists at the X Club, especially Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall. Reflecting later on his relationship with Huxley, he regretted being unable to convince him that “Christianity is one thing, and that current opinions about Christianity may be quite another.” Farrar concluded that “what many men dislike is not in the least the doctrine and the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, but something which has no necessary connection with it, and is sometimes a mere mummy painted in its guise” (Farrar 1897a, 153). Moreover, not only was Farrar one of the pall-bearers at Darwin’s funeral, he also preached the funeral sermon at his interment at Westminster Abbey (Moore 1982; White 2005). Despite having to endure the “fury of pulpits,” Farrar observed, Darwin remained the perfect example of “patient magnanimity and Christian forbearance” (Farrar 1897b, 167).

But his most important contribution to biblical studies was his 1885 Bampton Lectures, *The History of Interpretation*, which White consistently drew from. In these lectures, which he also dedicated to Jowett, Farrar declared that his sole desire “had been to defend the cause of Christianity by furthering the interests of truth.” Strikingly similar to White’s own position, Farrar believed acknowledging “past errors can hardly fail to help us disencumbering from fatal impediments the religious progress of the future” (Farrar 1886a, ix.). More remarkable still, Farrar, like White, strongly believed in a universal law of progress (Farrar 1886a, 4).

He contended that Christians needed to accommodate and relate to progress as it occurs, and thus welcome the new developments in scientific investigation. The meaning of Scripture was something apart from the huge edifice of tradition which had been built upon it. Farrar saw the progressive work of God not only in Scripture but even in secular history. God works his purposes in history and therefore the new and the old exist intermingled, with the old eventually dropping by the wayside. To cling to the old when the new demands our attention and allegiance, according to Farrar, is the constant error of Christians past and present. But according to Farrar, “an unprogressive church is a dying church; a retrogressive church is a dead church” (Farrar 1886b, 129).

Therefore, “no conception more subversive of Scriptural authority has ever been devised than the assertion, that in the Bible we must accept everything or nothing” (Farrar 1886a, 421). Farrar concluded that “the

students of science have exercised a mighty influence over theology, were it only that by their linear progress and magnificent achievements they have stimulated that spirit of inquiry which for many centuries had only gyrated within limits prescribed too often by the ignorance of priests" (Farrar 1886a, 426–27). Then, seemingly echoing White, Farrar affirmed his belief that "true science and true religion are twin sisters, each studying her own sacred book of God, and nothing but disaster has arisen from the petulant scorn of the one and the false fear and cruel tyrannies of the other" (Farrar 1886a, 428). Having listed some of the generally accepted critical conclusions about the biblical documents, Farrar ends with what might well be called the confession of faith to higher criticism: "Where the Spirit of God is there is liberty. All these questions have been under discussion for many years; yet to multitudes of those who on these questions have come to decisions which are in opposition to the current opinions, the Bible is still the divinest of all books and the Lord Jesus Christ is still the Son of God, the Saviour of the World" (Farrar 1886a, 430).

We should close our discussion by pointing out one final important source or guide for White in these matters, his secretary and private librarian George Lincoln Burr (1857–1938). Burr had attended Cornell University in 1877 and, upon graduation, White called on him to a literary partnership. Soon White dispatched Burr to Europe to track down and purchase numerous rare books and manuscripts, and ultimately became steward to the White Library at Cornell. In fact, it is quite possible that Burr conducted most of the research for White's magnum opus. White even wanted to credit Burr for his work on the title-page, but Burr ultimately declined. According to his biographer, copious notes in Burr's "hand survive for the chapters on meteorology, geology, comets, and miracles" (Bainton 1943, 52).

Burr was reared a Baptist and remained an active member of the Christian Association at Cornell, and no doubt may have influenced White to make the distinction between "religion" and "dogmatic theology." Burr would probably had gone further, though. For Burr, the conflict was not so much with "dogmatic theology" as it was with the very human general tendency toward obscurantism. In 1893, he wrote White:

I have long felt that, generous as you have tried to and have usually been, you have sometimes charged to conservatism of theology what might more fairly be charged to the conservatism of science itself and have sometimes seen obstruction in what may have been only cautions. (Bainton 1943, 57)

According to Burr, then, White was too inclined to explain the advance of society and the victories over tolerance solely in terms of the progress of reason and the spread of a scientific or positivist view of the world. At the same time, Burr shared with White his own religiously liberal leanings,

admitting that “had my personal creed been more orthodox and had I been able to see in religion a panacea for all the ills of earth, this might have led me to the pulpit. As it was, the only other fitting field seemed that of the teacher” (Bainton 1943, 24–25). Perhaps more tellingly, in 1891, he delivered an address to Cornell students at Barnes Hall on the “Living Gospel,” in which he argued that the Christian religion has not been transmitted so much from book to book as from life to life. The “living gospel” is “older, truer, more inspired,” Burr averred. “Jesus never wrote a word,” his truth lay “not in a book, but in a life.” The Gospel narratives are merely “a few scattered pages,” a “handful of anecdotes out of a lifetime,” a “narrative so scanty that we are not sure whether it deals with three years or with one.” But, there is an “unwritten gospel,” according to Burr, the thing we “prize most in Christian civilization.” Namely, “Christian living,” which is older than books, a “genealogy” that goes back, “at best, to his disciples; that, to the Christ himself.” At once older and surer, this “living gospel” also, like all living things, “grows.” Burr followed others by declaring that the “living gospel” has always come into conflict with “dead” written traditions. This “perpetual battle” between the “spirit” and the “letter” is evident for all to see in the “sombre aisles of history.” He calls on students to “love the Christian book,” but to also remember that “this book is not Christianity.” For Burr, most importantly, the message of history is that the “canon of the living gospel is not closed” (Bainton 1943, 234–42).

Years later, in 1931, Burr spoke of this “Religious Progress” in a lecture he gave at the Unitarian Church of Ithaca. He lamented how “conservative influence” had “thrown us back religiously whole decades.” This influence has not only “endangered progress” but also “discredited religion.” What true religious progress looked like, according to Burr, was “honesty” toward science and religion. That is, nonpartisan, humble, sincere, transparent honesty, grappling with the historicity of Scripture, the miraculous, and the hope of life after death. This “honesty” is not the “decay of faith,” Burr declared, but rather “true faith.” “Faith begins where knowledge leaves off. Faith is no more possible without doubt than courage without fear.” For Burr, then, religious progress is a “living faith” in the midst of doubt.

Decidedly less rationalistic than White, Burr argued that greater learning has little to do with religious progress. Rather, “it was to Christian love and to the spirit of the Master.” This “new revelation,” this “new progressiveness,” has thrown off the “old nightmare inherited from older faiths,” and old traditions, creeds, books “have lost their power to bind us.” Burr no doubt deeply loved the Bible, but it was ultimately only one fragmentary witness to the Word made flesh (Bainton 1943, 309–15).

CONCLUSIONS

White saw New Testament criticism as the “growth” of Christianity (White 1896, 2:389–90). In this sense, White’s philosophy of religion was ultimately guided by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888). “By poetic insight, broad scholarship, pungent statement, pithy argument, and an exquisitely lucid style,” White claimed, Arnold “aided effectually during the latter half of the nineteenth century in bringing the work of specialists to bear upon the development of a broader and deeper view” (White 1896, 2:390). His most concentrated work in this area was *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *God and the Bible* (1875). In these volumes, Arnold proposed to reestablish Christianity on a new basis, to mediate between radical, freethinking liberals and what he believed was an ossified orthodoxy. As a mediator, Arnold sought a reconciliation between science and religion. This reconciliation, however, depended entirely on theological accommodations. Wanting to save religion from the dogmatists, Arnold warned believers that it was no longer possible to resist the demands of science, and that miracles and metaphysics and the popular myths of a “materialized” theology must be abandoned. Like many of the heroes in White’s narrative, Arnold sought to salvage religious belief in a modern age. The problem, then, was to devise a new interpretation of the Bible that all believers might embrace (Ungureanu 2019, 90–92).

Arnold’s conception of God as the “Eternal power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness” became White’s own definition of divinity, and thus played a central role in his understanding of the relationship between science and religion (White 1896, 1:xii). Although modern science has acted powerfully to “dissolve away the theories and dogmas of the older interpretation,” it also offered a “reconstruction and recrystallization of truth.” Thanks to “the labours, sacrifices, and even the martyrdom of a long succession of men of God,” the Bible had been released from “a mass of entangling utterances,” fruitless “wrangling interpretations,” “fetichism, subtlety, and pomp,” and “everything which the Lord Jesus Christ most abhorred.” Our understanding of “sacred literature” has grown under the “divine light which the various orbs of science” has “done so much to bring into the mind and heart and soul of man... an exposition, not of temporary dogmas and observances, but of the Eternal Law of Righteousness—the one upward path for individuals and for nations” (White 1896, 2:395).

Early in the twentieth century, German theologian Ernst Troeltsch recognized that a “new” Protestantism had emerged in the nineteenth century, one that attempted to mediate between modern thought and the traditional teaching of the church (Gerrish 1978, 2). At the same time, the *sola scriptura* of Protestantism proved itself the harbinger not of peace but of the sword. What seemed like constant religious warfare, persecutions, splintering sects, and seemingly the degeneration of morals,

encouraged new developments in epistemology, which in turn gave pride of place to reason and experience. Following Luther, thinkers such as Grotius, Spinoza, and many others, rebelled against institutional religious authority. Beginning in the seventeenth century, liberal Protestants in particular produced sustained assaults on its own doctrinal heritage by rejecting the depravity of humanity and redefining salvation, morality, and freedom. As William Neil noted long ago, “what the combined effort of Deism, Rationalism and Evolution had failed to achieve, had been accomplished by the patient labours of the theologians themselves” (Neil 1963, 270). The history of modern Protestant theology is, in short, the warfare between contending theological worldviews.

More than any other “cofounder” of the “conflict thesis,” White offered readers the most detailed survey of this theological warfare. Whatever its shortcoming, White’s “an analysis of analyses of the Bible” offers us a glimpse of how men like himself attempted to reconcile the growing sense of separation between science and religion. If we are to make sense of the nineteenth-century “conflict thesis,” what it was and what it may still appear to be, we need to situate late-nineteenth-century narratives of science and religion within the history of modern biblical interpretation.

REFERENCES

- Allison, Henry E. 1966. *Lessing and the Enlightenment: His Philosophy of Religion and Its Relation to Eighteenth-Century Thought*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Altholz, Josef L. 1994. *Anatomy of a Controversy: The Debate over “Essays and Reviews,” 1860–1864*. Aldershot: Scholar Press.
- Bainton, Roland H. 1943. *George Lincoln Burr: His Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Baird, William. 1992. *History of New Testament Research, Volume One: From Deism to Tübingen*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Barth, Karl. 2002. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Barnett, S. J. 1999. *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests: The Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- . 2003. *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Barton, Ruth. 2018. *The X Club: Power and Authority in Victorian Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Basil, Willey. 1967. *The Seventeenth-Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Becker, Carl L. 1932. *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bourdeau, Michel, Mary Pickering, and Warren Schmaus, ed. 2018. *Love, Order, & Progress: The Science, Philosophy, & Politics of Auguste Comte*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Byrne, Peter. 1989. *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism*. London: Routledge.
- Cashdollar, Charles D. 1989. *The Transformation of Theology, 1830–1890: Positivism and Protestant Thought in Britain and America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Carlsson, Eric. 2016. “Eighteenth-Century Neology.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–1800*, edited by Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roerber, 642–650. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Chadwick, Henry. 1956. *Lessing's Theological Writings*. London: Adam & Charles Black.
- Clark, Elizabeth A. 2011. *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Cobbe, Francis Power. 1864. *Broken Lights: An Inquiry into the Present Condition & Future Prospects of Religious Faith*. London: Trübner & Co.
- Comte, Auguste. 1853. *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*. Translated by Harriet Martineau, 2 vols. John Chapman.
- Colenso, John William. 1862. *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green.
- Davis, John R. 2007. *The Victorians and Germany*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Ellis, Ieuan. 1980. *Seven against Christ: A Study of "Essays and Reviews"*. Leiden: Brill.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. 2013. *Discourse on Free Will: Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther*. Translated and edited by Ernst F. Winter. London: Bloomsbury.
- Erdozain, Dominic. 2017. "A Heavenly Poise: Radical Religion and the Making of the Enlightenment." *Intellectual History Review* 27 (1): 71–96.
- Farrar, Frederick W. 1886a. *History of Interpretation: Eight Lectures Preached Before the University of Oxford*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- . 1886b. *Sermons and Addresses Delivered in America*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.
- . 1897a. *Men I have Known*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company.
- . 1897b. *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.
- Forbes, Duncan. 1952. *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frei, Hans W. 1974. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gay, Peter. 1966. *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*. New York; W. W. Norton & Company.
- . 1968. *Deism: An Anthology*. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Co.
- Gerrish, B. A. 1978. *Tradition and the Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grafton, Anthony. 1991. *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grotius, Hugo. 2005. *The Rights of War and Peace*, edited by Richard Tuck, 3 vols. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund.
- . 2012. *The Truth of the Christian Religion: With Jean Le Clerc's Notes and Additions*. Translated by John Clarke and edited by Maria Rosa Antognazza. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund.
- Heering, Jean-Paul. 2003. *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion: A Study of His Work de Veritate Religionis Christianae, 1640*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hillerbrand, Hans J. 2008. "The Decline of Fall of the True Christian Church: The English Deist View." *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 60 (2): 97–110.
- Howard, Thomas Albert. 2000. *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2006. *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Israel, Jonathan I. 1995. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jowett, Benjamin. 1860. "On the Interpretation of Scripture." *Essays and Reviews*, 330–433. London: John W. Parker and Son.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1996. *Religion and Rational Theology*, edited by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kümmel, Werner Georg. 1972. *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Legaspi, Michael. 2010. *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Löwith, Karl. 1949. *Meaning in History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Locke, John. 1824. *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures*. London.

- Manuel, Frank E. 1962. *The Prophets of Paris: Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Comte*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moore, James R. 1982. "Charles Darwin Lies in Westminster Abbey." *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 17 (1): 97–113.
- Neil, W. 1963. "The Criticism and Theological Use of the Bible, 1700–1950." In *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, edited by S. L. Greenslade, 238–93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nellen, Henk J. M. 2007. *Hugo Grotius: A Lifelong Struggle for Peace in Church and State, 1583–1645*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nisbet, H. B. 2013. *Gottfried Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nuovo, Victor. 2017. *John Locke: The Philosopher as Christian Virtuoso*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Neill, J. C. 1985. "The Study of the New Testament." In *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, edited by Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Steven Katz and Patrick Sherry, 143–78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olson, Richard G. 2008. *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Preus, J. Samuel. 2001. *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Popkin, Richard H. 1977. "Spinoza and La Peyrère." *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (3): 177–95.
- . 2003. *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reventlow, Henning Graf. 1985. *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- Rogerson, John W. 2003. "Colenso in the World of Nineteenth-Century Intellectual Ferment." In *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Jonathan A. Draper, 127–35. London: T & T Clark.
- Rummel, Erika. 2004. "The Theology of Erasmus." In *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, edited by David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz, 28–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. 1860. *The Life of Schleiermacher, As Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*. 2 Vols. Translated by Frederica Rowan. London: Smith, Elder and Co.
- . 1988. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. Translated by Richard Crouter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schweitzer, Albert. 1968. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Sheehan, Jonathan. 2005. *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Spinoza, Baruch. 2002. *Spinoza: Complete Works*. Translated by Samuel Shirley and edited by Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Stephen, Leslie. 1870. "The Broad Church." *Fraser's Magazine* 1 (3): 311–25.
- . 1881. *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. 2 Vols. London: Smith, Elder, & Co.
- Talbert, Charles H. 1970. *Reimarus: Fragments*. Translated by Ralph S. Fraser. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- Temple, Frederick. 1860. "The Education of the World." *Essays and Reviews*, 1–49. London: John W. Parker and Son.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 2001. *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund.
- Tyrell, George. 1910. *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co.
- Ungureanu, James C. 2019. *Science, Religion, and the Protestant Tradition: Retracing the Origins of Conflict*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press.
- Welch, Claude. 1972. *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Volume I, 1799–1870*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- White, Andrew Dickson. 1896. *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. 2 Vols. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

- . 1899. “Address of His Excellency, Mr. Andrew D. White, President of the American Delegation.” In *Proceedings at the Laying of a Wreath on the Tomb of Hugo Grotius, In the Nieuwe Kerk, in the City of Delft, July 4th, 1899, By the Commission of the United States of America, to the International Peace Conference of The Hague*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1905. *Autobiography*. 2 Vols. New York: Century.
- . 1910. *Seven Great Statesmen in the Warfare of Humanity with Unreason*. New York: Century Co.
- White, Paul. 2005. “Ministers of Culture: Arnold, Huxley and Liberal Anglican Reform of Learning.” *History of Science* 43 (2): 115–38.