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### Citation for published version:

Levitin, D 2012, 'FROM SACRED HISTORY TO THE HISTORY OF RELIGION: PAGANISM, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY FROM REFORMATION TO 'ENLIGHTENMENT'', *Historical Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 1117-1160.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X12000295>

### Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S0018246X12000295](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X12000295)

### Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

### Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### Published In:

Historical Journal

### Publisher Rights Statement:

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The Historical Journal / Volume 55 / Issue 04 / December 2012, pp 1117 - 1160  
DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X12000295, Published online: 15 November 2012

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0018246X12000295](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0018246X12000295)

### How to cite this article:

DMITRI LEVITIN (2012). FROM SACRED HISTORY TO THE HISTORY OF RELIGION: PAGANISM, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY FROM REFORMATION TO 'ENLIGHTENMENT'. The Historical Journal, 55, pp 1117-1160 doi:10.1017/S0018246X12000295

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# HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

## FROM SACRED HISTORY TO THE HISTORY OF RELIGION: PAGANISM, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY FROM REFORMATION TO ‘ENLIGHTENMENT’\*

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**ABSTRACT.** *This essay is a critical historiographical overview of the recent literature on the writing of sacred history (history of the biblical Jews and early Christians) and history of religion in early modern Europe. It considers the rise of interest in this branch of intellectual history in the last decade, placing it in the context of the rise of the history of scholarship as a historical discipline. It then charts how the characterization of early modern history of religion as stale, pedantic, and blandly ‘orthodox’ until it was swept aside by a critical and heterodox ‘enlightenment’ is being revised, first in new approaches to early modern histories of biblical Judaism and historicizations of the Old Testament, second in new readings of early modern scholarship on primitive Christianity. It concludes by suggesting new avenues of research which divorce narratives of intellectual change from the linear and inconclusive emphasis on ‘enlightenment’, favouring an approach that conversely emphasizes the impact of confessionalization in creating a newly critical scholarly culture.*

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The early encounter between the Judaeo-Christian tradition and Graeco-Roman scholarship enacted a historiographical revolution. Seeking to prove both the veracity and priority of their beliefs, the Hellenistic Jews of the first and second centuries BC and their Christian successors eschewed the invented speeches and dramatic jumps of locale and chronology favoured by the civil historians, in favour of direct citation and quotation of documents, precise marginal references, a relatively strict chronological order, and a simple rhetorical style with little authorial intervention, all helped by maximal

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\* For advice on the preparation of this article, and comments on previous versions, I am extremely grateful to Felicity Green, Mark Goldie, Nick Hardy, Sachiko Kusukawa, Joe Moshenska, John Robertson, Richard Serjeantson, Alex Walsham, the two anonymous referees, and the audience present when I presented an early version at the Peterhouse College Historical Society.

exploitation of collaborative modes of production and of the codex format. This tradition found its apogee in Eusebius's *Church history* (c. 324).<sup>1</sup>

The revival of classical learning in the Renaissance, as well as re-igniting the study of Graeco-Roman antiquity, also witnessed the revival of interest in sacred history: the history of biblical Judaism and of early Christianity.<sup>2</sup> This interest was not limited to scholars, many examples testifying to the relevance of sacred history at different levels of early modern life. Local elites used it to defend their privileges and identities.<sup>3</sup> Accounts of the lives of early Christians could form archetypes for biographies of the Reformers.<sup>4</sup> Publishers' coffers were replenished by sales of the great epics of ecclesiastical history, like Cardinal Cesare Baronio's famous *Annales ecclesiastici*, the second edition of which accounted for 13 per cent of the revenue of the Plantin Press in 1590–5.<sup>5</sup> As late as the Restoration, the future lord chancellor could change his mind on ecclesiastical policy after consulting Ignatius and Cyprian.<sup>6</sup> From Sixtus IV's Rome to post-fire London, church architecture reflected early Christian ideals.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian historiography in the fourth century AD', in *The conflict between paganism and Christianity in the fourth century* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 77–99, repr. in *Essays in ancient and modern historiography* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 107–26; idem, 'The origins of ecclesiastical historiography', in *The classical foundations of modern historiography* (Berkeley, CA, 1990), pp. 132–52. For the connections between Christian historiography and book technology, see A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the transformation of the book: Origen, Eusebius, and the library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA, 2008). For the debate over cultural primacy, see A. J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian interpretations of the history of culture* (Dordrecht, 1989). The dating of the *Church history* refers to the probable date of the final revision.

<sup>2</sup> We are dealing here with an actors' category: for *historia sacra* as a distinct early modern discipline, see Simon Ditchfield, 'What was sacred history?' (Mostly Roman) Catholic uses of the Christian past after Trent', in K. Van Liere, S. Ditchfield, and H. Louthan, eds., *Sacred history: uses of the Christian past in the Renaissance world* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Alois Schmid, 'Die *Bavaria sancta et pia* des P. Matthäus Rader SJ', in C. Grell, W. Paravicini, and J. Voss, eds., *Les princes et l'histoire du XIV au XVIII siècle* (Bonn, 1988), pp. 499–522, and the classic Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, sanctity and history in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the preservation of the particular* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 328–60.

<sup>4</sup> I. Backus, *Life writing in Reformation Europe: lives of reformers by friends, disciples and foes* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Miachielsen, 'How (not) to get published: the Plantin Press in the early 1590s', *Dutch Crossing*, 34 (2010), p. 109, to which my attention was drawn by Ditchfield, 'What was sacred history?'

<sup>6</sup> R. Cornwall, 'The search for the primitive church: the use of early church fathers in the high Anglican tradition, 1680–1745', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 59 (1990), p. 327. More generally, see J. Spurr, "'A special kindness for dead bishops": the church, history, and testimony in seventeenth-century Protestantism', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005), pp. 313–34.

<sup>7</sup> M. Delbeke, 'Architecture and the genres of history writing in ecclesiastical historiography', *Repenser les limites: l'architecture à travers l'espace, le temps et les disciplines* (<http://inha.revues.org/1800>) (placed online 2008), consulted 20 Dec. 2011; N. Yates, *Buildings, faith and worship: the liturgical arrangement of Anglican churches, 1600–1900* (Oxford, 1991), p. 4; P. Doll, *After the primitive Christians: the eighteenth-century Anglican Eucharist in its architectural setting* (Cambridge, 1997).

And if everyone knows that the puritans banned Christmas, until very recently we had not realized that their argument depended on late sixteenth-century chronological scholarship that found the celebration's historical roots in a hangover from the Roman feast of Saturnalia.<sup>8</sup> Reasons of space dictate that this essay must concern itself with scholarship only, but this should not obscure the broader cultural significance of our subject.

## I

This essay will describe what its author perceives to be a revisionist moment; although it inevitably risks caricature, we must first paint a brief picture of what is being revised. Synthesized from the existing literature, a standard narrative could run something like this. In its accounts of Jewish, Christian, and pagan religion, early modern historiography was marked by a fundamental absence of 'criticism', in two respects. On the one hand, it was mere pedantry: 'learned accumulation' which generated nothing but 'intellectual regression'.<sup>9</sup> On the other, it slavishly espoused 'orthodox' narratives. Protestants wrote histories of the church's corruption by the papacy, Roman Catholics of its unchanging adherence to papal tradition, and both of the ancient Jews as God's unique chosen people. It took a veritable crisis to destroy this stale, crumbling, and pedantic orthodoxy, and that crisis came from late seventeenth-century heterodoxy and irreligion. Spinoza's biblical criticism – accompanied by that of his intellectual predecessor Isaac La Peyrère and supposed successor Richard Simon – was a radical break from the past that for the first time decentred the Jews and showed the Old Testament to be a work designed for a specific time and place.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, there was a quasi-inevitable shift from emphasis on an early ur-religion by some *avant garde* clerics like the Cambridge Platonists and 'latitudinarians' to emphasis on the commonality of 'natural religion', attack on priestcraft, and denial of revelation by deists and *philosophes*, all culminating in Hume's *Natural history of religion* (1757).<sup>11</sup> The late

<sup>8</sup> C. P. E. Nothaft, 'From Sukkot to Saturnalia: the attack on Christmas in sixteenth-century chronological scholarship', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 72 (2011), pp. 503–22.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The historical philosophy of the enlightenment' (1963), in idem, *History and the enlightenment* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2010), pp. 1–2 (note that the ecclesiastical historians are being particularly accused here).

<sup>10</sup> For a classic Anglophone statement of this position, see F. E. Manuel, *The broken staff: Judaism through Christian eyes* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 164–5, 181–3. For particularly loud recent claims towards Spinoza's importance, see J. I. Israel, *Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man, 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 409–35. Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the rise of historical criticism of the bible* (New York, NY, 2006) repeats these, but adds a teleological narrative from Protestant literalism to Spinoza's historical criticism. The most sophisticated recent claim towards a post-Spinozan 'crisis of Christian Hebraism' (with which I must nonetheless disagree) is A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. pp. 23–41.

<sup>11</sup> Classic statements are F. E. Manuel, *The changing of the Gods* (Hanover and London, 1983), pp. 27–51; idem, *The eighteenth century confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), pp. 57–84

seventeenth-century *crise* could also be found in patristic scholarship, where the sweeping away of a tired and complacent orthodoxy by the dawning sun of 'enlightenment' paved the way for the (in)famous chapters 15 and 16 of Gibbon's *Decline and fall* (1776).<sup>12</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century, in short, 'real' history had replaced Christian 'ideology': although, rather paradoxically, the new 'enlightened' history was itself tied to an ideology, one of anti-clericalism and tolerationism.

How did this narrative come into existence? Partly, as we shall see, it was the product of the false genealogies constructed by the eighteenth-century anticlericals themselves. But its most lasting roots were planted in the nineteenth century, by those operating in the context of English religious reform, such as Mark Pattison, Leslie Stephen, and John Tulloch.<sup>13</sup> Although it was far from their central concern, all three placed the rise of a historicist attitude to religion in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England (as part of the rise of a 'rational Christianity').<sup>14</sup> And, aware of the looming contemporary figure of the German critic, they followed the influential analysis of one such German critic, Gotthard Victor Lechler (*Geschichte des Englischen Deismus* (1841)) in ascribing the genesis of German historical-critical methodology to the mid-eighteenth-century reception of English deism.<sup>15</sup> This story's success has proved remarkably long-lasting. Both German and English liberal theologians have continued to ascribe the genesis of a historical-critical approach to the late seventeenth century, albeit sometimes incorporating teleological claims about earlier Reformed emphasis on literalism as

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(although other elements of this work remain useful). The most influential narrative of this sort is Peter Harrison, *Religion and the religions in the English enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 19–98, 130–72; see also J. A. I. Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken: the Church of England and its enemies 1660–1730* (Cambridge, 1992). For further studies which unflappably assume a deistic root for the study of religion, see e.g. Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative religion: a history* (London, 1975), pp. 15–19; Hans Kippenberg, *Discovering religious history in the modern age* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), pp. 1–10 (esp. p. 6); Peter Byrne, *Natural religion and the nature of religion: the legacy of deism* (London, 1989), and J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining religion: criticism and theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, CT, 1987), esp. pp. 23–39.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'From deism to history: Conyers Middleton' (c. 1982), in *History and the enlightenment*, p. 112. But there is a paucity of work on eighteenth-century patristics.

<sup>13</sup> Scott Mandelbrote, 'Biblical hermeneutics and the sciences, 1700–1900: An Overview', in Jitse M. van der Meer and S. Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and scripture in the Abrahamic religions: 1700–present* (2 vols., Leiden, 2008), 1, p. 16: 'Our own view of the religious and intellectual history of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has largely been formed by the writings of these men, and it reflects their sense of the meaning of that period, one which to them had far more immediacy and polemical value, and far more direct importance for their own sense of identity, than perhaps it need have to us today'. My comments on this issue are in general heavily indebted to this essay.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Mark Pattison, 'Tendencies of religious thought in England', *Essays and reviews* (London, 1860), p. 262. Leslie Stephen, *History of English thought in the eighteenth century* (2 vols., London, 1881), 1, pp. 191, 201.

<sup>15</sup> Mandelbrote, 'Biblical hermeneutics', pp. 22–3.

opening the door for this development.<sup>16</sup> This chronology has been picked up both by intellectual historians<sup>17</sup> and by biblical scholars writing the history of their own discipline.<sup>18</sup> Since citing nineteenth-century Englishmen fell out of fashion some time ago, intellectual historians now tend to cite Paul Hazard's *La crise de la conscience européenne (1680–1715)* (1935) when delineating this chronology; but Hazard's work was no less the product of contingent (and related) forces, in this case French Catholic modernism.

A similar deist-centred chronology was established for the history of the study of early Christianity, albeit for different reasons. On the one hand, those with a strong theological allegiance continued to insist on the continuity of the approaches established soon after the Reformation. Catholic historians insisted on the continuity of Catholic patristics post-Baronio;<sup>19</sup> Anglicans similarly maintained the continuity of Anglicanism as a putative patristic-grounded *via media* from Hooker onwards.<sup>20</sup> Once again, the whig tradition could then claim that this 'orthodoxy' was swept away by a vibrant and progressive heterodox historical criticism, and we return to a simple heterodox/progressive vs orthodox/conservative model of change.<sup>21</sup> And once again, this narrative was adopted not just by historians, but also scholars interested in the prehistory of their own approaches: thus, Albert Schweitzer placed the deist Hermann Samuel Reimarus in the key role in the development of the eighteenth-century 'quest of the historical Jesus'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Three major German works all claimed (albeit in different ways) that a historical-critical approach to the Old Testament only developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and specifically through deism: H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-Kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Neukirchen, 1956); K. Scholder, *The birth of modern critical theology: origins and problems of biblical criticism in the seventeenth century* (London, 1990 (German original=1966)); H. G. Reventlow, *The authority of the bible and the rise of the modern world* (London, 1984 (German original, 1980) (this chronological preoccupation with the post-1680 period is missing from the still very useful work by Ludwig Diestel: *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen kirche* (Jena, 1869)). For similar focus on the late seventeenth century, see John Drury, 'Introductory essay', *Critics of the bible, 1724–1873* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 2–20; David A. Pailin, *Attitudes to other religions: comparative religion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain* (Manchester, 1984), esp. pp. 10–11; Frampton, *Spinoza*.

<sup>17</sup> Manuel, *Changing of the Gods*; idem, *Eighteenth century confronts the Gods*; Harrison, *Religion*; Byrne, *Natural religion*; Preus, *Explaining religion*; Trevor-Roper, *History and the enlightenment*; Sutcliffe, *Judaism and enlightenment*.

<sup>18</sup> Kippenberg, *Discovering religious history*; Sharpe, *Comparative religion*; an important milestone in the creation of this myth was Ernest Renan, 'L'Exégèse biblique et l'esprit français', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 35, seconde période, 60 (1865), pp. 235–45.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. the comments in Eric Cochrane, *Historians and historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1981), p. 463, a work which nonetheless remains extremely useful.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. G. V. Bennett, 'Patristic tradition in Anglican thought, 1660–1900', in G. Cassmann and V. Vajta, eds., *Tradition in Lutherum und Anglikanismus* (Gütersloh, 1972), pp. 63–85.

<sup>21</sup> Trevor-Roper, 'Middleton'.

<sup>22</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen, 1906); for the latest English edition: *The quest of the historical Jesus*, ed. J. Bowden (London, 2000).

Why might this historiographical tradition be coming under attack? There are several reasons. One is the gradual (albeit very incomplete) realization by early modern intellectual historians that the figures they study for the most part eschewed abstract philosophical reasoning in favour of historical modes of discourse: narratives which privilege the supposed rise of philosophical rationalism as a ubiquitous explanatory mechanism, while still prevalent (as discussed below), are being challenged.<sup>23</sup> But even more important is the rise of the history of scholarship as a discipline in its own right over the last three decades.<sup>24</sup> The field had until recently been the preserve of scholars writing the prehistories of their own disciplines. But, stimulated in part by the legacy of Arnaldo Momigliano, and especially by the numerous works of Anthony Grafton (particularly his two-volume biography of Joseph Scaliger (1983–93)) the discipline has found its own professional identity.<sup>25</sup> Of particular importance for us is that with the solidification of the discipline, the disciplines of biblical criticism and patristics – neglected while the history of scholarship was being practised by classicists who adopted a rather narrow modern definition of ‘classical scholarship’ – have finally started to receive systematic attention.<sup>26</sup> For the most part, this development has been conducted primarily in the field of scholarly biography: Grafton on Scaliger is now supplemented by G. J. Toomer’s astoundingly erudite biography of John Selden (2009). This has perhaps served to maintain an unwarranted distance between historians of scholarship and intellectual historians interested in broader patterns of change. However, Jean-Louis Quantin’s recent (2009) study of seventeenth-century Anglican patristics – which will make several appearances in what follows – has set a new benchmark for how the history of scholarship can make a major contribution to histories of intellectual change. What follows is a brief overview of how the recent historiography is contributing the pieces to such a narrative, shifting attention away from late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century deism and heterodoxy to a broader range of scholarly developments. Section II

<sup>23</sup> For a landmark study concerned with legal historiography, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The ancient constitution and the feudal law: a study of English historical thought in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1957; reissued with a retrospect in 1987); for the pioneering study emphasizing the historical dimension to anticlerical thought, see Champion, *Pillars*, which nonetheless retains the connections between anticlerical politics and ‘new’ history. See now also H. Zedelmaier and M. Mulsow, eds., *Die Praktiken der Gelehrsamkeit in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> An excellent introduction to the discipline and its historiography is C. Ligota and J.-L. Quantin, ‘Introduction’, in C. Ligota and J.-L. Quantin, eds., *History of scholarship: a selection of papers from the seminar on the history of scholarship held annually at the Warburg Institute* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 1–38. For a more theoretical approach: Constanze Güthenke, ‘Shop talk: reception studies and recent work in the history of scholarship’, *Classical Receptions*, 1 (2009), pp. 104–15.

<sup>25</sup> For Momigliano’s legacy, see Michael Crawford and C. R. Ligota, eds., *Ancient history and the antiquarian: essays in memory of Arnaldo Momigliano* (London, 1995); and Peter Miller, ed., *Momigliano and antiquarianism: foundations of the modern cultural sciences* (Toronto, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> For Grafton’s early insistence on the importance of the late antique period to early modern scholars, see A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger* (2 vols., Oxford, 1983–93), I, pp. 134–60.



will focus on the historicization of the Old Testament and of ancient religion; Section III on histories of early Christianity. Section IV will conclude by considering how these narratives might contribute more broadly to models of intellectual change.

## II

The sacred history of the period before Christ's birth was the history of the biblical Jews as told in the Hebrew bible. We are well aware that the mid- to late sixteenth century saw major developments in what we might anachronistically label the textual criticism of the bible; although this moment requires further investigation it is becoming clear that Protestant emphasis on the literal sense was far from the only stimulus, for it was preceded and accompanied by the earlier humanist philological turn of which Erasmus and Lorenzo Valla were the main exponents, and by the dramatic rise in Greek and Hebrew learning, the latter stimulated by interest in Jewish mysticism (one thinks here of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin) before it was spurred on by rejection of the Vulgate.<sup>27</sup> By the late sixteenth century, pure philology had mutated into historical criticism of the bible.<sup>28</sup> Fundamental questions remain, which require extensive further research. How did the philological tasks of the grammarian mutate into what we call 'historical criticism'? And what was the relationship between the exegetical practices of the divines in the theology faculties and their colleagues in arts faculties?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The classics on Christian Hebraism are Jerome Friedman, *The most ancient testimony: sixteenth-century Christian-Hebraica in the age of Renaissance nostalgia* (Athens, OH, 1983); Manuel, *Broken staff*; G. L. Jones, *The discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: a third language* (Manchester, 1983). The essays in A. P. Coudert and J. S. Shoulson, eds., *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the study of Judaism in early modern Europe* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004) are useful for the connection between scholarship and contact with actual Jews. For the continued importance of Cabbalistic interests in the production of the 1555 *editio princeps* of the Syriac New Testament and the Antwerp Polyglot (1569–72), see R. J. Wilkinson, *Orientalism, Aramaic and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation: the first printing of the Syriac New Testament* (Leiden, 2007), and idem, *The Kabbalistic scholars of the Antwerp polyglot bible* (Leiden, 2007). The humanist-Protestant relationship is complicated by the fact that the alliance—however real—was from a very early stage being reinvented for polemical purposes on both sides of the confessional divide: Erika Rummel, *The confessionalisation of humanism in Reformation Germany* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 9–29.

<sup>28</sup> The best work remains F. Laplanche, *L'écriture, le sacré et l'histoire: érudits et politiques protestants devant la bible en France au XVIIe siècle* (Amsterdam, 1986), alongside idem, *La bible en France entre mythe et critique: XVIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1994). Also useful is the long introductory chapter to Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance bible: scholarship, sacrifice, and subjectivity* (Berkeley, CA, and London, 1994), pp. 11–53; M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, 'The textual criticism of the Old Testament: rise, decline, rebirth', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 102 (1983), pp. 365–99; and the classic H. J. De Jonge, 'The study of the New Testament', in T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes et al., eds., *Leiden University in the seventeenth century: an exchange of learning* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 64–109.

<sup>29</sup> De Jonge, 'Study of the New Testament', claims a sharp distinction between the exegesis being done in the arts and divinity faculties, but is challenged in this regard by Richard

For now, we can point out that it was in Old Testament exegesis that this historicist turn had perhaps its greatest impact, which some now speak of as the ‘antiquarianization’ of the bible. Two preconditions had to be met before this antiquarianization could fully blossom: first, the philological-historical realization that the biblical text had a history, and its corollary that there might thus be a history to be written of that text’s authors and their intentions; second, the establishment of a stable chronology in which the new historicization of sacred history could be inserted. Grafton’s *Scaliger* taught us how the Frenchman’s *De emendatione temporum* (1583) and *Thesaurus temporum* (1606) transformed the field of ancient chronology (even if Scaliger sometimes advertised his novelty where he should have advertised his intellectual debts), demolishing the famous old forgeries of the pseudo-Berosus of Annius of Viterbo, and, even more importantly, establishing as a methodological principle that Old Testament history could only be understood within a contextual scaffolding constructed from pagan narratives.<sup>30</sup> Scaliger settled few debates for certain, but his *programmatic* influence was vast, the historical thesis of the *Thesaurus* serving as a model to be emulated, almost as a test of any budding scholar’s capacity.<sup>31</sup>

Scaliger’s chronological research led him to stumble upon historical puzzles, contradictions, and even downright mistakes in the biblical narrative, which could only be solved by suggesting that the text itself had a history. Some of these he wisely abstained from sharing with even the scholarly reading public, such as his conclusion, reached late in life, that the lack of concordance between the various Gospels (why does the Gospel of Mark say Christ was crucified at three o’clock and the Gospel of John at six?) and between the Gospels and non-biblical historical sources was the result of the very early textual corruption of the New Testament by the primitive Christians themselves (e.g. since the reliable Josephus did not report the claim at Matt. 2.16 that Herod had all the boys in Bethlehem aged two or under put to death, the latter must be a later interpolation, designed by the early Christians to ‘fulfil’ the prophecy at Jer. 31.15).<sup>32</sup> Other conclusions, though, were made public and proved hugely influential. One was his interjection into the debate over the age

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A. Muller, *Post-Reformation reformed dogmatics*, II: *Holy scripture: the cognitive foundation of theology* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), pp. 444–9. For a recent study which seeks to examine directly how a theologian used humanist historical criticism, see C. T. Callisen, ‘Georg Calixtus, Isaac Casaubon, and the consensus of antiquity’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73 (2012), pp. 1–23.

<sup>30</sup> Grafton, *Scaliger*. On Annius, also important is Christopher R. Ligota, ‘Annius of Viterbo and historical method’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50 (1987), pp. 44–56.

<sup>31</sup> For Scaliger’s setting of the scholarly agenda, see, e.g. G. J. Toomer, *John Selden: a life in scholarship* (2 vols., Oxford, 2009), I, p. 213; Jeanine de Landtsheer and Peter Verbist, ‘Christmannus aliquidne de temporibus post scaligerum?’ Christmann’s lesson in chronology as an answer to Lipsius’s remark’, *Lias*, 37 (2010), pp. 269–97. I see no warrant for the denial of Scaliger’s influence in Harrison, *Religion*, p. 139.

<sup>32</sup> Grafton, *Scaliger*, II, pp. 740–2; H. J. De Jonge, ‘Joseph Scaliger’s historical criticism of the New Testament’, *Novum Testamentum*, 38 (1996), p. 181 (for Josephus and Matthew).

of the vowel points of the Masoretic Hebrew bible, which Scaliger not only affirmed to have been late and human rather than Mosaic and divine, but also subsumed into an elaborate narrative of the history of the Hebrew language, suggesting that it was Samaritan letters which had been used in Israel from Moses to the fall of the Temple.<sup>33</sup>

Here, Scaliger was operating within a debate that was already decades old. Where older scholarship once again looked towards the Spinoza–Simon nexus for the birth of the idea of textual historicity, newer narratives are shifting the focus back. The text’s historicity was a commonplace as a methodological principle by the mid-seventeenth century: in his famous ‘Prologomena’ to the London Polyglot (1657) Brian Walton offered a contextual textual history for each of the nine versions (Hebrew, Chaldee, Samaritan, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Ethiopic, Greek, and Latin) of this beautiful textual monument: ‘for him, and those whose work he discusses, the history of the text cannot be separated from the history in which the text was produced’.<sup>34</sup> And, as Peter Miller has charted, the even more beautiful Paris Polyglot of 1645 – the preparation of which ultimately ruined its publisher Guy Michael de Jay – also found its roots in the antiquarian interests of early seventeenth-century scholars in Rome, Paris, and beyond, from the former French ambassador in Constantinople, François Savary de Brèves, to the president of the *parlement* of Paris, Jacques-Auguste de Thou.<sup>35</sup> Of course, the very idea of a polyglot implied that the existing biblical texts were by themselves insufficient, and that a critical-philological approach was necessary to get closer to an original version. This contradicted the exegetical rules set out in the sixteenth century on both Protestant and Catholic sides: the Protestant view that scripture was self-authenticating and that the Masoretic Hebrew version (first printed in Venice in 1525) was the directly inspired word of God,<sup>36</sup> and the post-Tridentine Catholic position that the Vulgate (St Jerome’s translation from the Hebrew) held ultimate authority, defended on the basis that it represented a translation from a better Hebrew version than the Masoretic, and, of course, on the authority of the church.

Both confessional polemic and subsequent scholarly discoveries rendered these positions precarious. The obvious anti-Protestant argument was that the Masoretic bible was corrupt, and this immediately involved Catholic scholars in a process of *historical* text criticism. They drew on the *Masoret ha-Masoret* (1538) of the much-travelled Jewish scholar, Elijah Levita, which argued that far from being given to Moses at Sinai, or even added by Ezra the Scribe after the return

<sup>33</sup> Grafton, *Scaliger*, II, pp. 734–7.

<sup>34</sup> P. Miller ‘The “antiquarianisation” of biblical scholarship and the London polyglot bible (1653–1657)’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62 (2001), p. 470.

<sup>35</sup> P. Miller, ‘Making the Paris polyglot bible: humanism and orientalism in the early seventeenth century’, in H. Jaumann, ed., *Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus* (Wiesbaden, 2001), pp. 59–86.

<sup>36</sup> Muller, *Holy scripture*, pp. 403–6; see also Goshen-Gottstein, ‘Textual criticism of the Old Testament’, pp. 370–1.

from the Babylonian exile, the vowel points which made much of the Hebrew scripture intelligible were only added after the composition of the Talmud (c. 200 AD).<sup>37</sup> These findings were initially ignored by Protestants, but Catholics

quickly recognized that Levita's work could be a powerful new weapon for their debates with Protestants... By arguing for the post-canonical origin of the vowel points, Catholic polemicists could contend that the Hebrew Old Testament was not perspicuous and interpreters were almost entirely dependent upon human tradition in the form of the vowel points to understand it at all.<sup>38</sup>

This allowed Catholic scholars both to defend the superiority of Jerome's translation (supposedly based on an earlier non-corrupt Hebrew version) and to insist – given all these textual difficulties – on the necessity of the authority of the church in interpretation.<sup>39</sup> Some Protestants, most notably the Basel Hebraist Johannes Buxtorf, in his *Tiberias* (1620), argued that the Hebrew bible in its modern (i.e. Masoretic) form had existed since the time of Ezra, but scholarly consensus made this position untenable, especially after the recovery in 1616 (by Pietro della Valle) and publication (by Jean Morin, in Le Jay's Polyglot) of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which differs from the Masoretic text in around 6,000 instances.<sup>40</sup> An internal division within Protestantism was sealed when Louis Cappel, a professor of Hebrew at Saumur, published in 1624 and again in 1650 in favour of the late imposition of the vowel points (to the dismay of Buxtorf and his son); unlike the Catholics, he stressed the capacity of historical-philological scholarship to recover the original scriptural meaning.<sup>41</sup> Cappel's work may not have pleased all Protestants, but it was part of a mainstream debate about 'how to reconcile the text's authority, which was divine, with its history, which was more and more evidently human'.<sup>42</sup> So, by the first half of the seventeenth century we have witnessed the exegetical revolution previously ascribed to Hobbes, Spinoza, or Richard Simon, as both erudition and apologetics shifted from viewing the bible as a miraculously perfect whole,

<sup>37</sup> On Levita and his work, see Gérard E. Weil, *Élie Lévitte: Humaniste et Massorète (1469–1549)* (Leiden, 1963), esp. pp. 297–313. A translation of his work is available: *The Massoreth hamassoreth of Elias Levita*, ed. and trans. Christian D. Ginsburg (London, 1867).

<sup>38</sup> Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew learning in the seventeenth century* (Leiden, 1996), p. 206.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–7; N. Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Ezra, and the bible: the history of a subversive idea', in *idem*, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 415–18; R. A. Muller, 'The debate over the vowel points and the crisis in orthodox hermeneutics', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 10 (1980), pp. 53–72.

<sup>40</sup> P. N. Miller, 'A philologist, a traveller and an antiquary rediscover the Samaritans in seventeenth-century Paris, Rome and Aix: Jean Morin, Pietro della Valle and N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc', in Zedelmaier and Mulsow, eds., *Die Praktiken*, pp. 123–46; *idem*, 'An antiquary between philology and history: Peiresc and the Samaritans', in D. R. Kelley, ed., *History and the disciplines* (Rochester, NY, 1997), pp. 163–84.

<sup>41</sup> On Cappel by far the best account remains Laplanche, *L'écriture*, pp. 181–328; *idem*, *La bible*, pp. 51–7. On Cappel's debate with the Buxtorfs, see also Burnett, *Buxtorf*, pp. 203–39.

<sup>42</sup> Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Ezra, and the bible', p. 420.

authenticated either by itself or by the church, to the view that 'the veracity of the historical parts of the text could be defended (not weakened) by treating them as eye-witness reports, on the same basis as any other direct account of human experience'.<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting that although these developments were undoubtedly stimulated by confessional polemic, the recent historiography has emphasized that a narrative which reduces scholarship to politics does little to explain the cross-confessional appeal of these conclusions, or their intense contestation on both Protestant<sup>44</sup> and Catholic<sup>45</sup> sides.

The establishment of a stable chronology and of a consensus that the Old Testament text had a history opened the door for contextual study of biblical Judaism. Here, we might be tempted to say that we are approaching the margins of orthodoxy, but we need to pause and ask what this 'orthodoxy' was and who was establishing it, for we have already seen that theologians on both sides of the confessional divide often welcomed historical criticism. Tension between theology and erudition arose not from historicization per se, but when historicization took a route outside the limits established by theological exegesis, limits which were in fact quite minimal. One limit was chronological. As part of Scaliger's reconstruction of the lost *Chronicon* of Eusebius, he included the list of Egyptian dynasties compiled by the priest Manetho of Sebennytus in the third century BC, a precious source for ancient Egyptian history, with the one inconvenience that the listed dynasties stretched back not only before the Flood, but also before any accepted date for the Creation.<sup>46</sup> Scaliger's proposal of a period of 'proleptic time' convinced few (if any), and the most eminent seventeenth-century chronologists produced solutions which usually proposed that some of the dynasties were simultaneous rather than successive.<sup>47</sup> A few, however, went in the other direction, of whom the most famous by far is Isaac La Peyrère, the Huguenot who combined chronological scholarship, scepticism about the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and millenarian speculation to arrive at his famous pre-Adamite hypothesis.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422.

<sup>44</sup> As well as the Buxtorf–Cappel dispute, see the important piece on the reaction to the English polyglot (especially by the congregationalist leader John Owen): Scott Mandelbrote, 'The authority of the Word: manuscript, print and the text of the bible in seventeenth-century England', in Julia C. Crick and Alexandra Walsham, eds., *The uses of script and print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 135–56.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Rietbergen, *Power and religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini cultural policies* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 318–19; Laplanche, *L'écriture*, pp. 228, 874 n. 134. For a more general emphasis on the importance of intra-confessional disputes, see Ditchfield, 'What was sacred history?'

<sup>46</sup> Grafton, *Scaliger*, II, pp. 491–792.

<sup>47</sup> For a brief summary of the post-Scaliger debate, see A. Grafton, 'Joseph Scaliger and historical chronology: the rise and fall of a discipline', *History and Theory*, 14 (1975), pp. 156–85. On Ussher's famous dating of Creation: J. Barr, 'Why the world was created in 4004 BC: Archbishop Ussher and biblical chronology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 67 (1985), pp. 575–608.

<sup>48</sup> On La Peyrère, see R. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676): his life, work and influence* (Leiden, 1987); A. Grafton, *Defenders of the text: traditions of scholarship in an age of science*

As fascinating a figure as La Peyrère is, we now know that his theories had little sway in any serious intellectual circles in either the seventeenth or the eighteenth centuries, beyond such deliberate *provocateurs* as Voltaire, with his own theory of polygenesis.<sup>49</sup> Far more important were debates within the mainstream, such as the argument that the Flood was a local phenomenon, or preference for the Septuagint chronology, both of which could be found in the well-known works of Isaac Vossius.<sup>50</sup>

It is at the second theological limit—still far less familiar to modern historians—that we encounter a possible friction between the new approach and something we might choose to label ‘orthodoxy’. In the Protestant world, the relationship between the Mosaic Law and the Law of Nature, between the moral and ceremonial Law, and between Law and Gospel had all engendered much debate. The problem was the connection between the Old Testament and the New: one answer was typological exegesis. While rejecting the allegorizing of the *quadriga*, from an early stage the Reformers insisted that the literal historical sense of scripture included typological meanings, where both type and antitype retain their historicity. History, supposedly still literal, becomes prophetic; the role of the exegete becomes, as it did in the Gospel of John, to find Christ prefigured in the brazen serpent.<sup>51</sup> The historical dimension of typology rendered it attractive even to the humanists like Casaubon who were otherwise suspicious of anything that smacked overly of forced apologetic readings.<sup>52</sup> Tension thus arose not when contextual

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(Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 204–13, and the landmark Malcolm, ‘Hobbes, Ezra and the bible’ (see esp. p. 411 n. 98 for an important historiographical reassessment).

<sup>49</sup> On Voltaire see M. Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières* (1971; Paris, 1995), pp. 286–9. For an important exception, see W. Poole, ‘Seventeenth-century Preadamism, and an anonymous English Preadamist’, *Seventeenth Century*, 19 (2004), pp. 1–35, and now W. Poole and F. Henderson, eds., *Francis Lodwick: writings on language, theology and Utopia* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> For Vossius, see S. Mandelbrote, ‘Isaac Vossius and the Septuagint’, in E. Jorink and D. van Miert, eds., *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) between science and scholarship* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 86–117, esp. p. 117, convincingly challenging the claim that Vossius was a Spinoza-inspired deist and libertine, as made in J. I. Israel, *Radical enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 449, 451. See also E. Jorink, “Horrible and blasphemous”: Isaac la Peyrère, Isaac Vossius, and the emergence of radical biblical criticism in the Dutch Republic’, in J. M. van der Meer and S. Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and scripture in the Abrahamic religions: up to 1700*, 1 (Leiden, 2009), pp. 429–50. On the Flood more generally, see the excellent set of essays in M. Mulsow and J. Assmann, eds., *Sintflut und Gedächtnis: Erinnern und Vergessen des Ursprungs* (Munich, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Muller, *Holy scripture*, pp. 477–82; J. A. Steiger, ‘The development of the Reformation legacy: hermeneutics and interpretation of the sacred scripture in the age of orthodoxy’, in M. Saebø, ed., *Hebrew bible/Old Testament: the history of its interpretation*, II: *From the Renaissance to the enlightenment* (Göttingen, 2008), pp. 732–9. A decent basic introduction, albeit one unconcerned with scholarship, is Donald Dickson, ‘The complexities of biblical typology in the seventeenth century’, *Renaissance and Reformation*, 23 (1987), pp. 253–71.

<sup>52</sup> N. J. S. Hardy, ‘British criticism, c. 1610–1660’ (Title A Fellowship dissertation, Trinity College, Cambridge, 2012), pp. 53–4 (this is an abbreviated version of a forthcoming doctoral thesis).

history encountered theology, but when contextual history seemed to become Jewish, to abandon typology, and to explain the Old Testament as not only about the Jews, but solely *for* them as well. That boundary was sometimes crossed by Scaliger and by the circle at Saumur of which Cappel was a part. But it appeared most precarious in the works of Scaliger's student Hugo Grotius, who sent strong signals that contextualism was almost always enough for the Christian exegete: Christological types were there, but all forms of Old Testament prophecy more often referred to near-contemporary events, and Christians should content themselves with the knowledge that the New Covenant was clearer than the Old. What pushed this narrative beyond the bounds of acceptability for some was Grotius's concomitant historicization of the typological method: both the evangelists and the church fathers who cited the Old Testament for Christian apologetics followed an ancient Jewish allegorical custom: the allusion in the form of citation; when this was misunderstood, over-enthusiastic typology was born.<sup>53</sup> In arguing this, Grotius was, as we shall see, treading in the footsteps of the latest patristic scholarship, but one is not surprised to find him being accused both of Judaizing and of Socinianism.<sup>54</sup> These accusations were wrong, but when Grotius's method was further developed by Jean le Clerc it could be welcomed with open arms by a self-proclaimed freethinker like Anthony Collins to deny openly *all* prophetic readings of the Old Testament. But if the old historiography portrayed this as a characteristically 'deist' move, Sébastien Drouin has now taught us that we are dealing with the long reception of a debate about allegorical/typological exegesis that depended neither on heterodoxy nor on some sort of inevitable

<sup>53</sup> Sébastien Drouin, *Théologie ou libertinage? L'exégèse allégorique à l'âge des Lumières* (Paris, 2010), esp. pp. 99–109, on Grotius and the uptake of his 'double literal sense' by Jean le Clerc, and passim for the reception in France. For older, still valuable, treatments, see Laplanche, *L'écriture*, pp. 331–8; H. J. M. Nellen, 'Tension between church doctrines and critical exegesis', in Saebø, ed., *Hebrew bible*, p. 816; P.-M. Beaude, 'L'accomplissement des prophéties chez Richard Simon', *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 60 (1976), pp. 3–35.

<sup>54</sup> For accusations of Judaizing, see the full discussion in Edwin Rabbie, 'Hugo Grotius and Judaism', in H. J. M. Nellen and E. Rabbie, eds., *Hugo Grotius, theologian: essays in honour of G. H. M. Pothumus Meyjes* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 99–120, esp. p. 117, and Hans Bots, 'Hugo Grotius et André Rivet: deux lumières opposés, deux vocations contradictoires', in *ibid.*, pp. 145–57. For Grotius and Socinianism, see Hans W. Blom, 'Grotius and Socinianism', in Martin Mulso and Jan Rohls, eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and cultural exchange in seventeenth-century Europe*, eds., (Leiden, 2005), pp. 121–47 (unfortunately this piece discusses neither Grotius's *Annotationes* nor his attitude to typological exegesis of the Old Testament). For a possible Socinian inspiration for Grotius on typology, see Diestel, *Geschichte*, p. 391. For Grotius's thinking about the legal-theological relationship between the two Testaments, see Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and religion in the English revolution: the challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 27–9; J.-P. Heering, *Hugo Grotius as apologist for the Christian religion: a study of his work De veritate religionis Christianae* (Leiden, 2004 (Dutch original, 1992)), pp. 147–50.

logic within Protestantism, but on a specific scholarly shift towards philological-historical exegesis.<sup>55</sup>

The accusation of Judaizing – although unfounded in any narrow sense – contained a shred of truth, for Grotius was operating at the apex of a tradition of Old Testament scholarship which combined its contextualizing tendencies with rabbinic justification for them, especially those developed by the great twelfth-century codifier of Talmudic Law, Moses Maimonides. It was partially because of his systematization of the arcane threads of the Talmud that Christian scholars so revered Maimonides – typical of the ‘use and abuse’ approach to *rabbinica*, Scaliger intoned that ‘he alone among the Jews has given up talking nonsense’.<sup>56</sup> And, as charted in an essential monograph by Aaron Katchen, the publication and study of Maimonides’s works erupted in the Dutch Republic in the first half of the seventeenth century. Maimonides offered two tools to the historian of Old Testament Judaism. In his *Mishneh Torah*, he drew attention to the Seven Precepts of Noah, which the Talmud briefly mentions as commands given to the patriarch and to his descendants, who of course fathered all mankind.<sup>57</sup> Post-Katchen scholarship has taught us much about how the Noachic Precepts became a staple of early modern sacred history by the mid-seventeenth century, especially in the hands of Grotius, Selden, and their many followers.<sup>58</sup> The uses of the Precepts could be numerous – the jurist Selden used them both for a wholesale re-interpretation of English common law deployed against Charles I<sup>59</sup> and for an anti-sacerdotal history of excommunication by the Sanhedrin<sup>60</sup> – but their greatest import was in making the Mosaic

<sup>55</sup> Drouin, *Théologie*. Although very useful and important, this work does not cover the scholarly dimension of Grotius’s theology. For an example of the old deist-centred narrative, see Manuel, *Broken staff*, pp. 181–3.

<sup>56</sup> Aaron Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), p. 35; for examples of similar declamations by others, see also pp. 39, 95–6, 180, 248. D. Sorkin, *The religious enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), p. 171, attempting to appropriate Maimonides for an ‘enlightenment’, mistakenly claims that the early eighteenth-century German editions were the first ‘in almost two centuries’.

<sup>57</sup> Katchen, *Rabbis*, pp. 161–260, for the printing of the *Mishneh Torah*. As listed in Talmud Sanhedrin 56a–b the seven precepts are: the forbidding of idolatry, incestuous and adulterous relations, murder, blasphemy, theft, and eating the flesh of a living animal, and the positive command to establish courts of justice. For the difficult epistemic status of these laws, see Steven S. Schwarzchild, ‘Do Noachites have to believe in Revelation?’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 52 (1962), pp. 297–308, and 53 (1962), pp. 30–65; for Selden’s solution, see Toomer, *Selden*, pp. 490–503. A previously unknown manuscript by Isaac Newton on the Seven Precepts was recently sold at auction; for an unverified transcription see [www.bonhams.com/eur/auction/19386/lot/371/](http://www.bonhams.com/eur/auction/19386/lot/371/) (consulted 26 Dec. 2011).

<sup>58</sup> The fullest general study is K. Müller, *Tora für die Völker: Die noachidischen Gebote und Ansätze zu ihrer Rezeption im Christentum* (Berlin, 1994) (most relevant for our purposes are pp. 26–77 (on Sanhedrin 56a–b) 200–9 (on the early Christian reception) and 210–31 (on the Christian rediscovery of Maimonides and on Luther, Grotius, Selden and Toland)).

<sup>59</sup> J. P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England’s Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford, 2006), p. 262.

<sup>60</sup> *De Synedriis* (1650–5), on which, see Toomer, *Selden*, pp. 692–788.



dispensation more contingent and stripping it of any universalist elements, that universalism now being reserved for the Noachic Precepts.

The notion that that Mosaic dispensation was historically contingent was enhanced through another Maimonidean inheritance. In the third book of his *More Nevukhim* (*Guide for the Perplexed*) – published in a very popular Latin translation by Buxtorf Jnr in 1629 – Maimonides asked the philosophical question of why a rational God had given the seemingly irrational commands that constituted the Hebrew ritual law, offered the philosophical reasoning that the answer could not simply emphasize God's omnipotent will, but then delivered a *historical* answer to defend the Creator's rationality: the ritual law was given to the mentally-backwards Hebrew nation to wean them off the pagan idolatry which had surrounded them and to which they had become addicted. Maimonides ascribed this idolatry to a mysterious people called the 'Sabians', a 'fact' he obtained from an Arabic agronomic text, the *Filāḥat al-Nabaṭiyyah* (*The Nabatean Agriculture*) by Ibn Waḥshiyya (d. 931), which is now suspected to be a compilation of texts produced mainly in sixth-century northern Iraq,<sup>61</sup> but which Maimonides believed to be an ancient Sabian work. Here, we have a double historicization: the specific historical explanation for the Mosaic Ritual Law, but also the idea that God operates in history through second causes, including the minds of men. This accommodationist hermeneutic, familiar to Christians from Augustine,<sup>62</sup> but given a new impetus by the quick integration of the Maimonidean narrative into mainstream sacred history and apologetics, would prove to have a phenomenally long afterlife, not only because many major scholars attempted to identify the Sabians, but because the idea that God operated in history through second causes meshed with the contemporary emphasis on God's general over His special providence.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Jaakko Hameen-Anttila, *The last pagans of Iraq: Ibn Washiyya and his Nabatean agriculture* (Leiden, 2006). The *Nabatean agriculture* was unavailable to early modern scholars – it was only rediscovered in the nineteenth century.

<sup>62</sup> For a useful recent analysis, see Kenneth J. Howell, 'Natural knowledge and textual meaning in Augustine's interpretation of Genesis: the three functions of natural philosophy', in van der Meer and Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and scripture: up to 1700*, 1, pp. 117–46.

<sup>63</sup> The best summary is still Daniel Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus* (2 vols., St Petersburg, 1856), 1, pp. 23–90, to which little is added by Jonathan Elukin, 'Maimonides and the rise and fall of the Sabians: explaining Mosaic laws and the limits of scholarship', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63 (2001), pp. 619–37. The continued importance of accommodationism in the eighteenth century was first emphasized in a pioneering study by Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the scientific imagination, from the middle ages to the seventeenth century* (Princeton, NJ, 1986); Sorkin, *Religious enlightenment*, although slightly over-generalizing, adds some interesting examples, especially that of Jacob Vernet (pp. 77–80); also useful is M. I. Klauber and G. Sunshine, 'Jean-Alphonse Turretini on biblical accommodation: Calvinist or Socinian?', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 25 (1990), pp. 7–27. For a detailed history of accommodationism from early Christianity onwards, see Stephen D. Benin, *The footprints of God: divine accommodation in Jewish and Christian thought* (New York, NY, 1993). For a sensitive treatment of the 'radical' uses of accommodationism by Spinoza and Balthasar Bekker, see W. van Bunge, 'Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian hermeneutics and the challenge of Spinozism', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 1 (1993), pp. 55–79. On God's operation

Within the framework established by Scaligerian chronology and Maimonidean rationalism, there was a wave of new investigation into the history of the relationship between biblical Judaism and ancient paganism. Some of the grandest names of European scholarship developed a new genre, the history of idolatry, tracking how the post-Noachic diffusion of the world's peoples had gradually led to the establishment of the various idolatrous religions of paganism, either from nature worship, Euhemerist deification of rulers, or priestly imposture.<sup>64</sup> The three key texts of this tradition were John Selden's *De Diis Syris* (1617), which contextualized all the pagan deities mentioned in the Old Testament;<sup>65</sup> G. J. Vossius's *De theologia gentili* (1641), which ascribed the errors of the pagans to a misunderstanding of God's operation in the natural world (it was thus keenly taken up by natural philosophers to defend the mechanistic worldview as anti-idolatrous);<sup>66</sup> and Samuel Bochart's *Geographica sacra* (1646), which drew on an attempted reconstruction of Phoenician to ascribe particular importance in the diffusionist process to the Phoenicians.<sup>67</sup> Future criticism by the likes of Richard Simon and Voltaire has led to the

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in history: J. Gascoigne, "The wisdom of the Egyptians" and the secularisation of history in the age of Newton', in S. Gaukroger, ed., *The uses of antiquity: the scientific revolution and the classical tradition* (Dordrecht, 1991), pp. 171–212, repr. in J. Gascoigne, *Science, philosophy and religion in the age of enlightenment* (Aldershot, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Remarkably ignored until recently, this literature has now been tackled in three important articles: Jonathan Sheehan, 'Sacred and profane: idolatry, antiquarianism and the polemics of distinction in the seventeenth century', *Past and Present*, 192 (2006), pp. 35–66; P. N. Miller, 'Taking paganism seriously: anthropology and antiquarianism in early seventeenth-century histories of religion', *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), pp. 183–209; Martin Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and idolatry: the "Historia" of religions in the seventeenth century', in G. Pomata and N. G. Siraisi, eds., *Historia: empiricism and erudition in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), pp. 181–210. A still useful older study is D. C. Allen, *The legend of Noah: Renaissance rationalism in art, science, and letters* (Urbana, IL, 1963). On the idolatry discourse and the discovery of the New World, see C. L. Johnson, 'Idolatrous cultures and the practice of religion', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67 (2006), pp. 597–621; Joan Pau Rubiés, 'Theology, ethnography, and the historicization of idolatry', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67 (2006), pp. 571–96, attempts to bring together the discourse on the New World and the textual approach to pagan idolatry, but is too general to be of much use.

<sup>65</sup> Toomer, *Selden*, 1, pp. 211–53; M. Mulsow, 'John Seldens *De Diis Syris*. Idolatriekritik und vergleichende Religionsgeschichte im 17. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), pp. 1–24.

<sup>66</sup> On Vossius, see Nicholas Wickenden, *G. J. Vossius and the humanist concept of history* (Assen, 1993), and now the fullest discussion of the *Theologia gentili* in Ralph Häfner, *Die Götter im Exil: Frühneuzeitliches Dichtungsverständnis im Spannungsfeld christlicher Apologetik und philologischer Kritik (ca. 1590–1736)* (Tübingen, 2003), pp. 224–48, esp. the interesting suggestion at p. 230 that the work was intended as a response to Bodin's famous *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* (on which see Preus, *Explaining religion* pp. 3–22, and the definitive study by Noel Malcolm: 'Jean Bodin and the authorship of the "Colloquium Heptaplomeres"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 69 (2006), pp. 95–150). On the importance of the idolatry literature to natural philosophers, see M. Mulsow, 'Idolatry and science: against nature worship from Boyle to Rüdiger', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67 (2006), pp. 697–712.

<sup>67</sup> See now Zur Shalev, *Sacred words and worlds: geography, religion, and scholarship, 1550–1700* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 141–204. For contemporary ideas about the relationship between Hebrew

modern characterization of this scholarship as just another form of Renaissance syncretism, but, as Zur Shalev has astutely pointed out, this is a fundamental mischaracterization, for their

syncretism was very restricted... That Saturn hid the truth of Noah did not mean that they were equally valid narrations of the same story. It is therefore problematic to see in [Bochart] a promoter of syncretism, or even cabalism and 'ancient theology', as some scholars do... Bochart approached the bible mainly as a source for ancient history, not theology.<sup>68</sup>

Historians are now recognizing the central importance of these histories of idolatry to the humanization of the biblical narrative and in establishing a new approach to paganism.<sup>69</sup>

As historians have begun to explore this world of antiquarian/contextual Old Testament exegesis and *historia sacra*, they have begun to emphasize that mid-seventeenth-century 'orthodox' approaches were neither stale nor defensive, and some fascinating (and often important) figures have been rediscovered or rehabilitated. Jan Loop has discussed how the much-read Zurich-based orientalist Johann Heinrich Hottinger introduced important new Arabic sources, such as a partial manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (938), a book catalogue by Ibn al-Nadīm that Hottinger had discovered amongst the papers of his teacher Jacobus Golius, as part of the continued effort to explore the pre-Islamic Arabs, adding another textual layer to the contextualization of the biblical near east.<sup>70</sup> Dietrich Klein has taken a first step into what he rightly calls the *terra incognita* of Lutheran Arabic studies, with a fascinating account of

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and Phoenician more generally see Daniel Droixhe, 'La crise de l'hébreu langue-mère au XVIIe siècle', in Grell and Laplanche, eds., *La république des lettres et l'histoire du judaïsme antique, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992), pp. 65–99, esp. p. 76. In another important article, Dr Shalev has shown that the new *geographia sacra* was not just a product of Protestant literalism, but of a pan-confessional 'antiquarian turn': Zur Shalev, 'Sacred geography: antiquarianism and visual erudition: Bento Arias Montano and the maps in the Antwerp polyglot bible', *Imago Mundi*, 55 (2003), pp. 56–80, modifying the emphasis on biblical cartography as a uniquely Protestant phenomenon in Catherine Delano-Smith and Elizabeth M. Ingram, *Maps in bibles, 1500–1600: an illustrated catalogue* (Geneva, 1991).

<sup>68</sup> Shalev, *Sacred words*, pp. 178–80, questioning the interpretations of: Jonathan M. Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the history of the Jews: anti-Catholic polemic and historical allegory in the Republic of Letters', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (1992), pp. 603–30 at p. 612, and Paolo Rossi, *The dark abyss of time: the history of the earth and the history of nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago, IL, and London, 1984 (Italian original=1979)), p. 153; syncretism is also over-emphasized in April G. Shelford, *Transforming the Republic of Letters: Pierre-Daniel Huet and European intellectual life, 1650–1720* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 153, and in the caricature offered at Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, p. 472.

<sup>69</sup> At the most theoretical level, see Sheehan, 'Sacred and profane', p. 63. For the incorporation of this kind of research into the very influential commentaries on the Old Testament by Hugo Grotius, see F. Laplanche, 'Grotius et les religions du paganisme dans les *Annotations in Vetus Testamentum*', in Nellen and Rabbie, eds., *Hugo Grotius, theologian*, pp. 53–64.

<sup>70</sup> Jan Loop, 'Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667) and the "Historia Orientalis"', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), p. 194.

Theodor Hackspan, a professor at Altdorf who in the 1640s used both a Jewish manuscript – the *Liber Nizzachon* – that his students had stolen from a local rabbi while Hackspan distracted him, and two suras from the Quran which praise the undistorted faith of Abraham, to argue that the patriarch was ‘some kind of proto-Christian living long before the birth of Jesus Christ’ and that Judaism was only a temporary accommodation to the Hebrews.<sup>71</sup> Noel Malcolm has excavated the remarkable figure of Jacques Boulduc, a Parisian Capuchin, who, in a series of works published between 1626 and 1640, not only gave early versions of the diffusionist histories of idolatry that would become so influential through the works of Vossius and Bochart, but also argued that alongside reintroducing the Seven Precepts of Noah, Jesus had re-promulgated the original ceremonies which had formed part of the natural-law religion of the early patriarchs – this made Boulduc not only ‘the only modern author before Selden to structure an entire account of natural law around the “praecepta Noachidarum”’, but also a serious contributor to the task of reconciling the ur-religion with Christianity which became so prominent later in the century (moreover, it was Boulduc’s exposition of the Book of Job which inspired Thomas Hobbes to use the biblical leviathan as a symbol of the relationship between ruler and people).<sup>72</sup> Perhaps even more striking has been the rehabilitation of that most derided of seventeenth-century polymaths, Athanasius Kircher. Kircher’s sacred history was certainly idiosyncratic: he believed in an original Adamic revelation which was preserved through Noah and his sons to all the world’s nations, which, although it descended into idolatry when its esoteric truths were misunderstood by the common people, could still be identified in the wisdom of the Egyptian priests (whose hieroglyphs Kircher thought he had translated via studying Coptic) and Jewish Cabbalists.<sup>73</sup> His scholarly practices – such as his continued citation of Anniius’s pseudo-Berorus – left him open to ridicule.<sup>74</sup> But Daniel Stolzenberg has resuscitated serious investigation of Kircher as a sacred historian, showing how pioneering (and influential) some of Kircher’s ideas about Egyptian–Hebraic

<sup>71</sup> Dietrich Klein, ‘Inventing Islam in support of Christian truth: Theodore Hackspan’s Arabic studies in Altdorf, 1642–1646’, *History of Universities*, 25 (2010), pp. 26–55 (p. 41 for the quotation). For an illuminating study of how orthodox Arabic scholarship could be deployed for heterodox ends, see Martin Mulsow, ‘Socinianism, Islam and the radical uses of Arabic scholarship’, *Al-Qantara*, 31 (2010), pp. 572–6. See also Dietrich Klein, ‘Muslimischer Antitrinitarismus im lutherischen Rostock: Zacharias Grapius der Jüngere und die Epistola theologica des Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallāh’, in D. Klein and B. Platow, eds., *Wahrnehmung des Islam zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung* (Munich, 2008), pp. 41–60.

<sup>72</sup> Noel Malcolm, ‘The name and nature of Leviathan: political symbolism and biblical exegesis’, *Intellectual History Review*, 17 (2007), pp. 21–39, esp. pp. 34–9 (on Boulduc).

<sup>73</sup> See Daniel Stolzenberg, ed., *The great art of knowing: the Baroque encyclopedia of Athanasius Kircher* (Stanford, CA, 2001), and the essays in the excellent volume edited by Paula Findlen, *Athanasius Kircher: the last man who knew everything* (New York, NY, and London, 2004), especially the chapters by Daniel Stolzenberg (pp. 149–70) and Noel Malcolm (pp. 297–310).

<sup>74</sup> Anthony Grafton, ‘Kircher’s chronology’, in Findlen, ed., *Kircher*, pp. 171–90.

contact were, and, more fundamentally, how we need to read Kircher not as an example of an out-of-date Renaissance syncretism, but as a contributor to 'developing an original interpretation of Egypt that transcended the binary opposition of Egypt as the font of truth and Egypt as the nursery of superstition by regarding it as both'.<sup>75</sup>

An even more fundamental consequence has been a re-evaluation of the old narrative where a historicist revolution in biblical scholarship is said to begin with one of those three 'radical' deniers of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Hobbes, Spinoza, or La Peyrère, whose ideas are then said to filter into the 'modern' approaches of figures like Richard Simon, Jean le Clerc, Anton van Dale, and the English deists. Noel Malcolm's landmark essay on the sources of Hobbes's, Spinoza's and La Peyrère's attitude to Moses concludes, 'the most significant developments in biblical-critical thinking took place not at these extremes, but, so to speak, in the middle'.<sup>76</sup> Into this middle-ground he places Simon, whose famous theory, in his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678), that the Pentateuch was compiled by 'public scribes' mainly working under Mosaic direction, has previously been cited as the birth of a 'modern' approach. Dr Malcolm is accompanied in this revisionist judgement by Dr Shalev, who shows that Simon should be incorporated into 'what may be called the "Cappel" turn – accepting the historical malleability of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, and applying this notion to defend their respective orthodoxies'.<sup>77</sup> Much of Simon's reputation as a radically 'modern' figure came from the unexpectedly extreme reaction by Bishop Bossuet upon seeing the contents and the preface, leading to the almost total destruction of the French edition and to its glamorously exciting pirating, translating, and re-editing in various foreign editions.<sup>78</sup> Just as pioneering as Simon was John Spencer,

<sup>75</sup> Daniel Stolzenberg, 'The Egyptian crucible of truth and superstition: Athanasius Kircher and the hieroglyphic doctrine', in Anne-Charlott Trepp and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *Antike Weisheit und kulturelle Praxis: Hermetismus in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2001), pp. 145–64 at p. 164, and Daniel Stolzenberg, 'Egyptian Oedipus: antiquarianism, oriental studies and occult philosophy in the work of Athanasius Kircher' (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford, 2004). For the pioneering recognition that Kircher might not have been the buffoon that it was so easy to portray him as, see Erik Iversen, *The myth of Egypt and its hieroglyphs in European tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 1993 (original, Copenhagen, 1961)), pp. 92–102. For an important technical analysis of the limits of Kircher's Coptic, see Alastair Hamilton, *The Copts and the West, 1439–1822: the European discovery of the Egyptian Church* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 195–228.

<sup>76</sup> Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Ezra, and the bible', p. 430.

<sup>77</sup> Shalev, *Sacred words*, p. 201.

<sup>78</sup> See P. J. Lambe, 'Biblical criticism and censorship in ancien régime France: the case of Richard Simon', *Harvard Theological Review*, 78 (1985), pp. 149–77; on the reception and publication in England, see J. A. I. Champion, 'Père Richard Simon and English biblical criticism, 1680–1700', in James E. Force and David S. Katz, eds., *Everything connects: in conference with Richard H. Popkin: essays in his honor* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 37–62; for Germany, see J. Woodbridge, 'German responses to the biblical critic Richard Simon from Leibniz to J. S. Semler', in H. G. Reventlow, W. Spart, and J. Woodbridge, eds., *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wiesbaden, 1988), pp. 67–80. Bossuet has himself been the subject of important new interpretations: see the essays in G. Ferreyrolles, B. Guion, and

Master of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, who inverted the narrative of Maimonides's *Guide*: where the rabbi suggested that God had given the Jews rites which directly opposed those of the 'Sabians', Spencer's *De legibus Hebraeorum* (1685) instead argued that God *transferred* pagan (specifically Egyptian) rites into Jewish worship. Spencer's work laid the foundations for the attitude to the biblical Hebrews of Toland, Voltaire, Rousseau, Giannone, and a host of 'enlightened' figures; indeed, until the rediscovery of Spencer's work in the last two decades, it was assumed that such a marginalization of Jewish importance was a product solely of the eighteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Subsequent historiography thus tried to explain how the Anglican cleric-scholar Spencer fitted within this narrative; it explained his conclusions as either the product of his idiosyncratic genius or of a closet rationalizing heterodoxy.<sup>80</sup> But the most recent scholarship has disputed this interpretation, emphasizing Spencer's debt to long-term intellectual traditions – including the work of Kircher and other Catholic historians – and contextualizing him amongst a group of Anglican scholars whose political-ecclesiological ambitions were neither liberal nor 'enlightened' but aimed at shoring up Anglican intellectual and ecclesiastical authority.<sup>81</sup>

It should be clear by now that the old narrative of a turgid anti-pagan 'orthodoxy' being bulldozed away by the deist invention of comparative religion is coming under sustained pressure. Recent works which continue to espouse deist-centred interpretations do so only by ignoring the fruits of the recent history of scholarship.<sup>82</sup> Those interpretations depend on the notion that there was some kind of semi-inevitable shift from an interest in the worldwide

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J.-L. Quantin, eds., *Bossuet* (Paris, 2008); G. Ferreyrolles, ed., *Bossuet: le verbe et l'histoire (1704–2004): actes du colloque international de Paris et Meaux pour le troisième centenaire de la mort* (Paris, 2006), and M. Chauneu-Bouillot, ed., *Bossuet en son temps* (Dijon, 2005).

<sup>79</sup> The first major study to draw attention to Spencer was Gascoigne, "Wisdom", which focuses less on his scholarship but usefully puts him in the context of the shift of emphasis from God's special to his general providence in contemporaneous natural philosophy. Paolo Rossi had also previously drawn attention to Spencer in his still useful *Dark abyss of time*, pp. 125–6.

<sup>80</sup> For Spencer as idiosyncratic 'enlightened' genius, see Guy Stroumsa, 'John Spencer and the roots of idolatry', *History of Religions*, 41 (2001), pp. 1–23; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: the memory of Egypt in Western monotheism* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 55–79, esp. p. 75; Sutcliffe, *Judaism and enlightenment*, p. 70. For Spencer as closet 'enlightened' Socinian, see M. Mulsow, 'Orientalistik im Kontext der sozinianischen und deistischen Debatten um 1700: Spencer, Crell, Locke und Newton', *Scientia Poetica*, 2 (1998), pp. 27–57; Fausto Parente, 'Spencer, Maimonides, and the history of religion', in Ligota and Quantin, eds., *History of scholarship*, pp. 277–304.

<sup>81</sup> Dmitri Levitin, 'John Spencer's *De legibus Hebraeorum* (1685) and the nature of "enlightened" sacred history: a new interpretation' (forthcoming).

<sup>82</sup> Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The book that changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's religious ceremonies of the world* (Cambridge, MA, 2010) – see e.g. the disastrously teleological discussion of changing modes of the study of religion at p. 287. For a study with similar focus see Silvia Berti, 'Bernard Picart e Jean-Frédéric Bernard dalla religione riformata al deismo: un incontro con il mondo ebraico nell'Amsterdam del primo settecento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 117 (2005), pp. 974–1001. For Picart's famous engravings, the key study

diffusion and later corruption of a primitive ur-religion to a belief in natural religion only. This narrative was followed in Peter Harrison's influential survey, which mapped these developments on to a putative shift from Cambridge Platonism to Toland's deism;<sup>83</sup> others have claimed such a natural shift from Matteo Ricci's belief that the Chinese classics of the Late Chou and Warring States periods recognized the existence of a personal single God to the deism of Voltaire.<sup>84</sup> This is to confuse *prisca theologia*—a phrase used by Renaissance Neoplatonists and almost entirely useless for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—with the diffusionism that became standard in early modern historiography. In this respect, Christian scholars were not the self-defeating simpletons they can be presented as: there was no incompatibility between diffusionism and narratives of Christian revelation, because diffusionism implied nothing about the epistemological or theological status of the primitive (usually Noachic) revelation. The diffusionist approach was versatile, adaptable, and productive, able to incorporate both new evidence (like that on Chinese religion<sup>85</sup>) and new historical techniques (especially the conjectural histories of civil society developed in post-Pufendorfian German jurisprudence<sup>86</sup>). Gibbon may have smirked at the Noachic genealogies, but even his smirk was directed only at their more far-fetched nationalistic proponents,<sup>87</sup> and he relied heavily

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remains Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, *Religionsbilder der frühen Aufklärung: Bernard Picarts Tafeln für die Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (Bern, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Harrison, *Religion*, pp. 19–98, 130–72; for a similar narrative, see Champion, *Pillars*, pp. 133–69.

<sup>84</sup> As implied in G. Stroumsa, *A new science: the discovery of religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p. 149. For Ricci and for those Jesuits who responded to him by arguing that Chinese philosophy and religion were too contaminated with idolatrous beliefs to be adaptable to Christian ends, leading to the famous *querelle des rites*, see P. A. Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit interpretation of Confucianism* (Sydney, 1986); J. Ching and W. G. Oxtoby, *Discovering China: European interpretations in the enlightenment* (Rochester, NY, 1993). For Voltaire's tactical use of Ricci, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, II: *Narratives of civil government* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 98–102. For a discussion that respects the complexity of attitudes to 'natural religion', see Ruth Whelan, 'Le Dieu d'Abraham et le Dieu des philosophes: épistémologie et apologétique chez Jacques Abbadié', in M.-C. Pitassi, ed., *Apologétique 1680–1740: sauvetage ou naufrage de la théologie?* (Geneva, 1991), pp. 59–71.

<sup>85</sup> The classic introduction remains E. J. Van Kley, 'Europe's "discovery" of China and the writing of world history', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp. 358–85. The incorporation of China could involve the adoption of the longer Septuagint chronology, most famously by Isaac Vossius in his *Dissertatio de vera aetate mundi* (1659) (the best work on Septuagint scholarship, at least in England, is S. Mandelbrote, 'English scholarship and the Greek Text of the Old Testament', in Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene, eds., *Scripture and scholarship in early modern England* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 74–93, now accompanied by Mandelbrote, 'Vossius and the Septuagint').

<sup>86</sup> I. Hont, 'The language of sociability and commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the theoretical foundation of the four stages theory', in A. Pagden, ed., *The languages of political theory in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 277–308.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1772–1789), ed. D. Womersley (3 vols., London, 1994), I, pp. 233–4. Gibbon's most notable target was Olaus Rudbeck, Professor of History at Uppsala, who argued in his *Atlantica* (1679–1702) that

on the scholarship of those inheritors of Bochart who offered more reliable narratives, such as Antoine-Yves Goguet, whose *De l'origine des loix, des arts, et des sciences* (1758) happily inserted its subject matter into a Noachic-diffusionist framework.<sup>88</sup> Although geological arguments had been introduced into the debate in the mid-seventeenth century, most famously in Nicolaus Steno's development of a theory of stratification in his *Prodromus* (1669), it was not until the nineteenth century that they offered a comprehensive and convincing challenge to the chronological underpinnings of biblically grounded *historia sacra*.<sup>89</sup>

Some early modern scholars *did* follow Eusebius and argue for a Mosaic source for most of pagan culture: most prominent here are the names of Pierre-Daniel Huet in France and Theophilus Gale in England.<sup>90</sup> There has been a tendency to read too much into these examples, and to claim that anyone who charted the post-Noachic spread of religions in the eighteenth century and did not suggest that they were all derivations from Mosaic truth was in some sense 'heterodox' or espousing a 'Christianized deism': recent years have seen such claims made about Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, the discoverer of the *Avesta*, and about Sir William Jones, the famous 'father' of comparative philology (via his work on Sanskrit's relationship to classical Greek and Latin).<sup>91</sup>

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Sweden became the most advanced nation after the Flood and that Greek and Latin were derived from Swedish. For other patriotic appropriations of Noachic diffusionism see Colin Kidd, *British identities before nationalism: ethnicity and nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 29–30.

<sup>88</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, iv: *Barbarians, savages and empires* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 37–64.

<sup>89</sup> The best introduction is now W. Poole, *The world makers: scientists of the Restoration and the search for the origins of the earth* (Oxford, 2010) (pp. 101–4 on Steno, pp. 43–4 on the limits of the geological challenge to biblical chronology); for a useful summary of the nineteenth-century separation of geology and Genesis, see Martin J. S. Rudwick, 'Biblical flood and geological deluge: the amicable dissociation of geology and Genesis', in M. Kölbl-Ebert, ed., *Geology and religion: a history of harmony and hostility* (London, 2009), pp. 103–10.

<sup>90</sup> On Huet, see Shelford, *Huet*; on Gale, see the very useful article by Stephen Pigney, 'Theophilus Gale and the historiography of philosophy', in G. A. J. Rogers, Tom Sorell, and Jill Kraye, eds., *Insiders and outsiders in seventeenth-century philosophy* (New York, NY, Oxford, 2010), pp. 76–99, which places Gale's insistence on Hebraic primacy in theological context. For an overview and for the eighteenth-century debate see R. W. Serjeantson, 'David Hume's *Natural history of religion* (1757) and the end of modern Eusebianism', in J. Robertson and S. Mortimer, eds., *The intellectual consequences of religious heterodoxy* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 267–95.

<sup>91</sup> See Siep Stuurman, 'Cosmopolitan egalitarianism in the enlightenment: Anquetil Duperron on India and America', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 68 (2007), p. 266: 'Anquetil's recognition of the Asiatic sources as authorities in their own right destabilizes all future attempts to safeguard the global primacy of Christian sacred history'. Bruce Lincoln, 'Isaac Newton and Oriental Jones on myth, ancient history, and the relative prestige of peoples', *History of Religions*, 42 (2002), pp. 1–18 is superior, but still somewhat conflates Jones's novel *specific* conclusions (he argued, on the basis of the *Dabistān-i Mazāhib*, a Persian text from the seventeenth century, that the Mahābādians (a supposed Iranian dynasty), rather than more standard candidates like the Egyptians or the Chaldeans, were the world's first kings and inherited the primordial religion) with his supposed methodological novelty: 'While he still



Here, there is the assumption that ‘orthodoxy’ was about ‘upgrading’ the Jews and ‘downgrading’ other civilizations,<sup>92</sup> but, as we have seen, post-Maimonidean ‘orthodoxy’ was more than happy to emphasize the backwardness of the chosen people, and thus God’s need to operate in historical time through divine condescension. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century orientalism was the home of huge innovations, but a widespread emphasis on ‘natural religion’ was not, for the most part, one of them.

Of course, some truly radical thinkers did use this type of scholarship to attack biblical miracles as Ezran fabrications, or to defend the putatively Spinozan monism of Confucian religious philosophy.<sup>93</sup> But the most popular irreligious texts, we are now realizing, offered little more than anticlerical readings of established narratives. The best recent work has focused on the importance of the creative *reception* of humanist scholarship as central to late seventeenth-century freethought, from the Anglican schoolmaster Thomas Burnet, whose desire to defend a Cartesian Creation theory led him to misunderstand Spencer and to stumble into claiming that Moses was a lawgiver who told tactical untruths to the primitive Jews<sup>94</sup> (deists from Toland to Voltaire jumped on this narrative, leading to its fervent opposition by Vico<sup>95</sup>); to Isaac Newton, whose dog-eared pages of the early seventeenth-century scholarship of Selden and Vossius testify to his creative use in adapting them for his own clandestine antitrinitarian purposes;<sup>96</sup> to the use of Grotius’s historicization of

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privileged Israel and the line of Shem with regard to religion, he reduced that privilege to the bare minimum possible without mounting a direct challenge to Christian orthodoxy.’

<sup>92</sup> This is the language of Stuurman, ‘Cosmopolitan egalitarianism’, pp. 266–7. See also e.g. Manuel, *Broken staff*, p. 177, and for a particularly forceful assertion, Trevor-Roper, ‘Historical philosophy’, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Both positions held in the 1720s by the prominent scholar and secretary of the Académie des Inscriptions Nicolas Fréret: Malcolm, ‘Hobbes, Ezra and the bible’, p. 385; J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, 1: *The enlightenments of Edward Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 162–8; see further the essays in C. Grell and C. Volpilhac-Augier, eds., *Nicolas Fréret: légende et vérité* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>94</sup> The best account remains Scott Mandelbrote, ‘Isaac Newton and Thomas Burnet: biblical criticism and the crisis of late seventeenth-century England’, in J. Force and R. H. Popkin, eds., *The books of nature and scripture: recent essays on natural philosophy, theology and biblical criticism in the Netherlands of Spinoza’s time and the British Isles of Newton’s time* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 149–78, now supplemented by K. V. Magruder, ‘Thomas Burnet, biblical idiom, and seventeenth-century theories of the earth’, in van der Meer and Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and scripture: up to 1700*, pp. 451–90.

<sup>95</sup> For a general summary, see Sutcliffe, *Judaism and enlightenment*. Excellent on the Italian contributions to the debate, especially that by Pietro Giannone, is Lia Mannarino, *Le mille favole degli antichi: ebraismo e cultura europea nel pensiero religioso di Pietro Giannone* (Florence, 1999).

<sup>96</sup> The fullest account is Matt Goldish, *Judaism in the theology of Sir Isaac Newton* (Dordrecht, 1998), which corrects the influential thesis that Newton was effectively a deist, as offered in R. S. Westfall, ‘Isaac Newton’s *Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae*’, in W. W. Wagar, ed., *The secular mind: transformations of faith in modern Europe* (New York, NY, 1982), pp. 179–202. For many of the relevant texts see the extremely useful Newton Project, led by Rob Illife and Scott Mandelbrote: [www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk](http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk).

allegorical interpretation in the *querelle des anciens et modernes*;<sup>97</sup> and even to David Hume, whose *Natural history of religion* (1757) has recently been shown to have been in part an outgrowth of the seventeenth-century debates.<sup>98</sup>

The famous conclusions of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are, in short, being demonstrated to have been the product less of a self-contained 'early enlightenment', applying post-Cartesian scepticism to the field of ancient religious history, and more the gradual outgrowths of the contextualization of the Old Testament from the late sixteenth century onwards.<sup>99</sup> This is reflected in a recent monograph by the prominent historian of late antiquity Guy Stroumsa, which argues

that the modern science of religion was not born, as is usually thought, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the first Chairs dedicated to the general and comparative study of religious phenomena were established in Western European universities . . . [but in] the age of reason, broadly defined (the long Enlightenment, from 1600 to 1800).<sup>100</sup>

Professor Stroumsa's discussions of important figures like the Oxford orientalist and historian of Zoroastrianism Thomas Hyde are by far the best available.<sup>101</sup> But Professor Stroumsa has ultimately written as a scholar writing the prehistory of his own discipline, and this is reflected in his work's lack of engagement with the theological underpinnings of much of his subject matter; we await a truly historical treatment of how the writing of ancient religious history developed in our period.

More work still needs to be done here, for example on popularizing texts such as Bernard Fontenelle's *De l'origine des fables* (published 1724, but probably written some time in the 1680s); Fontenelle's self-conscious desire to please his genteel reading public led him to shift emphasis to what one might call the anthropology of primitive mythology, and although some work has charted the debts of this approach both to travel literature and to Epicurean psychological theories, a narrative remains to be written which connects such a text (which undoubtedly also informed Hume's *Natural history*) to the world of previous historical scholarship.<sup>102</sup> But the historical challenge of the deists and the

<sup>97</sup> Drouin, *Théologie*, pp. 155–258.

<sup>98</sup> Serjeantson, 'Eusebianism'.

<sup>99</sup> On the ineffectiveness of a 'Cartesian disenchantment' narrative in explaining shifting attitudes to God's operation in history, see A. Fix, 'Balthasar Bekker and the crisis of Cartesianism', *History of European Ideas*, 17 (1993), pp. 575–88, importantly modifying the views in idem, 'Angels, devils and evil spirits in seventeenth-century thought: Balthasar Bakker and the Collegiants', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 527–47.

<sup>100</sup> Stroumsa, *New science*, p. viii. The monograph in fact consists of condensed versions of several articles (listed at p. 215) – those in search of detail are recommended to turn to the articles.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102–13.

<sup>102</sup> On Fontenelle, the most useful summaries remain: Preus, *Explaining religion*, pp. 40–58; C. Poulain, 'Fontenelle et la vérité des fables', *Corpus*, 13 (1990), pp. 35–50. That Fontenelle hid his debts to earlier scholarship was already suggested by J.-R. Carré: B. Fontenelle, *De l'origine des fables*, ed. J.-R. Carré (Paris, 1932), p. 148.

*philosophes* now appears less like the culmination of a late seventeenth-century Hazardian *crise* and more as a polemical and popularizing interlude in the gradual scholarly recognition that studying the Old Testament involved studying the history of ancient paganism, and concomitantly the rise of the study of oriental religion. Of course, the eighteenth century witnessed major new developments. A rather obvious one was the increased access to the east offered by periods of peace with the Ottomans. A second was the rise of more advanced philological-historical apologetics: particularly important here were the researches of Albert Schultens, who argued first that Arabic was a form of a purer Hebrew preserved by Abraham's son Ishmael, and later that Hebrew and Arabic were both descended from a now lost Semitic mother language; both theses allowed him to use Arabic to defend the comprehensibility of biblical Hebrew.<sup>103</sup> Finally, there was a scholarly shift from grand historical to micro-textual philological defences of the bible, inspired initially by the manuscript-based emendations suggested in Richard Bentley and John Mill's *New Testament* (1710), but then most forcefully developed in Germany in the researches of Johann Albrecht Bengel, Johann Semler, and Johann David Michaelis, as the bible was increasingly defended as a literary and cultural artefact. Although deism might have been on the agenda for these figures, they were inspired as much by the orthodox criticism developed in eighteenth-century Oxford, especially by Robert Lowth and Benjamin Kennicott.<sup>104</sup> These approaches, with their stress on literary form and their use of anthropological conjecture, were certainly different from the humanist approaches discussed above, but even Michaelis's approach to the bible depended on the fundamental realization of the 'cultural particularity of the Ancient Israelites' that undoubtedly had its roots in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>105</sup> That moment, rather than any of its later 'radical' manifestations, had the longest afterlife.

<sup>103</sup> For a useful summary, see S. Burnett, 'Later Christian Hebraists', in Saebø, ed., *Hebrew bible*, pp. 786–801 at pp. 792–5.

<sup>104</sup> On the shift to manuscript collation: Kristine Haugen, 'Transformations of the Trinity doctrine in English scholarship: from the history of beliefs to the history of texts', *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), pp. 149–68, and the important account in idem, *Richard Bentley: poetry and enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 187–210. For the German critics, see now Jonathan Sheehan, *The enlightenment bible: translation, scholarship, culture* (Princeton, NJ, 2005). For a detailed account of the contexts of Lowth's criticism, see now Scott Mandelbrote, 'Biblical scholarship at Oxford in the mid-eighteenth century: local contexts for Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*', in J. Jarick, ed., *Sacred conjectures: the context and legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc* (New York, NY, 2007), pp. 1–24.

<sup>105</sup> The quotation is from Michael C. Legaspi, *The death of scripture and the rise of biblical studies* (Oxford, 2010), p. 51. For some comments on the debt of German criticism (especially that of Herder) to earlier humanists, see Christoph Bultmann, *Die biblische Urgeschichte in der Aufklärung Johann Gottfried Herders Interpretation der Genesis als Antwort auf die Religionskritik David Humes* (Tübingen, 1999), e.g. p. 49.

As Suzanne Marchand has written in her epic study of nineteenth-century German orientalism:

European, and especially German scholarly orientalism in the nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries remained powerfully rooted in humanistic traditions that reach back into the early modern or even the Hellenistic world and are rooted in the interpretation of Jewish and Christian scripture . . . For the most part, my research brought me face to face not with policy makers but with the descendants of those often rebarbative and iconoclastic theologians and philologists [of] early modern intellectual history.<sup>106</sup>

### III

We saw briefly that new narratives of pre-Christian religion might involve a critical attitude towards the textual *auctoritas* of the church fathers and even the evangelists, and we need now to turn to the early modern study of primitive Christianity. One need hardly be reminded that here the Reformation was a key incentive to scholarship,<sup>107</sup> although we should not forget that Italian humanists had been producing editions of the Greek fathers since the mid-fifteenth century, especially in the wake of the attempts at reconciliation between Rome and Greek Christians at the Council of Florence.<sup>108</sup> Following some pioneering mid twentieth-century research,<sup>109</sup> a small industry devoted itself to charting both Reformed and Counter-Reformed recourse to patristic authority.<sup>110</sup> But the use of the church fathers as *testimonia* for doctrinal

<sup>106</sup> Suzanne L. Marchand, *German orientalism in the age of empire: religion, race and scholarship* (Cambridge, 2009). There is an obvious reaction against Edward Said here, of which the most prominent manifestation is: Robert Irwin, *For lust of knowing: the orientalis and their enemies* (London, 2006).

<sup>107</sup> On Luther's shift to primitivism, see J. M. Headley, *Luther's view of church history* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1963), esp. pp. 162–81. A dense summary of Luther on the church fathers is Manfred Schulze, 'Martin Luther and the church fathers', in Irena Backus, ed., *The reception of the church fathers in the West* (2 vols., Leiden, 1997), II, pp. 573–626.

<sup>108</sup> Charles L. Stinger, *Humanism and the church fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and Christian antiquity in the Italian Renaissance* (New York, NY, 1977), esp. pp. 124–66, 198–202; and for a shorter summary: idem, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN, 1985), pp. 227–34; idem, 'Italian Renaissance learning and the church fathers', in Backus, ed., *Reception of the church fathers*, II, pp. 473–510; E. Rice Jr, 'The Renaissance idea of Christian antiquity: humanist patristic scholarship', in A. Rabil Jr, ed., *Renaissance humanism: foundations, forms and legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 17–28. For the early use of Greek patristics against Luther, see F. Tamburini, 'Giovanni Eck e Giovanni Fabri: Alcuni Codici della Biblioteca Vaticana nella polemica antiluterana', *Studi e testi*, 331 (1988), pp. 241–65. Although the main protagonists at the Council of Florence were the Greek Church, the short-lived union which ensued, as well as the Reformation, also stimulated the interest in the Armenians, Syrians, Maronites, and Copts: see Hamilton, *Copts and the West*.

<sup>109</sup> Pierre Frankel, *Testimonia Patrum: the function of the patristic argument in the theology of Philip Melancthon* (Geneva, 1961).

<sup>110</sup> For full bibliographies of older German works, see Backus, ed., *Reception of the church fathers*; for a useful bibliography of mostly French literature, see E. Bury and B. Meunier, eds., *Les pères de l'église au XVIIe siècle: actes du colloque de Lyon (2–5 octobre 1991)* (Paris, 1993),

positions begs the obvious question of the relationship between ideology and scholarship. Here, the literature lay for some time under the shadow of Pontien Polman's 1932 thesis that after the Reformation, history was almost entirely subsumed to confessional ideology; so much so that its use by Protestants was only a doctrinal betrayal of the principle of *sola scriptura*.<sup>111</sup> Polman's work remains a mine of important information. But its central arguments have been disputed. Starting with the latter claim, the recent scholarship has shown that when, say, Cranmer relied on the 'authorities of doctors'<sup>112</sup> first to defend and then to deny the notion of a Eucharistic Real Presence, or when Melancthon argued for the reintegration of patristics into the Protestant university curriculum,<sup>113</sup> neither felt any tension between the notion of *sola scriptura* and their historically grounded apologetics: for both, the consent of the fathers was not meant to establish doctrine but only to confirm the correct interpretation of scripture. Lutherans and Reformed could disagree whether the canon of scripture was known through the unchanging authority of the church (a position difficult to sustain from the start)<sup>114</sup> or from the inner witness of the Holy Spirit,<sup>115</sup> but even Lutherans 'insisted that the reception of scripture as having been transmitted by the Church by no means pledged them to accept traditions other than the Bible'.<sup>116</sup> These were no concessions to the Tridentine insistence that truth was to be found in the written and unwritten tradition preserved by the Holy Ghost within the church.

More fundamentally, Polman's first claim – that scholarship was subsumed to confession – is being heavily revised. Let us first remind ourselves that an early

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pp. 517–52; and since then: D. C. Steinmetz and R. Kolb, eds., *Die Patristik in der Bibelexegese des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1999). On Lutheran ecclesiastical history by far the most comprehensive account is now Matthias Pohl, *Zwischen Gelehrsamkeit und konfessioneller Identitätsstiftung: Luthersche Kirchen- und Universalgeschichtsschreibung, 1546–1617* (Tübingen 2007). For the publication of editions of the fathers: M. Cortesi, ed., *I padri sotto il torchio: le edizioni dell'antichità cristiana nei secoli XV–XVI* (Florence, 2002), and M. Cortesi, ed., *Ediciones principes' delle opere dei Padri greci e latini* (Florence, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> Pontien Polman, *L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du 16e siècle* (Gembloux, 1932).

<sup>112</sup> D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a life* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1996), p. 355; see further K. J. Walsh, 'Cranmer and the fathers, especially in the *Defence*', *Journal of Religious History*, 11 (1980), pp. 227–46.

<sup>113</sup> For Melancthonian patristics, see Frankel, *Testimonia Patrum*; E. P. Meijering, *Melancthon and patristic thought: the doctrines of Christ and Grace, the Trinity and the Creation* (Leiden, 1983), which is fiercely criticized in Timothy J. Wengert, "'Qui vigilantissimis oculis veterum omnium commentarios excusserit": Philip Melancthon's patristic exegesis', in Steinmetz and Kolb, eds., *Die Patristik*, pp. 115–34.

<sup>114</sup> I. Backus, 'The church fathers and the canonicity of the Apocalypse in the sixteenth century: Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29 (1998), pp. 651–65.

<sup>115</sup> Muller, *Holy scripture*.

<sup>116</sup> Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian antiquity: the construction of a confessional identity in the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 2009), p. 49, citing M. A. Deuschle, *Brenz als Kontroverstheologe: Die Apologie der Confessio Virtembergica und die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Johannes Brenz und Pedro de Soto* (Tübingen, 2006), pp. 157–61.

modern ecclesiastical historian was defined as such not by his adherence to a denomination but by his subscription to certain ancient methodological principles: for all the ideological appropriations that this tradition endured, 'ecclesiastical history remained large in scale and tightly connected to the compiling and the study of documents'.<sup>117</sup> Bearing this in mind, some of the most vibrant recent literature has charted the fruitful interplay between history and ideology, the most important of which is Irena Backus's work on historical method and confessional identity, which argues that 'the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were characterized by an interest in history first and foremost and the very omnipresence of history made it the obvious means whereby theologians of all religious parties could confirm their confessional identity'.<sup>118</sup> Although Backus includes Cardinal Baronio's *Annales* in her account, her strengths undoubtedly lie in the Protestant world, and she offers an important discussion of the *Magdeburg centuries* (1559–74), that remarkable undertaking of collaborative Protestant sacred history, brought together by Matthias Flacius Illyricus, a scholar and theologian who in our time has become associated, through the bizarre vicissitudes of intellectual history, with Gadamer's hermeneutics.<sup>119</sup> The methodological revolution enacted by the Centuriators is well known: condemning their predecessors – Socrates, Theodoret, Nicephorus, and above all Eusebius – the Centuriators proposed that the subject matter of ecclesiastical history was not the acts of individuals or the church as an institution, but *doctrine*.<sup>120</sup> One need not deny that there was an ideological component to this – emphasizing doctrine allowed one easily to chart the shifting locale of the 'true' (i.e. proto-Lutheran) church, rather than the institutional history of the Church of Rome – but this focus on the history of thought posed new methodological problems, and we might not be entirely foolish to see here an important step in what would become the history of ideas.<sup>121</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that the latest research is suggesting that the Centuriators' methodology was inspired partly by the same modes of

<sup>117</sup> Anthony Grafton, *The footnote: a curious history* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), p. 158.

<sup>118</sup> I. Backus, *Historical method and confessional identity in the era of the Reformation (1578–1615)* (Leiden, 2003), p. 3, and the important corollary: 'This hypothesis does not deny that there was religious controversy in the 16th and early 17th century. It does, however, aim to do away with the notion that theologians of the period were polemicists first and foremost'.

<sup>119</sup> The key earlier treatments are H. Scheible, *Die Entstehung der Magdeburger Zenturien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der historiographischen Methode* (Gütersloh, 1966), O. K. Olson, 'Matthias Flacius Illyricus', in J. Raitt, ed., *Shapers of religious tradition in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, 1560–1600* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1981), pp. 1–17. For the importance of other contributors beyond Flacius a good start is R. E. Diener, 'Johann Wigand', in *ibid.*, pp. 19–38.

<sup>120</sup> Backus, *Historical method*, pp. 361–2.

<sup>121</sup> D. R. Kelley, *The descent of ideas: the history of intellectual history* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 93–5, discusses Flacius but subsumes him to an anachronistic narrative of the rise of 'eclecticism'; for the importance of sacred history to the history of philosophy, see Sico Lehmann-Brauns, *Weisheit in der Weltgeschichte: Philosophiegeschichte zwischen Barock und Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 2006).

legal historiography that informed Scaliger's contextual approach to the bible.<sup>122</sup>

On the Roman side, that Baronio intended his *Annales* (1588–1607) as a reply to the *Centuries* is well known,<sup>123</sup> and we are unsurprised to find him returning to institutional history.<sup>124</sup> In part the unwitting inheritors of Protestant propaganda, some modern historians continue to scoff at the cardinal's enterprise as little more than the accretion of papal commonplaces; while we can hardly deny the polemical intent of the work, deeper research has explored the complex culture of post-Tridentine antiquarianism and metropolitan sacred history which informed it (where energetic bishops like Carlo Bascapè in Novara all 'agreed that the cause of holiness in the various churches of their own day could best be promoted by proving the existence of holiness in the same churches in the past')<sup>125</sup> and into the continent-wide research network of which Baronio was but one member (notwithstanding his efforts to suppress the fact), itself stimulated by the new and reformed religious orders of the Counter-Reformation, most importantly the Roman Oratorio established by Filippo Neri, who would conduct tours of the newly excavated Roman catacombs.<sup>126</sup> It was this combination of antiquarian and local history which marked Italian *historia sacra* and produced such monuments of large-scale scholarship as the *Roman martyrology* (1583) commissioned by Gregory XIII.<sup>127</sup> And like the Centuriators, Baronio's methodological choice to focus on institutional history involved him in a project that eclipsed his ideological ambitions, leading him to mine the Vatican archive to showcase the annals

<sup>122</sup> Gregory B. Lyon, 'Baudouin, Flacius, and the plan for the Magdeburg chronicles', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), pp. 253–72. For a very useful case-study of the historical fruits of the Centuriators' methodology, see Backus's discussion of their treatment of Gregory of Nazianzus: *Historical method*, pp. 364–7.

<sup>123</sup> For earlier attempts at an official response by Onofrio Panvinio, see Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, p. 458; for the first suggestion of using sacred history to combat the new heresy (in 1522 by Gregorio Cortesi), see *ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>124</sup> For the latest work on Baronio, see the essays in Luigi Gulia, ed., *Baronio e le sue fonti: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Sora 10–13 Ottobre 2007* (Sora, 2009). The fullest monograph study is now S. Zen, *Baronio storico: controriforma e crisi del metodo umanistico* (Naples, 1994), replacing the outdated Cyriac K. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius, Counter-Reformation historian* (London, 1975).

<sup>125</sup> Cochrane, *Historians and historiography*, p. 449. See also Ditchfield, 'What was sacred history?'

<sup>126</sup> S. Zen, 'Relazioni europee di Baronio: metodo di ricerca e reperimento delle fonti', in Gulia, ed., *Baronio*, pp. 5–50, esp. pp. 31–50; M. Ghilardi, 'Baronio e la "Roma sotterranea" tra pietà oratoriana e interessi gesuitici', in *ibid.*, pp. 435–87; Philip P. Jacks, 'Baronius and the Antiquities of Rome', in R. De Maio et al., eds., *Baronio et l'arte: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Sora 10–13 ottobre 1984* (Sora, 1985), pp. 75–96; on the Oratorians as editors and publishers, see G. Finocchiaro, *Cesare Baronio e la tipografia dell'oratorio* (Florence, 2005), pp. 100–6.

<sup>127</sup> Ditchfield, *Liturgy, sanctity and history*, pp. 43–4, and the still essential source study, H. Lämmer, *De Martyrologio Romano: Pærgon historico-criticum* (Ratisbon, 1878), pp. 29–36, as well as the essays by Manlio Sodi, Silvia Ronchey, John Howe, Stefania Mezzazappa, and Angelo Rusconi in Gulia, ed., *Baronio*, pp. 289–386.

format in its greatest glory: ‘Both the *Centuriators* and the *Annales* were fundamentally apologetic in tone but it is more important to note that each represented a well-defined school of history.’<sup>128</sup> This revisionism has not simply focused on Baronio: the important recent work of Arnoud Visser on Tridentine use of Augustine has emphasized how scholarship could transcend confession: ‘in many ways confessionalism actually promoted new scholarship, sharpened critical awareness, and refined philological and historical method’.<sup>129</sup>

For all his archival diligence, however, Baronio had one great fault: it quickly emerged that he was barely competent in Greek, never mind in Hebrew.<sup>130</sup> For one of the great findings of the recent historiography is that it was when the Hellenistic and the Semitic met (and sometimes clashed) with the patristic that early modern visions of primitive Christianity appeared at their most novel and their most suggestive. Eusebius and his antique counterparts had treated the church as a self-contained institution that had appeared—like the animals of Creation—fully formed. But already the Centuriators ‘adopted a radically different approach . . . From the start of their work, they insisted that one could not hope to understand the church that Jesus had created without first surveying the Jewish beliefs and institutions he had known and worked with.’<sup>131</sup> We have already encountered the importance of such narratives of cultural translatability, but in discussions of early Christianity they took on a new urgency: more work is undoubtedly needed on those Christian Hebraist pioneers who explored the Jewish background of early Christianity, such as the German scholar and cosmographer Sebastian Münster, whose Latin notes to his Hebrew edition of Matthew’s Gospel (1537) offered a ‘cultural discussion of the Gospel’ which focused ‘upon the Jewish background to the apostolic age’, and Paul Fagius, whose *Hebrew prayers* (1542) recognized the Lord’s Supper as a Passover *Seder*.<sup>132</sup> More generally, a full treatment of the early modern reception of Josephus remains a *desideratum*, for his work served as the premier

<sup>128</sup> Backus, *Historical method*, p. 374. For the continuity between Baronio and Tillemont in emphasis on the critical element in the annals format, see also J.-L. Quantin, ‘Document, histoire, critique dans l’Érudition ecclésiastique des temps modernes’, *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 92 (2004), pp. 597–635 at pp. 606–7.

<sup>129</sup> A. Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: the flexibility of intellectual authority in Europe, 1500–1620* (Oxford, 2011), p. 137, and the case-study in idem, ‘How Catholic was Augustine? Confessional patristics and the survival of Erasmus in the Counter-Reformation’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61 (2010), pp. 86–106. For comparable conclusions, see H. M. Pabel, ‘Sixteenth-century Catholic criticism of Erasmus’ edition of St Jerome’, *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 6 (2004), pp. 231–62.

<sup>130</sup> A. Grafton and J. Weinberg, *I have always loved the Holy Tongue: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a forgotten chapter in Renaissance scholarship* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), p. 182.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>132</sup> Friedman, *Most ancient testimony*, p. 102 (on Fagius) and pp. 215–34 (on Münster). On Münster, the fullest study remains Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster: Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1963) (esp. pp. 33–107 on his Hebraic interests); on his cosmographical interests, see now M. A. McLean, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: describing the world in the Reformation* (Aldershot, 2007).



ancient model for treating God's chosen people both as divinely elect but also part of ordinary human history.<sup>133</sup>

If the early history of these revolutionary conclusions remains hazy, it is only recently that the historiography has begun to come to terms with their consequences. The painstaking scholarship of Joanna Weinberg has thrown light on the central place in this narrative of the remarkable Italian-Jewish scholar Azariah de' Rossi, and his reassessment of that most important product of Alexandrian intellectual-religious syncretism, the Jewish biblical philosopher Philo Judaeus (20 BC – AD 50). Eusebius had identified the 'Therapeutae' described by Philo in his *De vita contemplativa* as the first Christian monastic order, and had portrayed Philo as a sort of proto-Christian – this story was then embellished and the Christian Philo reappeared when the first translations and editions of his works were printed in the middle of the sixteenth century. Using a combination of Christian and rabbinic sources, De' Rossi redefined Philo as a strange type of Hellenistic Jew, who knew no Hebrew and whose Platonic inclinations led him to allegorize the bible.<sup>134</sup> Several years later, Scaliger – motivated perhaps by the criticisms directed at his work by Theodore Beza – reconsidered the ἑλληνισται (Hellenists) mentioned in Acts 6.1, identified since Erasmus as Jews who lived in the Greek and Roman lands of the empire. Scaliger, as Anthony Grafton has documented, made a crucial new suggestion: the verb 'to Hellenize' did not simply mean 'live among the Greeks', but 'to speak Greek', and so the Hellenists of Acts were Jews who spoke Greek and read the bible in Greek, in the Septuagint version. Moreover, Scaliger followed De' Rossi in classifying Philo as a Hellenistic Jew.<sup>135</sup>

This scholarship had two fundamental consequences. It served to historicize the text of the Septuagint, showing that it was produced not, as the famous *Letter of Aristeas* affirmed, by seventy inspired scribes, but by one linguistically limited person addressing the specific needs of a community of Hellenistic Jews: in other words, in a specific time and place and for a specific reason. This philological historicization of scripture was thrust into the spotlight in the early seventeenth century in an ill-tempered debate between two professors at the University of Leiden, Daniel Heinsius and Claude Saumaise.<sup>136</sup> But just as important were the consequences for the understanding of early Christianity. De' Rossi suggested that far from being an early example of Christian

<sup>133</sup> A starting point is the bibliography of printed editions: Heinz Schreckenberg, *Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden, 1968). See also the thorough recent study of the reception of the famous *Testimonium Flavianum*: Alice Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus: the Testimonium Flavianum controversy from late antiquity to modern times* (New York, NY, 2003), esp. pp. 73–168.

<sup>134</sup> See Joanna Weinberg, 'The quest for Philo in sixteenth-century Jewish historiography', in A. Rapoport-Albert and S.J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: essays in honour of Chimen Abramsky*, (London, 1988), pp. 163–87; and the wonderful critical edition: Azariah de' Rossi, *The light of the eyes*, trans. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven, CT, and London, 2001).

<sup>135</sup> Grafton, *Scaliger*, II, pp. 413–20; idem, 'Joseph Scaliger et l'histoire du Judaïsme Hellénistique', in Grell and Laplanche, eds., *Judaïsme antique* (Paris, 1992), pp. 51–63.

<sup>136</sup> De Jonge, 'Study of the New Testament', pp. 74–6, 96.

monasticism, the Essene sect (aligned by him with the Therapeutae) was a branch of Hellenistic Judaism which in turn *became* Christian monasticism: 'The origins of Christian monastic institutions were Jewish: Philo's Essenes were a Jewish, not a Christian, sect.'<sup>137</sup> Protestants had long complained about the intrusion of monasticism into the primitive church, but had tended to date that intrusion far later, sometime in the fourth or fifth century. Not only did the new historicization shift the corruption back, it also suggested that the world of early Christianity was pregnant with intellectual traditions—Jewish and Hellenistic—very alien to those used to the standard patristic narratives. Just as fundamentally, reconstructing the Jewish context of early Christianity could destabilize the historical authority of the church fathers, who could now be castigated for their lack of knowledge of Hebrew.<sup>138</sup>

The evangelists and the church fathers could now be seen not as conveyors of blindly trustable *testimonia*, but as humans with their own contingent intentions. It was this late sixteenth-century finding that informed Grotius's historicization of allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament (see above), and would inform Jean le Clerc's 'enlightened' attitude to early Christianity (see below). But we can already see it being repeatedly deployed by the great Casaubon. Long ago, Mark Pattison somewhat regretfully noted that 'what stirs his soul is Christian Greek';<sup>139</sup> Casaubon's devotion to primitive Christianity has finally received the treatment it deserves at the hands of Joanna Weinberg and Anthony Grafton.<sup>140</sup> And here, we find that if many of Casaubon's investigations began with the ideological desire to refute Baronio, they quickly alighted from that path to investigate the consequences of this 'enculturation' of early Christianity. Not only did Casaubon launch a deeper investigation into the relationship between early Christians and Jewish ascetic sets like the Essenes,<sup>141</sup> but the *intentions* of the early believers—and their possibly unforeseen consequences—now came under the historical spotlight. Just as for his friend Scaliger, the *Letter of Aristeas* could be dismissed, and the Septuagint shown to be the product of a local culture.<sup>142</sup> It emerged that Paul and the apostles, in their attempts to convert the gentiles, perhaps unwisely incorporated elements of pagan mystagogic vocabulary into the primitive faith.<sup>143</sup> And even more profoundly, the realization of cultural malleability taught both

<sup>137</sup> Weinberg, 'Philo', pp. 168–9.

<sup>138</sup> As was done by Thomas Erpenius, Professor of Oriental Languages at Leiden University, in an oration in 1620: P. T. van Rooden, *Theology, biblical scholarship and rabbinical studies in the seventeenth century: Constantijn l'empereur (1591–1648), Professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden* (Leiden, 1989), p. 58.

<sup>139</sup> Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon, 1559–1614* (London, 1875), p. 495.

<sup>140</sup> Grafton and Weinberg, *Casaubon*. See also H. Parenty, *Isaac Casaubon, helléniste: des studia humanitatis à la philologie* (Geneva, 2009), esp. pp. 93–6, 271–81, on his Greek patristic interests.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122–9.

<sup>143</sup> Levitin, 'Spencer', on chapter 43 of the *Exercitationes*.

Scaliger and Casaubon that the early Christians had, in a spirit of syncretizing enthusiasm, produced 'pious forgeries' designed to appeal to the Hellenistic pagans and Jews – the *Hermetic corpus*, the *Sibylline oracles*, and the *Testimonium Flavianum* – and they were wrong to do so, not only because falsehood does not beget truth, but because the unforeseen consequences of these forgeries were the rise of ascetism and monkishness.<sup>144</sup> There is a deep irony here, in that it was Casaubon's conclusions which had the unforeseen consequences of destabilizing patristic *auctoritas*. Frances Yates considered Casaubon's redating of Hermes the birth of a modern mind because it signalled the end of Renaissance illuminationist-magical Hermeticism;<sup>145</sup> we now find that she may have been correct but for entirely the wrong reason, for the real significance was that the history of primitive Christianity could now be the history of error, or at least of religious, philosophical, and cultural intermingling and confusion.<sup>146</sup>

We are here at one defining point when patristics becomes 'critical', for if the early church is pregnant with Judaism, yet that Judaism is itself infused with Hellenistic intellectual culture, we have an encounter between Christianity and paganism that can explain but also goes beyond Paul's sermon to the Athenians. The evangelists and church fathers now have their own contextually determined intentions and the theology that they produce now has a clear human history. One might think that here we have the end of notions of patristic orthodoxy, but it would be a mistake to jump to this conclusion. Theological (and political) leaders on both sides scrambled to ally this criticism to confessionalism, and we find a poignant tug of war over Casaubon's allegiances between the ultramontane Cardinal Du Perron (who would invite him to breakfast to attempt to convert him through patristic citation), the French Calvinists whose rejection of the fathers he had come to deplore, and, belatedly, the English church of the scholar-king James I and the polyglot Bishop Lancelot Andrewes.<sup>147</sup> That French Catholicism had tempted him should not surprise, for under Du Perron's leadership it was itself undergoing

<sup>144</sup> Grafton and Weinberg, *Casaubon*, pp. 210–12; Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, p. 147. See also the discussion of Lucas Osiander's rejection of extra-Biblical *testimonia Christi* in Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus*, pp. 94–5.

<sup>145</sup> F. A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the hermetic tradition* (London, 1964), p. 398.

<sup>146</sup> On the significance of Casaubon on Hermes, see A. Grafton, 'Protestant versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 46 (1983), pp. 78–93, now supplemented by Grafton and Weinberg, *Casaubon*, pp. 30–42. See also the important set of essays in M. Mulsow, ed., *Das Ende des Hermetismus: historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance: Dokumentation und Analyse der Debatten um die Datierung der hermetischen Schriften von Genebrard bis Casaubon (1567–1614)* (Tübingen, 2002). For the recognition of the dangerous possibilities inherent in Casaubon's conclusions by his contemporaries (both Protestant and Catholic), see Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 147–8. For an excellent case-study of the new approach at work, see H. J. de Jonge, 'Grotius' view of the gospels and the evangelists', in Nellen and Rabbie, eds., *Hugo Grotius, theologian*, pp. 65–74.

<sup>147</sup> Pattison, *Casaubon*, pp. 211ff; Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 142–4 and 150–5, for a sensitive reading of Andrewes's attitude to the fathers and his much-disputed 'Anglicanism'.

a critical turn: the cardinal's contact with Casaubon was just one of many signs that a shared method could transcend confessional boundaries.<sup>148</sup> The decree of the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1546) that the traditions of the church were equal in status to scripture, which should not be interpreted without the 'unanimous consent of the fathers', had raised as many questions as it answered: who qualified as a father, and how many were required for unanimity?<sup>149</sup> Anti-scholastic sentiment may have encouraged the idea that St Bernard was the 'last of the fathers', but this sat rather uneasily with the principle of unanimity: 'Taken in isolation, each one of [the fathers] is liable to make a mistake and thus can only provide the theologian with a probable argument; considered together, they cannot err and their consensus is certain proof of the truth of a doctrine'.<sup>150</sup> In the battle between unanimity and history Du Perron favoured the latter, and 'shifted the debate from doctrine to history, from the Fathers "as Doctors" to the Fathers "as witnesses of the Customs and practice of the Church of their times"'.<sup>151</sup> Jean-Louis Quantin has charted the great influence in France of this historicizing turn: it led to the development of what became known as 'positive theology' (especially popular with the Benedictine Maurists and the Jesuit Bollandists): self-consciously anti-scholastic and patristic.<sup>152</sup> Here we have the direct prehistory of the 'golden age for the study of Christian antiquity' in France,<sup>153</sup> of which the most prominent product was the Jansenist

<sup>148</sup> Quantin, 'L'érudition ecclésiastique', p. 603: 'L'exigence de proximité des sources induit un mode particulier d'écriture de l'histoire, qui transcende les frontières confessionnelles.' The important Pierre Petitmengin, 'De adulterates partum editionibus: la critique des texts au service de l'orthodoxie', in E. Bury and B. Meunier, eds., *Les pères de l'église au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: actes du colloque de Lyon, 2-5 octobre 1991* (Paris, 1993), pp. 17-31, argues for a viable but perhaps slightly overdetermined critical turn in the period 1610-20.

<sup>149</sup> J.-L. Quantin, 'The fathers in seventeenth-century Roman Catholic theology', in Backus, ed., *Reception of the church fathers*, II, pp. 951-86 at p. 956. On the use of patristic works at Trent, usually supplied by the scholar-cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto, see Irena Backus and Benoît Gain, 'Le Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto (1514-1585), sa bibliothèque et ses traductions de Saint Basile', *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome*, 98 (1986), pp. 889-955. The history of ecumenical councils themselves also drew scholars: see C. Leonardi, 'Per una storia dell'edizione Romana dei concili ecumenici (1608-1612): da Antonio Augustin a Francesco Aduarte', in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* (Vatican City, 1964), pp. 583-637.

<sup>150</sup> Quantin, 'Fathers in Roman Catholic theology', p. 960.

<sup>151</sup> Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, p. 216, quoting *The reply of... Cardinall of Perron* (1630), Lady Falkland's translation of Du Perron's *Lettre envoyée au Sieur Casaubon en Angleterre* (1612).

<sup>152</sup> See now especially Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le catholicisme classique et les pères de l'église: un retour aux sources (1669-1713)* (Paris, 1999), esp. pp. 103-111; Bruno Neveu, *Érudition et religion aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1994), pp. 333-63. An older but still useful long overview is Robert Guelluy, 'L'évolution des méthodes théologiques à Louvain d'Erasmus à Jansénius', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 37 (1941), pp. 31-144; Henri Gouhier, 'La crise de la théologie au temps de Descartes' (1954), repr. in *La pensée religieuse de Descartes* (Paris, 1972), pp. 279-309. For the Bollandists: Jan Marco Savilla, *Antiquarianism, Hagiographie und Historie im 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2009), esp. the powerful challenge to the Hazardian chronology at pp. 756-7.

<sup>153</sup> Quantin, 'Fathers in Roman Catholic theology', p. 976.

Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont;<sup>154</sup> but here we also have the potential clash of criticism and ‘orthodoxy’ well before ‘heterodoxy’ has become a major component of the narrative. For the critical method was liable to being turned against itself: in his *Traité de l'emploi des saints pères* (1631), probably the most important anti-patristic text of the seventeenth century, the French Calvinist Jean Daillé ‘aimed specifically at Du Perron’s new care for the authenticity of the Fathers’:<sup>155</sup> the paucity of sources made the fathers unreliable as witnesses, whereas Du Perron’s own critical approach had demonstrated their shortcomings as doctors, for had not the cardinal himself pointed out that before the Arian controversy the language of the fathers was hardly reconcilable with Nicene dogma?<sup>156</sup> And had Casaubon not taught the world that the early Christians resorted to forgeries?<sup>157</sup> But not even inter-confessional polemic was necessary for theological trouble, for the Casaubonian inheritance could inspire a devout Jesuit, Denis Petau, a friend of the Genevan while the latter was in Paris but an able opponent of Scaliger in matters chronological (and perhaps the foremost exponent of ‘positive theology’) to argue, in his *Theologica dogmata* (1644–50), that the Christological speculations of the ante-Nicenes – infected as they were by Hellenistic Platonism – were indistinguishable from those of the Arians.<sup>158</sup> Petau was even suspected of Socinianism: these suspicions were undoubtedly misplaced, but they were signs of the possible tension in theology’s marriage to criticism, not least because Petau’s conclusions were soon taken up by real antitrinitarians, from Christoph Sand and Daniel Zwicker in Germany (both ended up in the Dutch Republic) to John Biddle and Isaac Newton in England.<sup>159</sup> In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Jansenists’

<sup>154</sup> Bruno Neveu, *Un historien à l'école de Port-Royal: Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont (1637–1698)* (Le Haye, 1966); J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, v: Religion: the first triumph* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 47–50.

<sup>155</sup> Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, p. 234.

<sup>156</sup> For the full context, see J.-L. Quantin, ‘Un manuel anti-patristique: contexte et signification du *Traité de l'emploi des saints Pères* de Jean Daillé’, in G. Frank, T. Leinkauf, and M. Wriedt, eds., *Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit: Die Relektüre der Kirchenväter in den Wissenschaften des 15. bis 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 299–325; for the English reception: Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 238–51.

<sup>157</sup> Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, p. 236.

<sup>158</sup> M. Hofmann, *Theologie, Dogma und Dogmenentwicklung im theologischen Werk Denis Petau's* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976), esp. pp. 194–208; L. Karrer, *Die Historisch-Positive Methode des Theologen Dionysius Petavius* (Munich, 1970), pp. 181–4.

<sup>159</sup> On Zwicker, see Peter G. Bietenholz, *Daniel Zwicker, 1612–1678: Peace, tolerance and God the one and only* (Florence, 1997); on Sand and his late-life turn to Spinozism, see L. Szczucki, ‘W kręgu spinozjańskim (Krzysztof Sandius junior)’, *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, 6 (2007), pp. 289–311; on the English reception of the debates stimulated by Sand, see Sarah Hutton, ‘The Neoplatonic roots of Arianism: Ralph Cudworth and Theophilus Gale’, in L. Szczucki, ed., *Socinianism and its role in the culture of the xvi-th to xviii-th centuries* (Warsaw, 1983), pp. 139–45; for the most general overviews, see M. Mulsow, ‘The Trinity as heresy: Socinian counter-histories of Simon Magus, Orpheus, and Cerinthus’, in J. C. Laursen, ed., *Histories of heresy in early modern Europe* (New York, NY, 2002), pp. 161–70; idem, ‘A German Spinozistic reader of Cudworth, Bull, and Spencer: Johann Georg Wachter and his *Theologia Martyrum* (1712)’, in Ligota and

continuous citation of Augustine perturbed Rome enough that the optimism of the early seventeenth century was replaced by 'a growing rift between the attempt to return to the sources based on the works of the Fathers, on the one hand, and on the other, a theological and disciplinarian movement approved by the Church'.<sup>160</sup> By the time of *Unigenitus*, the vast investment in patristics could be seen to have failed, not because of a radical heterodox challenge but because of the quality of its own scholarship, and we may note in passing here that it was this scholarship – rather than any Spinozan iconoclasm – that informed Bayle's articles on the fathers in the *Dictionnaire* (1697).<sup>161</sup>

English theologians meanwhile, buoyed by Casaubon's declaration that it was their church which best preserved primitive purity, developed their own critical turn. Since the Oxford Movement at least, Casaubon's welcome into the fold had consistently been portrayed as yet another step in the continuous journey that was 'Anglicanism's' unchanging marriage to Christian antiquity: as old as Hooker and Jewel and permanently opposed to the pincer-like challenge of popery and puritanism. This narrative has been swept aside by Professor Quantin's remarkable aforementioned monograph. Neither Jewel nor Hooker nor any of their contemporaries 'ascribe[d] special authority to any period of the history of the church',<sup>162</sup> for just like their Reformed counterparts on the continent, Elizabethan divines could resort to anti-papal patristic citations without investing historical tradition with any intrinsic theological authority. It was the contribution primarily of continental émigré scholars, whether Casaubon himself or Marcantonio De Dominis, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Spalato who temporarily joined the English church,<sup>163</sup> to begin to ascribe to that church a definitively 'patristic' identity, and 'only after the Restoration did the reference to antiquity become essential to the new synthesis which, by that time, can fairly be called Anglicanism'.<sup>164</sup> Once again, it was the alliance of 'orthodoxy' and criticism that produced the most spectacular results. Nowhere is this more evident than in the defence of the English church by the Anglo-Irish scholar Henry Dodwell, in an argument whose learning was matched only by its inventiveness and idiosyncrasy. Under the Jewish Covenant, sacrifices enacted a mystical union with God, and the Christian bishops continued the

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Quantin, eds., *History of scholarship*, pp. 357–85; Mortimer, *Socinianism*, pp. 147–76. On Newton, see S. Mandelbrote, "'Then this nothing can be plainer": Isaac Newton reads the fathers', in Frank, Leinkauf, and Wriedt, eds., *Patristik*, pp. 277–97.

<sup>160</sup> Quantin, 'Fathers in Roman Catholic theology', p. 984.

<sup>161</sup> Ruth Whelan, 'The wage of sin is orthodoxy: the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26 (1988), pp. 195–206, and more broadly, idem, *The anatomy of superstition: a study of the historical theory and practice of Pierre Bayle* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>162</sup> Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, p. 396.

<sup>163</sup> N. Malcolm, *De Dominis (1560–1624): Venetian, Anglican, ecumenist and relapsed heretic* (London, 1984), esp. pp. 41–6; Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 148–9.

<sup>164</sup> Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 397–8. And for an important institutional case-study: Peul Nelles, 'The uses of Orthodoxy and Jacobean erudition: Thomas James and the Bodleian Library', *History of Universities*, 22 (2007), pp. 21–70.

functions of the Jewish High Priest in preserving this union (traceable through the Neoplatonic vocabulary of the apostles and the ante-Nicene fathers): communion with the bishop was thus necessary for communion with God. Even if this narrative was deployed to buttress the church Dodwell adored, it can hardly be explained by simple ideological mapping: Professor Quantin has demonstrated beyond doubt that Dodwell's refusal to take up clerical orders stemmed not, as all his subsequent biographers claimed, from a desire to maintain a façade of neutrality, but from a covert scepticism, born from his research, about the apostolic purity of the Athanasian Creed. The same critical acumen led him later to deny that the primitive church held belief in the natural immortality of the soul: a remarkable claim which shocked his Anglican (and by then nonjuring) friends and served as ammunition for gleeful freethinkers.<sup>165</sup>

We have reached a point where historians start talking about 'enlightenment', but it is unclear what is being signified.<sup>166</sup> Dodwell was working with the world of a Hellenistic-Judaic Christianity which we found being erected by early seventeenth-century scholarship. The subsequent century saw the Second Temple Jewish background to Christianity explored in painstaking scholarly detail, especially by John Selden, now the subject of G. J. Toomer's aforementioned biography.<sup>167</sup> We have encountered Selden already as a contextualizer of the Old Testament, but perhaps his greatest contribution was to paint the fullest picture yet of the Jewish background to the apostolic age, and Professor Toomer charts for us how these conclusions rested on new Jewish sources, such as the Karaite texts deposited in England by a professor of oriental languages at Königsberg University, J. S. Rittangl, after his ship had been attacked by Dunkirk privateers on its way to Holland,<sup>168</sup> on newly recovered Arabic texts like the world chronicle *Nazm al-Jawhar* (*String of pearls*) by Eutyichius (Said ibn Batriq), a tenth-century patriarch of Alexandria, fragments of which contained

<sup>165</sup> J.-L. Quantin, 'Anglican scholarship gone mad? Henry Dodwell (1641–1711) and Christian antiquity', in Ligota and Quantin, eds., *History of scholarship*, pp. 305–56.

<sup>166</sup> Neither C. D. A. Leighton 'The religion of the non-jurors and the early British enlightenment: a study of Henry Dodwell', in *History of European Ideas*, 28 (2002), pp. 247–62, nor idem, 'Ancienneté among the non-jurors: a study of Henry Dodwell', *History of European Ideas*, 31 (2005), pp. 1–16, adds much to the work of Quantin, and their elaborate attempt to put Dodwell in a narrative of 'enlightenment' is unwarranted.

<sup>167</sup> Toomer, *Selden*. Additionally, Professor Toomer has extremely generously placed online his transcriptions of the Selden Correspondence, available at the Oxford Cultures of Knowledge Project: [www.history.ox.ac.uk/cofk/archives/5354](http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/cofk/archives/5354).

<sup>168</sup> Toomer, *Selden*, II, pp. 626–91. The Karaites are a Jewish sect who reject the Oral Law, recognizing only the *Tanakh*. For obvious reasons, this idiosyncrasy made them appealing possible mirrors of Protestantism; on Rittangl and early modern interest in them, see D. J. Lasker, 'Karaism and Christian Hebraism: a new document', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59 (2006), pp. 1089–116, esp. pp. 1089–103 and more generally Mikhail Kizilov, 'Jüdische Protestanten? Die Karäer und christliche Gelehrte im Frühneuzeitlichen Europa', in R. Decot and M. Arnold, eds., *Christen und Juden im Reformationszeitalter* (Mainz, 2007), pp. 237–64.

anti-episcopalian readings of early ecclesiology,<sup>169</sup> and on Selden's deployment of his scholarship for religio-political ends, not least in the Westminster assembly.<sup>170</sup> The monumental forthcoming edition of the minutes of that assembly will be an essential source for those wishing to chart the role of scholarship in early modern political life, when John Lightfoot could pontificate for an afternoon on Homeric philology so as to explain the third article of the Apostle's Creed (Christ's descent into Hell), because 'The Greeke Phrase is a Phrase used among the Heathen originally.'<sup>171</sup> It was Selden's (and to a far lesser extent Hobbes's) Erastian readings of Christianity's Jewish inheritance that forced both Catholics like Simon and Anglicans like Henry Hammond, Herbert Thorndike, and Dodwell into elaborate counter-narratives.<sup>172</sup> And here we come to the crux of the matter, for it was the church's investment in scholarship (only accentuated by the catastrophe of the Civil War), and in an ever-more historically defined Christianity, that led patristics into the troubles of which Dodwell's intellectual career is only one manifestation. While in France patristic 'orthodoxy' smashed against Jansenist citations of Augustine on predestination, in England (where the focus on the ante-Nicenes circumnavigated any Augustinian embarrassment)<sup>173</sup> defenders of the post-1689 ecclesiological settlement could throw Dodwell back at his high

<sup>169</sup> A full version, jointly produced by Selden and Pococke, appeared in 1656: Toomer, *Selden*, II, pp. 600–13; idem, *Eastern wisdom and learning: the study of Arabic in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 65–6, 164–5. The important English Arabist William Bedwell similarly developed an interest in Arabic historical texts because they could elucidate aspects of early Christianity: Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell, the Arabist, 1563–1632* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 2, 74–80; for this theme, see also Toomer, *Eastern wisdom*, p. 15 and passim.

<sup>170</sup> Toomer, *Selden*, II, pp. 563–94.

<sup>171</sup> C. B. Van Dixhoorn, 'Introduction', in idem, ed., *The minutes and papers of the Westminster assembly, 1643–1652* (forthcoming, 5 vols., Oxford, 2012), I, pp. 39–59, will explain the often long-winded day-to-day functioning of the assembly. For Lightfoot's use of Homer, see John Lightfoot, 'A breife journal of passages in the Assembly of Divines', Appendix A in C. B. Van Dixhoorn, 'Reforming the Reformation: theological debate at the Westminster assembly 1642–1652' (7 vols., Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge, 2004), II, pp. 13–14.

<sup>172</sup> For a comparison of Selden's and Hobbes's very different accounts of early Christianity's inheritance from Judaism, see the nuanced account in Johann Somerville, 'Hobbes, Selden, erastianism, and the history of the Jews', in G. A. J. Rogers and Tom Sorell, eds., *Hobbes and history* (London and New York, NY, 2000), pp. 160–88. On the Anglican reception, see the brief comments in Levitin, 'Spencer'; for their use of Grotius, see Mortimer, *Socinianism*, pp. 122–37. On the general context, see Peter Lake, 'The Laudians and the argument from authority', in B. Young Kunze and D. D. Brautigam, eds., *Court, country and culture: essays on early modern British history in honour of Perez Zagorin* (Rochester, NY, 1992), pp. 149–76, now accompanied by Achsah Guibbory, *Christian identity, Jews, and Israel in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 2010). On Simon's development of an elaborate narrative of a Jewish early Christianity, see G. Stroumsa and J. Le Brun, eds., *Les juifs présentés aux chrétiens: textes de Léon de Modène et de Richard Simon, introduits et commentés* (Paris, 1998). For Hobbes on the fathers, see also J. A. I. Champion, 'An historical narration concerning heresie: Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Barlow, and the restoration debate over "heresy"', in D. Loewenstein and J. Marshall, eds., *Heresy, literature, and politics in early modern English culture* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 221–53.

<sup>173</sup> But for the importance of Augustine to Restoration defences of persecution, see M. Goldie, 'The theory of religious intolerance in Restoration England', in O. P. Grell,



church and nonjuror friends: why must one accept the authority of Cyprian on episcopacy (which Dodwell had defended in a timeless edition produced at John Fell's famous Oxford press),<sup>174</sup> yet reject the early church on the immortality of the soul?<sup>175</sup>

All this brings us to the fifth instalment in John Pocock's magisterial series on Edward Gibbon as a historian and as a participant in plural 'enlightenments'. This volume deals with Gibbon as a church historian, in the infamous chapters 15 and 16 of the *Decline and Fall*, where Gibbon began by telling his readers that he would chart the secondary causes behind the rise of Christianity and finished by pointedly noting that the darkness that followed the death of Christ, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, went unrecorded in other ancient sources. As in the other volumes in this series, the great value of Professor Pocock's work lies in his willingness to explore in depth texts other than Gibbon's, in this case a set of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ecclesiastical historians: the Amsterdam-based Swiss journal editor Jean le Clerc,<sup>176</sup> the pastor of the French church in Berlin and historian of Manichaeism Isaac de Beausobre,<sup>177</sup> and the Lutheran chancellor of the University of Gottingen Johann Lorenz von Mosheim.<sup>178</sup> Labelling their histories of Christianity's encounter with Hellenistic philosophy a 'Protestant enlightenment',<sup>179</sup> Professor Pocock goes on to detail how Gibbon replaced them with a history of early Christianity's encounter with Roman *civil* philosophy.<sup>180</sup> This contrast gives a double cadence

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J. I. Israel, and N. Tyacke, eds., *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution and religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 331–68.

<sup>174</sup> M. Purcell, "Useful weapons for the defence of that cause": Richard Allestree, John Fell and the Foundation of the Allestree Library', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 21 (1999), pp. 124–47.

<sup>175</sup> For precisely this line of attack in a widely read defence of toleration and parliamentary supremacy over the church, see D. Levitin, 'Matthew Tindal's *Rights of the Christian Church* (1706) and the church–state relationship', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), pp. 717–40.

<sup>176</sup> The best total treatment remains A. Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc, 1657–1736, et la République des Lettres* (Paris, 1938); for his historical method, see M. C. Pitassi, *Entre croire et savoir: le problème de la méthode critique chez Jean le Clerc* (Leiden, 1987).

<sup>177</sup> Guy G. Stroumsa, 'The birth of Manichaean studies: Isaac de Beausobre revisited', in R. E. Emmerick, W. Sundermann, and P. Zieme, eds., *Studia Manichaica* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 601–12; J. C. Laursen, 'Temporizing after Bayle: Isaac de Beausobre and the Manicheans', in S. Pott, M. Mulsow, and L. Danneberg, eds., *The Berlin refuge 1680–1780: learning and science in European context* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 89–112.

<sup>178</sup> See now the essays in M. Mulsow, ed., *Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1693–1755): Theologie im Spannungsfeld von Philosophie, Philologie und Geschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1997). For a useful study of the critical approach of a contemporaneous German theologian, Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, Professor at Halle, see Sorkin, *Religious enlightenment*, pp. 138, 145–51.

<sup>179</sup> E.g. Pocock, *Barbarism*, v, pp. 9, 371.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, v, pp. 282–6, 305. The classic historiography on civil religion attributed it solely to anticlericals: M. Goldie, 'The civil religion of James Harrington', in Pagden, ed., *Languages*, pp. 197–222; Champion, *Pillars*, pp. 170–95. But this 'anticlerical exclusivism' is now fruitfully challenged in William J. Bulman, 'Constantine's enlightenment: culture and religious politics in the early British empire, c.1648–1710' (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton 2009), pp. 159–72.

to the book, and one sometimes senses that the real hero is less Gibbon and more le Clerc, whose linguistic-contextual approach to early Christianity Professor Pocock ingeniously labels ‘proto-Skinnerian’.<sup>181</sup> For le Clerc, so confused and confusing was the Platonic speculation employed by the primitive Christians to explain St John’s *logos*—itself developed against Philo’s Hellenism and to be translated as *ratio* rather than *verbum*—that the historian must resign themselves to describing but not understanding the mindset of intellectual hybridity that had produced it.<sup>182</sup>

This, in Professor Pocock’s discussion of the ensuing debate through Beausobre and Mosheim, is what constituted one branch of the ‘Protestant enlightenment’, when theology is ‘replac[ed] with the history of theology’.<sup>183</sup> But here, the astute reader will have noted, is where we encounter the problem of periodization that has been hanging over us from the start. To become an ‘enlightenment’ this story must begin *c.* 1680, and so in Professor Pocock’s hands le Clerc’s linguistic turn is informed by two 1680s intellectual movements: first, Richard Simon’s defence of Catholic tradition through contextualization, and concomitant demonstration of the fallibility of both the fathers and the texts of scripture; second, by Locke’s theory of knowledge, ‘which insisted that we could know only our thoughts concerning an object of knowledge, but that the object could never be known directly’.<sup>184</sup> But we have seen already that the key contexts for understanding le Clerc did not emerge in the 1680s, but around the 1580s, to which we can trace both the direct prehistory of Simon’s historical-philological method and the recognition of the cultural hybridity of early Christianity. While le Clerc certainly resorted to fashionably Lockean language, he hardly needed it when the historical-philological researches of Petau were available to him.<sup>185</sup> Yet, if our story begins in 1580 (or before), are we then still talking of ‘enlightenment’? Undoubtedly, le Clerc was in touch with real antitrinitarians—the most important name here is that of the author of *Le Platonisme dévoilé* (1700), the Huguenot Jacques Souverain—but one must associate Socinianism with both vast influence and with an overly vague ‘rationalism’ before one can equate it with ‘enlightenment’, moves which Professor Pocock resists, in line with other recent historiography on the movement.<sup>186</sup> It is similarly unclear whether the category of ‘enlightenment’ helps explain developments later in the century.

<sup>181</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism*, v, p. 99.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, v, p. 98.

<sup>183</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, ‘Historiography and enlightenment: a view of their history’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 5 (2008), p. 87.

<sup>184</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism*, v, p. 99.

<sup>185</sup> Professor Pocock knows of Gibbon’s reading of Petau, but where Gibbon added them to the three Protestants, Professor Pocock subtracts: *Barbarism*, v, p. 91.

<sup>186</sup> But Professor Pocock connects Socinianism to anti-sacerdotal politics (‘Wherever there was reaction against the devastating effects of religious war upon civil society, there was an impulse to show that the Gospels contained nothing incompatible with the rule of the magistrate; but if Christ had added nothing to the reign of law... what need was there to suppose him the equal of his Father?’ (p. 14, see also p. 32)). But as is conclusively shown in Mortimer, *Socinianism*, the legalistic basis of Socinianism was the claim that Christ *had* brought

Where Schweitzer had emphasized the influence of the deist Reimarus in progressing the study of Christianity's earliest days by stressing Jesus's supposedly political motivations, more recent scholarship has emphasized that the debate was 'won' by Reimarus's orthodox critic Johann Salomo Semler, who used his knowledge of Philo and rabbinics 'to show that the idea of a spiritual religion superseding Judaism was not something invented by the apostles'.<sup>187</sup> Scepticism built on philology could always give way to optimism built on better philology: for Semler, 'it was not necessary to deploy an argument from miracles to defend the authenticity of the Gospel witnesses to Christ: the texts themselves made clear in a historical manner both the expectations of a special figure by the Jews and Christ's fulfilment of that expectation'.<sup>188</sup>

#### IV

Gibbon himself drew a line back to the late sixteenth century when he chastised the *encyclopédistes* for 'contemptuously' tarring the 'successors of Lipsius and Casaubon' with the 'new appellation of *Erudits*'. D'Alembert and his colleagues, he pointed out, had accused the humanist scholars of forsaking the faculties of imagination and judgement in favour of memory.<sup>189</sup> We are introduced here to the relationship between history, philosophy, and politics, and this is apt, because the historiography has tended to over-determine that relationship. Gibbon was correct: the *encyclopédistes* did indeed condemn erudition as the bare exercise of memory over imagination or reason.<sup>190</sup> But, it is being suggested, we should believe neither them, nor Gibbon's judgement of them. Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists ascribed to a complex (and often implied) epistemology, but one which was undoubtedly 'critical' (i.e. not simply reliant on the faculty of memory) in the most historically precise sense that we can say this.<sup>191</sup> The matrix through which the accusation of pedantry

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new laws, and its reasoning was consequently often adopted in adapted form by sacerdotal theologians.

<sup>187</sup> C. Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant thought, 1778–1860* (Durham, NC, 1985), pp. 11–12, and the criticisms of Schweitzer at p. 15.

<sup>188</sup> Mandelbrote, 'Biblical hermeneutics', p. 27.

<sup>189</sup> J. Murray, ed., *The autobiographies of Edward Gibbon* (London, 1897), p. 167. In starting with this quotation, I follow slavishly in the footsteps of Pocock, *Barbarism*, 1, p. 141, although as my comments above hint – and as Gibbon's naming of Lipsius and Casaubon suggests that we should – I cast my eyes further back than is done there. On Lipsius as author of *historia sacra*, see: J. Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius' *De cruce* and the reception of the fathers', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, 2 (2000), pp. 99–124. For a full, if sometimes flawed, study of the French assault on erudition, see Blandine Barret-Kriegel, *La défaite de l'érudition* (Paris, 1988).

<sup>190</sup> The classic account remains Robert Darnton, 'Philosophers trim the tree of knowledge: the epistemological strategy of the Encyclopédie', in *The great cat massacre and other episodes in French cultural history* (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 191–213. The prehistory of these claims is Cartesian: see C. Borghero, *La certezza e la storia: Cartesianoismo, pironismo e conoscenza storica* (Milan, 1983), esp. pp. 24–34.

<sup>191</sup> See Benedetto Bravo, 'Critique in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the rise of the notion of historical criticism', in Ligota and Quantin, eds., *History of scholarship*, pp. 135–96;

became a literary commonplace was the *querelle des anciens et modernes*, the artificial product of Louis XIV's programme of cultural aggrandizement which pitted those who claimed that the achievements of the ancients could only be imitated against those who claimed that they could be outdone by French neo-classicism and, perhaps more importantly, understood on their own terms.<sup>192</sup> Having inherited and accentuated the anti-erudition rhetoric of the *querelle*, the *philosophes* were perennially embarrassed by the fact that they then 'proceeded to write history, and could neither do without erudition nor acknowledge their debt to it'.<sup>193</sup> Recognizing this, a recent narrative has deviated from Gibbon and suggested that even the 'enlightenment' of the *encyclopédistes* was often little more than humanism bifurcated through the *querelle*.<sup>194</sup> Specifically for our topic, we might recognize that while Scaliger famously called for his students to read pagan authors to understand the bible, by the late eighteenth century classicists were calling for the methods of sacred philology to be applied to classical antiquity more generally.<sup>195</sup>

The history of scholarship, it seems to me, is central to this revisionism. Attempts to chart an 'enlightenment' in the writing of the history of religion have floundered on two variants of the anti-humanist reductionism inherited from the *philosophes*. One reduces all change to change in philosophy: new history depended on new metaphysics. Of course, in some extreme cases, metaphysical baggage *did* shape exegetical conclusions (Spinoza being perhaps the most prominent example). But, as we have already seen, the recent historiography has found the most long-lasting changes occurring not at the philosophical extremes, but in the historical-critical mainstream. Reducing history to philosophy probably tells us more about our intellectual preoccupations than those of whom we study.

The second reductionism is when an 'enlightenment' in historiography is fixed to a politico-ecclesiological movement. In its late seventeenth-century Huguenot variety, the erudite *republique des lettres*, we are told, became a movement for political reform, with Bayle and le Clerc as its two leaders.<sup>196</sup>

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Hardy, 'British criticism'; and now most appropriately for our topic, Jean-Louis Quantin, 'Reason and reasonableness in French ecclesiastical scholarship', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 74 (2011), pp. 401–36 (especially the instructive comments about the Jesuit origins of Voltaire's attack on ecclesiastical erudition at pp. 434–5).

<sup>192</sup> M. Fumaroli, 'Les abeilles et les araignées', in Anne-Marie Lecoq, ed., *La querelle des anciens et des modernes* (Paris, 2001), pp. 7–218. For a new reading, see Larry F. Norman, *The shock of the ancient: literature and history in early modern France* (Chicago, IL, 2011), esp. pp. 99–110.

<sup>193</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism*, I, p. 147.

<sup>194</sup> Dan Edelstein, *The enlightenment: a genealogy* (Chicago, IL, 2010); idem, 'Humanism, l'esprit philosophique, and the Encyclopédie', *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts*, 1 (2009): <http://rofl.stanford.edu/node/27>.

<sup>195</sup> J.J. Reiske, ed., *Oratorum Graecorum*, I (Leipzig, 1770), p. lxxvi. For Scaliger see De Jonge, 'Study of the New Testament', p. 84.

<sup>196</sup> For a prominent recent narrative of this type, see John Marshall, *John Locke, toleration and early enlightenment culture* (Cambridge, 2006), e.g. pp. 504–5.

New or 'progressive' history, it follows, was written by those who were theologically 'liberal'. But this sociological model does not fit the facts. First, it leads to the awkward shoe-horning of those who seem embarrassingly 'orthodox' into 'enlightened' categories: so the Anglican John Spencer becomes a closet Socinian, the scholar le Clerc becomes Locke's partner in an all-encompassing reform movement, and Richard Simon is disconnected from every possible influence that is not Spinoza.<sup>197</sup> More fundamentally, the best recent work on the Republic of Letters has demonstrated that it did not possess an ideology of political reform, but, if anything, an 'ideology of the non-political'.<sup>198</sup> This was a *respublica* which was elitist, inward looking, and concerned above all with its own scholarship.

The history of scholarship is proving to be a corrective to this search for unifying explanations: history is being explained not solely as a function of the underlying categories of philosophy or politics, but as the result of actual historical practice. This leaves us with the fundamental question of why such major changes in the writing of *historia sacra* happened at all. Here, I would like to propose a tentative avenue for future research which can account for change without reducing it to a Hazardian *crise* stimulated by politics or philosophy. We have seen that as the period of confessionalization set in, the various churches scrambled to mobilize scholarship to their side. Consequently, the confessionalized clerisy came together with the humanist *respublica litteraria* and opened the door for the tools of humanist critical historiography to be applied to the sacred past, and for this to be done not from the outside, but in defence of religion. The history of this moment is as much an institutional as an intellectual history: Peter van Rooden has hinted at it in his essential study of Constantijn L'Empereur and the world of Dutch university Hebraism.<sup>199</sup> But for the most

<sup>197</sup> For the earlier period, see the important warning in I. Backus, 'Introduction', *Reception of the church fathers*, 1, pp. xxi–xxii: '[The] critical attitude did not necessarily coexist with a more ecumenical theology'.

<sup>198</sup> The quotation is from N. Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', in *Aspects of Hobbes*, pp. 457–546 at p. 540. The most important revisionist study is A. Goldgar, *Impolite learning: conduct and community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1995). For the Republic of Letters and confessional disputes, see Jaumann, ed., *Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik* (especially useful for us is the essay by A. G. Shelford, 'Confessional division and the Republic of Letters: the case of Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721)', pp. 39–57); also illuminating is Dirk van Miert, 'The limits of transconfessional contact in the Republic of Letters around 1600: Scaliger, Casaubon, and their Catholic correspondents', in J. De Landtsheer and H. Nellen, eds., *Between Scylla and Charybdis: learned letter writers navigating the reefs of religious and political controversy in early modern Europe* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 367–408, as well as the essays in this volume more generally.

<sup>199</sup> van Rooden, *L'Empereur*, esp. pp. 12, 184–229, 232–4, although I cannot agree with the chronology of the claim (p. 233) that 'L'Empereur belonged to the *last* generation in which an orthodox theologian, on the grounds of his special knowledge and abilities, could also become a fully fledged member of the Republic of Letters' (my emphasis). For wider reflections on the history of universities and early modern scholarship: K. L. Haugen, 'Academic Charisma and the Old Regime', *History of Universities*, 22 (2007), pp. 199–228.

part, this moment—when an Oxford Regius Professor of Theology could happily endorse in a lecture Cappel’s historicist reading of the bible only two years after its first publication in print<sup>200</sup>—has gone uncharted.<sup>201</sup> It was the moment when various ‘orthodoxies’ sought to replace philosophy with history as the handmaiden to theology. This had obvious benefits, not least a way of maintaining the steadying sociological authority of the scholar-cleric in the wake of the Wars of Religion.<sup>202</sup> But it also set up an institutional and intellectual culture where historical criticism was inescapable. The revolutionary moment was when this culture was established, not any of its later products (whether Spinoza, Simon or whoever). Note please that we are not dealing here with the category of ‘conservative enlightenment’, which is still predicated on *political* considerations (scholarly conclusions lead to ‘liberal’ churchmanship),<sup>203</sup> but with the creation of a sociology of knowledge that transcended both politics and confessions. Paradoxically, it could be the case that what we treat as ‘enlightenment’ in the study of the history of religion in fact emerged far earlier than we thought, and stemmed *from* confessionalization, and the scholarly opportunities that it offered. Of course, to study this moment is difficult: it involves going beyond the well-known vernacular texts in which ‘enlightenment’ is usually said to have manifested itself, and it involves understanding the debates within ‘orthodoxy’ as much as the arguments directed against it: as Professor Pocock has written: ‘Criticism is unintelligible unless we know what is being criticized; and irreligion is unintelligible unless we know the possibly complex and sophisticated religion that is being disbelieved’.<sup>204</sup> There is of course another option: we can continue to believe the self-serving rhetoric of the *philosophes*, to reduce all the complexities of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholarship to a battle between philosophical rationalists and the ‘undiscriminating bigots of orthodoxy’,<sup>205</sup> and to dismiss the traditions of humanist scholarship that do not fit out chronologically convenient schemes as ‘tied to a cultural system steeped in authority and credulity’.<sup>206</sup> It appears that the history of scholarship has become too well established a field for this second approach to go uncriticized.

<sup>200</sup> M. Feingold, ‘Oriental studies’ in N. Tyacke, ed., *The history of the University of Oxford*, vi: *Seventeenth-century Oxford* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 456–7.

<sup>201</sup> But see now Hardy, ‘British criticism’.

<sup>202</sup> This sociological dimension of scholarship is brought out well in the English context by Mandelbrote, ‘Authority’, and Quantin, *Christian antiquity*, pp. 405–10.

<sup>203</sup> The classic statement is Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The religious origins of the enlightenment’, in *Religion, the Reformation and social change* (London, 1967), pp. 193–236, on which, see now John Robertson, ‘Hugh Trevor-Roper, intellectual history and “The religious origins of the enlightenment”’, *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), pp. 1389–421. As pointed out in Professor Robertson’s ‘Introduction’ (p. xviii) to Trevor-Roper, *History and the enlightenment*, it is interesting to note that these interests are absent from Trevor-Roper’s later work. For a possible context for the anticlerical turn, see A. Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: the biography* (London, 2010), pp. 454–74.

<sup>204</sup> Pocock, *Barbarism*, v, p. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Trevor-Roper, ‘Middleton’, p. 112.

<sup>206</sup> Israel, *Enlightenment contested*, p. 419.