Explaining Bias and the History of Modern Biblical Scholarship: A Response to Thomas L. Thompson

Neither Ratzinger nor I ever claim that the "crisis in biblical scholarship reflects a conflict between the critical methods of theology and history." The crisis, rather, reflects the lack of appreciation of the inescapable subjectivity of the modern exegete (of all exegetes of all times, Catholic or not, theological or not). This is one irony of some of the positivist approaches which still exist in modern biblical criticism.

See Also: On Biblical Scholarship and Bias

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It was quite an honor for me to discover that Thomas L. Thompson had not only read my article, "On Biblical Scholarship and Bias," but had taken the time to respond to it so thoughtfully in his rejoinder, "On Myths and Their Contexts: An Issue of Contemporary Theology? A Response to Jeffrey Morrow." What follows is my response to Thompson. In my attempt rightly to understand Thompson, and accurately to represent the positions he takes in his written response, I include ample quotations from his reply below, and my responses directly tackle what he wrote. Thus the format in general will be along the lines of, "Thompson writes…. To which I respond…," cumbersome as that is. In general, the article below is structured by linking Thompson's statements that go together thematically, rather than addressing them in the order in which they appear in his article.

Understanding and Misunderstanding Morrow's Use of "Bias"

In reference to my earlier piece, Thompson writes, "The problem of inevitable 'bias' in presuppositions, which are at the same time both 'unconscious' and 'philosophical,' is I suggest awkwardly defined." I concede the point; I could have

been clearer. By "bias" I intended the general category of presuppositions. Presuppositions often rely upon philosophical foundations. Such presuppositions, philosophical or otherwise, may be conscious or unconscious. In the terms of biblical scholarship, I think they are often unconscious. I know many biblical scholars who are tremendous linguists, archaeologists, historians, theologians, etc., but have been unaware of philosophical presuppositions as unexamined starting points. This lack of awareness may in part lie in their paucity of formal philosophical formation. Of course, this is not true in every case.

Thompson opines, "The weight of this critique of criticism is, unfortunately, somewhat lessened by Morrow's suggestion that such 'bias' is due merely to an ordinary carelessness." I would not use the word "carelessness," so much as "unconscious," or "unaware." Such unconsciousness need not be "careless," especially for exegetes who do not claim for any such presuppositions to exist. They may simply be unaware of these unexamined commitments, which need not imply carelessness, especially for those whose biblical scholarly formation omitted consideration of being aware of such commitments.

Thompson demurs: "The existence of either Morrow's or Ratzinger's crisis of criticism might well be doubted…." Certainly, but such doubt doesn't carry much weight until it refutes the concrete examples (e.g., Bultmann and Dibelius—and their unacknowledged Heideggerian biases/presuppositions) that Ratzinger, Reiner Blank, Michael Waldstein, and others have demonstrated.[1] Moreover, such "unexamined commitments of criticism," have been broadly recognized outside of Christian circles, as Jon Levenson's essay with that very subtitle—"The Bible: Unexamined Commitments of Criticism"—demonstrates.[2]

Thompson balks at the idea that, "theoretically 'unbiased' scholarship is claimed to be impossible!" This idea is not all that novel, and certainly not unique to my work. Perhaps none have argued this as forcefully, while remaining realist and resisting the solipsism of so much of post-modern thought, as Alasdair MacIntyre.[3] Peter Novick has shown the history of the opposite assumption within the founding and early years of the development of the discipline of history within the United States, likening such quest for objectivity to "nailing jelly to the wall."[4] One need only be aware of the necessary uncertainty within the hard sciences like physics and chemistry—à la the physicist Werner Heisenberg, to whose "Heisenberg principle," the then Cardinal Ratzinger made reference in his, "Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit."[5] Despite the many apparent protestations to the contrary that I have heard, I have yet to be persuaded that the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, and the related "observer effect," obtain in such fields as

physics (quantum mechanics), and chemistry, and yet disciplines like history and literature are somehow exempt; that they might "theoretically" achieve a higher level of objectivity. I remain open to (and welcome) persuasive contradiction here.

Thompson continues: "Bias becomes almost a physical handicap." Not quite. The bias I'm getting at tends to be unconscious, unnoticed. Not quite like a physical handicap. The bias might blind an exegete or it might illuminate. Thompson writes, "he continues the discussion now declared hopeless!" Not hopeless, hopeful. It's a call to be aware of our presuppositions and commitments and how they may blind or illuminate our work.

Thompson proceeds to write:

"Unrecognized or 'under-recognized' biases of early *historical critical* scholarship become the focus, rather than any alleged biases of current biblical scholarship, which had been the problem and target of Ratzinger's 1988 and 2010 papers! Morrow does not address the same crisis of biblical scholarship that Ratzinger had addressed as, certainly, *Jesus von Nazareth*, published by Ratzinger, in 2007—with its own, rather moderate form of historical criticism—must fall under this critique of alleged bias due to the methods and principles of these three founders of historical criticism!"

Not quite. Some of the exegetes Ratzinger mentioned, e.g., Bultmann, were the same I mentioned, and also from the past, albeit more recent past. It's the same crisis, I'm simply tracing the history back earlier, which was one of the suggestions Ratzinger made, namely to examine the history and foundations of modern biblical criticism. One who follows historical criticism like Ratzinger, but is aware of some of these potentially infelicitous biases, may avoid some of the pitfalls. I have never, nor will I ever, call for an end to modern biblical criticism. My position is closer to Ratzinger's which seeks an "exegesis C," utilizing both traditional forms of exegesis (what he called "exegesis A") as well as modern methods (what he called "exegesis B").[6]

Thompson understands me fairly well when he notes that I claim that "the methodological assumptions of historical criticism's founding fathers, which have been inherited by contemporary scholarship as 'fundamental guiding assumptions' are inherent in the very methods and scholarly hypotheses of historical criticism." My only caveat would be that this applies to *some* of the methods and hypotheses.

Thompson is critical of my claim that these assumptions may "neither [be] shared

by scholars today; nor is their influence realized. This is an extraordinary claim for a tradition so rooted in the history of scholarship, evolution and methods as historical criticism has been for some three centuries!" I think it is true nonetheless. Examples abound. Just because scholars employ various methodological frameworks, hypotheses, or conclusions that appear to be the assured results of historical criticism, does not mean those same scholars agree with the assumptions that formed and shaped those very same conclusions.

For example, there are many good arguments for Markan priority. Indeed, it is possible that Mark was the first of the four canonical Gospels written. Studying the history of the development of the synoptic problem, however, reveals how unlikely it was that either the truth of the matter (if it is true), or the persuasive arguments put forward were the reason for its widespread acceptance in the decade or so after the First Vatican Council.[7] The question is whether or not some of those assumptions are carried forward in the method, for it is certain that many Markan prioritists today do not share those assumptions, forged in part in the milieu of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*.

Another case in point might be the conclusion of the late-dating of the Book of Daniel to the second century B.C.E. This is a fairly widely held conclusion today, and has been for some time. It may in fact be correct. When Porphyry made this claim (which was revived in modern scholarship), it certainly was not with the same sophistication of arguments modern scholars employed, but was loaded with his anti-Christian bias. Was such bias illuminating for him? Perhaps, if Daniel is from the second century B.C.E. Either way, however, when Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) assumed such a dating in his *Jesus von Nazareth*,[8] he was not guilty of sharing Porphyry's bias, nor that of the modern revivers of his arguments. It is a legitimate question whether or not such biases are carried forward in the methods and conclusions themselves. In this context, I think of Matthew Bates' depiction of the historian engaging in a "holistic approach," where, "The historian is keenly aware that perhaps the predetermined classification systems and tools used for data collection might be skewing the results."[9] I think this is the preferable approach.

Despite Thompson's protestations that historical criticism is "a tradition so rooted in the history of scholarship, evolution and methods" and "has been for some three centuries," there remains a paucity of studies on just this sort of history of scholarship. The overwhelming majority of such scholarship has been piecemeal, and disconnected.[10] There are a few welcome exceptions to this, e.g.: Henning Graf Reventlow's four volume *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*;[11] John Van Seters'

The Edited Bible;[12] and Magne Sæbø's five volume *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*.[13] I find that most Bible scholars are generally unaware of these histories. One of the great exceptions to this ignorance is Dominique Barthélemy's fine (but little cited) survey of such scholarship.[14]

Understanding and Misunderstanding Morrow's Use of Troeltsch

Thompson misunderstands (in three different places) how I am using Troeltsch when he writes:

"Morrow uses a quotation from Troeltsch to argue further that this development of historical-critical scholarship was a uniquely Protestant critique, in contrast to the earlier, authority-oriented, traditional and Catholic theology. For Morrow this betrayed an obvious Catholic bias. Why he sees it as a bias rather than Troeltsch's insistence on the priority of scientific methods was not rather a conclusion of his research is somewhat unclear."

I didn't use Troeltsch's quotation to show what Troeltsch was trying to argue. I was not arguing that historical criticism was "uniquely Protestant," nor that more "traditional" non-historical critical forms were more "Catholic." Rather I used it to show Troeltsch seemed to think so (although he didn't, as my endnote made clear). The fact that Troeltsch could use it in such a dichotomous way was the anti-Catholic bias I referenced.

Again, Thompson continues later to misunderstand how I was using sources when he mistakenly attributes Troeltsch's clearly false dichotomy to me: "direct bearing on the dichotomies Morrow, in his critique of biblical criticism, asserts to exist between critical and Protestant biblical scholarship on the one hand and theological and Catholic biblical scholarship on the other." That was Troeltsch's dichotomy, not mine, and I agree with Thompson in eschewing this dichotomy.

Finally, when Thompson writes, "Morrow's identification of critical thinking with 'Protestantism' is deeply inattentive to the historical context of such biblical criticism," he again mistakes Troeltsch's view (which I quoted) for mine. To be fair to Troeltsch, he explained that he was not exclusively referring to "Catholics" by this designation, and that we should probably not refer to it as "Catholic," as I mention in endnote 21 of my prior article.

Loisy and the Roman Catholic Modernist Controversy

Thompson writes, "In his qualification, Ratzinger stresses the change and relativity of scientific questions and observations over time, raising an issue, which is already, clearly central to the arguments of especially Troeltsch and Bultmann in regard to their understanding of modernism's transformation of traditional Catholic theology with the help of historical criticism." This point may raise a question, but it is not clear to me from what Thompson writes what that question is. Ratzinger's use of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle applies quite well for the hard sciences (like physics and chemistry), and he is applying it to historical and literary studies, precisely because these disciplines have so often been likened to the hard and natural sciences. Ratzinger's point was that even the hard sciences are not purely objective.

This issue of "modernism's transformation of traditional Catholic theology with the help of historical criticism," is something for which neither Troeltsch nor Bultmann had much concern. Perhaps Thompson was referring to the Catholic modernist controversy, centered around figures like Alfred Loisy, whom Thompson later brings up. Loisy certainly sought to transform Catholic theology, as he later conceded in his autobiographical memoirs: "Therefore I did not limit myself to criticizing M. Harnack, I implied discretely but really an essential reform of biblical exegesis, of the entirety of theology, and even of Catholicism in general."[15]

Thompson writes later:

"Central to Loisy's theology had been his objection that the biblical traditions, most notably, the Pentateuch, were not to be interpreted literally or as an account of events. As with Bultmann's understanding of central myths of the New Testament, Loisy's critique was not rooted in historicist 'bias'. He rather argued on the basis of an astute and critical reading of the Pentateuch that its narratives were rooted in myth and legend."

I'm not sure where in Loisy's massive literary corpus—he published 57 books in his lifetime (more posthumously)—Thompson is getting this. I'm not sure precisely what Thompson means by "literally."[16] That's not Loisy's standard language. Loisy wrote on the senses of Scripture, as well as other forms of interpretation.[17] This has a long history within Christianity, gaining prominence with St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, for which St. Augustine was indebted to the Donatist Tyconius' *Liber Regularum*.[18] In his "Firmin" articles, Loisy defended patristic recourse to the spiritual sense of Scripture, but most of his comments, and his historical critical work, tended to focus on the literal sense.[19]

Certainly, Loisy's language was often slippery, and this was especially the case in his writings intended beyond specialists.[20] Loisy's positions also changed and developed over time. I'm not sure if Thompson is referring to work Loisy published after his 1908 excommunication, or prior. Loisy was more cautious in his explanations prior. Early on, especially, he was wary of applying "myth" to the biblical accounts.[21] He defined "myth" when he wrote, "Myths are the dogmas of pagan religions…."[22] He conceded that one cannot simply assume that flood traditions in the Bible are copied from older accounts, but admitted the possibility both accounts relied upon earlier traditions.[23]

Thompson is correct when he writes: "There are not many Catholic scholars today who would see any reason to argue with Loisy."

Julius Wellhausen and "Bias"

When Thompson writes, "Morrow does not actually offer an argument that Wellhausen's conclusions regarding the dating of 'P' are biased," I think I detect some confusion on his part. That was the very point of the quotation I included. I'm not exactly sure how Thompson is using the term "bias," but I wonder if we are using it differently. At the outset of my article, I stated that I would use "bias" not "in any technical sense, but rather as a general term for the inevitable starting assumptions that we scholars bring with us when we interpret texts." We don't approach texts with no prior commitments, subjectivity, etc. Even to approach a text with the ostensible goal of formal objectivity, pure neutrality, itself represents a prior commitment, a bias (in the way I employ the term in my article) that might affect how we read the text.

The quotation from Wellhausen which I included would, I think, indicate a rather strong bias in favor of the Prophets and opposed to the Torah or Pentateuch. Wellhausen wrote, "my enjoyment of the latter [the historical and prophetical books] was marred by the Law [the Pentateuch]; it…intruded itself uneasily, like a ghost that makes a noise indeed, but is not visible and really effects nothing."[24] With these statements, Wellhausen is giving his impressions of the stories, with his obvious preference for the historical books and the prophets. This is not the conclusion he reached from disinterested scholarship, but was his first impression reading the Pentateuch. We catch a sense of Wellhausen's relief when he remarks, "At last…" he learned that perhaps the Pentateuch came after the prophets, as well as his telling comment, "almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it."[25] His preference for the Prophets was precisely that, a preference. That preference, coupled with his obvious distaste for the Pentateuch,

was a bias that may have affected his scholarship, since it was a prior starting position he held prior to his scholarly attempt at reconstructing the history of Israel. This does not mean Wellhausen's conclusions regarding "P" are incorrect, but it is difficult to argue they were free from any prior commitments or assumptions on his part.[26]

Thompson is of course correct when he writes, "However, such arguments within today's scholarship do not imply in the least that the failure of Wellhausen's thesis on the dating of 'P' had been due to bias." But that's not how bias works. Bias does not always lead you to incorrect assumptions. It can also clarify. If your bias (in this case, anti-ritual, anti-priest, anti-cult, etc.), however, is one cause leading to your conclusion (e.g., regarding "P"), then although the failure of your thesis is not due to bias…it's simply due to being incorrect, or insufficiently explaining more recent evidence...it may be biased nonetheless. The reason one may embrace a position, and be blinded to other options, may have been caused in part by such bias. Thus, when scholars fault Wellhausen for his general lack of engagement with other ancient Near Eastern materials, part of the failure might be due to Wellhausen's assumptions about the significance (or in this case, the insignificance) of such material on the history of Israel. Wellhausen could read Akkadian, and was in fact familiar with the discipline of Assyriology, as Peter Machinist has shown.[27]

Thompson is correct to note:

"Inadequate historical arguments, whether related to the documentary hypothesis, the two-source theory or the existence of 'Q' are inadequate as *historical* arguments. These theories can be falsified and they are largely based on evidence! It is hardly difficult, Morrow claims, let alone impossible, to question the documentary hypothesis today! However, many scholars have, especially over the last half-century."

But my comments were not meant to imply that scholars have not challenged these views (like the Documentary Hypothesis)—I too cited scholars who made such challenges. My point was that they are easily dismissed: I have seen this at many conferences. I concede my anecdotal evidence might be unique to me, but I have heard too many such anecdotes to think that very likely. Or, arguments that have been put forward, often multiple times, are summarily ignored.

Theological Criticism and Historical Criticism

To Thompson's comment, "Morrow is quite on the mark in arguing against overly simplified dismissals of 'traditional' theological readings of the Bible. However, this does not give us reason to accept such readings as either valid or critical in comparison with modern scholarship," I reply: Certainly its validity would have to stand on other points than mere assertion, like argument and evidence. Nor would I intend to claim such traditional forms of exegesis are "critical." I question, rather, the preference for the distance "criticism" creates between the text and the reader. In my non-seminary classes that I teach, I often hear students facilely link mathematical "reason" with knowledge, and "faith" with ignorance. But cannot faith and trust give us knowledge, at least natural faith and natural trust (if not the theological virtue)? Commitment to the text, a commitment that prescinds from the more skeptical starting positions often assumed in "criticism" might arrive at a host of insights that a more critical eye might miss.

Thompson declares, "Traditional theological misreadings are often due far more to carelessness and lack of attention to the text in question." Perhaps, but not always.

Thompson claims that, "Modern biblical scholarship is rooted in a discourse of evidence-based arguments." That's certainly how it styles itself. This notion seems to fit MacIntyre's description of encyclopedic rationality, in his Gifford Lectures, and, frankly, I find his account of tradition (which, as MacIntyre describes it, also involves a form of evidence and argument), thickly narrated, more compelling than either encyclopedic or genealogic rationality.[28]

Again, Thompson writes: "I also do not think he has demonstrated a bias against theology." I concede that I may not have demonstrated a bias against theology, but my overall point was not focused just on theology, but on bias in general, and on the need to be aware of our biases.

Thompson demurs:

"Lemche rather argued his case in support of a thorough going theologically oriented interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, my own popular book of 1999, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, presented an argument both that the ancient history of Palestine must be based on sources apart from the Bible as well as that the function of biblical literature is not centered in a historical discourse, but is rather appropriately understand as theological. Morrow's assertion that critical biblical scholarship, in its principles and methods, is rooted in an anti-theological bias is simply not true."

I would concede that what Thompson claims is correct; that he and Lemche were claiming "that the function of biblical literature…is rather appropriately understood as theological." My point was more in reference to the (theological) position that the Bible is Scripture, a living unified text that speaks to us about a real personal God who exists and who relates to us personally, and communally. That is not a "traditional" position within modern critical scholarship. Levenson points out the contrast quite well:

"historical criticism is the form of biblical studies that corresponds to the classical liberal political ideal. It is the realization of the Enlightenment project in the realm of biblical scholarship. Like citizens in the classical liberal state, scholars practicing historical criticism of the Bible are expected to eliminate or minimize their communal loyalties, to see them as legitimately operative only within associations that are private, nonscholarly, and altogether voluntary. Within the public space of the academy, scholars of every sort—Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, secular, or whatever—meet, again at least in theory, as equals…. the new arrangement…. tends subtly to restrict the questions studied and the methods employed to those that permit the minimization of religious difference with relative facility...."[29]

One need only compare approaches as James Kugel does so well in his *How to Read the Bible*.[30]

I remain rather confused by Thompson's statement: "Neither do I see that the most significant differences in the conclusions of historical criticism and traditional theological or Catholic readings of the Bible are, in fact, to be explained as the result of bias, as Morrow claims." I reread my article, but failed to find where I write that, "the most significant differences in the conclusions of historical criticism and traditional theological or Catholic readings of the Bible are, in fact, to be explained as the result of bias," or anything resembling this statement. My writing has *many* flaws, but I do try to use words like "many," "significant," etc., with precision. And yet, I think *many* forms of exegesis, be they Thomistic, Bonaventurean, Karraite, Medieval Andalusian Muslim, etc., differ from one another in their starting positions, among other differences. Such starting points (biases) are not the *only*, nor *necessarily most significant* differences, but they remain differences.

Thompson writes:

"Historicist bias has little to do with the conflicts that have arisen over time

between critical and church related Catholic scholarship. In the conflicts he refers to in my *memoire*, the issues were similarly rooted in my insistence as a Catholic scholar on the theological and non-historical character of the narratives of Genesis against a traditionalist insistence that the texts be read naively and within the modern context of theological consensus: as accounts of past events. Bias played little role in this conflict. The disagreement was real."

By no means was I trying to imply that the disagreements were not real. In fact, I was attempting to use Thompson's autobiographical reflections, as I did in my reference to the modernist controversy, with some sympathy for him and for them (the "modernists") on my part. I was certainly not attempting to denigrate Thompson by asserting the problem in his early controversy he shared was reducible to his bias. Rather I was attempting to express my sympathy for the way in which he described how harshly he had been treated. Furthermore, even when "bias" (as I have been using the term) is present, it need not indicate there are not real disagreements involved.

The Role of Figures (and Their "Biases") from the Seventeenth through Nineteenth Centuries in Historical Criticism's Origins

Thompson is clearly correct when he writes that, "I do not think that Morrow has made a case that the methodology and principles of critical exegesis is biased in its origins, methods and principles; nor that it prejudicially favors a historicizing of the Bible or any other particular historical interpretation or ideology." He is right, I didn't make that case. Rather I summarized my own work, and that of others, with a few examples. The case has been made, but it takes more than a brief article to trace the history of historical criticism's origins, methods, and principles, showing the way that political, cultural, philosophical, theological, and other biases shape these. Important examples exist, e.g.:[31] Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker's, *Politicizing the Bible*;[32] Pierre Gibert's, *L'invention critique de la Bible*;[33] Michael Legaspi's, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*;[34] Jonathan Sheehan's, *The Enlightenment Bible*;[35] Thomas Howard's, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism*;[36] and Henning Graf Reventlow's, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne, Die bedeutung des Bibelverständnisses für die geistesgeschichtliche und politische Entwicklung in England von der Reformation bis zur Aufklärung*.[37]

Thompson writes further:

"I doubt that we can any longer claim that what Ratzinger and Morrow have seen

as a crisis in biblical scholarship reflects a conflict between the critical methods of theology and history. The conflict is, I suspect, rather rooted in a failure to understand biblical literature, which is after all based in the context of a very ancient and distant past. Neither the Bible nor the historical origins of Samaritanism, Judaism and Christianity are historically transcendent. Nor is their theology to be understood apart from our fragile understanding of the ideologies from which they were originally formed."

Neither Ratzinger nor I ever claim that the "crisis in biblical scholarship reflects a conflict between the critical methods of theology and history." The crisis, rather, reflects the lack of appreciation of the inescapable subjectivity of the modern exegete (of all exegetes of all times, Catholic or not, theological or not). This is one irony of some of the positivist approaches which still exist in modern biblical criticism. Historical criticism was forged in a rationalist context (especially with Spinoza's combination of a Baconian method applied to Scripture with a modified Cartesian methodic doubt)[38]. In the nineteenth century, especially as practiced by English-speaking scholars, historical criticism began to take on the same Scottish Common Sense Enlightenment philosophy that helped give rise and shape to the American Protestant Fundamentalist movement (and here I refer to those who self-identified as Fundamentalists at the dawn of the twentieth century). In many ways, the Fundamentalist common sense approach to Scripture comes from the same philosophical well springs as the more rationalist secular (in the contemporary sense of the word)[39] approaches.[40]

Importantly, Thompson stresses the particularity of the diverse figures I bring up:

"The entrenched confusion of Morrow's essay could perhaps be linked to the excessive ease with which he transcends the contexts of the critical scholarship he wishes to critique. Although the research, methods and principles of the philosophy of Hobbes, Peyrere, Spinoza, Troeltsch, Wellhausen, Schweitzer and Bultmann all might well be presented as central in understanding the methods and assumptions of the critical methods and principles of today's biblical scholarship, our ability to understand differs considerably in regard to each of them. This is due, not least, to their very different contexts, both historical and theological, spread as they are over three centuries, from the early 17th to the mid-20th centuries! Whether the intellectual ideology, which had influenced the critical methods and principles of Isaac Peyrere and Baruch Spinoza's biblical criticism, might be profitably understood as reflecting Thomas Hobbes's philosophical reflections, which at times dominated 17th century intellectual life, is an historical question that needs to be addressed to our knowledge of Peyrere and Spinoza's contemporary theology

and intellectual life. Nevertheless, a study of the radically different theology, contemporary to the work of two, much later, German theologians, Julius Wellhausen and Rudolph Bultmann would produce entirely other expectations."

This is true (with some caveats), but Thompson has missed the point I was trying to make. Thompson is completely correct that our knowledge of the past and of the historical contexts out of which the diverse texts that make up the Bible emerged, is far greater than for these prior figures. This does not have anything to do, however, with my claims of prior assumptions. My point about their "bias," their prior starting points which affected their interpretations and methodological assumptions, has little to do with their lack of the knowledge we have. Moreover, our ability to transcend their limits because of our increasingly greater knowledge of the past, has not always changed the ways in which we relied upon the methods they helped forge…and our continued adherence to these methods is not, I would argue, the result of greater evidence, continued excellent explanatory power, etc., but is often rather due to our unquestioning use of them as starting points.

A few minor points of confusion in Thompson's comment here: La Peyrère's biblical work in *Prae-Adamitae* (written between 1635-1643) was prior to Hobbes' in *Leviathan* (1651), and received published refutations prior to its and Hobbes' published versions of their texts, even though the final text (which included his *Systema Theologicum*) was only published later (1655).[41] It seems unlikely that Hobbes' philosophy affected La Peyrère, but they moved in similar circles, so it is likely they shared common influences.[42] Spinoza almost certainly relied upon both, at least in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670).[43] The studies on these connections, which Thompson mentions should be done in order to discover their likelihood, have already been done.[44]

Obviously, in articles such as these, I don't have the space to trace all of these many connections (which is why I referred there, and here, in the endnotes, to the larger body of scholarship where such lengthier arguments can be found). Thompson is certainly correct about the later work of Bultmann and Wellhausen. I agree these are more complex figures, and their contexts were different, and the results would be (and have been) different in the various studies of their lives and works. I was focusing on the similarities: anti-cult, anti-Jewish elements, anti-Catholic elements, etc. These are commonalities, which should not surprise us, because they are some of the few similarities that La Peyrère's context as a Huguenot (coerced into becoming Catholic, and then joining the Oratorians as a lay member where he had occasion to influence Fr. Richard Simon) in the seventeenth century Gallican Catholic France under Louis XIV, shared with

Hobbes in self-imposed exile in Paris (at Chateau Condé when and where La Peyrère hung out) during the English Civil War, and shared with Spinoza in the context of the various philosophical receptions of Descartes in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic and the political battle over the Calvinist take-overs in the wake of the defeat of Catholic Spain in the south, and shared with Wellhausen in post-*Kulturkampf* (and thus post Vatican I) Germany as a supporter of Prussian Bismarck, which was similar to Bultmann's context as a Lutheran writing prior to and during the Third Reich relying upon Heidegger's philosophy mediated to him first when he co-directed Hans Jonas' dissertation on Gnosticism. These are vastly different contexts, and I am well aware of their distinctions…these are the sorts of histories and figures I spend my days and nights reading. I am focusing on the similarities I have detected in their work and political and cultural contexts, despite many differences. Their particular reasons, and starting assumptions, often differ, on a great many things. But I think they do share some things in common. To this list could easily be added other figures: Richard Simon; Johann Salomo Semler; Johann David Michaelis; Hermann Samuel Reimarus; Gotthold Lessing; Johann Gottfried Eichhorn; Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette; Ferdinand Christian Baur; Heinrich Julius Holtzmann; William Robertson Smith, et al.

Here Thompson appears confused: "Spinoza was indeed Jewish, and both he and Peyrere were rather more influenced by the agnostic Thomas Hobbes than by Protestant thought!" In what way was Spinoza Jewish? Does Thompson mean halachically, because his mother was? Does he mean that he never was baptized a Christian, therefore he remained Jewish? Or is it because later members of the Haskalah would recognize Spinoza as one of their own, and one of their guiding lights?[45] There's no evidence his faith or practice was Jewish after his excommunication. He certainly wrote more favorably of Jesus, Jesus' apostles, and the New Testament, than of Moses, the early Israelites, medieval Jewish sages like Maimonides, or the Old Testament, in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.[46] Spinoza was almost certainly influenced by Hobbes. I don't think the evidence bears out that La Peyrère was influenced by Hobbes. If anything, I think it more likely the influence was the other way around, although this cannot be proven.[47] The "agnostic" Hobbes contrasted with "Protestant" thought? Well, Hobbes was an Anglican, so if we exclude Anglicans from "Protestantism," as they have historically done, that might be the case. Was Hobbes an "agnostic"? I have some familiarity with Hobbes' works (*Leviathan*, *De Cive*, his now published letters, etc.), but I find no evidence that he was an "agnostic." Explicitly he seems to be a faithful member of the Church of England, which was consistent with his political philosophy—he went to church faithfully every Sunday. I think the real controversy is whether or not he had faith—he appears to from all explicit

comments he makes in this regard, as well as from his practice (unlike the case of Spinoza and Judaism). Or, whether he was really an Epicurean atheist.[48] I don't claim to know, although I lean, perhaps, in the latter direction.

Concluding Remarks

I did not respond in this article to every point Thompson brought up in his article, but only to those that I think most directly related to what I initially wrote. I am sincere in my appreciation for his taking the time to engage my work, despite our many disagreements. I hope I have clarified some of the points from my earlier article, although I do not expect to have won any converts. Such written disagreements on public forums such as this periodical are how we move scholarship forward in constructive ways.

Notes

[1] In addition to Joseph Ratzinger, "Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit: Zur Frage nach Grundlagen und Weg der Exegese heute," in *Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit*, ed. Joseph Ratzinger, 15-44 (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 32; see also Michael Maria Waldstein, "*Analogia Verbi*: The Truth of Scripture in Rudolf Bultmann and Raymond Brown," *Letter & Spirit* 6 (2010): 93-140, at 98, 100-103, and 107; Michael M. Waldstein, "The Foundation of Bultmann's Work," *Communio* 14 (1987): 115-145; and Reiner Blank, *Analyse und Kritik der formgeschichtlichen Arbeiten von Martin Dibelius und Rudolf Bultmann* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kommissionsverlag, 1981) [which Ratzinger cites]. An English translation of Ratzinger's entire German essay is Joseph Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Conflict: The Question of the Basic Principles and Path of Exegesis Today," in *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 91-126. An earlier (but slightly shorter) English translation is available online as, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis," which was the paper he delivered in 1988 in New York City as the Erasmus Lecture, and is here published in *First Things*.

[2] Levenson originally published this essay in *First Things* (1993), but it was later included in his collection of essays, Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), ch. 5, "Historical Criticism and the Fate of the Enlightenment Project," 106-126, which I think should be required reading for all Bible scholars.

[3] See, e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); and Idem, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition: Being Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1988* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). For an excellent example of biblical studies attempting to take MacIntyre's approach into account and applying it to our understanding of the Bible, see C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[4] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7.

[5] Ratzinger, "Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit," 23.

[6] See Ratzinger's conversation as cited in Paul T. Stallsworth, "The Story of an Encounter," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus, 102-190 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 107-108.

[7] See, e.g., the important historical and sociological work of David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); William R. Farmer, "State *Interesse* and Markan Primacy," in *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms 1850-1914*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and William Farmer (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 15-49; and Idem, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1976).

[8] Joseph Ratzinger/Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth: Erster Teil: Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 86-87. English edition available as Idem, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

[9] Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 43.

[10] See, e.g., the many (primarily partial) studies cited in the footnotes of Jeffrey L. Morrow, "The Enlightenment University and the Creation of the Academic Bible: Michael Legaspi's *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*," *Nova et Vetera* 11, no. 3 (2013): 897-922.

[11] Henning Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung Band I: Vom Alten Testament bis Origenes* (Munich: Beck, 1990); Idem, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung Band II: Von der Spätantike bis ausgehenden Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1990); Idem, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung Band III: Renaissance, Reformation, Humanismus* (Munich: Beck, 1997); and Idem, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung Band IV: Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 2001). English editions of this appeared in print as: Idem, *History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 1: From the Old Testament to Origen*, trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Idem, *History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 2: From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. James O. Duke (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Idem, *History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 3: Renaissance, Reformation, Humanism*, trans. James O. Duke (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); and Idem, *History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 4: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

[12] John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

[13] Magne Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300) Part 1: Antiquity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Idem, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300) Part 2: The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Idem, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Idem, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation III: From Modernism to Post-Modernism Part 1: The Nineteenth Century—A Century of Modernism and Historicism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); and Idem, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation III: From Modernism to Post-Modernism Part 2: The Twentieth Century—From Modernism to Post-Modernism* (Göttingen:

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

[14] I'm referring to his 114 page introduction to *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament 1: Josué, Juges, Ruth, Samuel, Rois, Chroniques, Esdras, Néhémie, Esther*, ed. Dominque Barthélemy (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

[15] Alfred Loisy, *Choses passées* (Paris: Nourry, 1913), 246. He wrote virtually the same thing, slightly modified, nearly twenty years later: "Therefore I did not limit myself to criticizing Harnack, I implied with discretion, but actually, an essential reform of the received exegesis, of the official theology, of the ecclesiastical government in general." See Alfred Loisy, *Mémoires pour servir a l'histoire religieuse de notre temps T. II: 1900-1908* (Paris: Nourry, 1931), 168.

[16] See, e.g., Jeffrey L. Morrow, *Alfred Loisy and Modern Biblical Studies* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming); Idem, "Religion and Empire: Loisy's Use of 'Religion' Prior to His Correspondence with Cumont," in *Constructing Religion: Literary, Historical, and Religious Studies in Dialogue*, ed. Joshua King and Jade Werner (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, forthcoming); and Idem, "Loisy, Alfred Firmin," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception Volume H*, ed. Hans-Josef Klauck, Bernard McGinn, Choon-Leong Seow, Hermann Spieckermann, Barry Dov Walfish, and Eric Ziolkowski (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming). For Loisy's complete publications, see the official Loisy website.

[17] See, e.g., A. Firmin [Alfred Loisy], "Les preuves et l'économie de la revelation," *Revue du clergé français* 22 (1900): 133-134; and Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Alfred Loisy's Developmental Approach to Scripture: Reading the 'Firmin' Articles in the Context of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Historical Biblical Criticism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 3 (2013): 333-334.

[18] See, e.g., St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*; Jeffrey L. Morrow, "*Dei verbum* in Light of the History of Catholic Biblical Interpretation," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 23, no. 1 (forthcoming): 1-5; J. Patout Burns, "Delighting the Spirit: Augustine's Practice of Figurative Interpretation," in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, 182-194 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Maureen A. Tilley, "Understanding Augustine Misunderstanding Tyconius," *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 405-408; Martine Dulaey, "La sixième Règle de Tyconius et son

résumé dans le 'De doctrina christiana,'" *Revue des Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 35 (1989): 83-103; Francisco José Weismann, "Principios de exégesis bíblica en el De Doctrina Christiana de San Agustín," *Cuadernos monásticos* 80 (1987): 61-73; Giancarlo Gaeta, "Le Regole per l'interpretazione della Scrittura da Ticonio ad Agostino," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 4 (1987): 109-118; and Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

[19] On the "Firmin" articles, see, e.g., Morrow, "Alfred Loisy's Developmental Approach," 324-344.

[20] In addition to Idem, *Alfred Loisy*, see especially C.J.T. Talar, *(Re)reading, Reception, and Rhetoric: Approaches to Roman Catholic Modernism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

[21] See, e.g., Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Babylon in Paris: Alfred Loisy as Assyriologist," *Journal of Religious History* 40, no. 2 (2016): 261-276; Idem, "Alfred Loisy and les Mythes Babyloniens: Loisy's Discourse on Myth in the Context of Modernism," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology/Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 21, no. 1 (2014): 87-103; and Idem, "*Études Assyriologie* and 19th and 20th Century French Historical-Biblical Criticism," *Near Eastern Archaeological Society Bulletin* 59 (2014): 3-20.

[22] A. Loisy, *Les mythes chaldéens de la création et du déluge* (Amiens: Rousseau-Leroy, 1892), 1.

[23] See, e.g., Ibid., 82-95; Idem, *Les mythes babyloniens et les premiers chapitres de la Genèse* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1901), X, 68, and 101; and Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Babylonian Myths and the Bible: The Historical and Religious Context to Loisy's Application of 'Myth' as a Concept," *Papers of the Nineteenth Century Theology Group* 44 (2013): 59-60. More recently, on the complex relationships between the various ancient Near Eastern flood traditions (form Mesopotamia, but excluding the biblical accounts), see Y.S. Chen, *The Primeval Flood Catastrophe: Origins and Early Developments in Mesopotamian Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[24] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel, with a reprint of the article Israel from the "Encyclopaedia Britannica"*, trans. by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies, with a preface by W. Robertson Smith (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885), 3.

[25] Ibid.

[26] See, e.g., Paul Michael Kurtz, "The Way of War: Wellhausen, Israel, and Bellicose Reiche," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 127, no. 1 (2015): 1-19; and Arnaldo Momigliano, "Religious History Without Frontiers: J. Wellhausen, U. Wilamowitz, and E. Schwartz," *History and Theory* 21, no. 4 (1982): 49-64.

[27] Peter Machinist, "The Road Not Taken: Wellhausen and Assyriology," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller, and Alan Millard, 469-531 (Leiden: Brill, 2009). This, of course, would not be a fault for Wellhausen with regard to his lack of engagement for other ancient Near Eastern elements that we now take for granted, like Ugaritic literature; Ugaritic had not yet been deciphered.

[28] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*.

[29] Levenson, *Hebrew Bible*, 118. The particular essay is available online as, "The Bible: Unexamined Commitments of Criticism."

[30] James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

[31] I'm trying to contribute to this in my own work, e.g., Jeffrey L. Morrow, *Theology, Politics, and Exegesis: Essays on the History of Modern Biblical Criticism* (Eugene: Pickwick, forthcoming 2017); and Idem, *Three Skeptics and the Bible: La Peyrère, Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Reception of Modern Biblical Criticism* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2016).

[32] Scott W. Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture 1300-1700* (New York: Herder, 2013). On their volume see Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Averroism, Nominalism, and Mechanization: Hahn and Wiker's Unmasking of Historical Criticism's Political Agenda by Laying Bare its Philosophical Roots," *Nova et Vetera* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1293-1340; and Idem, "The Untold History of Modern Biblical Scholarship's Pre-Enlightenment Secular Origins." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 8, no. 1 (2014): 145-155.

[33] Pierre Gibert, *L'invention critique de la Bible: XV^e^ – XVIII^e^ siècle* (Paris:

Éditions Gallimard, 2010).

[34] Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). On this volume see Morrow, "Enlightenment University," 897-922.

[35] Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[36] Thomas Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W.M.L. De Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[37] Henning Graf Reventlow, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne, Die bedeutung des Bibelverständnisses für die geistesgeschichtliche und politische Entwicklung in England von der Reformation bis zur Aufklärung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980). This is available in English as, Idem, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[38] See, e.g., Morrow, *Theology, Politics, and Exegesis*, ch. 2; Idem, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 4; and relevant sources cited therein.

[39] See, e.g., Andrew Willard Jones, *Before Church and State: A Study of Social Order in the Sacramental Kingdom of St. Louis IX* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, forthcoming 2017); Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Secularization, Objectivity, and Enlightenment Scholarship: The Theological and Political Origins of Modern Biblical Studies," *Logos* 18, no. 1 (2015): 14-32; and John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 1-25.

[40] See, e.g., Jeffrey Lawrence Morrow, "Evangelical Catholics and Catholic Biblical Scholarship: An Examination of Scott Hahn's Canonical, Liturgical, and Covenantal Biblical Exegesis," (Ph.D. diss., University of Dayton, 2007), 136-137; D.G. Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 146-147; William L. Portier, "Fundamentalism in North America: A Modern Anti-Modernism," *Communio* 28 (2001): 595; Mark A. Noll, "The Evangelical Mind in America," in *Should God Get Tenure? Essays on Religion and Higher Education*, ed. David W. Gill, 195-211 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Sandra Yocum Mize, "The Common-Sense Argument for Papal Infallibility," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996):

242-263; Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 2, 33-34, and 37; Sandra Yocum Mize, "The Papacy in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Catholic Imagination," (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1987); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Idem, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

[41] See, e.g., Jeffrey L. Morrow, "The Acid of History: La Peyrère, Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Separation of Faith and Reason in Modern Biblical Studies," *Heythrop Journal* (forthcoming); Idem, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 2; Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 392-394, 393 n. 31-32, 393-394 n. 33 and 394 n. 37; Élisabeth Quennehen, "Lapeyrère, la Chine et la chronologie biblique," *La Lettre clandestine* 9 (2000): 244; Idem, "Un Noveau Manuscrit des Préadamites," *La Lettre clandestine* 4 (1995); and Idem, "À Propos des Préadamites: deux manuscrits des Archives Nationales," *La Lettre clandestine* 3 (1994): 17-20.

[42] See, e.g., Morrow, "Acid of History,"; Idem, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 2; Andreas Nikolaus Pietsch, *Isaac La Peyrère: Bibelkritik, Philosemitismus und Patronage in der Gelehrtenrepublik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 84-88 and 125-133; and Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 5-25, 40, and 45-49.

[43] See, e.g., Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Spinoza and Modern Biblical Hermeneutics: The Theo-Political Implications of his Freedom to Philosophize," *New Blackfriars* (forthcoming); Idem, "Acid of History,"; Idem, *Theology, Politics, and Exegesis*, ch. 2; Idem, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 4; Richard H. Popkin, "Some New Light on the Roots of Spinoza's Science of Bible Study," in *Spinoza and the Sciences*, ed. Marjorie Grene and Debra Nails, 171–88 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1986); and Idem, "Spinoza and La Peyrère," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (1977): 172-195.

[44] In addition to the studies mentioned above, see also, e.g., Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jeffrey L. Morrow, "The Early Modern Political Context to Spinoza's Bible Criticism," Revista de Filosofía 66, no. 3 (2010): 7-24; Eric Jorink, "'Horrible and Blasphemous': Isaac La Peyrère,

Isaac Vossius and the Emergence of Radical Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Republic," in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700: Volume 1*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, 429–550 (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Noel Malcolm, "*Leviathan*, the Pentateuch, and the Origins of Modern Biblical Criticism," in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, ed. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau, 241-264 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Daniel J. Elazar, "Spinoza and the Bible," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 7 (1995): 5-19; Edwin Curley, "Notes on a Neglected Masterpiece: Spinoza and the Science of Hermeneutics," in *Spinoza: The Enduring Questions*, ed. Graeme Hunter, 64-99 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Richard H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau, "La lecture de la Bible dans le cercle de Spinoza," in *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible*, ed. Jean-Robert Armogathe, 97-115 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989); Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes and Biblical Philology in the Service of the State," *Topoi* 7 (1988): 231-239; Eugene Combs, "Spinoza's Method of Biblical Interpretation and His Political Philosophy," in Modernity and Responsibility: Essays for George Grant, ed. Eugene Combs, 7-28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Juan José Garrido, "El método histórico-crítico de interpretación de la Escritura según Spinoza," in *El método en teología. Actas del primer Simposio de Teología e Historia (29-31 mayo 1980)*, ed. The Faculty of Theology of Saint Vincent Ferrer, 269–281 (Valencia: The Faculty of Theology of Saint Vincent Ferrer, 1981); Richard H. Popkin, "The Development of Religious Scepticism and the Influence of Isaac La Peyrère's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism," in *Classical Influences on European Culture, AD 1500-1700*, ed. Robert Ralf Bolgar, 271-280 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Idem, "Bible Criticism and Social Science," in *Methodological and Historical Essays in the Natural and Social Sciences*, ed. Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky, 339-360 (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1974); and Sylvain Zac, *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965).

[45] But see Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), who provides a devastating critique of the early Spinoza biography (*La vie de Monsieur Benoit de Spinoza*) used to mythologize Spinoza's early life before his excommunication, in order to bolster his supporters within the Haskalah and in eighteenth century philosophical circles in general. Although scholars often fail to realize the important place Spinoza played in the later "Enlightenment" debates, see the important work of Jonathan

Israel which has demonstrate how fundamentally important Spinoza's thought, and its reception, actually was, e.g.: Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Idem, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[46] See, e.g., Morrow, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 4. Also compare Spinoza's comments in his first chapter on "prophecy" with Moses and Jesus, and his comments in general on historical Israel versus Jesus and the New Testament. The most important critical edition of this text is Spinoza, *Œuvres III: Tractatus Theologico-Politicus/Traité théologico-politique*, 2nd ed., ed. Pierre-François Moreau, text established by Fokke Akkerman, trans. and notes by Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012). That volume contains a critical edition of the Latin text with French translation on opposing pages. The best available English translation made on this Latin critical edition, is in Edwin Curley, ed., *The Collected Works of Spinoza: Volume II*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 65-355.

[47] See, e.g., Morrow, *Three Skeptics*, ch. 2. Here I agree with Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère*, 45-49.

[48] On Hobbes' Epicureanism, see Hahn and Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible*, 285-338; Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes and Epicurean Religion," in *Der Garten und die Moderne: Epikureische Moral und Politik vom Humanismus bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. G. Paganini and E. Tortarolo (Stuttgart: Rommann-holzboog Verlag, 2004), 161–214; Idem, "Hobbes's Theory of Civil Religion," in *Pluralismo e Religione Civile*, ed. G. Paganini and E. Tortarolo (Milan, IT: Bruno Mondatori, 2003), 61–98; and Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes e l'epicureismo," *Rivista critica di storia dell filosofia* 33 (1975): 54–71.