From Butler to Thornton: A Typology of Conflicting Readings of the Two Books of Scripture and Nature in the Church of England from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology awarded by Wycliffe College and the University of Toronto.

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This dissertation studies the persistence within modern Anglicanism of (a) a classical "high view" of Scripture as the exemplar of creation, (b) the apologetic and phenomenological advantages of this view in the wake of Joseph Butler (1692-1752) due to (c) the kind of theodicy the Bible displays in contrast to more rationalistic proposals from deism to panentheism. (d) Finally, the view of theodicy and Scripture one takes influences whether or not one reads the two books of Scripture and nature figurally. The "high view" was undercut by nineteenth-century sectarian polemics between Protestants and Tractarians. Yet a minority kept this tradition alive. Lionel Thornton (1884-1960) is important to this project because he escaped from Tractarian and Protestant dead ends. The dissertation lays out this broader Anglican story and then focuses on Thornton, for whose work I provide historical context and a detailed examination. I first analyze his early, philosophical-theological period where he defended an incarnational theodicy over against the panentheistic-monist alternative: the "soul-making" theodicy. Thornton's theodicy led him to take up a realist ("Platonist") metaphysic and phenomenology in order to resist the monist tendency to smooth over antinomies in Scripture and nature, especially the problem of evil. Next, I look at the theodical alternatives through the lens of Thornton and his mentor, John Neville Figgis (1866-1919). In contrast to the Modernist monism of Charles Raven and others, Figgis and Thornton resisted the temptation to offer an etiology of evil. They concluded that grace overcame evil by reordering the past. The last chapter, therefore, looks at Thornton’s view of the
temporal and cosmic reach of Christ's reordering work of "recapitulation", and the hermeneutical consequences that follow: namely, that having reunited creation by rescuing it from the dispersive power of evil, every trivial detail of creation came to reflect Christ. I argue that this way of handling the Bible follows consistently from a biblical, non-monist, theodicy. Furthermore, I believe Thornton's project shared a family resemblance to Butler's, for, like the latter's, it indicated that the rejection of figural reading implied methodological atheism. This larger argument touches on contemporary hermeneutical debates within the Church.

**Keywords:** Scripture; natural and supernatural; two books; creation; theodicy; analogy; skepticism; fideism; biblical ontology; figural reading; revelation; antinomy; accommodation; divine pedagogy; intellectual probation; the alphabet of nature; synechdoche; science and religion; forgiveness; fall; atonement; recapitulation; Christian Platonism; monism; emergentism; deism; Joseph Butler; Jones of Nayland; John Henry Newman; John Keble; H. L. Mansel; John Hannah; Charles Gore; Charles Raven; John Neville Figgis; L. S. Thornton.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my wife, Jennifer, and our two children, who had to do without a husband and father for quite a while as I was finishing up this dissertation. Many thanks also to my parents, Will and Carol Boldt, and my in-laws, Frank and Charlette Talat, for all of the financial support these many years. Nor should I fail to mention certain regular sources of bursaries and income including Wycliffe College, The Anglican Foundation, the Prayer Book Society of Canada, and the parish of St Matthew's Riverdale. Most especially I must thank my supervisor, Ephraim Radner, whose work and encouragement made this project possible. I would hardly have finished my bachelor's degree had it not been my desire to study under him at the graduate level. Additionally I need to thank my committee members — Joseph Mangina, David Neelands, David Novak, and Scott Mandelbrote — for their constructive input. Finally, there are so many friends and editors whose eyes have passed over this manuscript in whole or in part: Ben Guyer, Zachary Guiliano, Doug LeBlanc, Jeremy Bonner, Mark Chapman, David Ney, Dane Neufeld, David Adkins, Andy Witt, and, most especially, Rachel Lott. All mistakes are of course my own.
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Introduction: Scripture, Nature, Supernature

The controversy over the supernatural was one of the defining features of twentieth-century theology. One need look no further than the highly influential work of Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) to find but one prominent example.¹ For Anglicans the issue came to a head even earlier at the time of Charles Gore (1853-1932) and his Modernist opponents. “Modernism” is synonymous with the early form of what we now call theological “Liberalism.” Ramsey defines Modernism as a set of tenets drawn from the Victorian age about the inevitability of progress, the uniformity of nature, and the identity of God and man.² Where the Modernists equated God with immanent evolutionary processes,³ Gore and Lionel Thornton (1884-1960) tried to maintain a real transcendent Creator and redeemer. Thornton’s rather straightforward definition of the natural and supernatural was in terms of creation and Creator.⁴ Writing in hindsight, Michael Ramsey charted this theological flashpoint in From Gore to Temple, noting how the theological naturalism advocated by early Liberals had, by the time of writing, been eclipsed by back-to-the-Bible movements that were eminently supernaturalistic.⁵ The obvious example is the theology of Karl Barth (1886-1968) and his British translator, Edwyn Hoskyns (1884-1937). Both “read the Bible from within,” and, in the rising shadow of Hitler, both emphasized apocalyptic discontinuities between God and creation due to radical evil.

⁴ Even more precisely, Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 88, defined the distinction not in terms of God’s relative attribute of Creator, but in terms of God’s uncreated nature vs. created nature.
⁵ Ramsey, An Era in Anglican Theology, chapter 9.
But German theology had a rocky reception in England after World War I for a variety of reasons: guilt by association with dictatorial culture, and, in Barth’s case, his dislike of natural theology, which had strong historical roots and institutional weight in Britain. Anglican theologians in the biblical-theological mould still, therefore, put a high priority on the doctrine of creation and on natural theology. As the ties of friendship between German and English theology unravelled in the interwar period, each theological culture tended to go its own way. It has often been emphasized how detrimental this was to English theology. Perhaps less often has the reverse argument been made — that German theology perhaps lacked some insights into the doctrine of creation, which still occupied the English.

While German theology maintained its dominance over Western academic theology well into the latter half of the twentieth century, English — and Anglican in particular — theologians have gained less notoriety despite their intrinsic interest. While Barth and de Lubac are broadly discussed amongst theologians of every denomination and ideology, Anglican theologians are a bit of a niche market, and were often the property of rival parties that are inexplicable to theological outsiders interested in a more ecumenical “mere Christianity.” This is a shame since these same rivalries mean Anglican debates make rather good microcosms for understanding divided Christendom.

No theologian of talent has been more affected in his reception by the balkanization of twentieth-century theology than Lionel Thornton. To be fair, he was an extremely difficult writer. He was Anglo-Catholic — a party that has less popular traction than larger Roman and Eastern Catholic traditions. He also advanced some unpopular ideas. Not least was his great

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reservation about ecumenical enthusiasm. More tellingly for my purposes was his virtuoso performance as a figural, or “typological,” reader of Scripture. Thornton thus found intimations of Christ everywhere in Scripture, including the Old Testament. This method of reading was the standard manner of reading the Bible for Christians until somewhere in the nineteenth century, after which time it was tightly reined in and, I would argue, unsuccessfully blended with historical criticism, if not thrown out entirely (at least in academic circles). Figural reading became virtually unintelligible to the modern academic world.7

One such assumption was a “high view” of Scripture. This is neither a Barthian “witness to the Word” doctrine, nor a “fundamentalist” doctrine of plenary inspiration.8 It is something even higher. By “high view” of Scripture I mean that by virtue of the incarnation, the Bible is identical with the thoughts of God. As such, it is the exemplary archetype of creation and the final cause of it — that towards which God is shaping our times.9 The characteristically Anglican interest in creation10 kept alive this view of Scripture in the largely neglected thinkers I examine.

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7 Figural reading is, firstly, the way in which Scripture is used to interpret Scripture by way of similarities found between events, persons, natural or artificial objects, symbols, and verbal links. In other words, what has broadly been called typology and allegory. The Western distillation of this way of reading was formulated in the fourfold quadriga, which recognized a literal, Christological, moral, and eschatological sense of Scripture. I will be demonstrating that this method assumes the unity of Scripture and finds the "whole" reflected in each "part" (synechdoche). I will not be arguing that biblical criticism led to a downgrading of figural reading, but that hermeneutical decisions in the theological academy were effects of the implosion of Christendom from the time of the Reformation through World War I. Figural reading is just far too pervasive a practice to ever be extinguished. That is because, secondly, biblically literate Christians instinctively "apply" biblical figures to their own lives by way of analogy. The way in which the Bible "absorbs the world" for normal believers is at the heart of what I try to describe.

8 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), Vol I.1. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Benediction Classics, 2015). To be sure, both Barth and the fundamentalists read figurally even if their doctrines of Scripture failed to articulate the ontological presuppositions governing the practice. I will argue in this thesis that the truth of Scripture is inseparable from the goodness it intends to form in the Church. It is entirely possible, then, to have “good” readings of Scripture without solid second-order theological reflection.

9 I am convinced this was the assumed ontology of Scripture until relatively recently. See Appendix 1 for a discussion of some of the sources of this view. Also see chapter 2 in Ephraim Radner, Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

10 Per Lønning, Creation — An Ecumenical Challenge?: Reflections Issuing From A Study By The Institute For Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1989). Issuing from ecumenical work around the doctrine of creation, Lønning's study shows how "typically Anglican" sacramental ontology has become ecumenical.
in this thesis: Joseph Butler, William Jones, John Keble, H. L. Mansel, John Hannah, Neville Figgis, and Lionel Thornton. It is my contention that this view of Scripture is what safeguards the distinction between the natural and the supernatural and that the asymmetrical relationship between God’s “two books”\textsuperscript{11} of Scripture and nature practically precedes the more abstract issue of the natural and supernatural. If one collapses Scripture and nature, one also collapses the supernatural and natural. If one keeps them distinct, it has less to do with metaphysical gymnastics and more with whether one finds biblical theodicy compelling.\textsuperscript{12} If not, the modern alternative seems to be the “soul-making” theodicy — a metaphysical, and largely conceptual, solution unregulated by biblical language.\textsuperscript{13} In short, when presented with the problem of evil, the soul-making theodicy jettisons God’s omnipotence and ramps up evil’s usefulness for common currency. He asks: "What was there in the Anglican spiritual inheritance that particularly favored the emergence of a "sacramental" universe?" (241). His answer is that prior even to the influence of idealism there was a preference for Plato and the Johannine literature as can be seen in the \textit{Lux Mundi} essayists, but further back in the Cambridge Platonists and others. One might see Platonism in a negative light in that it can devalue matter as presenting only the imperfect projections of a higher reality, or one might use it to celebrate matter as the only available and adequate means to represent that reality (245). That the latter is the case can be confirmed by the fact that so many Anglican priests have been scientists, which has also mitigated Anglicanism's opposition to Darwinism (247). At the same time the Johannine approach to Scripture of Hort, Westcott, and Lightfoot justified the use of reason (Logos) and smoothed the transition from Scripture to the Platonism of the early church, which has been a contact point with Orthodoxy (248–9). Like Barth, the Anglican/Orthodox vision is Christocentric, but this is inclusively Christocentric (249).

\textsuperscript{11} The idea here is that God is the author of both Scripture and nature, which implies analogous authorial characteristics and troubling features in both texts. Early Christian and Jewish theologians anticipated the idea inasmuch as created things were conceived as letters and words, while Scripture was often compared to organic things — the body, most prominently. The book of Scripture, however, had an ontological priority. For a history of ontologies of Scripture see Ephraim Radner, \textit{Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). For essays on the history of this concept, see the two volumes of Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., \textit{Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions}, 2 vols (Boston: Brill, 2008).

\textsuperscript{12} I use the term theodicy generally to refer to the justification of God given the fact of both suffering (pain caused by "natural evil") and moral evil. Following Neville Figgis in my fifth chapter, I believe one could more easily reconcile pain with the existence of an omnipotent God on the observation that suffering might be useful. Evil, on the other hand, is much harder to make useful without erasing the distinction between it and goodness. My claim is that insofar as "soul-making" theodicies blur the line between suffering and evil, so too are they tempted to blur stark distinctions between good and evil.

\textsuperscript{13} John Hick, \textit{Evil and the God of Love} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), popularized this perennial theodical option. Hick's theodicy only distilled standard Modernist thinking from the early decades of the twentieth century. As we will demonstrate in chapter 5, Charles Raven found theodical precedent in Theodore of Mopsuestia and not, as with Hick, in Irenaeus. I might have more explicitly contrasted the opposing Irenaean projects of Hick and Thornton had Hick said anything substantially different from his predecessors. Hick, in any case, wrote his book in 1966, six years after Thornton's death.
personal growth. It normally results in some kind of reciprocal, “panentheist” relation between God and nature that is not quite pantheist, but still monist.\textsuperscript{14}

The distinction between nature and supernature, creation and uncreated Creator, is the hallmark of theism. But can the relation between the two be upheld without ending in absolute skepticism regarding a transcendent Creator, or, more temptingly, without bringing creation and Creator under one explanatory principle? To speak of this problem is to talk about God’s exemplary, formal, efficient, and final causal relationship with creation.\textsuperscript{15} Theism has characteristically said that God had in mind a plan for creation that he perfectly executed. The fact of evil, however, calls into question whether the execution was perfect. The answer to this, for Christians, has had to come through the doctrines of redemption: incarnation, atonement, recapitulation, and so on. If we accept that Jesus Christ has somehow unified creation in accordance with the mind of God (for unity is precisely what has been called into question by evil), we also have to admit that this unity has been revealed to us in the figures of the Bible.

\textsuperscript{14} A short word on the concept of monism is necessary. Parmenides and Spinoza are classical and early modern examples of those who believed that reality was reducible to one thing. Monism in the religious realm was, by the time of Neville Figgis and Lionel Thornton, identified with the project of German and British idealism and, later, with the emergentism of Samuel Alexander and Alfred North Whitehead. Figgis’ preferred term for idealists was "pantheist." I follow Nadler who states that "[r]eductive pantheism and atheism maintain extensionally equivalent ontologies," Steven Nadler, “Baruch Spinoza,” in \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy}, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/spinoza/. "What really distinguishes the pantheist from the atheist," he continues, "is that the pantheist does not reject as inappropriate the religious psychological attitudes demanded by theism. Rather, the pantheist simply asserts that God—conceived as a being before which one is to adopt an attitude of worshipful awe—is or is in Nature." In Appendix 2 I indicate how the term "monism" was claimed by reductive materialists as well, which is why in chapter 4 I discuss Philip Clayton's distinctions between "physicalist" and "non-physicalist" monisms, the latter of which certain kinds of emergentists, pantheists, and "panentheists" would claim as their preferred ontology. I am not convinced by the distinction between physicalist and non-physicalist monism for reasons I discuss in Appendix 2 regarding the history of "imponderable fluids," but I take it as a statement of a real intention by emergentists to distinguish themselves from materialists. Finally, I assume in that same chapter that while Platonism may be logically reductive, it is the opposite of monism since it upholds phenomenological distinctions the monist would materially reduce. As such, classical Platonism is a proto-anti-materialism.

\textsuperscript{15} For thinking of the natural and supernatural in terms of Aristotle’s four causes, I here show my indebtedness to John Scotus Eriugena, \textit{Periphyseon}, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams and Ludwig Bieler, vol. 1–4 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968). The addition of exemplary causality of course was a later formulation that was in some way a response to the problems of \textit{only} using Aristotle’s four causes.
This was a sticking point for twentieth-century theologians. On the one hand, “Liberals” and “Neo-orthodox” have not wanted to affirm the straightforward unity of Scripture in all its trivial details, while evangelicals have usually not affirmed biblical unity with reference to a doctrine of creation. As such, all groups with varying degrees of consistency have had trouble with full-blooded figural reading. Such reading not only presupposes the unity of Scripture. It supposes that Scripture’s words are things that signify other things “allegorically” (in many circles a bad word).

My contention is that figural reading is necessarily entailed if one concedes that God had a plan for creation, that the plan was executed by Jesus Christ against the divisive effects of sin, and that the Bible reveals that plan as one and complete. Put differently, Christ was not incarnated into a void, but like Adam into a garden. The incarnation implicates and recapitulates the whole creation; it restores to divine use as a primordial language every creature (human artifacts included). As such, the incarnation is necessarily extended in a perfected creation by virtue of the hypostatic union. Scripture is that perfected creation; it is the formal and final — more — the exemplary cause of everything in creation and history. This dissertation claims

Formal, efficient, and final causation change their character in a theistic context where relations between these three to a created effect are non-necessary and intentional rather than purely logical (e.g., Plotinus, Hegel). Thus medieval theologians developed the idea of exemplary causality: see T. Kondoleon, “Exemplary Causality,” New Catholic Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia.com, October 22, 2017, http://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/exemplary-causality. They debated whether exemplary causality was more akin to one of the three previous causes, and found similarities to each. If God has an exemplar in mind, “it exerts its influence upon the effect only through the will. It thus touches upon the very causality of the efficient cause…” Others noted that “the exemplary cause is of the intentional order,” and is thus “reducible to the genus of formal cause.” Kondoleon continues,

St. Thomas and many of his followers regard it as reducible to the genus of formal cause. However, they then speak of it as being an extrinsic formal cause. While this view is certainly tenable, for the exemplar is a preconceived form, it has the weakness of doing violence to the intrinsic-extrinsic division of causes, according to which division the formal cause is intrinsic to the being of its effect.

Consequently, since the exemplary cause is extrinsic to the effect and exerts its influence as an idea in the intentional order, it is more properly reducible to final cause. Thus, while the final cause considered as a preconceived form of a work exerts an attractive influence upon the will of the agent, it performs at the same time a secondary role of measuring the agent’s action; in the latter respect it is an exemplar….
that this is the best way to relate the two books of Scripture and nature, with nature and history being in asymmetrical analogy to Scripture. History and its inhabitants (the Church especially) are the material cause of the New Creation that will be brought about when God has completely impressed biblical figures on creation at the end of time. Where this construal is denied, the result is practical atheism of the sort Joseph Butler demonstrated of the deists, and John Neville Figgis (1866-1919) and L. S. Thornton demonstrated of the Liberal Modernists. The added value of observing how Christians from Butler to Thornton have taken for granted the ontological givenness of Scripture is in how this fact accounts for the phenomenon of belief. Butler compellingly describes how people believe based on a cumulation of analogies from Scripture to life. A large number of those analogies are quite personal since biblical examples are regularly used by common Christians to figurally make sense of any number of circumstances.

Why does the “high view” of Scripture as the exemplary cause of creation matter? It contains a theodicy that cuts against the grain of its Liberal counterpart — the “soul-making”

The concept of exemplary causality is helpful insofar as it unites the three causes, and it guards against what John Betz calls an “analogy of inequality” or a “pseudo-analogy of gradation”; see John R. Betz, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Erich Przywara, Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 35. That is, creation as an effect cannot pre-exist intrinsically within God, which would imply some kind of continuity of being. Thus Betz in footnote 144 quotes Przywara as saying:

The *analogia entis* points to God as the *ipsa forma* of the *forma rerum*, i.e., to God as *causa exemplaris*; as for the ground of creaturely existence, on the other hand, the *analogia entis* points to God as the principium (i.e., *causa efficiens*) and finis (i.e., *causa finalis*). Thus all three causal relations between God and world … are comprised within the one *analgia entis.*” (54)

God is more than a Platonic form; he is an exemplar.

I am aware of the fact that "deism" is a catch-all for a number of natural theologians who did not necessarily apply the term to themselves, but it is nevertheless convenient. I will discuss Butler's "parity argument" in chapter I whereby he demonstrates the epistemological double-standard such natural theologians applied to supernatural and not natural revelation. My claim is that the double-standard has never ceased to be held by certain theologians up to the present, which is why Butler has a perennial relevance. Bob Tennant, *Conscience, Consciousness And Ethics In Joseph Butler’s Philosophy And Ministry* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2011), has shown how Butler's arguments actually opened the door to a greater cultural consensus in Britain. In the same way, I would hope the logic of his argument would today produce greater ecumenical convergence and theological consistency. Simultaneously, I want theologians to follow Butler's "down to earth" descriptions of actual belief rather than proceeding in abstract, prescriptive apologetic modes.
theodicy — that lends it unique apologetic, or rather existential, and phenomenological purchase. In Figgis’ words, the supernaturalist theologies of Scripture and nature put forward by Butler, Thornton, and several other thinkers I survey in this thesis simply “include more facts” than their opponents. At the most basic level this is expressed in a form of Platonic realism not uncommon in Anglicanism. These theologians make no presumptive metaphysical decision to discount as epiphenomena — but rather, to leave be as antinomies — sameness and difference, unity and diversity, wholes and parts; and they extend this objectivity to the phenomena of revelation (Trinity, incarnation, creation, theodicy etc.). First-order phenomena have priority over second-order reflections.

The opponents of the high view, by contrast, were tempted to make of their second-order reflections a complete explanatory system within which Scripture and nature were reduced. Modernists often claimed that science led them in this direction, but the historical facts show that theodicy was really the driving motive. Their “soul-making” theodicy preserved God’s goodness by claiming that his power was limited by human freedom and by his limited panentheistic nature. Where Butler’s heirs distinguished between belief “that” “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28) and ignorance regarding “how” they do, Modernists strove for gnosis of “how” the natural and supernatural interfaced and thereby reduced everything to a single, natural continuum of being. From atoms to apes to Adam to Adonai, everything was the ever greater sum of efficient causes. Time’s telos was the last link in this iron chain. Theism’s antimony of antinomies, the phenomenon of evil, was naturalized. Inasmuch as Modernists thought this telos was effected by humanity’s “co-creating” response to the divine ideal of love, redemption became a human work with a rather uncertain future, while the past became certain and immutable. This was the reverse of Figgis’ and Thornton’s view of time. For
them, time’s telos was given and rendered immutable by Christ, who broke the iron chain of the past in an act of radical forgiveness, an act that changed and recapitulated the past. But any form of forgiveness, Figgis was at pains to underline, was impossible on the theodical terms of Modernist panentheism, which was driven, in theory and practice, by an unforgiving strategy of self-redemption. Here was the strength of biblical orthodoxy over against panentheism’s phenomenological poverty. Butler’s heirs maintained apophatic silence regarding the causal mechanism behind biblical events like the fall and atonement. They highlighted the fact that these doctrines had analogies in the regular experience of, say, suffering for other peoples’ actions or not suffering the consequences of one’s own actions because a friend has extended forgiveness. Butler’s heirs, therefore, offered a convincing phenomenology of belief that accounts for inconvenient facts against the theistic paradigm, and that accounts for Christianity’s persuasive persistence in contrast to the historical epiphenomena of deism and panentheism.

All of this is a consequence of the construal of Scripture and nature that I am arguing for here, but I am arguing more: that figural reading matters. Why? The unity of Scripture and the revelatory significance of its verbal trivialities has been questioned because biblical history and biblical writers are not only said to be fallible but actually subject to the consequences of the fall. Again, these opponents assume an alternative theodicy, but my claim is that an incarnational theodicy means that the Son of God assumes, redeems, and transfigures the trivialities of Scripture (authors included). Such a theodicy gives more hope to a Church whose divided form, as John Keble said, contradicts our presumptions about what a Church ought to look like. I will show that Thornton’s reading of Judas illustrates the subversive power of figural exegesis to undermine settled “orthodox” presumptions in this way (including his own), but it also illustrates that within orthodoxy’s resources, hopeful words can be spoken.
Why, finally, should this view of Scripture, creation, and figuration matter to theologians? I do not believe that the problem of the relation between the natural and the supernatural is persuasively solved with reference to science or the analogy of being but a cruciform theodicy. I believe that figural hermeneutics necessarily follow from this and that anything less is a concession to atheism. Finally, I believe figural reading is the way the majority of normal Christians read Scripture. By finding analogies to their own experience, they receive hope. Academic theology ought to at least accurately describe this fact if not explicate the theological assumptions that stand behind it. Alas, this was not a strength of twentieth-century theologians, for whom Butler’s name was forgotten.

Methodology

The two pillars of this dissertation are Joseph Butler and Lionel Thornton. In studying Thornton I intend to centre on Revelation and the Modern World. This represents the synthesis of Thornton’s philosophical-theological and biblical-theological interests. Although I believe that his turn to biblical theology with The Common Life in the Body of Christ marked a change, I neither think the biblical concern was missing from his early work nor the philosophical from his later work. I will bring my reconstruction of Thornton’s project into conversation with Butler’s classic The Analogy of Religion, but also with other patristic, Anglican, and ressourcement theologians who do something similar: namely, describe history within a scripturally governed

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18 Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?, ed. Creston Davis, reprint edition (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011). While I basically agree with everything Milbank says to Žižek, the latter, unlike Milbank, is appropriately focused on the problem of suffering, with a biblical exegesis of a figural, though unorthodox, kind reminiscent of the Gnostic Ophite conflation of the Redeemer with the Serpent in Eden. Thornton noted the figural convertibility of Christ and the Serpent in several biblical passages in The Dominion of Christ, Being the Second Part of a Treatise on The Form of the Servant (London: Dacre, 1952), 137-146. If I had more time, I would have contrasted Gnostic and orthodox figuralism, Žižek and Thornton.


divine pedagogy. The Anglicans will be of particular importance since the Church of England’s relative continuity throughout modernity — and instrumentality in bringing about modernity — make it an interesting microcosm of the Western Church’s continuing conflicts.

Despite the contemporary resurgence of interest in figural exegesis, few today have tied it as explicitly to a doctrine of creation as did Thornton.21 It seems obvious, for example, when St Thomas states that God endows created things with meaning,22 that his doctrine of Scripture is inseparable from the doctrine of creation. Yet how frequently did a discussion of natural symbols and analogy come into evangelical inerrancy debates? Reservations about figural exegesis are not only had by the typical historical-critic, but also by conservatives committed to historical realism.23 On these terms biblical figures only make sense if humanly intended. What everyone usually misses is that practitioners of figural exegesis presume a view of creation. To be sure, it is a view no longer shared. But it is not shared because it is simply misunderstood and forgotten; and if forgotten, it is not a less powerful explanation. But the figural reader finds even our state of forgetfulness within the scriptural cosmos. Remembering the neglected work of Thornton, therefore, is a step towards remembering our own role as tillers of a text that for too many generations now has produced spiritual thorns and thistles.

Genre and the Present-Day Context

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22 “The author of Holy Scripture is God, in Whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, Q.1, a. 10)
This dissertation is not primarily a work of history. A play on Ramsey's *From Gore to Temple*, my title indicates that this is, firstly, a work of historical theology. It simply assumes and supplements Ramsey's own delineation of the two largest theological contestants (Anglo-Catholic and Modernist) within the Church of England at the time. I therefore do not dwell much on either Gore or Temple. My time period, however, is longer, beginning as it does with Butler. It also does not present a seamless and unbroken genealogy of ideas passed from one mind to another. True, Butler was received and commented on by anyone and everyone up until the interwar period. This genealogy was not hard to track. More important for the unity of my project are convergent lines of theological evolution. For instance, there is no indication that Mansel and Hannah knew the work of William Jones. And yet the Butlerian influence caused them to formulate a similar theology of Scripture to Jones despite the fact that Butler himself did nothing of the sort. My purpose is to explore how theological tendencies constellate — often in reaction to upheavals in Christendom. Here I show my debt to my supervisor, Ephraim Radner, but also to Yale-school typologies of the sort Frei, Lindbeck, Kelsey, and Cyril O'Regan have

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24 No doubt more history would have been helpful for filling in, for instance, the Lockean background within which more "Liberal" theology has stood and against which so many of my "analogists" where contending. For instance, Locke's epistemology opened the door to more (Hume) or less (deism) extreme versions of skepticism regarding our ability to "get behind" our senses to "things in themselves" and to God. Bishop Berkeley's response was to throw out the theory of truth as representation altogether in favor of a hermeneutic of divine disclosure — God was the cause of perception. Had he written more about Scripture, I would have written more on Berkeley. Nevertheless he looms large as a kind of realist interpreter of the book of nature who refused to allow an anti-sacramental gap open up between sign and thing signified. It is this "sacramental" hermeneutic that I find so similar, on the one hand, to Augustine, who believed that the present experience of the past as memory made speculations about a past behind memory redundant. On the other hand, I find Berkeley's hermeneutic similar to Barth's and Frei's assumption that Scripture is divine identity description. As such, the reconstruction of a "history behind" the text becomes hermeneutically penultimate for these theologians as it similarly was for Thornton. I do not believe it is coincidence that Barth and Thornton had a proclivity to track closely with traditional Jewish interpretive methods (Frei was a Jew) given the fact that both Scripture and nature have also been understood as divine identity description in certain Jewish traditions Gershom Scholem has described in "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism" in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970). Finally, I should note that it also would have been interesting to expand on Robert Markley's observations about Newton's hermeneutics in comparison with ancient Arianism. See *Fallen Languages: Crises of Representation in Newtonian England, 1660-1740*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Markley describes how Newton admits an infinite deferral of textual signification not dissimilar to Athanasius' own observation that Arian theories of mediation lead to an infinite regression between the Logos and God.
offered to categorize general trends in modern theology. For, in this dissertation I am interested in outlining catholic vs Modernist trajectories with reference to how they relate phenomenology of belief, metaphysics, and hermeneutics. Butler furnished me with a phenomenology of Christian belief in which human ignorance and problems of theodicy are constants against which the differing theological "types" react. This allowed me to use these types to sometimes refer to antique controversies with the Gnostics.

At the same time, I offer them as paradigms that might usefully make sense of current controversies. I rarely reference the latter, but should perhaps state them up front. Obviously I think my project is relevant to ongoing debates around the legitimacy and limits of figural interpretation, and I hope to make the case that the doctrine of creation is key to the whole problem. Perhaps tangentially I also have in mind certain popular non-Christian figuralisms on the right and the left with which I would like to contrast my project. I would like to think that if Christian apologists renewed their engagement with Butlerian analogy and figural reading they would at least be more interesting to their interlocutors. I am not just referring to predictable Liberal or evangelical talking-points (science, design, empty tomb, and so on). For, while Žižek and Peterson draw in thousands of followers by paying serious attention the problem of evil — often through attention to Scriptural details! — the catholicly-inclined often focus all their efforts on attacking nominalism. While I appreciate catholic metaphysics, these apologists are a little

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26 I have already mentioned Žižek's death of God hermeneutic, but I also have in mind the popular Jungianism of Jordan B. Peterson, *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*, (New York: Routledge, 1999). David Dawson has already done some of this work in relationship to theological proponents of Derrida (Daniel Boyarin) and Eranos Gnosticism (Harold Bloom) in * Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (University of California Press, 2001); *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
too systematic for their own good and could probably benefit from a Butlerian doctrine of "intellectual probation" (see below). I believe what is lacking on both sides of the apologetic divide (Christians vs non-Christians) is a very basic phenomenology of Christian belief. That is to say, it is more informative to explore why my grandmother believed than why David Bentley Hart does. Butler and Mansel would say that the cumulation of analogies between Scripture and life logically assumes a given scriptural whole to which a person at some point accepts by faith. The fact, however, that many of these analogies will be figural (e.g. "Jonah makes sense of my current situation," "this Psalm is about me") additionally assumes an ontology of Scripture that can only be understood in relationship to the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. And, I hope to illustrate that it is with reference to the doctrine of creation that one can explain a very large number of controversies between Liberals and conservatives, and between catholics and evangelicals. One of the reasons I find Butler relevant is that, because his method starts from the fact of ignorance, he has in the past usefully contributed to ecclesial consensus building. Despite the existential pressure his arguments create to choose the side of biblical theism over agnosticism, the accuracy with which they describe the logic of Christian belief holds much potential for ecclesial rapprochement.

Procedure

Chapter 1 will look at how Joseph Butler (1692-1752) related the “two books” of Scripture and nature analogically, with an asymmetrical priority given to Scripture. As my main exemplary analogist in Anglicanism, I will outline how Butler prioritized phenomenological

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27 Hart demonstrates that various traditional theistic reflections (Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Sikh, Vedantic, Greek, and so on) rest on universal phenomenological experiences. See The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). I worry that his attention to phenomenological detail is strained when it comes to universal Christian beliefs that fail to fit his system.

28 Not least among these disagreements are ethical divisions
“description” over “presumptions” about how Scripture and nature ought to look. His apologetic intention here was to show how the given facts of Scripture have analogies to our experience of nature. These analogies are why Christians find the Bible plausible. In addition to certain less decisive “positive evidences,” the cumulation of these analogies “include more facts” about our experience than naturalistic theologies — deism’s in particular, but as the thesis goes on, panentheism’s natural theology as well. Butler thus logically eliminates any halfway house between theism and atheist agnosticism. How a person decides between these two alternative theological trajectories illustrates two different evaluations of knowledge in relation to “means.” Where the deist prioritizes knowledge of “how” God brings about his ends, Butler prioritizes knowledge “that” certain ends are givens. Knowledge of “that’s” is logically independent of “how’s.” In fact, God withholds information of his means in order to test our faith. “Intellectual probation” is central to Butler’s theodicy, while moral formation flourishes in the gaps. We can still know what our obligations are even when we lack certainty about the reality of heaven or hell. Following Pascal’s wager argument, Butler appeals to the enlightened self-interest of his audience by asking them to consider that even a non-negligible degree of probability for eternal punishment and beatitude justifies deliberately applying themselves to faithful practices.

The eighteenth-century high churchman William Jones of Nayland (1726-1800) is my second exemplary Anglican analogist. Like Butler, he believed there was a pedagogical purpose behind our lack of systematic knowledge of God’s historical pedagogy. But this is the consequence of a more explicitly worked out theology of language that is due to God’s accommodation to our limits. Skepticism about the Infinite does not follow. Jones sets this traditional apophaticism beside a notion of Scripture as the unfallen, universal language of God, the angels, and Adam. As such, Scripture’s asymmetrical superiority to nature means that
temporal things are a reflection of it, and these reflections extend to the specific details of Christian truth. Thus, where Butler’s apologetic pressed non-scripturally ruled theists (the deists) to find within nature analogous troubling facts to those within Scripture, Jones claimed against Arians, deists, and Unitarians that nature reflected even the Trinity. Thornton’s apologetic would share many features in common with these two exemplary analogists, including Jones’ interest in Jewish patterns of thought.

Jones’ exemplary “high view” of Scripture is a segue into Chapter 2, where I look at the doctrine’s subversion by sectarian politics in the Church of England. Recapitulating the skeptical dilemmas of the sixteenth century,29 the Tractarians’ emphasis on anti-evangelical polemics (and vice versa) effectively turned Scripture into an epistemic foundation rather than the exemplary cause of creation. Indeed, epistemic preoccupations veiled the theodical problem of a divided Church. While the slide towards an epistemologization of revelation is evident among many Tractarians, it is most helpfully apparent with John Henry Newman (1801-1890). Newman began with an ambiguous affirmation of a Christologically founded ontology of Scripture, but slid towards a merely propositional view and opposed the Bible first to the Fathers, the episcopate, then to the papacy, and so on. Laid out in his Essay on Development (1845), this was meant to render providence’s processes intelligible enough to locate and justify the True Church. I contrast Newman’s epistemology, therefore, with John Keble’s (1792-1866) Butlerian arguments against presumptions regarding the Church’s visible form. I then contrast him and Tractarianism as a whole with older high church biblical ontologies preserved by H. L. Mansel and John Hannah. Self-consciously in Butler’s tradition, these theologians held on to an analogy between the infinite and the finite, as well as the necessarily antinomical character of revealed language.

29 Popkin, History of Scepticism.
They maintained a distinction between knowing “that” some such antinomy is a fact and knowing “how” these facts are to be harmonized. The grasping for “harmonization,” according to Hannah, had resulted in contemporary historical-developmental schemes. Newman and the later *Lux Mundi* (1889) developmentalisms were good examples, as was William Sanday’s (1843-1920) representative reduction of biblical forms to historical effects. Neither Newman’s nor Sanday’s construals of revelation imagined that time’s exemplary, formal, efficient, and final cause was already within the Bible.

Chapter 3 is a brief introduction to the life and work of Lionel Thornton, whose brand of “evangelical-catholicism” I argue is particularly hopeful. I explain how, after his early ethical and dogmatic works in defence of supernaturalism, Thornton began to explore scriptural ontology and figural hermeneutics in relation to problems of Church and sacrament. Chapter 4 moves into an explication of some of these early works to show how he maintained the natural-supernatural distinction neither through historicist nor metaphysical “harmonizations.” Rather, Thornton related Creator and creation, the supernatural and natural, Scripture and nature, non-systematically through analogy and a biblical theodicy centred on the incarnation. A regular process-theological (i.e., emergentist, panentheist) criticism I am countering in this chapter is that Thornton’s “orthodox” theology failed to come to grips with the implications of evolutionary science. The assumption of the criticism is that, had he done this properly, the acceptance of naturalistic science would necessitate metaphysical monism. My claim is that theodicy is the more fundamental problem for relating the two books. One’s decision for a biblically regulated incarnational theodicy or for a metaphysically generated monist theodicy also influences one’s phenomenology. Monism will not countenance real antinomies, natural or supernatural, but must rather predetermine how they are epiphenomenal. Religious monism
therefore cannot uphold anything like a traditional doctrine of the Trinity and incarnation. A case in point is the Modernist degree-Christology, which ignored biblical grammar for the sake of metaphysical “consistency.” Instead of tracking biblical nouns and verbs like Thornton, they approached the incarnation as a “compositional” problem. Thus they missed the benefits of biblical theodicy.

Dismissing the problem of science and religion in favour of the more fundamental problem for the two books, theodicy, in Chapter 5 I look at the two general alternatives. Anglican Modernists reinterpreted Christian doctrine often because of their experience of the World Wars. Likewise, Figgis and Thornton generally followed Augustine’s original sin theodicy as a response to the “given” fact of contemporary evil. Modernism’s “soul-making” view, representatively held by Charles Raven (1885-1964), prioritized etiological explanations for “how” the world came to include suffering. This went beyond a basic assignment of sin to creatures, inasmuch as evil was the result of evolutionary law. This naturalization of evil, therefore, allows me to typologize this theodicy as “Gnostic.” Gnostic theodicy does have existential purchase, but I argue that the “orthodoxy” of Thornton and Figgis “accounts for more facts” of experience. Butler had used analogy to make sense of the fall and atonement. Figgis intensifies Butler’s method by drawing attention to the fact of forgiveness among friends and family as both an analogue to the atonement and as a “given” that breaks the explanatory harmony of religious monism. He goes so far as to argue that divine forgiveness even changes the past — a crucial claim deeply congruent with Thornton’s figural view of time described in Chapter 6. The plausibility of Christ’s atonement, therefore, accounts for the longevity of

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30 This type would broadly include Manichean dualism and Valentinian monism. Marcionite theism, on the other hand, had not yet speculated on the causes of evil.
Christian belief over against epiphenomenal movements of religious naturalism (deist, panentheist, and otherwise).

Figgis’ proclamation that time was subject to God meant, to Thornton, that this was because of Christ’s work of “recapitulation.” In Chapter 6 we see that Thornton’s Christological theodicy logically entailed a figural hermeneutic. Christ came to “recapitulate” Adam’s macrocosmic priesthood, and to do it correctly. As a particular individual who was “extended” in his progeny, Christ had to identify with the least of humanity; he had to utilize every trivial feature of Israel’s context in order to redeem creation as a whole. This redemption is formally and finally accomplished in the New Creation of Scripture, towards which we are all moving by grace. Further, the redemption of trivialities — of the Bible’s “jots and tittles” — meant that Scripture could be interpreted synecdochically. But synecdoche is a radically “synchronic” method of correlating Scripture’s parts to its Christological whole. This was hard to swallow for Thornton’s “harmonizing” contemporaries. But if he was right, his critics’ “low view” of Scripture and their antipathy for figural reading was both the spiritually obscuring consequence of sinful divisions and the result of their inability to truly find “the Form of the Servant” in the most debased stuff of creation. God’s use of Judas’ betrayal for our good stands in Thornton’s figural interpretation as a providential sign for anyone interested in the problem of theodicy. Judas does not show us “how” God in every case uses all things for good for those who love the Lord (Rom. 8:28), only “that” he does.

Some final conclusions in this thesis are controversial. I believe Thornton was right to argue that biblical language offers the best protection against religious naturalism (deism, panentheism). I believe supernaturalism “accounts for more facts” of experience than religious naturalism — importantly radical evil and radical forgiveness — and that this accounts for the
more stable persistence of Christian supernaturalism in the churches. Religious monism is inferior to Christian theism and atheism as alternative frameworks for human experience. Inasmuch as religious monists are methodologically naturalist, they are practical atheists and Gnostics. They are atheists because religious monism differs from irreligious monism not in ontology but in sentiment alone and because non-biblical theisms demonstrably slide towards monism. They are Gnostics because knowledge of nature’s allegedly amoral principles and processes precedes moral decisions that the “orthodox” make in the absence of absolute certainty. There is no such thing as “knowledge” of nature separable from perfection in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. Indeed, I even put forward a general view of the Bible’s “accommodation” of scientific facts in wholly moral terms, and I argue that modern historical and metaphysical paths through Scripture are entirely the product of the fall and the sinful breakup of Christendom. Finally, if, as Thornton argues, the incarnation strikes the best balance between Creator and creation, and if this entails a theodicy in which the Servant recapitulates the trivial forms of creation, then even those more “orthodox” theologians who do not practice figural reading are at least methodologically atheist and Gnostic, even if their practical faith belies such assumptions. (Theologians, after all, can be inconsistent, like most people.) But this is only what Thornton’s main patristic influence, St Irenaeus (130-202), already argued in the second century.
Chapter 1: Exemplary Anglican Analogists

I. Introduction

This chapter will not be a general history of Anglican biblical views or Anglican understandings of the analogy between the two books of Scripture and nature, an impossibly large task. I will instead discuss two exemplary eighteenth-century theologians in anticipation of some directions I will go with Thornton: Joseph Butler and William Jones of Nayland. In the eighteenth century, the theological assumptions behind the relationships between Scripture and nature were questioned by various non-Trinitarian theisms: deism, Arianism, Unitarianism.31 In responding to this question, Butler and Jones employed figural-analogical reasoning quite deliberately. My purpose here, firstly, will be to show how each thinker offered a theological basis for the analogy of Scripture and nature. It will be pertinent to discuss just what they thought the Bible was, and how this justified intertextual, figural, and allegorical links between its various parts. Secondly, I intend to show how each thinker used Scripture’s words, narratives, and figures more broadly as resources to explicate human experience of “the constitution and course of nature,” as Butler would put it. Both theologians drew analogies between biblical figures and the natural and historical world. The benefit of this approach was that the Bible was used as a resource for giving coherence to certain troubling facts of human

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31 Respectively, and very generally, the difference is that deism essentially rejects supernatural revelation, while Arianism and Unitarianism do not. All three reject the Trinity and divinity of Christ, but only Arians admit a pre-existent, non-divine, Logos. In the British context alleged Arianism derived from Isaac Newton and was popularly seen to be represented by the metaphysics of Samuel Clarke, with whom Butler corresponded. As David Ney has shown in “Scripture and Providence: The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament” (Wycliffe College, ThD, University of Toronto, 2015), "Arian" apologetics for supernatural revelation over against the radical deists nevertheless undermined the importance of the Old Testament. I will discuss the founder of Unitarianism, Joseph Priestley, further in Appendix 1, but not to the degree he deserves. See Robert E. Schofield, The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1733 to 1773 (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004); Robert E. Schofield, The Enlightened Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work From 1773 to 1804 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).
experience that otherwise spoke against Christian belief. The most troubling fact was, of course, the problem of evil, but there were others.

Butler, for instance, dealt with the mystery of God’s hiddenness and with the uneven distribution and comprehension of revelation among human beings. From the perspective of deism and atheism, these facts speak against revelation and perhaps even against God’s existence. Yet Butlerian apologetics uses analogy as an offensive strategy against deism and as a defensive argument for the coherence of Christianity. Butler was able to use the biblical pattern of divine pedagogy as a framework for addressing the problem of why some people find it easier to believe than others. Butler's answer is that God is sometimes hidden in order to test our virtues — faith most especially. This is otherwise known as Butler’s doctrine of “intellectual probation.” In addition, Butler used the constitution and course of nature to show how our experience illuminates the reasonableness of belief in miracles, prophecy, the commandments, and Christ’s mediation.

Jones, on the other hand, had a less nuanced doctrine of “probation” or God’s testing. But he used the biblical figure of Israel in a variety of ways to explain the persistent and troubling fact of apostasy, particularly in his revolutionary day. More notable was the way he used biblical “emblems” to address God’s apparent absence in the natural philosophical systems of his day. Not satisfied with mere physico-theological design arguments for a generic deity, Jones thought he could use the book of Scripture to illuminate the language of nature in order to find the Trinity written there as well. What Jones achieved was no less than a reassertion of something like the medieval symbolic approach to nature that Peter Harrison describes in *Protestantism and the*
Jones did not see Scripture as wed to any particular scientific theory (Ptolemaic or Copernican astronomy, or Newtonian physics), for each configuration of physical reality was at best a visible representation of invisible reality. Theories about the causal relationship between the elements and their relationship to space and time varied, but fire, light, air, space, and time were equally susceptible of emblematic interpretation.

My purpose in this chapter, therefore, is to set up some precedents for Thornton's theology of Scripture and for his analogical approach to the troubling facts of his day. These facts continued to include the problem of theodicy, but more specifically of “ecclesiodicy” — justifying the division of the Church and the fragmentation of Christian truth. Moreover, the theory of evolution had opened up further theological problems. Nevertheless, Thornton neutralized this threat with reference to a Biblical ontology, a doctrine of divine pedagogy, and a Christological “emblematicism” not dissimilar to Jones’ and Butler’s.

II. Joseph Butler (1692-1752)

Joseph Butler has a conflicted reception in the history of Anglican theology, a history that I will briefly summarize in the following chapter. I only note now that despite his recent neglect among theologians, Butler has continued to fascinate philosophers of religion and of ethics. It is not uncommon for these philosophers to either ignore Butler’s religious philosophy in the Analogy of Religion in favor of his ethical reflections in The Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel, or, where Butler’s Analogy is engaged, to focus on the natural theology of the first part

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33 This term was coined by Ephraim Radner in A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).
and dismiss Butler’s case for Christian particulars in part II.\textsuperscript{35} This trend began to change in the last quarter of the twentieth century, especially in Terence Penelhum’s landmark Butler. Writing as a philosopher, Penelhum’s book is helpfully clear in its exposition of Butler’s arguments. I will, therefore, follow Penelhum in describing the ordered argument especially in Butler’s Analogy. My interest here is not only in showing how Butler’s style of analogical argument was offensively employed against deists, but how it can be defensively employed against atheist-agnostics. By outlining this double use, I want to show how analogy can be utilized differently depending on the context of the debate. In the process I also hope to make explicit Butler’s understanding of God’s scriptural-providential economy (or “scheme” in eighteenth-century parlance), an economy that unifies nature and supernature, creation and revelation.

Butler’s opponents were what we would call "deists." Yet because there were various kinds of "deists," Penelhum clarifies to whom Butler was speaking. (1) There were deists who believed in a creator who was not also a governor. (2) There were those who believed in a creator who was an amoral governor. This is to say that, although creation was supposedly teleological, it did not have a moral teleology. (3) There were deists who believed the creator was a moral governor but denied an afterlife of reward and punishment. (4) Finally, certain deists believed in immortality and the moral law of God, but they thought that both could be known from reason alone.\textsuperscript{36} Butler wrote for all but the first group. What he tried to show was that arguments for both natural and revealed religion were based on probabilities and not on prior assumptions; they were based on analogies open to doubt and not on absolute certainties. He therefore constantly argued that it was inconsistent to reject revealed religion on presumptive grounds when natural religion could be rejected on those same grounds.

\textsuperscript{36} Penelhum, Butler, 100.
As given in *The Analogy*, Butler’s arguments against moral-government deists were sound (3, 4), but more questionably successful against amoral-government deists (2). Deists of the latter sort were more akin to the Humean agnostic, and they demanded a different approach. Penelhum’s judgment is that Hume’s critique of religious analogy was a success. The evidence from nature, *sans* revelation, for a benevolent deity, was no more probable than the evidence for a malicious deity. Because Butler relied on this kind of weak argument to sway deists in category (2), his arguments were only successful against deists (3) and (4) who already took for granted God’s goodness. One must deploy analogical arguments against deists in (1) and (2) in the way one would against Humeans.

Butler argued that God had set up the world to teach us prudence through pleasure and pain. Indeed, it was not unreasonable to believe that God would have a consistent system of rewards and punishments and that the next life would contain rewards for prudence — assuming, that is, that God was not cruel. Yet according to Penelhum, this assumption was not proved, and Hume’s alternative interpretation of an inconsistent God remained a possibility.37 Thus Penelhum points out that the movement from our experience of nature to an explanation of nature as a divine pedagogy remains unconvincing. This may be correct, but strictly speaking, I do believe that it makes no sense to talk about design and intentionality as anything but intrinsically moral by definition.38 This stood behind Bishop Berkeley’s rejection of matter as an impersonal, and, therefore, amoral efficient cause of perception, and his alternative claim that perception is always the result of a divine personal agent communicating truthfully or not. The

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37 Penelhum, 152-153.
real issue, then, is not (as Penelhum has stated it) whether providence is moral or a-moral, but whether it is good or bad (or a varying gradation between).

Admitting Penelhum’s point with this caveat, however, we can deploy the analogy backward from an established belief in God’s moral government in order to give intelligibility to our experience of the course of nature. Where an opponent either rejects a teleological argument for moral providence (Hume, deists (1) and (2)), Butler still has value in describing the inner logic of religious belief and in showing that the acceptance of revelation entails a belief that the natural world is morally formative. 39 Beginning from revelation, Butler provides a defensive apologetic that the world is what a Christian would expect it to look like: “For it is the task of the apologist to show, if he can, not only that Christian doctrines are internally coherent and are formally consistent with the evidence of experience, but also that if they were true, we should expect the world to be pretty much the sort of place that it is.” 40 If this world is designed for moral formation, we would expect the mixture of rewards and punishments that we do in fact see.

Further, if we introduce belief in an afterlife, we would expect that some offenders would receive mercy in this life, while others would only receive punishment in the next. 41 When assumed from revelation, the doctrine of future judgment does add intelligibility to inconsistencies within a mere this-worldly framework of rewards and punishments, which deists (3) conceded. Deists in category (3) were bound to find such inconsistencies troubling (bad things happening to good people and good things happening to bad people), and Butler proved

39 Penelhum, Butler, 107.
40 Ibid., 109.
41 Ibid., 154-155.
that they should have been open to the possibility of an afterlife based on their own premises. And even though a demonstration of the inner logic of an afterlife does not prove Christianity to the agnostic, combined with Butler’s other arguments it remains a good case for taking Christianity seriously as a self-consistent worldview.

Butler’s doctrine of “probation” or moral government also contained the outlines of a theodicy. If the deist agreed that God gave rewards to prudence and virtue, then we have reason to think that he tests us with temptations in order to develop a good character. Butler’s analogy was between the way that the skills we develop in childhood help us as adults, and the way that this life can equip us through the formation of habits for spiritual adulthood in the next life:

The former part of life, then, is to be considered as an important opportunity which nature puts into our hands, and which, when lost, is not to be recovered. And our being placed in a state of discipline throughout this life, for another world is a providential dispensation of things, exactly of the same kind as our being placed in a state of discipline during childhood for mature age. Our condition in both respects is uniform and of a piece, and comprehended under one and the same general law of nature.

It is also tremendously important to note that for Butler knowing “that” we go through tests of faith was different from knowing on the front-end “how” such tests were forming us. Butler made much of the fact of human ignorance.

Indeed, ignorance and the doctrine of probation play a foundational role in Butler’s answer to objections to the credibility of miracles, the dubious nature of prophecy, the morally

42 Lessing is an example of someone who took this logical step. Indeed, the reintroduction of the doctrine of metempsychosis after the Renaissance shared with mainstream Christian doctrine the belief that moral inequalities had to be worked out in the next life. See “Reincarnation” in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2006).

43 Penelhum, *Butler*, 163-166. One objection Butler considers is that the majority of people do not use their life to build moral character. But this does not count as a proof that the world is not so intended. In fact, Penelhum does not consider it, but a doctrine of reprobation would account for God hardening peoples’ hearts in these circumstances.

questionable nature of the Old Testament and of the atonement, and to the fact that the Bible is not clear and universally available to all in equal degrees. Butler characteristically demonstrates that our ignorance about the expediency and appropriateness of God’s means within the realm of revealed religion mirrors our ignorance about his decisions in the realm of nature. The value of these arguments is that they are easy to detach from the deistic context and apply to our own. What they share is the sound observation that we can legitimately believe “that” miracles, prophecy, atonement, the commandments, and God’s moral government are facts, by analogy with other facts of experience, without being able to offer a mechanical account of “how” God uses these things in every case.

Regarding miracles, Butler argued that just as there are natural laws of creation, there are analogous supernatural laws — moral laws. Given God’s moral purposes, it is therefore consistent that he allows on occasion for miracles that have an overwhelming pedagogical-moral function (and both Hume and Butler assumed that this was what miracles were for).45 We would not be able to predict when and “how” they happened, nor would we be compelled to accept all miracles but only the ones based on good testimony. However, assuming God’s moral government, the deist had to admit miracles were logically possible in the same way that unanticipated events were always possible in nature. Moreover, Penelhum argues that the agnostic must admit that the Christian belief in miracles is at least self-consistent.46

45 “It is from our finding, that the course of nature, in some respects and so far, goes on by general laws, that we conclude this of the rest. And if that be a just ground for such a conclusion, it is a just ground also, if not to conclude, yet to comprehend, to render it supposable and credible, which is sufficient for answering objections, that God’s miraculous interpositions may have been, all along, in like manner, by general laws of wisdom.” Butler, The Analogy, Part II, iv.iii [4] (White 248-249).
46 Penelhum, Butler, 177-179.
Christ’s mediation has continued to be a moral scandal to the present because of the alleged injustice of one man being punished for another, but Butler also showed how it was analogous to experiences we already have:

And when, in the daily course of natural providence, it is appointed that innocent people should suffer for the faults of the guilty, this is liable to the very same objection as the instance we are now considering. The infinitely greater importance of that appointment of Christianity which is objected against, does not hinder but it may be, as it plainly is, an appointment of the very same kind with what the world affords us daily examples of.47

Penelhum summarizes Butler’s analogy in this way:

This revealed truth is analogous to certain features of God’s known governance of this world. (1) There is, first, the fact that God never deals with us in nature wholly separately, but makes us dependent on one another; this is analogous to the revealed truth that our personal destinies are critically affected by the actions of another person. (2) Since in nature the punishments of imprudence and vice often come about through the operation of natural laws (so that someone “trifling upon a precipice” will fall naturally to his destruction, or someone guilty of overindulgence in youth will endure a sickly old age), it may well be that the penalties of sinfulness follow in the next life in an equally lawlike manner. (3) In nature the normal bad consequences do not always follow when we behave foolishly; so we have intimations in our life here that God’s rule is compassionate as well as just. (4) Societies do not remit misdeeds solely for repentance and reformation, but exact penalties; the widespread practice of propitiatory sacrifice among the heathen suggests that mankind has a deep recognition that somehow God’s justice also requires punishment — a punishment that is borne, according to the Christian revelation, by Christ’s unmerited suffering.

So much for the analogy. Penelhum then articulates the point:

What the Christian revelation shows us, then, is that Christ’s death makes it possible for us to attain salvation through repentance. It does not tell us the metaphysical details of how it makes this possible, apart from the intimation that his sufferings are acceptable in place of ours.48

Thus atonement, like miracles, is believable by comparison with everyday experience.

I will come back later to Butler’s doctrine of prophecy and Scripture as a segue into Jones. For now, I want to emphasize Butler’s argument that our lack of knowledge contributes to our earthly probation. This was already implicit in Butler’s observation that children may not know “how” their acquired habits benefit them in the future. Because “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” Butler had no anxieties about scriptural commandments being unfair, “heteronomous” impositions. Of course, we will not always understand how they contribute to our salvation! This requires hindsight. More interestingly, Butler argued that absence of knowledge about God and his purposes does not lessen our moral obligations.

In order to understand the moral implications of ignorance further, we need to see how Butler addressed the issue of Christianity’s unequal distribution and comprehension. Though there was an obvious answer for the atheist — that God did not exist — the Christian had to account for a troubling fact. Penelhum summarizes: “granted that the Christian understanding of our world and our lives is a rationally open option, why is it not the only rationally open option? If Christianity is true, why is it not more obviously true?”

Butler’s response to the problem of God’s hiddenness came back to his doctrine of probation — intellectual probation. This can be traced back to Pascal, who wrote about the divine purpose given in human doubts:

It is true then that everything teaches man his condition, but there must be no misunderstanding, for it is not true that everything reveals God, and it is not true that

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49 Butler states: “And if we are not able at all to discern, how or in what way the present life could be our preparation for another, this would be no objection against the credibility of its being so. For we do not discern how food and sleep contribute to the growth of the body, nor could have any thought that they would, before we had experience. Nor do children at all think, on the one hand, that the sports and exercises, to which they are so much addicted, contribute to their health and growth; nor, on the other, of the necessity which there is for their being restrained in them; nor are they capable of understanding the use of many parts of discipline, which nevertheless they must be made to go through, in order to qualify them for the business of mature age.” Butler, *The Analogy*, Part I, v.iii [10] (White 196).

everything conceals God. But it is true at once that he hides from those who tempt him and that he reveals himself to those who seek him, because men are at once unworthy and capable of God: unworthy through their corruption, capable through their original nature.\textsuperscript{51}

Butler similarly stated:

Thus, that religion is not intuitively true, but a matter of deduction and inference; that a conviction of its truth is not forced upon every one, but left to be, by some, collected with heedful attention to premises; this as much constitutes religious probation, as much affords sphere, scope, opportunity, for right and wrong behaviour, as anything whatever does. And their manner of treating this subject, when laid before them, shows what is in their heart, and is an exertion of it.\textsuperscript{52}

According to Butler, not everyone was placed in a situation where they had standard moral temptations. So, God placed some in situations where they would be tested with doubts. Those with frivolous characters would refuse to take to heart the warnings of religion, and their character would be proved by how they dealt with this. Would they take refuge in objections that more serious people had thought up?

Common men, were they as much in earnest about religion, as about their temporal affairs, are capable of being convinced upon real evidence, that there is a God Who governs the world: and they feel themselves to be of a moral nature, and accountable creatures. And as Christianity entirely falls in with this natural sense of things, so they are capable, not only of being persuaded, but of being made to see, that there is evidence of miracles wrought in attestation of it, and many appearing completions of prophecy. But though this proof is real and conclusive, yet it is liable to objections, and may be run up into difficulties…. Now if persons who have picked up these objections from others, and take for granted they are of weight … will not prepare themselves for such an examination … or will not give that time and attention to the subject, which, from the nature of it, is necessary for attaining such information: in this case, they must remain in doubtfulness, ignorance, or error.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52}Butler, \textit{Analogy}, Part II, vi [8] (White 266).
\textsuperscript{53} Butler, \textit{Analogy}, Part II, vi [16] (White 271).
Contrary to deist objections, God was less concerned with relaying information and definite instructions than with “the inner nature of our responses to him; and this might cause him to reveal his wishes to us in a way that permitted questioning and hesitation.”\(^\text{54}\) Doubts are a test from God; ignorance fits with the facts of revelation.

Agnosticism, for Butler, was equivalent to yielding to the temptation to become frivolous. This was because “for those with the right doxastic [which is to say, belief-producing] practices the evidences are not ambiguous at all.”\(^\text{55}\) Does this claim contradict Butler’s other claim that the evidence for Christianity is merely probable, unclear, and full of difficulty? Penelhum thinks so. Yet the whole point of a doctrine of divine pedagogy is that it explains our temporal struggles with doubts. It does not allow us to make judgments about the ultimate election of individuals. Penelhum fails to notice how the doctrine of election is functioning in Butler, and that this does not result in the self-serving argument that we can confidently attribute every instance of doubt to frivolity at any given time.\(^\text{56}\) Butler, therefore, does not contradict himself by asserting both that agnosticism is due to frivolity and that Christian claims are contestable.

Butler’s theory of intellectual probation provides powerful reasons for why God would not make himself equally well known to everyone. It combines well with what Penelhum calls the “Parity Argument,” it increases Butler’s apologetic force. The “Parity Argument” can be summarized as “the insistence that it is arbitrary, and probably a sign of mere prejudice, to dismiss the claims of religion on grounds that we are not willing to apply at the secular level. The onus of proof lies with those who would demand greater assurances of truth in religion than

\[\text{54} \text{Penelhum, Butler, 194-195.}\]
\[\text{55} \text{Ibid., 196-197.}\]
\[\text{56} \text{Butler does seem to think that the positive evidences for Christianity make it more likely than not. See Chapter VII, Part II of The Analogy.}\]
they would demand in the realm of secular knowledge.”57 Beginning with presumptive arguments and demanding a level of certainty to which they did not hold themselves, the deists were particularly vulnerable to Butler’s accusation of a double standard. In the cases mentioned above — miracles and atonement — the deists commonly assumed that they knew in advance “how” God would act and what he would decide. Butler’s analogies indicated, however, that the deist was content with ignorance regarding God’s “how” in nature, and that this was inconsistent.

Having exposed the inconsistency of their presumptive attacks against Christian revelation, Butler’s apologetic leaves the reader with a comparative judgment between complete outlooks. Penelhum is clear that Christianity was a more resourceful position than deism for many reasons. Christianity had a more powerful theodicy, for the doctrines of alienation and redemption allowed the Christian to “make evil partially intelligible and to emphasise its full gravity.”58 Moreover, God’s hiddenness was far better accounted for by a Christian doctrine of intellectual probation. Christianity simply took account of more facts of experience, which is certainly the reason why it has had more longevity and universal appeal than deism and its related offspring. Christianity resonates with human experience in a way that deism does not.

Butler’s arguments continue to be a more resourceful position vis-à-vis deism’s contemporary heirs. Penelhum concludes, “I do not see the neo-deism of such theologians as an option that can exert much appeal to those who begin their reflections outside the Christian tradition altogether.”59 The question of resourcefulness is an important point to which I will return in my discussion of Thornton and his mentor, Neville Figgis (1866-1919).

57 Penelhum, Butler, 198.
58 Ibid., 201.
59 Ibid., 207.
Atheism and agnosticism are also more resourceful and economical than deism and its offspring. Both Christianity and agnosticism-atheism can account for the other’s apparent foolishness and have ways to respond to the other’s criticisms. In this situation, holistic judgments are less decisive. Therefore Butler utilized a version of Pascal’s wager to clinch his case for Christianity.

Pascal’s argument was that if there were no decisive disproofs of Christianity, the importance of its claims counted in favour of its practice. Butler’s argument was more radical. He suggested that the stakes count in favor of Christianity’s practice even if it were more likely false than true. For example, we take bomb threats seriously even if they may be unlikely. Definite action here is required not only by high probabilities but by non-negligible degrees of likelihood where the stakes are especially high. To Butler’s mind, in the same way, those who disregard the high-stakes claims of Christianity prove themselves frivolous. Writes Penelhum:

I think it is fair to summarize Butler’s position as follows. The importance of the claims of Christianity is so great that it is prudentially foolish to ignore them unless they are disproved. If they are not disproved, and a serious examination of them shows them to have even a low degree of probability, this is prudentially sufficient to prove that we should act upon them. This demands an element of positive probability that Pascal seems not to require; but, on the other hand, it allows Butler’s prudential case to proceed even where the probability of an incompatible theory, such as atheism, is thought to be greater. (Pascal’s argument would not proceed at this point).

Butler thought that the most cautious inquirer would find that Christianity had the most probability. But even if a competing worldview was judged to have a greater probability, the gravity of Christianity was decisively in its favor.

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60 Ibid., 92.
61 Ibid., 202.
What follows from this argument is that people ought to conform themselves to Christianity practically. This is not to say that Christian belief is not required for fulfilling God’s will. But because Butler believed that prudent self-love pointed in the same direction as conscience, people might start off with a desire to acquire the habit of belief out of fear of God and hope of reward, which in time would result in true love of God. Butler believed we should not be fussy about such consequentialist motives since they do issue in genuine virtues.62

It is necessary now to take account of what Butler’s practice of analogy assumed about Scripture and its relationship to creation. What is the Bible for Butler? How is it assented to? How should we understand its obscurities, and what should we expect a revelation to look like? I will begin with the last question and work backward. What would we expect a revelation to look like? The answer is based on the relationship of the “two books” articulated in the preface to the Analogy:

Hence, namely from analogical reasoning, Origen has with singular sagacity observed, that he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of Nature. And in a like way of reflection it may be added, that he who

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62 I should add, however, that there is another difference between Pascal’s and Butler’s wagers in that the latter’s appeals to a virtue other than mere prudence. Butler put it this way: For, suppose a man to be really in doubt whether such a person had not done him the greatest favour; or, whether his whole temporal interest did not depend upon that person: no one, who had any sense of gratitude and prudence [emphasis mine], could possibly consider himself in the same situation, with regard to such person, as if he had no such doubt…. because the apprehension that religion may be true does as really lay men under obligations as a full conviction that it is true.62 Butler, Analogy, Part II, V [9] (White 266-267).

“Gratitude” goes beyond enlightened self-interest as a motive for cultivating Christian “doxastic practices” and is perhaps an even more honest reason for doing so. For those people who honestly think Christianity is unlikely, Penelhum wonders “how far what he [Butler] recommends to them involves him [the agnostic] in direct conflict with his intellectual integrity,” Butler, 205. The most Penelhum thinks that can be required of this person is that they continue to consider the claims of Christianity even if they are disinclined to believe it. But Penelhum does not discuss how gratitude might alter this dilemma. Is there a phenomenology of gratitude that might allow an analogical handle on Christian belief — belief, perhaps, in God’s gracious work in creation and redemption? This is partially the direction that Neville Figgis takes Butler’s analogy insofar as gratitude is related to forgiveness, as we will see in Chapter 5.
denies the Scripture to have been from God upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him.”63

This is the *Analogy’s* whole argument in a nutshell. And Butler skillfully utilized it to disarm objections to the form of the Bible in his chapter titled “[o]f our incapacity of judging what were to be expected in a revelation; and the credibility, from analogy, that it must contain things appearing liable to objections.” Creation contains all sorts of things that we experience as absurd and inexpedient. For example, why did God create humanity with the limitations they have and not with others? If there are no *a priori* ways to answer this and any other imaginable question,64 there can be no logical grounds for objecting to apparent absurdities and inexpediencies in Scripture. Indeed, we should positively expect them.

Several conclusions follow this line of reasoning. For one, there can be no presumption against revelation based on style and a dislike of “hieroglyphical and figurative language.”65 Why think that there should be no various readings of the texts or obscurity of style or disputes around authorship? Furthermore, we cannot know in advance how much information God would give us in a revelation, whether he would testify to it by miracles, or whether he would give certain, highly probable, or doubtful evidence for it, and whether all people would have the same degree of evidence. Neither do we know whether he would reveal everything at once or only gradually. Further, we do not know in advance whether a revelation would be committed to writing or left to oral tradition.66 So Butler concluded that objections can only arise against

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64 Why should our optical nerves cross over to the opposite side of the brain? Why should the bronchial tube and esophagus be so dangerously interconnected? Why did God create pandas with such fussy sexual preferences? The questions are endless. Evolutionary biology might solve the “how” of these states of affairs, but it does not answer the “why” from the perspective of a designer.
particular claims of revelation and not against the possibility of it. And what would that revelation look like? There’s good reason to think it would be as puzzling as the Bible we have.

How, then, do people assent to Scripture as the starting point for interpreting their own experience? As Butler accurately described it, this is a practical rather than a theoretical decision. On the one hand, it comes down to a cumulative judgment based on the respective power of the biblical world to describe the world of human experience over against other paradigms. It is often the case that as people practice Christianity, as they “try it on,” and as they learn its analogical thought-patterns from within, they become convinced. On the other hand, it is a practical decision based on a healthy self-love. If Christianity is at all probable, ignoring the possible source of goodness in this life and the life to come is ungracious, while ignoring the threat of eternal punishment is imprudent. Butler again believed we should not be fussy about such consequentialist motives since they do issue in mature virtues (faith leads to understanding; hope to joy; fear to love).

It would seem, therefore, that a revelation is assented to as a whole, and indeed this acceptance is assumed by the kind of apologetic Penelhum adapts from Butler to fit contemporary circumstances. If you do not assume Scripture as a whole, you cannot offer a coherentist apologetic for Christianity based on analogues that are simply given. In other words, if one has to offer natural theological arguments as a foundation for accepting revelation in order to draw analogies between Scripture and nature, one has just conceded the argument. In chapter 2 we will see how H. L. Mansel used Butler to argue that the Bible cannot be accepted piecemeal without diminishing the logical case for belief to the level of deism, which, because of its
vulnerable presumptions, has less coherence than agnosticism or atheism. This was precisely what Butlerian apologetic was designed to avoid.

It goes without saying, however, that because Butler’s argument is cumulative and moral, he is not using the Bible as a foundation for building a system of indubitable truths. If we aren’t able to reconstruct the original autographs of Scripture, or if we aren’t able to prove that Jericho was conquered by Hebrews, or if we can’t find evolutionary science in Genesis, the whole edifice does not collapse like a house of cards. To use one of Butler’s disciple’s analogies, as the unity of nature is axiomatic for the scientist, so biblical unity is for the Christian. No amount of induction establishes a law of nature. Rather, the lawfulness of nature is assumed so that we can make sense of nature’s details. The same is true of Scripture. In Butler’s terms no bit of “positive evidence” establishes faith. Conversely, contradictions do not count against Scripture's lawfulness. In fact, Butler’s acceptance of Scripture's lawfulness and the way he uses this to account for apparent contradictions enables him in the end to provide a convincing phenomenology of Christian belief; namely, that Christians believe specific Christian claims for Christian reasons and not for non-Christian reasons (which should be obvious!).

Penelhum unfortunately muddies this issue in his discussion of miracles. He says, on the one hand, that miracles are only accepted on the basis of the possibility of revelation:

For a contemporary reader, who is not poised in deism’s half-way house, the fact that the Bible contains miracle-stories, and that some of them at least (such as the Resurrection) seem indispensable, is an obstacle to acceptance of Christian claims. For such a person, the sort of openness that Butler argues for, and that I have suggested is rational, cannot precede an acceptance of the claims the biblical documents make, but can only follow upon a positive response to them. (Penelhum, Butler, 182-183.)

On the other hand, he comments that Christians will only accept miracles based on good testimony, and that not all biblical miracles will garner agreement. True as this may be as a description of modern Christian disagreements, this lapse into philosophical prescription strays from the more robust and convincing description of the way in which people actually assent to the Bible. Assent, as stated above, is given to the Christian worldview as a cumulative whole and is not based upon the foundation of testimony. Testimony is at best an element within the cumulative case for Christianity, along with other ad hoc “positive evidences” for particular claims.


See Butler, Analogy, II.VI, “Of the Particular Evidence for Christianity,” (White, 263-272)
In relation to nature, however, Butler’s method shows that Scripture has priority. Butler drew analogies from Scripture to our experience of the course of nature. His analogies for miracles, Christ’s mediation, the commandments, and revelation all proceeded in this way. This kind of asymmetrical prioritizing of Scripture over nature reflected better the view of Scripture latent in his thoughts on prophecy. Butler’s doctrine of inspiration is also evident in his defense of prophecy. If God is the author of Scripture, human writers naturally become subsidiaries. We thus do not need to “prove” that they intended a future fulfillment in order for that fulfillment to be true.\(^70\) Penelhum summarizes what follows from this belief:

> Such a [biblical] writer cannot fully understand what he writes, and the meaning of it is not confined to that part which he does understand. To reject alleged prophecies that fit later events in telling ways, merely because the human writers of those passages did not themselves intend to refer to those later events, is to prejudge the question of prophecy against them.\(^71\)

The meaning of Scripture is fixed by God’s intention, while human intentions are partial instrumental causes. If Scripture reveals a divine telos, this leaves open a variety of efficient “means” that God might use to bring about his ends. It follows that there can be no single theory of how the Bible came to be inspired. Human intentions are merely instrumental to God’s purposes. In fact, God could use many different instruments for his ends: he might dictate words to a visionary, convey meaning through Job’s limited understanding, or he might signify several meanings through “hieroglyphics” that escape the writer’s intentions altogether. Therefore, the question of “how” the Bible was inspired is ultimately irrelevant to believing “that” it is.

The analogy to our experience of nature should be clear. Believers accept the fact “that” God has a purpose for creation. But they are often in the dark about “how” he brings about those

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\(^70\) This naturally undercuts the evidential power of prophecy, but I argue that for Butler Scripture is only meant to convince those with certain virtues.

\(^71\) Penelhum, Butler, 183-184.
purposes and why he uses one method rather than another to effect them. Moreover, nature and Scripture are related more deeply. Natural theology tells us “that” there are final causes in creation. But “what” those final causes are can only be known from revelation — from Scripture. What, then, is Scripture? Butler implies it is God’s instrument to separate the sheep from the goats and to order both according to his intentions. And his primary intention is to bring his lost sheep to a deeper faith in him.

This sums up Butler’s theodicy. We know “that” our Creator and Redeemer is good, but his ways in the world are sometimes obscure. Worse, God’s ways are seemingly unfair. But if life is a test of faith, hope, and love, it is not clarity about God’s ways that matter but the integrity of our response. This has sometimes been taken in a rationalistic direction: the exercise of human freedom requires God to allow evil. But Butler is far too aware of the limits of human reason to presume that all evil can be explained in this way. Indeed, by admitting that the Creator submitted to the unfair punishment of the Cross, Butler implies that suffering and injustice have been inseparably bound to the being of God. If we were capable for a moment of transcending the limits of human knowledge, would God’s suffering be any more explicable? Butler’s deferral of a total explanation only makes sense from within the biblical cosmos where the saints endlessly praise God out of gratitude.

Finally, a word on figural hermeneutics. Unlike Origen, Butler does not explicitly justify allegorical interpretations. He mentions “hieroglyphical and figurative language,” but he offers no theory of synecdoche by which each part of Scripture might refer to Christ. He does use St Paul’s synecdochical figure of the Church as a Body made up of many cooperating members.

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72 It does not matter to Butler whether his treatise persuades everyone. People are likely to ignore evidence they don’t like, and that is their problem. But this too is part of Providence’s design. *Analogy, II.VIII [10] (White, 296).*

Thus it would be unsurprising if Butler affirmed something like Origen’s doctrine of Scripture as another Body of Jesus. But here again, we must be satisfied with probability, not certainty.

III. William Jones (1726-1800)

William Jones of Nayland was a disciple of John Hutchinson (1674-1737) who in 1724 released *Moses’ Principia*\(^\text{74}\) in which he argued that the loss of Old Testament authority in his day was the responsibility of Isaac Newton (1674-1727) and his disciples. Given Newton’s covert "Arianism," this was perceptive. In contrast to Newtonian natural theology, Hutchinson claimed to find the Trinity in both Scripture and nature. Yet, as David Ney has convincingly argued, Newton and Hutchinson held in common a Renaissance view of history as devolving from a pristine age of theology and wisdom.\(^\text{75}\) Both in their own way were reactions to the work of John Spencer (1630-93) in *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus et earum rationibus libri tres*\(^\text{76}\) (1685), where the author argued that the rituals of the Hebrews were modelled on the rites of the Egyptians. Spencer removed the Pentateuch from prehistory and placed it squarely in history. Newton, his disciples William Whiston (1667-1752) and Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), and Newton’s opponent John Hutchinson were forced to admit that the Old Testament itself was subject to the corrosive effects of history. They therefore shifted the Old Testament’s authority from historical truths to the allegedly timeless truths of natural philosophy still visible in the text. Newton did so by turning the Old Testament into a source of mathematical truths both chronological and physical.\(^\text{77}\) Whiston attempted to buttress the Old Testament with apologetic


\(^\text{76}\) John Spencer, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus et earum rationibus libri tres* (Cambridge: Chiswel, 1685).

\(^\text{77}\) Ney, “Scripture and Providence: The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament,” 16-17.
precise by applying Newtonian chronology to its prophecies. But finding them lacking, he was forced to concede that the text had been corrupted by time, and he placed his emphasis on the New Testament. Clarke focused on natural theological arguments for a generic theism. Hutchinson, on the other hand, had recourse to the emblematic tradition which allowed him to find vestiges of the Trinity in natural objects. Behind the invalid accretions of the Masoretic vowel point system, Hutchinson thought he had found the lost language of Adam. This Hebrew was God’s language, a language of things rather than of mere conventional associations. And Hutchinson believed he was the one who had recovered its true interpretation.

Ney argues that all these concessions — including Hutchinson’s — to the devolutionary ideology of history subverted the scriptural status of the Old Testament. Yet the later Hutchinsonians George Watson (1723-73), George Horne (1730-92), and especially William Jones of Nayland (1726-1800) extended Hutchinson’s emblematic approach to once again include historical facts. They rejected a devolutionary ideology of history for an unsystematic figural and analogical approach. Thus, for the later Hutchinsonians, history was re-infused with potential providential meaning. Jones was the most consistent of the late Hutchinsonians; his work, according to Ney, was “the apogee of the tradition.” This was because he was less embarrassed than others to take the figural hermeneutic to its logical conclusions, but also because he had more time on his hands. Unlike Horne, who had an important role within the

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78 Ibid., 7-8.
79 Ibid., 13-15.
80 Ibid., 5. See also pages 26-27: “Although early Hutchinsonians were set on defending Hutchinson’s renderings, later Hutchinsonians applied Hutchinson’s hermeneutic to all scriptural words. This, in turn, compelled them to leave behind Hutchinson’s quest to create a unique Old Testament apologetic. In its place the Hutchinsonians forged an apologetic that sought to defend the Old and New Testaments on equal terms, and this broadening of Hutchinson’s hermeneutic led the Hutchinsonians to embrace a far more comprehensive view of providence than either Newton or Hutchinson was able to endorse. By interpreting every word of Scripture as potentially illuminating, they were compelled to uphold as providential far more than merely the objects of the natural world: they were able to uphold the Church of England, the English commonwealth, and countless other elements of human society as providentially ordered.”
81 Ibid., 257.
establishment, Jones spent his life serving in obscure rural parishes where he had could write more prolifically.82

Jones had a broader range of opponents than Butler, whose *Analogy* was occupied entirely with versions of deism. Jones’ opponents, among others, included Arians, Unitarians, and scholars who preferred pagan classics to the Bible. To be sure, Jones was very concerned about deism’s pernicious effects in the American and French revolutions. His major work on the Trinity, however, was concerned just as much with the “Arian” polemics of Samuel Clarke and his disciples.83 Although a defender of Scripture against deism, Clarke nevertheless had much to do with the decline of respect given the Old Testament.84 To Jones, for whom the Old Testament continued to be a resource both for a doctrine of the Trinity and for natural philosophy, Clarke’s selective use of biblical passages in support of Arianism looked like proof-texting.

By all the observations I have been able to make, the greater number of those who disbelieve the Trinity upon principle, (for many do it implicitly, and are credulous in their unbelief) do not profess to take their notions of God from the Bible, but affect to distinguish themselves from the common herd, by drawing them from the fountains of Reason and Philosophy…. In which case the whole labour of collecting texts, and framing of comments, and fishing for various readings, is an after-thought. It is submitted to rather for apology than for proof…”85

Like Butler, Jones did not see Scripture and reason as two competing criteria of truth. Thus he professed to make Scripture its own interpreter.86 Again, this is only to assume the unity of Scripture on analogy to the lawfulness of nature. Comparing Scriptural texts is thus necessary for discovering such laws. Since they were epistemological foundationalists, Jones' theistic

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82 Ibid., 255.
84 This is a central claim of Ney, “Scripture and Providence: The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament.”
86 Ibid., iii.
opponents had to arbitrarily presume that no such law existed. This meant that they had to resolve biblical difficulties with reference to the laws of nature alone.

These more generic versions of theism also had an effect on natural philosophy. Jones was concerned that natural philosophy was being used to defend religion in general rather than Christianity, and that some even thought natural philosophy opposed Christianity:

Men eminently learned, and worthy of all commendation, have excelled in demonstrating the wisdom of God from the works of Nature: but in this one respect they seem to have been deficient; in that they have but rarely turned their arguments to the particular advantage of Christian Revelation, by bringing the volume of Nature in aid to the volume of the Scripture; as the times now call upon us to do: for we have been threatened, in very indecent and insolent language of late years, with the superior reasonings and forces of natural philosophy; as if our late researches into Nature had put some new weapons into the hands of Infidelity, which the friends of the Christian Religion will be unable to stand against.”87

Jones’ argument was that a proper interpretation of nature shows that it reveals specifically Christian doctrines like the Trinity. These were known through a combined Hutchinsonian-Origenist “hieroglyphic” hermeneutic.

Still, rationalizing theisms were Jones’ main target. His arguments, like Butler’s, were premised on creation having a pedagogical purpose. Not that an Arian, Unitarian, or deist would necessarily deny this. But as Butler showed, the rationalizing method was a slippery slope towards atheism; one could not have a double standard for the God of creation and the God of revelation: “And in a like way of reflection it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him.”88  Keeping in mind that a theological worldview premised on human limitations runs contrary to the spirit of the age, we will not be surprised by Jones’

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constant complaints about the ridicule he faced in the press for this figural method and belief in providence.\textsuperscript{89} Even though the doctrine of probation\textsuperscript{90} was taught in Scripture and Christian tradition, he related his astonishment that “learned men” denied that God used nature to instruct humans,\textsuperscript{91} and he was acutely aware that Paul’s claim that the Old Testament was written for our learning (Rom. 14:4) sounded strange to his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{92} Christian England had begun to change assumptions about creation, and it no longer had the sympathy of mind to understand what it then found preposterous.

Although Jones and Butler inherited a similar analogical framework, their method and purposes diverged based on their different opponents. Both shared a doctrine of divine pedagogy, as I shall describe further below. Both used it to deal with the problem of evil, and both used it to account for the reality of doubt that they were confronted with. Yet Butler was more nuanced when it came to discussing God’s hiddenness, and Jones was more interested in the problems raised by natural philosophy. Methodologically, Jones’ approach was almost entirely of the sort Penelhum advocates. That is, Jones unashamedly assumed Christian revelation as a starting point that could reveal the inner logic of human experience in every area of life. Unlike Butler, who probably accepted Clarke’s teleological arguments for a generic deity, Jones seemed to have no interest in “religious analogy” of the sort vulnerable to Hume. So he explored the symbolic meaning of the natural world to find evidence for the Trinity. Yet he

\textsuperscript{89} Preface of William Jones, \textit{A Discourse on the Use and Intention of Some Remarkable Passages of the Scripture Not Commonly Understood} (London, 1798).

\textsuperscript{90} I am not positive that Jones read Butler, but it is rather likely given the Butlerian word “probation,” which had already become common for Jones and all Anglicans after. I am indebted to Scott Mandelbrote for pointing out, however, that “probation” was already present in the work of Isaac Barrow (\textit{Of Contentment}, 1685). (In what follows I discuss some of the different emphases of Jones compared to Butler.) Additionally, there is Jones’ complaint below that probabilistic arguments do not work on sinners, which is perhaps the point of Pascal’s version of the wager argument. Was Jones registering a Pascalian complaint against Butler’s more optimistic use of probabilism?

\textsuperscript{91} Jones, \textit{A Discourse on the Use and Intention of Some Remarkable Passages of the Scripture Not Commonly Understood}, vii-viii, where he also references Origen.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 13-14.
did not think these were proofs “because no Proposition of any one Science can have its
Demonstration in another Science.” Still,

[a]nalogy captivates the Fancy; and, by furnishing it with Ideas, assists the
Understanding: it is also of use to reconcile Reason, because it answers the Objection
which might arise from Singularity. When it occurs in great Abundance, and with such
Uniformity as in the present Subject, it rises into presumptive Evidence; but in Divinity it
cannot amount to absolute Proof, till it becomes Scriptural: and as the Proof of every
divine Doctrine is properly from the Scripture itself, the Analogies which are there found
become argumentative, and may be pleaded in defence of the Truth which they
illustrate… 93

Jones’ biblicism failed to resonate with many contemporaries. Unlike Butler, he offered no
wager argument to unsettle his opponents’ judgments against Christianity. Jones, however,
shared with Butler a doctrine of probation and election that allowed him to interpret doubt as
divine pedagogy.

The biblical framework for the doctrine of divine pedagogy has traditionally been found
in Israel’s wilderness wanderings, and Jones frequently used this figure. This comes out
explicitly in his sermons, where Jones draws an analogy between Israel and the historical
Church. Within Christian history, we see both God’s deliverance and the corrections and
punishments he uses to make the Church wise and holy. 94 Indeed, all the particular things that
Israel underwent in the wilderness “are the works of God’s Providence”:

These are the works of God’s Providence towards his church; he delivers it from the
power of the world; he punishes it for disobedience, and humbles it to effect its
reformation.

If we were to examine the history of the several nations of christendom, since they were taken into the church; we should find, that his providence has acted by the same rules, for the preservation of his truth and the reformation of his people.95

One of the figures Jones extended to the history of Christendom was Korah’s rebellion, which came in a series of *Lectures on Hebrews*96 where he was at pains to illustrate how both the religion and the institutional form of Israel and the Church were continuous. Proof of their common religion was that in both times both people believed something about the past and had faith in things to come: “The religion of the people of God always was, and always will be, a scheme of faith and dependence...”97 Both received favor from God by worshipping him through sacraments: Adam had the “sacramental tree,” the Patriarchs and Jews certain sacrifices, and Christians had baptism and the Lord’s supper.98 Both times also saw slavery and persecutions.99 And as Israel had twelve patriarchs, so the Church had twelve apostles who were fathers of spiritual children.100 Both had three orders of ministers: the Old Testament had high priests, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, while the New Testament had Apostles, the seventy, and the deacons. And both, finally, had successions that were opposed by schismatic “levellers” like Korah.101 Jones thought this continuity of religion, institution, and sacrament mattered because in the wake of the Reformation many had come “to a deplorable state of ignorance” about the infinite importance of the sacraments and of the church.102 More interestingly, Jones

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95 Ibid., 211-212.
96 At the end of Jones, *A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture*.
97 Ibid., 365.
98 Ibid., 363-365.
99 Ibid., 403-5.
100 Ibid., 395.
101 Ibid., 398-399.
102 Ibid., 408. Butler was comparably concerned with the Church and its practices in *The Durham Charge*, reprinted in *The Works of Bishop Butler*. There he discussed pedagogy and formation: “The form of religion may indeed be where there is little of the thing itself; but the thing itself cannot be preserved amongst mankind without the form” (8). He complimented Catholics and Muslims for understanding this point (9). And the Old Testament did this by using every law to constantly keep religion in view (10). This is also why he thought Christians needed to keep their buildings in good repair, since they ought to show a high regard to religion in this way (11-13). External acts of
expressed the belief that the analogy of Israel and the Church was predestined—that is, the Old Testament was the Archetype to which God conformed the Church:

Unless it were so, the Church of Christ would not be conformed, as it ought to be, to the Church of Israel. Though the case is lamentable, yet thus it must be: it must be that offences come: the authority of the priesthood must be opposed, and the Church must be divided, if the Scriptures are verified; but woe unto them by whom the offence cometh.  

This is a remarkable passage demonstrating that Jones believed Scripture was both the formal plan and final cause towards which God was shaping history through the instrumentality of the Bible’s figures.

But Jones believed God’s providence extended to particular persons as well. There too punishment followed sin and blessing followed dutifulness. When Jesus said to the man with palsy, “go and sin no more lest a worst thing come unto thee,” Jones argued that Jesus implied the man’s sickness was due to a particular sin, that he needed to rely on God’s grace, and that punishment for not reforming was worse than punishment that leads to reform. At other times God delivered people from imminent danger, causing them to reform and dedicate themselves to his service. Like Israel, he also allowed their enemies to overtake them when they displeased him. So far this is a straightforward theodicy. But providential frameworks of reward and punishment are simplistic; therefore, Jones dealt further with the theodical problem of wicked men who prospered and of good men who suffered.

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religion are necessary, including repetition of services, family prayers, prayer rules, prayer before meals, catechism and prayers for children, and observance of special seasons (14-19).

103 Jones, A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture, 399-400.
105 Ibid., 214.
106 Ibid., 215.
107 Ibid. In the case of the wicked, he said, God sometimes permitted them to have their enjoyments in this life. But as Abraham said to the rich man in the parable, “Son, remember that thou in thy life-time received thy good things,” these people could not complain against providence for not giving them what they wanted (217). Had they been given trials, they would not have benefitted from them anyway. For trials are only seen to be good by the eye of
For Jones, however, Israel’s profile extended beyond the wilderness wanderings to include their rejection of the Messiah, which provided an analogy of both communal and individual election and reprobation. In a later work, Jones looked in great length at the figures of Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, and a multitude of other figures to find a recurring foreshadowing of the Gentile replacement of the Jews. Contemporary theology has perhaps become more sensitive to the reversal of roles an unrighteous Christendom has taken vis-à-vis Judaism — the Gentiles have become “Ishmaelite” persecutors (Gal. 4:29) — but in Jones’ pre-Holocaust setting this lesson of providence had not yet been learned. And Jones was satisfied with a traditional Origenist description of an unbelieving “Jewish mind” as an analogue of the perennial reprobate.

To be fair, the Jewish mind did include Gentile reprobates; and Jones, like Butler, was aware of how his particular Gentile culture repeated biblical patterns. In *The Durham Charge* Butler was concerned to address the decline of, and hostility towards, Christianity. Far from being a cause for despair, Christians understood the times in light of Jesus’ prophecy that when he would return, he would not find faith on earth. Jones similarly preached that spiritual dullness had set into European minds. His preface to *Popular Commotion Considered as Signs* faith (218). Indeed, such faithful sufferers are the “favorites of heaven” who, like Jesus, are “chosen vessels” (219-220). They are indeed thankful that God corrects their sins, bringing good out of evil (226). Retrospectively from heaven, they will look back on this life and continue to give God glory (227).

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108 Jones, *A Discourse on the Use and Intention of Some Remarkable Passages of the Scripture*.

109 Perhaps my readers would benefit from an up-front statement of my own opinion regarding supercessionism, namely, that I believe it is a heresy that has dogged the Church from early times. I do not know if Jones knew Jews or hated them as a group, but no doubt he was supercessionist and anti-Judaic in the traditional Christian pattern. Since I believe my own argument about divine pedagogy, however, I do think that Providence has unveiled this Christian evil to many churches in recent times. Part of the antidote to this sin is a rejection of time-as-progress altogether, for I am inclined to believe the notion is inherently racist — hence my later comments on Hastings Rashdall's "white-supremacism," to use Gary Dorrien's words. I am skeptical that we have any way to judge whether humanity or the Church has "progressed" in history; we have from time-to-time been confronted by God with our own sins. Thus I reject any "replacement" theology, believing instead that biblical Israel is ontologically prior to contemporary Jews and Christians. Jones believed this even if he failed to understand the full import of this ontology.

connected the spiritual dullness of deists like Voltaire not only to the decline of belief but to the outbreak of violence during the French Revolution. Jones must not be interpreted as “judgmental” here, for he was clearly concerned about the bloodshed unbelief brought. And along with Butler, he placed this in an eschatological frame using analogies drawn from Old Testament examples: “As it was before the flood, as it was in Sodom, as it was in Jerusalem, so shall it be before the end of the world.” Indeed, Jones claimed that the further a people moved away from God, the less stable their political culture became. Commenting on Luke 21:25, 26 he begins, “The authority of God’s laws, and of his ministers, to keep a fallen world in order, and secure to the good and virtuous the blessings of peace, is one of the greatest and best gifts of the over-ruling Providence. But we have reason to fear, that, as the world degenerates, and Christian piety declines, this blessing will not be preserved to us.” No doubt Jones was convinced that a doctrine of the divine right of kings prevented people from starting violent rebellions. But he also thought that in God’s providence a faithless people got the government they deserved:

And herein we may view the difference between the power of government and the power of the people: for the power of government is ordained of God, and supported by his providence, to still that storm, and prevent that confusion, which the power of the people raises. The one is the only remedy against the other. The one is the gift of God to a nation that serveth him; the other is his curse upon the disobedient who are departed from him.

Finally, a brief comparison ought to be made between Jones and Butler on intellectual probation. Jones believed that God tests us with doubts. But Jones did not formulate his teaching in the exact way in which Butler did. For Butler, such doubts may be temporarily

112 Ibid., 3.
113 Ibid., 1.
114 Ibid., 5.
115 George Westhaver, “The Living Body of the Lord: E.B. Pusey’s ‘Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament’” (Durham University, 2012). Westhaver thinks Jones was very close to Butler when he wrote “The bible has farther
justified, though (crucially) they never justify acting as if Christianity were not true. More pessimistic than Butler about the power of reason, Jones writes,

Some speculative writers have treated of credibility and probability, and the nature, and force, and degrees, of evidence, as if we had rules of weighing all truth to a single grain with mechanical certainty: whereas in fact, man, with all his boasted ballancings of reason, can resist a proof that would confound a devil.116

Jesus, for instance, cast out demons who testified to who he was, yet his enemies still claimed he cast out demons by Beelzebub. Jones concluded, “None are so blind as they who are so by choice; that is to say, the ignorant are never found to be so absurd as the disaffected.”117

Unbelief, therefore, was at base an issue of affections. And the orientation of one’s affections shaped what one considered wise. In Scripture, there were two classes of people: the children of Cain and the children of Seth, Heathens and Hebrews.118 False wisdom was rationalistic, but the mark of true wisdom was its hiddenness in scriptural signs and symbols.119 Implicitly, then, Jones agreed with Butler that the process of learning involved a movement from seeking to finding because the entire economy of divine knowledge hid God in such a way that only the sincere would find him. Jones was less subtle, however, insofar as he seemingly assumed that all instances of doubt were frivolous. Butler needed only to assume that persistent doubt combined with a wilful rejection of “the safer way” was the ultimate proof of spiritual frivolity.

Recognition of our limitations in the face of divine hiddenness has important implications for our interpretation of Scripture.120 A sophisticated doctrine of Scripture and scriptural difficulties arising from another principle. For it pleased God, for wise ends, to exercise the faith and devotion of his people with a system of forms and ceremonies, which had no value but from their signification” (275).

117 Ibid., 21.
118 Ibid., 22.
119 Ibid., 23, 24.
120 See Jones, A Discourse on the Use and Intention of Some Remarkable Passages of the Scripture Not Commonly Understood. How, for instance, should we understand certain apparent immoralities among the Patriarchs? As with
language lay within the doctrine of divine hiddenness as Jones articulated it, a doctrine that was at the same time altogether traditional but unusually clear in Jones’ theology. In a late work, he stated, “the whole visible World is a Transcript of the divine Mind,” as a result of which the divine nature diffuses itself into the “Constitution of all other Things.” One major consequence of this view was that truth was not apprehended primarily in propositions but through created things. Unitarians and Socinians criticized Christians for failing to adequately set forth the doctrine of the Trinity in “the Proposition that the three Persons are one God.” Not thinking of revelation in terms of propositions, Jones countered:

But if Men will insist, that they must see a Similarity of Truth in what is known, before they admit what is unknown; then we can meet upon their own Ground. Only let it be understood, that by an Idea of a Doctrine we mean an Image of its Truth; and then of such Ideas we have Plenty; some of them selected and applied by the Word of God from the Creation of God: and if due Justice were done to their Testimony, the whole World would be Trinitarian, and join with Christians upon Earth, as Christians shall join with Angels in Heaven, in giving Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God.122

Another consequence of this view was that created analogies made the creed easier to understand. Jones’ claim makes sense when we understand his theory of biblical language.

In A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture, Jones had previously set out why “the language of the Scripture differs from that of other books; and

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Butler, for whom Scripture’s puzzling features were to be expected, Jones counseled intellectual humility when God used unexpected means for his ends. The polygamy of Abraham may be contrary to the laws of morality and social law, but “perfectly agreeable to the laws of his providence and the sense of his promises. The apostle has, therefore, treated of this case without any censure…” (17). That is because patriarchal polygamy carried with it a providential meaning. As such it could not be imitated. Jones wrote:

The act of Abraham, in taking a bond-woman, can never be drawn into a precedent, because no man can be in his circumstances, standing in a prophetic character, as the progenitor of two orders of people, a carnal and a spiritual Israel, the sons of nature and the sons of faith, and furnishing us with an allegory, which has been fulfilling in its several parts for more than half the age of the world. (18)

121 Jones, A Short Way to Truth, No. 4, 1.
122 Ibid., No. 1, 9.
123 Jones, A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture, 301-2.
whence its obscurity arises.”  

Obscurity did not arise from the grammar of Scripture, but from the “matter” (read “content”) and the created “forms under which that matter is delivered.”

The difficulty of the matter is that, since it was not delivered through the things of nature but was above nature, it was hard to understand and to receive.

From the difficulty we are under of comprehending such things as are above natural reason, the manner of the scripture is as extraordinary as its matter: and it must be so from the necessity of the case. Of all the objects of sense we have ideas, and our minds and memories are stored with them. But of invisible things we have no ideas till they are pointed out to us by revelation: and as we cannot know them immediately, such as they are in themselves, after the manner in which we know sensible objects, they must be communicated to us by the mediation of such things as we already comprehend. For this reason, the scripture is found to have a language of its own, which doth not consist of words, but of signs or figures taken from visible things.

On one level this higher knowledge was difficult to grasp, but because it was clothed in created forms it was also easy and universally accessible. It was so easy that children took to it naturally, and the whole of humanity was attracted to the natural imagery of Jesus’ parables. This was because human language was made of “arbitrary sounds,” but the original language of creation was not intended for the Hebrew or the Egyptian, the Jew or the Greek, but for man; for that being who is composed of a reasonable soul and a fleshly body; and therefore it obtains equally under the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations; and is of

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124 Ibid., 1.
125 Ibid., 6.
126 Ibid., 8.
127 Ibid., 9-10.
129 Jones, A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture, 11.
130 “It could not otherwise treat of God who is a spirit, and of the spirit of man, and of a spiritual world; which no words can describe. Words are the arbitrary signs of natural things; but the language of revelation goes a step farther, and uses some things as the signs of other things; in consequence of which, the world which we now see becomes a sort of commentary on the mind of God, and explains the world in which we believe. It being then the professed design of the scripture to teach us such things as we neither see nor know of ourselves, its stile and manner must be such as are no where else to be found. It must abound with figurative expressions: it cannot proceed without them...” Ibid., 9-10.
common benefit to all ages and all places. Words are changeable; language has been confounded; and men in different parts of the world are unintelligible to one another as barbarians; but the visible works of nature are not subject to any such confusion; they speak to us now the same sense as they spoke to Adam in paradise; when he was the pupil of heaven, and their language will last as long as the world shall remain, without being corrupted.131

Continuing, Jones explained how created images brought ideas to mind more richly than did propositions.

But when it is said, God is a sun and a shield, then things are added to words, and we understand that the thing being signified by the word God, is bright and powerful; unmeasurable in height, inaccessible in glory; the author of light to the understanding, the fountain of life to the soul; our security against all terror, our defence against all danger.132

Figural preaching was therefore essential for our sensual way of understanding.

For truth, as we have often observed, does not enter into mens (sic) minds in its own abstracted nature, but under the vehicle of some analogy, which conveys a great deal of sense in very few words: and therefore the best preachers have always taken advantage of some such analogy, after the manner of Scripture itself, which gives us the pattern of all true preaching.133

Those who preach in any way other than the figural risk being misunderstood by all kinds of people.134

Even so, understanding required agreeable affections. For “When there is no appetite, the sweetest meat is of no value, and even the sight and savour of it may be disagreeable.”135 This made faith essential for interpretation:

Thus when God speaks of things which are above nature, his meaning must be received by a faculty which is not the gift of nature, but superadded to nature by the gift of God

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131 Ibid., 294.
132 Ibid., 294.
133 Ibid., 311.
134 Ibid., 11.
135 Ibid., 16.
himself. For spiritual truth there must be a spiritual sense; and the scripture calls this sense by the name of faith: which word sometimes signifies the act of believing; sometimes the matter which is believed; but in many passages it is used for that sense or capacity in the intellect, by which the invisible things of the Spirit of God are admitted and approved.136

Scripture had both a surface and a spiritual sense corresponding to two classes of people — those with faith and those without.137 In the Old Testament, its spirit was the deeper sense, the sense “intended” by the lawgiver, which was the same as the doctrine of the New Testament:138 “the services of the law are the gospel in figurative description, and the gospel is the law in spirit and signification.”139 Nevertheless, the whole Bible used figurative language, including the New Testament.

Jones outlined the five main forms of biblical figures: natural objects, human institutions and laws, biblical individuals, the history of Israel and the Church, and prophetic actions and miracles of the prophets.140 In contrast to later theories, Jones presents no dichotomy between divine and human intentions and creations (as if 1 was different from 2-5), because human history was divinely ordered. Thus the category of nature included earthly kingdoms as figures of the heavenly kingdom; its ministers became images of the ministers in the new covenant;141 nature included war,142 occupations such as husbandry,143 family life,144 and the teacher-student

136 Ibid., 17.
137 Ibid., 27.
138 Ibid., 28.
139 Ibid., 29.
140 Ibid., 34.
141 Ibid., 61.
142 Ibid., 65.
143 Ibid., 67.
144 Ibid., 73.
In addition to more obviously “natural” creatures such as animals, plants, and minerals.\textsuperscript{146}

Indeed, Jones taught that the particularly Christian character of nature was given from the moment of creation, its grammatical unity being intended by God for our testing and “probation.”\textsuperscript{147}

The creator himself hath made use of it [creation], in revealing his will by it, and referring man to it for instruction from the beginning. For this use he intended it when it was made; and without such an intention, there never could have been such an universal agreement between nature and revelation.\textsuperscript{148}

More explicitly, Jones clearly connected the doctrine of election and divine pedagogy with a doctrine of the alphabet of nature:

To those who consider only how the creation can furnish matter to their lusts and passions, it is no better than a vain shadow: but to those who take it rightly, it is a shadow of heavenly things; a school in which God is a teacher; and all the objects of sense in heaven and earth, and under the earth, are as the letters of an universal language, in which all nations have a common interest.\textsuperscript{149}

When Jones claimed, then, that “the world is a riddle, and christianity the interpretation,”\textsuperscript{150} he meant that Christian, and not simply generic, theism was known in creation.

For example, in an interesting work of natural theology entitled \textit{A Short Way to Truth}, Jones offered five analogical demonstrations of the Trinity from nature. Some of these analogies were traditional, such as the tripartite constitution of the human body, soul, and spirit; or the three faculties of man’s mind: the understanding, will, and memory. Another such analogy

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 86-87.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 87-88.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 302.
drawn from Genesis 1 is the mind, speech, and breath of God. More characteristic of his Hutchinsonian background, though, was a Trinitarian analogy drawn from the three inseparable powers of Air, Fire, and Light. At Sinai God was a consuming fire, while the Son was the light of the world, and the Spirit was the wind of Pentecost and the breath of inspiration.

Believing that Christian revelation was universal, Jones even found the Trinity in pre-Christian religion. To be sure, in pagan worship natural hieroglyphs for God were deified and worshiped as principles in themselves. “Fire, Light and Air, the scriptural Emblems, were universally adored throughout the Heathen World.” Yet the elements were associated with separate gods, which were further linked with characteristic animals. Jupiter, the god of air, was associated with the eagle, while Moloch and Apis, the Golden Calf, were gods of fire represented by an ox or bull. Finally, various lion-gods with golden manes symbolized light. Jones argued that it was more than a coincidence that the heathen world agreed on these things. To him, their religion was a corruption of an original revelation. This was most evident in the way Scripture’s heavenly pictures illuminated these scattered shards of revelation. In a characteristic Hutchinsonian interpretation, Jones continued that the previously mentioned “sacred Animals” were

All found together in that grand Heiroglyphic of the Bible called the Cherubim, first set up at Eden, and afterwards placed in the Temple, and particularly described by the Prophet Ezekiel (Chap. i. and x.) as composed of a Lion, and Eagle, and a Bull, with the Face of a Man united to one of them. The Intention of this mythical Figure may be partly collected from its Situation in the Holy of Holies; which being a Figure of the heavenly Places, this must have been a Figure of the heavenly Powers: and the Prophet himself declares, that what he had seen in Vision was an Appearance of the Likeness of the Glory of the Lord… In this Figure of the cherubic Animals, we have the Original of all those

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151 Jones, A Short Way to Truth, Analogy 4, 1.
152 Ibid., Analogy 1, 8.
153 Ibid., Analogy 3, 1.
compound and many-headed Idols, with which Egypt and Greece and Rome abounded:
and there is one singular Example, in the mythological Character of Cerberus. The Word
is of no Greek Extraction, but evidently the same in its Consonants with CheRuB…”154

Therefore, although pagan religion was a devolution of eternal Christian truth, its hieroglyphs,
sacrifices, and doctrine of dependence on the gods were nevertheless an imitation of real faith.

The deists, however, did not even have those aspects of natural religion, because they
were rationalistic and they denied dependence upon God altogether:

The scheme of our Deists, as they call themselves, has nothing in it of things past; no fact
or tradition to ground itself upon: it has no sacraments, nor services of any kind, to keep
up an intercourse with heaven; it expects no predicted judgment, and has no particular
view of any thing after this life. Thus having no objects of faith, it teaches no
dependence, which alone renders the most just man acceptable to God. It actually
inculcates independence, and glories in it: it has neither church, nor sacraments, nor
religious worship, nor allegiance, nor submission to God or man; and therefore, it comes
more nearly close to the wishes of the Devil, the great author and first father of
independence, than any religion ever professed in the world before.155

It followed that the idolatry of the Greeks was superior to deist "philosophical religion," because
it at least preserved natural-theological hieroglyphs. Such hieroglyphs simultaneously proved to
Jones that natural theology signified Christian particulars and not theistic generalities.156

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154 Ibid., Analogy 3, 3. In this thesis I eventually offer a theory of biblical accommodation to natural facts in entirely
moral terms. An expansion of my theory would include phenomenological-symbolical similarities between
religions, but I would not want to affirm anything like Jung’s racialized unconscious, Henry Corbin’s occult
“imaginal world,” or the more commonplace liberal existentialist theories of “myth.”
156 Ibid., 463-464: “And if Nature answers to Christianity, it contradicts Deism: and that religion cannot be called
natural, which is contradicted by the light reflected upon our understandings from natural things. The Socinian is
nearly in the same situation as the Deist: and they may both join together in calling upon Nature, from morning until
night, as the Priests of Baal called upon their Deity; but there will be none to answer; and philosophy must put out
one of his eyes before it can admit their doctrines. In short, take any religion but the Christian, and bring it to this
test, by comparing it with the state of Nature, and it will be found destitute and defenceless. But the doctrines of our
faith are attested by the whole natural world. Wherever we turn our eyes, to the heaven or to the earth, to the sea or
the land, to men or to beasts, to animals or to plants, there we are reminded of them. They are recorded in a
language which hath never been confounded; they are written in a text which shall never be corrupted.”
Although I could go on to explicate Jones’ other analogies for the Trinity in nature,\(^{157}\) or to outline his Christian apologetic drawn from geology and electricity, I ought to clearly state what was at stake when Jones insisted on a figurative interpretation of nature. Rationalizing unbelief led to temporal violence and it also had eternal consequences. Jones was clear that signs and figures raised and glorified the spirit of man, “producing an effect upon it, the same in kind with what it shall hereafter experience when admitted into the presence of God,”\(^{158}\) “where all things are real and eternal.”\(^{159}\) Looking into the spirit of the words of God “occasions a transfiguration in man’s nature.”\(^{160}\) The denial of the analogical method of interpretation, therefore, was equivalent to denying salvation and glorification altogether — the very purpose of the divine pedagogy. At the same time, the scheme of probation also drove those with hard hearts towards death. Jones was worried that his explication of scriptural figures was, in fact, doing that to his readers.\(^{161}\)

\textit{IV. Butler and Jones Compared}

It is time to take stock of the similarities and differences between Butler’s and Jones’ analogical systems. Both Butler and Jones believed that creation was a place of trial, election, probation, and divine pedagogy. Although he thought that God’s moral government could be known from nature alone, Butler more frequently drew analogies from Scripture to human experience of the course of nature. As mentioned above, his analogies for miracles, Christ’s mediation, the commandments, and revelation all proceeded in this way. This kind of

\(^{157}\) Jones, \textit{A Short Way to Truth}, Analogy 4, 2. In geometry it is the circle and triangle; in optics the three primary colours; in “Pneumatics, the Theory of Sounds exhibits three distinct Notes in one perfect Harmony”; furthermore, space has three dimensions.

\(^{158}\) Jones, \textit{A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture}, 304.

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 317.

\(^{160}\) Ibid., 306.

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 309.
asymmetrical prioritizing of Scripture over nature reflected better the view of Scripture latent in his thoughts on prophecy. The same view was more clearly articulated by Jones, whose polemic against generic theisms began with scriptural emblems in order to find analogies in nature to Christian particulars. This “coherentist” method, in combination with Butler’s “wager,” was probably more appropriately deployed against atheism-agnosticism than it was against forms of generic theism that took for granted God’s moral government. The latter was more subtly refuted by Butler’s “parity argument” against presumptions — presumptions, to be sure, to which atheists and agnostics are also often blind.\(^{162}\)

In any case, the biblical view common to both men was deeply tied to human epistemic limits. For Butler, it was a fact that human beings were often quite ignorant of the reasons behind God’s works in Scripture and nature. Jones, like Mansel in the next century, used the limits of human knowledge and language as a starting point for a theory of analogical language: given our limits and God’s immensity (“which no words can describe”), we cannot but speak analogically of God. Both Butler and Jones believed that these epistemic limits, and their corresponding analogical and probabilistic processes of reasoning, tested one’s character. What one did with ignorance mattered in God’s eyes: would one use doubts to justify ingratitude, frivolity or, more seriously, revolutionary violence? The answer to this question had eternal consequences for each individual, and, in Jones’ mind, for whole nations and churches.

Both also seem to have believed in something like the alphabet of nature. Jones was quite explicit that Scripture was the language of Adam, a language of things, a transcript of the Divine Mind. We will see in the next chapter that Keble thought that Butler held something like

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a Berkeleyan doctrine of divine sensual communication. That is, God and not matter was the cause of our sensory experiences for the sole purpose of the divine pedagogy.

Although I have not mentioned it until now, both men, finally, had a place for positive evidences on behalf of Christianity. For Butler, these were mostly ground-clearing refutations of claims that called into doubt either historical facts in the Bible or the trustworthiness of its authors.\textsuperscript{163} There is no reason to think that either man doubted the traditional cosmological argument. Perhaps more dubiously, Butler may have held to something like Clarke’s teleological argument. Jones may or may not have found this argument convincing, but it did not interest him because it was too generically theist. Jones’ flood geology would be considered problematic in our time.\textsuperscript{164} Yet even here it is impossible to separate his interpretation of geological fact from emblematic warning: these facts too, whatever else they may be, are subordinate to a moral pedagogy — they are divine words. Again, Bishop Berkeley’s occasionalism comes to mind. For if natural law is actually an aspect of a higher moral law, then all is divine communication and nothing is random. The result is that geological — and implicitly evolutionary — “how” etiologies are again subordinated to the fact “that” our current reconstruction of history is itself taken up into God’s self-revelation and judgment on us. The same can be said of Jones’ history of pagan religion. Few scholars today would reconstruct world religions as a devolution from a pristine symbolic theology, but Jones’ theory does not really depend on a diachronic reconstruction. If in fact created things are divinely given symbols, then both their phenomenological similarities to biblical symbolism and their idolatrous differences confirm his point. Signification and probation are more basic than causation.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} Butler, \textit{Analogy}, Part II, VII.
\item \textsuperscript{164} William Jones, \textit{Physiological Disquisitions; Or, Discourses on the Natural Philosophy of the Elements} (London, 1781), Discourses VII-VIII.
\end{itemize}
Although this manner of responding to scientific “facts” was largely eclipsed in the next century, it nevertheless endured in the corner of the Church of England inhabited by John Hannah (1818-1888), to whom I will turn in the next chapter. Speaking of the new science of geology and of the latest (but as-yet still tentative) theories of evolution, he wrote:

But whenever investigation has led us to believe that a phrase of Scripture was accommodated to a scientific creed which has now been abandoned, we simply translate that phrase into the deeper meaning, which no scientific theory can reach or alter. We refuse to lend the weight of Scripture authority to decisions on topics with which it was not dealing, and which did not lie within its proper sphere.\(^\text{165}\)

In the following chapter, we will see how biblical authority and unity came to be contested in the nineteenth century. We will also see that the “how” of biblical unity is not given, and that this fact is part of our moral test; indeed, it leads to the transfiguration of the mind. Theologically, therefore, it will make perfect sense for Hannah to subordinate the exegetical principle of scientific accommodation to figuration. Even apparent scientific “facts” are more primarily the garments of divine manifestation; they are somehow moral words and tests.

Chapter 2 The Eclipse of Biblical Ontology

I. Introduction

In this chapter I intend to look at how and why High Church theologians began to misuse and forget the analogy of Scripture and nature in the nineteenth century as intra-Christian polemics became pressing. It is not as if the analogy was eclipsed altogether, for men like Pusey (1800-1882), Keble (1792-1866), Mansel (1820-1871), Hannah (1818-1888), and certain other High Churchmen continued to use it. But if High Churchmen of the eighteenth century were the custodians of a theology of Scripture and nature, then the High Church came to have a far more ambivalent attitude toward analogy in the nineteenth. This began prior to the Oxford Movement (Tractarianism) with Bishop Van Mildert (1765-1836), who failed to carry forward Jones’ biblical ontology. In the last chapter I described this in terms of the Bible's formal and final causal relationship to creation. The figure Jones uses is of Scripture as an alphabet or lexicon of creation. Thus Scripture has a logical and metaphysical priority over the course of nature. This metaphysic had Tractarian advocates in Keble and Pusey, but the polemical stance of the Tractarians against evangelicalism’s doctrine of *sola scriptura* effectively undermined much of its force. Instead of a Scriptural metaphysics and theodicy, they were turned toward the more modern concern of epistemology.

166 Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Nockles makes an important distinction that I will rely on between the old High Church party, which carried into the nineteenth century, and the Oxford Movement — their leaders known as “Tractarians” because of their controversial series *Tracts for the Times*: John Henry Newman and E. B. Pusey, eds., *Tracts for the Times*, 6 vols. (London: Parker, 1840). “A serious misconception implicit in Tractarian historiography is the assumption that the followers of the Oxford Movement alone were the true heirs of the High Church tradition in the Church of England, and that it was only because the episcopal and academic authorities in opposing the Movement repudiated that tradition, that the secessions to the Roman Catholic Church ensued” (Nockles, 3). Therefore, there is a difference between high churchmanship and Tractarianism even if these are mostly conflated. Indeed, Mansel and Hannah would be classed more in the old tradition of high churchmanship.
Because Thornton’s theological background is so complex, this chapter will analyze the problems set up by the High Church party, Tractarianism, John Henry Newman in particular, and *Lux Mundi* theology. First, the debate against dissenters outside of the Church of England (Van Mildert), and the debate between Tractarians and evangelicals within the Church of England, pushed each side to claim for themselves a decisive criterion by which the purer Christianity could be discerned. Popkin has traced this logic at work between sixteenth-century Christian combatants — either side fideistically standing upon Scripture or the Church (or reason!) and lobbing skeptical attacks against each other's foundation.\(^{167}\) In the same way, because Scripture was the evangelical's criterion, the Tractarians chose "antiquity." The inherent instability of placing one's faith in one criterion, however, meant that more consistently skeptical souls, like Newman, found themselves swapping their criterion quite often. Thus Newman ended up favoring the papacy. The observation I want to make is that when Scripture is treated as a mere source of knowledge — and an obscure one at that — its ontological status is diminished. Once diminished, Scripture is no longer read as a source of figures that illuminate our way through fallen history. Without such a guide, we either end in absolute skepticism or in stubborn fideism.

\(^{167}\) Richard Popkin, *History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford University Press, 2003), has described the epistemological impasse that resulted from Reformation divisions and how the polemical exploitation of rediscovered skeptical arguments led to a questioning of all foundations, ecclesial, Scriptural, rational. Nineteenth-century Protestant and High Church polemicists used the same strategies. At the same time they were inconsistent skeptics. The opposite of skepticism is dogmatism, and each side of the Reformation divide certainly remained dogmatic. The major skeptical argument cast doubt on one’s ability to justify any epistemic standard (the senses, reason, the Bible, the Church, etc.) in a non-circular way that did not lead to an infinite regression. Christians therefore used skeptical arguments against opponents without applying them to themselves — what might be best characterized as "fideism," in Popkin's terms, xxi. Thus Protestants, Catholics, and rationalists-enthusiasts each faithfully upheld their own foundation without being able to justify it to the other sects they skeptically attacked. Occasionally someone like Newman would indeed see that his own foundation was open to doubt, and he would swap dogmatic foundations. The Tractarians, like almost everyone, thus recast Christian division as an epistemology problem and not a theodicy problem. The nineteenth-century sectarian disputants within the Church of England did not solve the skeptical dilemma; in fact they further undermined Scripture. Anglican figuralism of previous generations was a casualty. The skeptical consequences of Church division are an integral part of Thornton’s history of the demise of sound biblical ontology and figural reading.
This is the problem of Tractarianism. Despite their intentions to recover figural reading, intra-Christian polemics prevented it.

This is not to say that a high view of Scripture was entirely lost among High Churchmen. H. L. Mansel and John Hannah stand out in this regard. Indeed, I will favour Mansel’s Butlerian defence of Scripture’s analogical language, its antinomical character, and his distinction between “how” and “that” questions, in order to set up a later chapter’s analysis of theological Modernism as the other context within which Thornton wrote his early works. In particular, Mansel’s distinction between "that's" (phenomenology) and "how's" (etiology) will be helpful in pinpointing, in my typology, just how “Modernist” or how “orthodox” a person was, based on how many “how” questions he felt it necessary for a theologian to answer.

Again Newman sets an interesting precedent since his doctrine of development was an etiology that both catholics and Liberals found attractive. For example, Newman's developmentalism combined well with Darwinism in the minds of Liberals like Frederick Temple (1821-1902) and Charles Kingsley (1819-1875).168 The same is true of the Lux Mundi

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168 This is ironic, given that his accusation that Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism was insincere led to the latter writing the Apologia pro Vita Sua (New York: Penguin, 1994). For Kingsley’s relationship to Newman’s thought via Mivart, see Gregory P. Elder, Chronic Vigour: Darwin, Anglicans, Catholics, and the Development of a Doctrine of Providential Evolution (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996). A colleague of both Darwin and Huxley, Mivart developed the idea of providential evolution that would in turn influence Charles Kingsley, Newman’s great Protestant rival. Kingsley applied Darwinism to the moral life in his children’s book Water Babies (1862), in which a chimney sweep drowns and is turned into a water baby who begins a process of moral evolution (135-6). Frederick Temple’s contribution, “The Education of the World,” in Essays and Reviews (London: Longman, 1861), was similar for the conspicuous absence of God in the process of human education. There he compared the human race to a single man that had been growing throughout history. Each age incorporated into itself the substance of the last, so that in the Victorian age men were more informed about religion, science, and the world than they had ever been (147). Later when Temple endorsed evolution in 1884, Mivart wrote an anonymous review linking Temple’s views to himself and Newman (112). Enthusiastic for the new doctrine, Temple pressed the third Lambeth conference (1888) to accept providential evolution, but his strongly worded resolutions provoked a successful conservative resistance. By the time he was made Archbishop of Canterbury, however, his views on biblical criticism and evolution were generally received. See Frederick Temple, The Relations Between Religion and Science: Eight Lectures Preached Before the University of Oxford in the Year 1884 on the Foundation of the Late Rev. John Bampton (London: Macmillan, 1885). Yet Temple did not address the underlying issues of theodicy, fall, and atonement.
generation of Liberal Catholics — specifically Charles Gore (1853-1932) and J. R. Illingworth (1848-1915), who inherited Newman’s dilemmas, absorbed British idealism and liberal critical method, and stepped farther away from a coherent ontology of Scripture and doctrine of providence. An evolutionary model of doctrinal development is quite different from Butler’s view of history as probation. These problems would be passed down to the theologians of the early twentieth century, including Thornton. I try to show, however, that Thornton’s re-articulation of the exemplary ontology of Scripture provided a coherent answer to these inherited issues.

II. High Church and Tractarian Scriptural Skepticism

1. Historical Background

After William Jones, High Church reflections on the figural reading of Scripture continued into the nineteenth century, though the Tractarians’ Oxford Movement in many ways marked a departure from the influence of the party of the past.169 What set off the Movement was the constitutional changes enacted by Parliament between 1828 and 1833. In 1828, the humiliating barriers against Dissenters were removed. The future Tractarians — Newman, Keble, and Froude — were moved to action when in 1829 Robert Peel, a Tory member of

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169 See Garnett, “Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist: Butler and the Development of Christian Moral Philosophy in Victorian Britain,” on Butler’s pervasive influence in the nineteenth century despite having been removed from Oxford’s curriculum through the efforts of the “Essayists” Jowett, Stanley, and Pattison. Every major theologian commented on Butler, especially because Mansel brought his method into the center of controversy. As a moralist, Butler was also commented on by Hastings Rashdall, A. E. Taylor, Scott Holland, Charles Gore, Henry Sidgwick, and James Martineau. The subsequent wave of positivism and the independent status of continental philosophy (Kant) has obscured Butler’s influence in modern theology.

Of the major works of William Jones, the latest edition of Lectures on the Figurative Language of Scripture, was published in 1821; The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones in 1826; The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity in 1787; and his Memoirs...of George Horne in 1795. It is much clearer when Jones lost influence.
Parliament for Oxford University, swung from his previous anti-Catholic position to lead the way toward Catholic emancipation. It is not that the Tractarians were anti-Catholic. They were worried that with Dissenters now allowed in Parliament, the orthodoxy of the Church of England was in danger because of the support Dissenters gave to Protestantism within the Church. They worried that its privileged position would not be assured, its property would be endangered, the standing of its clergy would be diminished, and the Church of England would increasingly have to compete for the loyalty of its members. The Tractarians disliked Peelite conservatives and their High Church supporters as much as they did the Whigs. So after the Great Reform Act of 1832 and the subsequent Irish Temporalities Act of 1833, in which bishoprics in the Church of Ireland were rearranged by the state, Newman, Keble, and Froude initiated the Tracts for the Times to protest against a denominationally mixed Parliament’s encroachment on the established Church’s territory.

Peter Nockles has drawn attention to the fact that High Churchmanship and Tractarianism were not synonymous in the nineteenth century, a misconception stemming from Tractarian historiography. On the Tractarian telling, the Oxford Movement helped to reverse a century and a half of decay from the time of the Caroline “golden age” and the separation of the holy Non-Jurors after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9. It should be recalled that the Non-Jurors in England were a group of nine bishops, including Canterbury, who refused to break their oath of allegiance to James II when he was ousted by William III. Mostly High Churchmen, the resulting schism left the Anglican Church in England, Scotland, and Ireland without some of their most

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171 Ibid., 17, 18.
172 Ibid., 18, 19.
principled clergy. These were the ones who inspired the Tractarians in their own fight against the establishment, including old High Church supporters of the establishment. Consequently, the Tractarians, like the Methodists before, looked at the eighteenth century as a time of stagnation:

It was because the eighteenth century was deemed such a sterile period that, apart from the Nonjurors and a few figures within the establishment such as Daniel Waterland, Jones of Nayland and George Horne, the laboriously constructed Tractarian *catenae patrum* overwhelmingly relied on a narrow span of the seventeenth century.\(^{174}\)

Yet for High Churchmen who stood in the Hutchinsonian tradition, the lineage of true teachers was far from broken in the eighteenth century. Nockles writes that for one such High Churchman, Edward Churton,

nothing was more important “than to show that Anglicanism, as it is now called, is not a new party, but has come down to us in regular descent from the Reformation, from Hooker to Andrewes, Andrewes to Laud, Bramhall, and Hammond, thence to Pearson and Jeremy Taylor, thence to Bishop Bull, thence to Hickes and Robert Nelson, Leslie and other names.” Thereafter, there was no breach, as some Tractarians would have it. On the contrary, “after the succession of George III these principles were again enquired for, and Horne and Jones answered to the call. Horne and Jones have their disciples still living. Tell the world this.” … the names in this roll-call, including those of Horne and Jones of Nayland, were cited in various *catenae* in the *Tracts for the Times*. Yet if the letter was sometimes observed, the spirit of Churton’s advice was imperfectly heeded by Tractarian partisans.\(^{175}\)

Tractarian selectivity derived from their disgust with other High Churchmen who failed to attack Protestants due to their alleged support of Parliament’s encroachment in church affairs.

There were also hermeneutical discontinuities with the old High Churchmen, though complex. Tractarian views of providence were discontinuous with Butlerian and Hutchinsonian precedents. Their Christian Platonist hermeneutic was more continuous with the highest insights of Hutchinsonianism than were the views of late Hutchinsonians like William Van Mildert,\(^{174}\)\(^{\text{Ibid.}}\)\(^{,} 4.\)\(^{175}\)\(^{\text{Ibid.}}\)\(^{,} 22.\)
bishop of Durham. The politics of Christian division, however, frequently undermined their ability to read their times within the frame of the Bible’s figures.

2. Van Mildert (1765-1836)

William Jones, let us recall, taught that the Bible's language was necessarily figural because God had to accommodate his communication to human limits. In his Bampton lectures of 1815, Van Mildert differed from Jones insofar as his interest in “mystical interpretation” was narrowly confined to finding a criterion by which to sort true from false "Roman" and "fanatical" dissenting interpretations. Mystical interpretation was thus justified by Van Mildert in two ways. First, Scripture itself engaged in mystical interpretation: the Jews did it, the Apostles did it, and with some serious restrictions, Van Mildert at first seems to say we can do it too. Yet having laid down some rules, he backtracks and stipulates that mystical readings ought to have little weight “unless they can be shewn to have the sanction of Holy Writ.” Furthermore, it will not “avail to argue, from some particular instances in Scripture of this mode of interpretation, to the application of it [figural interpretation] as an universal rule. No such universal rule is to be found in Scripture.”

176 The same search for criteria is evident in the later work of Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (Daniels & Smith, 1852); John Josias Conybeare, *An Attempt to Trace the History and to Ascertain the Limits of the Secondary and Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture* (University Press, 1824).


To comprise all in a few short maxims:—figurative and mystical interpretations are never to be so applied as to destroy or supersede the literal sense, when that sense is sufficiently clear and intelligible;— they are never to be far-fetched, or pressed beyond the obvious meaning of the text; — they must be such as elucidate, not obscure or perplex the subject; — they are not to be made the foundation of articles of Faith, but adduced only for the illustration or confirmation of what is elsewhere more plainly revealed; — nor are they to be sought after in matters of little moment, or made the chief object of investigation. (251-2)

For an earlier search for interpretive criteria see William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture: Against the Papists, Especially Bellarmine*, trans. William Fitzgerald (Printed at the University Press, 1849).

178 Van Mildert, 250.
Second, and far too briefly, Van Mildert gives the reason that symbolic communication is necessary given human limitations:

The utility, indeed, if not necessity, of thus communicating spiritual truths appears, partly from the natural effect of imagery in arresting the attention and engaging the affections of mankind in general, partly from the nature of the truths themselves, which perhaps are not capable of being imparted to the human mind without the aid of figurative and symbolical expressions.\textsuperscript{179}

Yet Jones’ pedagogy of things is conspicuously absent. Hence Van Mildert allows a mystical interpretation of the Lord’s parables but qualifies it. Speaking of the Ten Virgins he writes:

But the mystical signification of the lamps, and the oil, and other adventitious circumstances, as it is less evident, so is it comparatively unimportant; these being rather incidental to the narrative, than essential to its purpose … we ought carefully to distinguish between (essential and merely circumstantial resemblances…)\textsuperscript{180}

One could well imagine Jones responding that insofar as lamps and oil were creatures, they too spoke of Christ. Van Mildert, however, worried that this kind of interpretation was subjective. Ironically, however, without a metaphysical account of resemblances, Van Mildert’s distinction between essential and circumstantial details lacked objectivity.

Van Mildert’s concern for objectivity was also ironic given his inadequate attempt to connect figural reading and literal reading. He admitted that allegories were a distinct class of spiritual meanings based on the science of “the symbolical language of the prophets.”\textsuperscript{181} Furthermore, he felt allegory was dangerous when, for instance, writers took the Creation and Fall in a non-historical direction,\textsuperscript{182} thus he warned,

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 228.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 240.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 241-2.
that nothing could more effectually shake the whole fabric of Revealed Religion, than thus converting its history into fable and its realities into fiction. For if the narratives most usually selected for the purpose may thus be explained away, what part of the Sacred History will be secure against similar treatment. Nay, what doctrines, even those the most essential to Christianity, might not thus be undermined? For are not those doctrines dependent upon the facts recorded in Scripture, for the evidence of their truth? Does not, for instance, the whole system of our Redemption presuppose the reality of the Fall as an historical fact? And do not the proofs of the Divine authority of the whole, rest upon the verification of its Prophecies and Miracles, as events Which have actually taken place? Allegory thus misapplied is, therefore, worse than frivolous or useless: it strikes a deadly blow at the very vitals of the Christian Faith.¹⁸³

This point is valid, and Van Mildert would have been uncomfortable with Charles Gore’s later denial of the historical reference of certain Old Testament narratives.¹⁸⁴ But his lack of a theory of divine language was a problem, for it meant that he was unable to provide guidance once German biblical criticism became popular in England.

3. E. B. Pusey (1800-1882)

Pusey’s early treatment of types and prophecy in his unpublished “Lectures on Types and Prophecy” (1836-7)¹⁸⁵ took aim at Van Mildert and his kind.¹⁸⁶ Having been trained in the milieu of early nineteenth-century German biblical criticism, Pusey was concerned that apologetic proofs from prophecy were vulnerable to rational objection. He turned, therefore, to a metaphysic of creation and a theory of spiritual illumination to account for the veiled nature of

¹⁸³ Ibid., 242-3.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 237.
¹⁸⁶ Van Mildert, 239. Specifically, Van Mildert had written that “It is, indeed, essential to a Type, in the Scriptural acceptance of the term, that there should be competent evidence of the Divine intention in the correspondence between it and the Antitype; a matter, not left to the imagination of the Expositor to discover, but resting on some solid proof from Scripture itself, that this was really the case.”
Scripture, which Van Mildert’s apologetic could not account for since it was concerned with criteria and proofs.

According to Westhaver, Pusey’s biblical ontology was derived especially from Hooker and Ambrose, which allowed him to assert that “The world is full of types; and it were probably true to say, ‘every thing is a type,’ if we could see it.”187 All things, then, mirrored God, their cause. All things proceeded from him and returned to him.188 And all things in their being were words of God.189 Indeed, the books of creation and revelation were in harmony; everything God wrote in them was proportionate and analogous to every other thing. Pusey believed there were hidden materialistic assumptions among old High Church apologists like Van Mildert, who, in thinking that there could not be typological correspondences in the minute particulars of the Bible, betrayed a non-Christian belief in chance.190 This fact was important for Pusey’s claim that typological exegesis was a moral discipline.

Following Jones, Pusey thought that nature’s objective, as a commentary on Scripture, was our moral formation. The book of nature ought to be read ascetically, for this would propel us beyond the plain or literal sense191 and allow us to see God in every lowly detail of his two books. Thus, God’s design of the entirety of Scripture and nature in each seemingly random detail was our moral formation. In proper Platonic fashion, Pusey claimed that we only know the object of our search by making ourselves like the thing we are seeking.192 Westhaver writes,

Like reading the book of God’s Word, reading the book of nature comes with a kind of trial. The temper of mind which despises small things and “will not bend itself to the

187 Westhaver, 214.
188 Ibid., 216.
189 Ibid., 225.
190 Ibid., 68.
191 Ibid., 237.
192 Ibid., 238.
lowly portal ... which in Naaman, despises slight visible means, or in Saul, slight shades of duty, or with Gallio ‘questions of words and names (Acts 18:12-15)’ will not be able to see ‘tokens of Him in every foottrack of His Providence, each work of His Hands.’ Once again, Pusey makes the failure to discern the meaning of types an example of the gravest forms of biblical disobedience or faithlessness. Careful attention to nature helps the soul to “bend itself to the lowly portal”; it is a means of sanctification.\(^{193}\)

With this metaphysical basis in mind, we can see that Pusey opposed the High Church apologists because he believed they were simply fighting rationalism with rationalism. For Pusey, analogical exegesis was not a method of proving prophetic intention, nor was this method left up to the imagination. Types did not have to be expressly declared by Christ because all creatures were types.\(^{194}\) By contrast, Van Mildert's apologetic mode undermined prophecy and types (synonyms for Pusey): “For this proceeding, amidst its apparent modesty, does in fact assume the precariousness of types; its very object is to get rid of the question of typology as unsatisfactory and so, it, of necessity (sic) engenders a suspicious feeling with regard to those which remain.”\(^{195}\) The point of the prophecies, in other words, was moral formation, not indubitable knowledge. In this process of divine pedagogy, every detail of Scripture became a vehicle of revelation.\(^{196}\) There could be no difference of value between “direct” and more “obscure” prophecies as if those that would have been clearest to the Jews at the time were the better types.\(^{197}\) Moreover, even prophecies that were clear and evident on the surface had a far deeper meaning than was apparent.\(^{198}\) Westhaver argues that the influence of Locke’s empiricism had limited theological possibilities at the time since under his influence images could only refer to our ideas and not to divinely given analogies. This inflated the importance of

\(^{193}\) Ibid., 238.
\(^{194}\) Ibid., 145.
\(^{195}\) Ibid., 148.
\(^{196}\) Ibid., 152.
\(^{197}\) Ibid., 157.
\(^{198}\) Ibid., 157.
the historical context, which furnished the mind with the materials for prophecies. But having broken out of empiricist epistemology and cognitive theory, Pusey claimed that we gain direct access to God through the humble discipline of typological reading. These types truly participate in the reality they signify.  

So why were Pusey's “Lectures” never published? Despite Pusey’s strong moral emphasis, there is some question whether Tractarian politics embedded a doctrine of providence at odds with the doctrine of divine pedagogy. There is reason to believe that the primitivist ideal of nineteenth-century Tractarians substituted a philosophy of history as “decline” for a figural doctrine of divine pedagogy. For, while Pusey and Keble were akin to the Hutchinsonians, Ney states that

Pusey and Keble endorse Patristic figural interpretation as a necessary component of the project to re-institute pristine Christianity. Pusey boasts, “Whatever I have received, I received on the authority of the Ancient Church.” The figural hermeneutic he received he received from the early Church, and the fact that it is the hermeneutic of the early Church is what compels him to endorse it. The extent to which the application of this hermeneutic is itself necessary to assist in his grand project, however, is unclear…. Pusey’s figural hermeneutic, like that of Keble, was widely ignored, not because it was regarded as peculiar — though it was — but because it was deemed unnecessary for the reinstitution of Apostolic Christianity.

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199 Ibid., 166.
200 Ibid., 176-8.
201 Ney, “Scripture and Providence: The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament.” “I argue that the Tractarian appeal to a philosophy of history to bring providential order to history compromised the status of the Old Testament in their thought” (322). Ultimately, “The Tractarians ... do not need the Old Testament because they believe they have immediate access to their primitive ideal, pristine Christianity” (323).
Inasmuch as Pusey got caught up in sectarian polemics (attacking *sola scriptura*), epistemological self-justifications replaced the need for a theodicy that came to terms with why God might have allowed the division of Christendom.

The problem with Pusey can be stated in terms of the traditional four-fold method of biblical interpretation (the "*quadriga*"). According to this scheme, after one has learned to read "literally" and "allegorically" in order to find Christ in biblical figures, the reader moves on to the "tropological" (i.e. the "moral"), and "anagogical" levels of interpretation. Tropology is the way one applies the text to the particular spiritual struggles of life, while anagogy figurally reveals that the struggle ends in heaven. The Tractarians should have been able to make tropological sense of their own political trials and the division of the Church. This, however, would have meant using biblical figures as archetypes of human history. It is one thing to interpret natural objects in terms of biblical figures like John Hutchinson. Nature, however, is not in a fallen state, humanity is. This means that a tropological understanding must engage fallen history otherwise we will neither see how Christ's work (discerned "literally" and "allegorically") has historical purchase, nor will we know how to chart a course to our destination (understood "anagogically"). My argument is that once Tractarians had wrapped themselves up in epistemological issues (what is the foundation and criterion for determining the True Church?), tropology lost its lustre.

III. John Henry Newman (1879-1890)

1. Introduction

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204 Turner, *John Henry Newman*, 283, quotes Pusey’s *Letter to the Bishop of Oxford* of 1839, where he said, “All true theology must of necessity be Scriptural; but that which terms itself a ‘Scriptural Theology,’ has always been a stepping-stone to Socinianism or Rationalism.”

Whereas mainstream Tractarianism offered an epistemic foundation in "antiquity," or in a dual Scripture-Church foundation, Newman preferred a complex “counterbalance” of authorities (Scripture, antiquity, episcopate, papacy, conscience, theological guild, consensus fidelium). Newman thus attacked sola scriptura as an inadequate criterion of truth in itself. He therefore was accused of skepticism. I believe there is some truth to this claim, not only because Newman's shifting attacks on epistemic criteria is characteristic of skepticism, but because his British empiricist assumptions contained seeds as well. As I will show in his misuse of Berkeley, this skepticism was related to an increasingly impoverished biblical ontology. This did not mean he rejected figural reading, but it did entail that such reading was governed by the clearer dogmas of the Church. Newman regarded Scripture’s puzzling features more as human authorial artifice than — as with Jones and the early Pusey — divine content expressed through creaturely forms and figures. This emphasis on the human side of biblical authorship meant that Scripture became a product of the traditioning process. The natural and supernatural collapsed into one overarching developmental tradition. Scripture, then, ceased to be the sole, asymmetrical source of analogies, figures, and archetypes within which Church history could be grasped. For history offered up its own prime analogues (Arianism, Donatism, Monophysitism, etc.) by which Newman parsed true from false Church.

2. Arians (1833)

John Henry Newman was the Bible’s most consistent critic from within the Tractarian fold. Turner notices that already in The Arians of the Fourth Century (1833) Newman was attacking the foundations of evangelical belief by emphasizing the inadequacy and obscurity of

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On Newman’s reading of early church history, the Arian heretics resembled contemporary Protestants. Having been commissioned to write the book by the High Churchmen Hugh James Rose and Archdeacon W. R. Lyall, he was refused their imprimatur because it looked to them as if Newman was courting theological indeterminacy with his doctrine of the *disciplina arcana*. This was the idea that the Church was the “key” to understanding the mysterious collection of canonical writings, that the Church held in secret “the series of revealed doctrines more systematically than they record them in Scripture,” that the Church “should appeal to Scripture in vindication of its own [temporally prior] teaching,” but that the secret tradition ceased to exist once it was laid down in Creeds. Scripture had a deliberately obscure design for the purposes of *disciplina arcana*. As such it positively invited an allegorical interpretation, which fit with “a general principle of our nature” that we “give utterance to our highest feelings in a figurative style.” This is what the human authors did under the influence of inspiration. As such biblical imagery also appropriately tried “the earnestness and patience of inquirers, discriminating between proud and humble, and that in the most permanently impressive manner, without the world’s sharing in the knowledge. Our Lord’s remarks on the design of his own parables, is a sufficient evidence of this intention.”

Newman’s doctrine of Scripture placed the emphasis on ecclesiastical authority, human authorship, and literary intentionality rather than on creation itself figuring the divine. The

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211 Ibid., 57.
212 Ibid., 57, 58.
213 Ibid., 59.
214 I could have used Isaac Williams as a positive example of Tractarian figuralism in his sermonic, devotional, and poetic work. Would his figuralism have countered the Tractarian philosophy of history as a decline? I am not sure, but my sense is that figuralism flourished in devotional genres because it no longer had a place in providential discernment. Williams was also famous for a version of the *disciplina arcana*, the doctrine of reserve. See *Tract 80*, John Henry Newman and E. B. Pusey, eds., *Tracts for the Times*, 6 vols. (London: Parker, 1840). It could just as
test of faith elicited by the literary structure of Scripture had little to do with the fact that created things analogically reflected their Creator. Scripture’s riddles were more akin to the hieroglyphic emblems of a secret society. It is not as if God was absent from the writing process, but there was already a drift in Newman’s book toward the naturalistic explanations of his later work. This is further evident in Newman’s puzzlement over certain allegories of the Alexandrians that he could not justify with reference to literary intention. Such puzzlement is in tension with Newman’s later statement that, “It may almost be laid down as an historical fact that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together.”

The closest Newman came to articulating an ontology of scriptural words was when, in the same book, he discussed the notion of the economy. This referred to the way all of God’s works and words took on the accommodating form of the incarnate Lord:

Thus it is applied by the Fathers, to the history of Christ’s humiliation, as exhibited in the doctrines of His incarnation, ministry, atonement, exaltation, and mediatorial sovereignty, and, as such distinguished from the “theologia” or the collection of truths relative to His personal indwelling in the bosom of God. Again, it might with equal fitness be used for the general system of providence by which the world’s course is carried on; or, again, for the work of creation itself…

easily be interpreted as a traditional reassertion of the Patristic doctrine of scriptural language veiled by the letter, or it could be seen as a Tractarian attempt to elevate their ecclesiastical authority at the expense of evangelicals and to lift up the episcopate as an alternative epistemic foundation. Compare Westhaver, 282-285, with Turner, 283-289. Compare Richard Lim’s hermeneutic of suspicion applied to the apophaticism of Chrysostom, the Cappadocians, and Pseudo-Dionysius in Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). While there is a grain of truth in Turner’s and Lim’s approach, it is a too formulaic analysis of power relations, especially in the latter case. The apophatic theology of these Fathers was explicitly meant to cool divisive debates with late Arian cataphaticism for the purpose of ecclesial harmony. One might “suspect” their motives as an attempt to assert their own authority (very small at the time). But it is yet another example of the perennial use of skepticism for the purposes of peace and the saving of lives!


216 Newman, The Arians of the Fourth Century, 64.

217 Ibid., 405 — although one might question whether here again figural reading is true because it is orthodox, and not that figural reading is the method of orthodox interpretation.

218 Newman, 74-75.
Jones could have written this. Indeed, Newman did read figurally. His *Tract 83, Advent Sermons on the Antichrist* (1838), however, was a tropological “road not taken.”²¹⁹ For the more polemical Newman became, the less consistently figural he was.

3. Tract 85 (1838)

Newman’s view of Scripture took a turn away from ontology in his *Tract 85, Lectures on the Scripture Proof of the Doctrines of the Church* as he continued his attack on *sola scriptura*.²²⁰ Against the evangelicals, Newman was not content just highlighting Scripture’s obscurity, its absurdities (a talking serpent and ass), and its contradictions. Given that these could only be smoothed out with reference to ecclesiastical tradition, he concluded that the hermeneutic of comparing Scripture with Scripture ought, therefore, to be applied to the contradictions between Scripture and Tradition. Newman wrote: “As distinct portions of Scripture itself are apparently inconsistent with one another, yet are not really so, therefore it does not follow that Scripture and Catholic doctrine are at variance with each other, even if they too seem to be so.”²²¹ Here Newman anticipates his later collapse of Scripture into Tradition.

To be fair, Newman believed in Scripture and he was worried that biblical criticism would cause unbelief. Westhaver relates that, “Newman saw [Pusey’s] “Lectures” as exactly

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²²⁰ John Henry Newman and E. B. Pusey, eds., *Tracts for the Times*, 6 vols. (London: Parker, 1840). Turner, *John Henry Newman*, sums up the happy reception of this next round of criticism against the Bible by unbelievers: Newman in *Tract 85*, “Lectures on the Scripture Proof of the Doctrines of the Church” of late September 1838, turned his critical anti-Protestant prowess against *sola scriptura*. Late in the century, both Leslie Stephen and T. H. Huxley pointed to this tract, with its harsh and extensive attack on the religious and historical authority of the Bible, as providing arguments against Christianity as powerfully effective as those written by any unbeliever. This polemic illustrates all too clearly how in quarrels among themselves Christians have provided weapons to their most serious opponents (275).

Turner compares Newman’s comments on the humanness of Scripture to Benjamin Jowett’s contribution to *Essays and Reviews* a generation later.

²²¹ Tract 85, p. 49, in Turner, 280-1.
what the needs of the age demanded.”222 Perhaps, yet Newman’s own apologetic was calculated to convince evangelical Protestants that “if the authority of the Church Catholic were not secured, there would be no institution prepared to defend the authority of the Bible itself.”223

Turner states,

> What both Pusey and Newman left for other occasions was any effort to delineate how Catholics and other Christians of their day were actually to understand Scripture as interpreted by Christian antiquity. They remained satisfied with having thrown into doubt the Protestant faith in sola scriptura.224

More concerned with dogma, Newman formulated a theory of doctrinal development instead of using something like Pusey’s doctrine of types as a bulwark against liberal rationalism.

4. Development

The new element in Newman’s Essay on the Development of Doctrine (1845) was his basic agreement with previous evangelical arguments regarding the rejection of the High Church ideal of the consensus of the Fathers as an epistemic foundation.225 Thus at the end of the book, Newman settles on the see of Rome as the criterion of truth.226 Taking this tack, Newman had to prove that Roman doctrines were not corruptions but continuities. He, therefore, used scriptural

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222 Westhaver continues, “In September, 1839, Newman wrote Pusey about David Friedrich Strauss’s radical reconstruction of the New Testament accounts of the life of Christ in his Leben Jesu (1835). In it, Strauss attributes the supernatural elements of the Gospels to the myth that developed between the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels at a later second-century date. To address the challenge of Strauss’s book Newman proposes, not an apologetic demonstration of the weaknesses of Strauss’s argument, but rather Pusey’s account of typological interpretation in the “Lectures”: “Strauss’s book is said to be doing harm at Cambridge. The only way to meet it is by your work on Types” “The Living Body of the Lord,” (284-5).

223 Indeed, Turner admits (in John Henry Newman, 282) that Newman presciently saw the direction much of Protestant theology would go thereafter.


types and prophecies to prove from Scripture that later revelations were more complete truths, and to prove that the whole Bible was written on his principle of development. One objection is that this collapses Scripture into Tradition. Another objection is that this line of argument is self-serving because Newman ended up “rather simply … equating Christianity with its changing concrete social embodiments.” Thus “[t]he longevity and durability of the Roman Catholic Church in and of itself suggested the purity of its developments.” Van Mildert, we have seen, already made this kind of argument over against dissenters.

Indeed, and in contrast to Butler, Newman tried next to formulate presumptive arguments to support his move to Rome. Writes Turner,

If, Newman argued, the Creator of the order of nature stands as a permanent guardian of the fact and operation of that creation, the same Creator breaking into the natural order through revelation would presumably wish to oversee and preserve that revelation. The Bible itself could not serve that purpose: “We have tried it, and it disappoints; it disappoints, that most holy and blessed gift, not from fault of its own, but because it is used for a purpose for which it was not given.” A divinely supplied infallible authority external to Scripture both permitted developments and served to distinguish true developments from corruptions. Without recourse to an extrabiblical authority, which Newman now saw in Rome, religion declined into the chaos of private judgment or the “hollow uniformity” of the Church of England or the “interminable divisions” of the Protestant sects. On the basis of those assertions, Newman elliptically concluded, “As creation argues continual governance, so are Apostles harbingers of Popes.” He further claimed, presumably to the surprise of most of his English readers, that few people would deny “the very strong presumption [my emphasis] which exists, that, if there are developments in Christianity, the doctrines propounded by successive Popes and Councils, through so many ages, are they.”

We will return in a moment to Keble’s criticism of this line of reasoning, for the point here is not primarily to show up weaknesses of Newman’s project but to contrast it with Butler. Newman

228 Ibid., 572.
229 Ibid., 573.
230 Ibid., 574.
used analogy positively to come up with his own presumptive judgments about what to expect in history.231 Butler had normally used analogies between the two books in order to open up possibilities and not claim probabilities.

Butler had also conceived of our providential access to knowledge as a moral problem. By contrast, again, Newman’s doctrine of providence became unmoored from a doctrine of divine pedagogy and intellectual probation. We have seen that Newman’s disciplina arcani was a moral process, but a moral process put together ("how"?) by the intentionality of prophets and apostles (if even under inspiration). Here inspiration was accounted for in efficient-causal terms with vague connections to the natural symbolism of things themselves. Later in the Essay on Development, the moral pedagogy of providence was subordinated to a providential unfolding of ideas — again, a "how" explanation.

Newman’s arguments could have had a moral bearing on whether joining the providentially guided Church of Rome had salvific consequences. It turns out, however, that he did not think that the salvation of Anglicans depended on their conversion. Dulles writes,

All who are in a position to grasp the true nature of Christian revelation, Newman believed, are in principle bound to accept the channels that God has established for communicating revealed truth. As a Catholic, Newman accepted the standard doctrine that persons in invincible ignorance, including those raised in different religions and different Christian communities, could be saved if they believed whatever religious truth was accessible to them with the help of God’s grace. But those who receive the grace to accept the divine claims of the Catholic Church had an obligation to act upon their lights. By failing to profess the Catholic faith, they would incur serious danger of losing their souls.232

Newman's salvation depended on his conversion to Rome; other Anglican's salvation was not. Grace here was supervenient upon Newman's reason tracing the outworking of revealed ideas in history. The diversity of Christian reasoning about these matters, however, meant that “Newmanesque” conversions from other denominations would be rare, conversions of whole denominations almost impossible, and the discernment of those who truly rejected Roman grace very difficult. And yet the Western Church remained divided with all of the violence and all of the skeptical consequences that had led many to reject Christianity. Were deathbed skeptics simply “honest doubters” who could be saved by the small amount of truth they accepted? Or, in Butler’s terms, had they left off the saving virtues of prudence and gratitude? If so, was the divided Church complicit in providing an excuse? Was St Paul’s threat in 1 Corinthians 3:17 a figural judgment on the “branches” of the Church: “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple”? Newman and Keble wagered that this figure was not judging the Church. Yet Keble did try harder to expand the tropological implications for our ignorance of providence.

5. Keble vs Newman

After Newman’s departure for Rome, Keble for his part tried to steady the Anglo-Catholic movement in the “Preface” to a set of *Sermons Academical* (1847). Addressing those Anglicans who were asking themselves about Rome, “What if her exclusive claim be true? What if it should prove, that as yet I have been living without the pale of Christ’s Kingdom?”, Keble intended to give a practical, uncomplicated answer and recommended Bishop Butler as a guide.

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234 Ibid., v-vi.
Keble endorsed the Butlerian method of decision making, first, as probabilistic reasoning. Where there was an issue of eternal salvation, the “safer route” trumped even a higher probability, provided the “safer route” at least had a non-negligible amount of probability.235 Keble reminded his readers, second, that presumptive judgments were refuted by Butler’s method, and that, third, “positive analogies to actual experience” tell toward the truth. These rules were “grounded on the essential conditions of human life and practice” and were relevant beyond Butler’s own controversy. They may grate against those who “watch most eagerly for direct tokens from above.” But life is generally about making decisions on mere “probabilities and analogies.”236 Faith, after all, is not certainty.237

Keble proceeded, then, to apply these three Butlerian principles to Newman’s argument for conversion to Rome. Keble’s first line of response was the moral one, which showed how far he had internalized Butler’s view of divine pedagogy. Maria Poggi Johnson has recently ridiculed this response to Newman as “fundamentalist.”238 Yet if Newman’s biography illustrates the logic of division and skepticism, and one finds such skepticism corrosive of Christian faith, Keble must be taken seriously.

Keble's moral argument was indirect. He assumed that Butler's wager held when one’s eternal salvation was at stake (Christianity vs non-Christianity) but that this was not at issue in the decision to remain Anglican or become Catholic. Nevertheless, the decision to convert to

235 Ibid., vi.
236 Ibid., ix, x, xi.
237 Ibid., xi-xii. “When objects therefore, either earthly or heavenly, present themselves to the mind as distinctly as though they were seen, there is no room any longer for either hope or faith, properly so called. To say that probability, as opposed to intuition or demonstration, is the very guide of life and duty; in other words, that moral questions must be decided by moral not mathematical evidence; so far from excluding the action of a generous faith, is the only statement which gives faith unlimited scope.”
Catholicism tested one's moral integrity. He therefore asked Newman’s followers five questions. Was the decision made out of contentment and resignation to God’s will? To which he concludes, “I am where God has seen fit to place me; surely this one consideration entitles me to throw the burden of proof entirely on those who call on me to alter my profession.”

The second was the question of intellectual modesty: Keble wrote that if there was an issue that seemed to require a kind of intellectual “daring and hardihood of mind to answer” from which “intellects of the average sort draw back,” then we ought to be careful of pride and cultivate a “wise self-distrust.” His point here was that such a complicated decision inevitably was a decision based on one’s own authority — the very principle of Protestantism to which Tractarians had objected.

The third was contrition: Is there one decision that will cultivate within us more of a spirit of repentance? Fourth, based on the observation that some converts had come to relish Anglican sin as evidence of their correctness, Keble asked whether conversion implied a disparagement of true sanctity. “But it is one thing to weigh and measure other men’s sanctity, another to love sanctity, and cling to it, wherever God puts it in our way: to love it the more the nearer He has brought it to ourselves, and to shrink from all that tends to disparage it.” Finally, Keble indicated how conversion would tempt others to skepticism:

What shall we say, if some hasty step of ours, unsettling the principles of some weak brother, leave him either a sceptic for life, or drive him back, by a kind of reaction, into the cold uncantholic ways, the region where each man does what is right in his own eyes? What if we confirm the prejudices of the unbelieving world, and put a clue into her hand,

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240 Ibid., xix.
241 Ibid., xxvi.
242 Ibid., (xix).
243 Keble, *Sermons, Academical and Occasional*, xx-xxi. Given the Anglo-Catholic recognition of Roman and Orthodox churches as legitimate, the moral test here was not symmetrical. “A Roman Catholic joining the English Communion has no occasion to conceive himself separated from the undeniable sanctity of the Church of Rome. There is nothing to prevent our acknowledging their Saints: there is much to make them slow and jealous in recognising any true holiness beyond their own border” (xxxii).
whereby to entangle anew those who were just beginning to disengage themselves from her?²⁴⁴

Keble concluded:

But where the revelation, or the evidence, admits of question, there, I say that we are thrown back more or less on moral tests, such as have been suggested; that each one of them according to its measure deserves to be gravely thought on, as in the sight of God; that where they concur in any great number, the providential warning becomes awful, more than in proportion to their number, the danger of slighting them is not only increased but multiplied; and that the unequivocal presence of them all is such an indication which way our duty lies, as can only be overborne by manifestations almost miraculous.²⁴⁵

By framing the whole decision within the pedagogical framework of God’s providence, Keble exemplified the traditional belief that God's purpose was more moral than intellectual.

Keble next used tropology to claim that divided Christendom was nevertheless within God’s providential purposes. Admitting the strength of Newman's presumptive argument for Rome as the "one" Church of the creeds, he writes,

[O]ne of the principal difficulties which haunt thoughtful Anglicans in the present state of things, is the contrast between what they really find, and what they seem encouraged, in Scripture and Antiquity, to expect. The Church should be one; but to us the present Church seems palpably and incurably divided. The Church should be a guide; but by us the present Church is hardly felt to be such in several important points. And persons are tempted hastily to conclude, either that the promises have failed, or that we are not in the Church.²⁴⁶

Like Newman, Keble could draw analogies from Church history to suit his argument: the great schism of the fourteenth century left Roman Catholics in much the same predicament as at present.²⁴⁷ Yet he admitted that it was also reasonable to presume that the Lord’s intention for

²⁴⁴ Ibid., xxxii.
²⁴⁵ Ibid., xxii.
²⁴⁶ Ibid., xxxiv.
²⁴⁷ Ibid., xl-xlili.
Church unity looks like the Roman Church. But, then, the Jews also presumed that their Messiah would not be a crucified king. Here, crucially, Keble began to apply biblical figures in a way that tropologically illuminated his circumstance. He even wondered whether Church unity depended in some way on sanctity:

It is surely a material consideration, which has constantly been urged in this controversy, and has never, that I know of, met with a satisfactory answer, How far the promises to the Church, like those to individuals, are conditional: her more external privileges dependent on her inward and spiritual privilege of sanctity.

Is it not possible, he finally asks, that the temporary division of the Church be punishment?

Finally, Keble used Butler’s parity arguments to dismantle Newman's presumptive argument for Rome as the bearer of divine favour. Keble amends Butler’s famous passage on inspiration to apply equally to presumptive arguments about what faithful traditioning ought to look like:

We are wholly ignorant .... how far, or in what way, God would interpose, to secure [Church Principles] being transmitted to posterity. We are equally ignorant, whether the evidence of them would be certain, or highly probable, or doubtful: or whether all who should have any degree of instruction from them, and any degree of evidence of their truth, would have the same…. Nay, we are not in any sort able to judge, whether it were to have been expected that the [mind of the Church] should have been committed to writing; or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted, by verbal tradition, and

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248 Keble, *Sermons, Academical and Occasional*, furthermore noted that the Roman Church had to explain why the other creedal notes of "sanctity" and "universal" were not ubiquitously correct in her own case: the Church was not literally everywhere or unambiguously holy in all its members. Why not the same analogical subtlety about the mark of unity? (xxxvii-xxxix.)

249 Ibid., xxxvi. “How completely did the predictions to the house of David appear to man’s judgment as if they failed! how eminently is it the work of faith to see that they are realized in our Lord! And to take the greatest instance of all, what a disappointment was that of the whole Jewish nation, the lowly Apostles alike and the haughty Priests, when they were told the true meaning of the Old Testament in its sayings concerning Christ’s kingdom! a disappointment in which even now both Jews and many Christians (so far perhaps Judaizing) seem almost entirely to sympathize. Is it not possible that the Roman Catholic exposition of the same Scriptures may partake of the same error? It surely seems to depend very much upon certain outward circumstances, which however striking to the imagination, are rather particular forms and embodiments of the great idea of Unity, than inseparable parts of the idea itself.”

250 Ibid., xxxix.

251 Ibid., xlii.
at length sunk under it, if people so pleased, and during such time as they are permitted, in the degree they evidently are, to act as they will.” How does this way of speaking suit with the sentiment, that an Infallible Guide must needs be given, because we cannot see how the truth can be otherwise preserved? or with that other sentiment, “I walk by my own private judgment, but I know I cannot be far wrong, because I have prayed”?  

Keble then asks whether, shorn of our presumptions, Anglican tradition is good enough.  

Indeed, should we not positively expect surprising and puzzling circumstances within Christian history? The Roman objector asked whether the English Church’s corruptions and small size counted against its catholicity. But Keble responds that the same God of the Church is the God of nature who unevenly distributed health and access to remedies. As Butler wrote:

> In a word, the remedies which nature has provided for diseases are neither certain, perfect, nor universal. And indeed the same principles of arguing, which would lead us to conclude that they must be so, would lead us likewise to conclude, that there could be no occasion for them; that is, that there could be no diseases at all.

Thus by analogy, defects of catholicity and infallibility cannot be hedged against by presumptive logic. Indeed, analogies from Scripture and nature do not exclude such possibilities.

Keble’s “branch theory” of inclusive catholicity would require, therefore, that the Roman Catholic “stay put” in his communion just as the Anglican ought to “stay put” in his own. The “providential hints” are “especially calculated to keep us in our place at this time”:  

“Surely, taking all into account, it is more scriptural, more analogous to God’s ordinary moral government, aye, and more hopeful too, in the end, to suppose the whole visible Body shattered

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252 Ibid., xlvi-xlix.  
253 Ibid. Again “The only question [for an English Churchman] concerning the [Church of England] is, whether it be a real [branch of the Church]; not, whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for: and concerning the [Prayer Book] whether it be what it claims to be; not, whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulgated, as we might be apt to fancy a [perfect form of solemn worship] should” (xlix).  
255 Keble, Sermons, Academical and Occasional, liii.  
256 Ibid., liv.  
257 Ibid., lxviii.
and decayed, than to claim perfection for one part, while we deny the very being of the rest.”

The “English theory” of the Church would call Greeks to remain Greeks, Roman Catholics to stay in their place, and English to stay in the Church of England. More than this, it had positive ecumenical benefits in that all are required to speak charitably of one another as if in debt to one another out of natural, familial piety.

It is evident, therefore, that Keble’s use of the analogy of Scripture and nature, with its presupposition of God’s moral government, allowed for a novel ecumenical proposal. The problem with Keble’s Butlerian case for staying put was that the proposal was not sufficiently robust and too conservative. If it is unfair to label Keble a “fundamentalist,” Johnson is at least correct in seeing an absence of critical principle in Keble’s conservatism. That principle, I would suggest, could have been a discernment of divided Christendom under the judgment of the figure of 1 Corinthians 3:17, combined with a radical ecumenical project of reunion based on the “wager” that our souls are endangered if such a project is not undertaken. Keble did recognize division as a temporary punishment, but the absence of a fuller tropological reading of providence meant that he did not find in Scripture hopeful projections about how he might participate in Christ's solution to the problem of division.


258 Ibid., lxix.
259 Ibid., lxx. “Here lies our true Via Pacis, and centre of unity: not to be found by eagerly pressing on to outward communion, but rather by praying for them and with them at a distance: by acquiescing, so long as it shall please God, in the sentence (so to call it) of partial excommunication, which seems now for many centuries to have hung over each separate portion of our sinful and decayed Christendom. This, in God’s counsels, may be the kind of unity intended for us, as best suiting our condition, and furthering our probation: an unity of faith, not of sight: an unity which, far from admitting any boastful contemplation of our privileges, cannot be imagined apart from the constant breathings of a lowly and penitent spirit” (lxxi).
260 “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person.” The easy way out is to observe that people in the past destroyed the unity of the Church. True as this is, it does not answer the "original sin" problem of why we are still being punished for what other people have done.
Both Newman and Keble had recourse to Butler’s Analogy for their respective ecclesial commitments, though it is clear that Keble had more solid metaphysical and theological underpinnings for his decision. Reflecting on “the safer way” in the controversy between Anglicans and Romans, Keble made a very interesting offhand observation about the metaphysical implications of Butler’s method. The “safer way” would be impossible to discern without a theistic guarantee of the world’s lawfulness. I do not wish to assess the philosophical merits of this argument, only to note that Keble described Butler in a very Berkeleyan way. The regularity of the course of nature depended on God; our perception of nature is caused by God (and not matter) and this is analogous to the claim that Scripture is also a communication from God. Indeed, if God causes our perceptions of Scripture and nature, then he will always send us sufficient information to make moral decisions even in those cases where we wish we had more information and are forced to take "the safer way." Conversely, without such a governor, moral deliberation would be impossible.\textsuperscript{261} The contrast with Newman is subtle.

Mark Allen McIntosh has recently argued for Newman’s Berkeleyan metaphysical vision. In this vision, sense impressions are given by God in an ongoing process of formative communication. McIntosh discovers that both Newman’s sister, Jemima, and E. B. Pusey had

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., xii-xiii. He writes:

Again: to urge on a person the wisdom and duty of taking “the safe way” may sound indeed at first like cold calculation, but is practically a principle of faith, since it must ever issue in preferring eternity to time. Perhaps too, even metaphysically, it may imply a righteous Governor of the world: for how can there be any comparison of safe or unsafe, if all be left at random? And granting the comparison, why should we trust our own impressions about it, except through an instinctive faith in the veracity of one who caused us to have such impressions? Who knows but the like instinct may lie at the foundation of the whole way of reasoning from analogy? Bishop Butler has put the question without solving it, “Whence it proceeds that likeness should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one?” It seems not unnatural to say to one’s self, Perhaps the tendency may arise from an instinct, unconsciously recognising His Presence and Power, Who actuates all things, and moves them by general laws. For example, our faith in the course of nature, in our own senses, or in our personal identity, when we come really to consider it, is scarcely intelligible but as faith in the God of Nature, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” And so the very notion of reasoning at all from analogy may seem to stand on a religious basis.
recommended Berkeley to Newman. 262 Indeed, in 1834 Newman showed “some rather confused knowledge of Berkeley’s views” in a discussion with his sister, to whom he wrote “at least he [i.e., anyone holding the views Newman ascribes to Berkeley] will hold the external world to be a divine intimation, a scene of trial, (whether a reality or not) just as a child’s game may be a trial. I have tried to say this in the Arians, ch. I §3.”263 Thus far, this seems to cohere with Keble.

Evidence for Newman’s Berkeleyan Platonism can also be found in the Apologia (1864), where again he mentions Berkeley in relationship to the influence of Butler and Keble on his thought. Newman relates that he learned from Keble

the same two [ideas], which I had learned from Butler, though recast in the creative mind of my new master. The first of these was what may be called, in the large sense of the word, the Sacramental system; that is, the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen, — a doctrine, which embraces in its fulness, not only what Anglicans, as well as Catholics, believe about Sacraments properly so called; but also “the Communion of Saints”; and likewise the Mysteries of the faith. The connexion of this philosophy of religion with what is sometimes called “Berkeleyism” has been mentioned above; I knew little of Berkeley at this time except by name: nor have I ever studied him.264

Newman here acknowledges a kinship between Butler and Berkeley. Yet when we refer back to Newman’s account of the two ideas he learned from Butler, we find some strangely un-Berkeleyan thoughts. He writes,

for myself, if I may attempt to determine what I most gained from it [the reading of Butler’s Analogy], it lay in two points … they are the underlying principles of a great portion of my teaching. First, the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system, and of this conclusion the

263 Ibid., 347.
theory, to which I was inclined as a boy, viz. the unreality of material phenomena, is an ultimate resolution. *At this time I did not make the distinction between matter itself and its phenomena*, [my emphasis] which is so necessary and so obvious in discussing the subject… Thus to Butler I trace those two principles of my teaching, *which have led to a charge against me both of fancifulness and of scepticism* [my emphasis].

Newman makes an explicit distinction that Berkeley was determined to resist because of its atheistic implications, that is, the distinction between matter and its phenomena. The problem with the empiricist theory of knowledge here is that there is no way to get behind the phenomena to verify whether they accurately represent the material things that might have caused the sense impressions. Additionally, Berkeley felt that by positing an impersonal cause behind phenomena, we also must deny the straightforward moral import of perceptions as divine communication. Might not the charge against Newman of skepticism, which Berkeley’s arguments were designed to counter, be related to his empiricist distinction between matter and its phenomena?  

Furthermore, the difference between Newman's providential theory of doctrinal development and the alternative theory of probation is that the former only has moral import for the person who has traced God's purposes in Church history. Again, average Anglicans were under no obligation to convert to Rome, only those, like Newman, who had discerned the trajectory of providence. The theory of probation, on the other hand, is that ignorance of providence is included within the moral purpose of providence.

By the time Newman wrote his sermon on “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine” (1843), he *had* made a distinction between matter and its phenomena. He then drew an analogy between impressions caused by matter in the natural realm and impressions caused by

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266 Writing in 1880 in Note II at the conclusion of *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1955), Newman takes issue with A. M. Fairbairn and others who had observed that the following statement in the *Apologia* betrayed Newman’s skepticism: “that there is no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity, and that a perfectly consistent mind, under those circumstances in which it finds itself here below must embrace either the one or the other” (*Grammar* 383). For more on this debate see Turner, 565.
God in the supernatural realm. Thus he had to respond to the inevitable skeptical objection that our sense impressions and our “ideas” about God are inadequate representations.

When it is said that such figures convey no knowledge of the Divine Nature itself, beyond those figures, whatever they are, it should be considered whether our senses can be proved to suggest any real idea of matter. All that we know, strictly speaking, is the existence of the impressions our senses make on us; and yet we scruple not to speak as if they conveyed to us the knowledge of material substances. Let, then, the Catholic dogmas, as such, be freely admitted to convey no true idea of Almighty God, but only an earthly one, gained from earthly figures, provided it be allowed, on the other hand, that the senses do not convey to us any true idea of matter, but only an idea commensurate with sensible impressions.”

Newman asserted that “our ideas of Divine things are just coextensive with the figures by which we express them,” but notice what he is not saying. He is not saying with Berkeley that this is because God created the world to be a language and that the concept of a material “thing in itself” is an unnecessary — indeed atheistic — hypothesis. Newman simply asserts the connection of matter and its sensory impressions as a matter of faith. The connection is not given a theological justification but is assumed after a dismissal of the skeptical argument against the reliability of the senses, senses which are then used as a basis for further knowledge. In drawing an analogy between matter and its impressions to God and his “religious impressions,” Newman was also not following Butler. Ignorance, for Butler, was not the result of not knowing whether our senses were reliable, but the result of a certain amount of irregularity in the information received. Butler's analogies trade on our ignorance of the means God uses for his ends in the realms of nature and grace, and are not based on potential skepticism about the senses. Newman might have believed that God ensured the reliability of the senses, and hence ensured the adequacy of signs to their referents, but the metaphysical and practical arguments

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268 Ibid., 338.
were lacking or confused. Without this consistency, Newman fails to advance beyond Lockean empiricism toward Berkeley's more defensible position. For if God is not the cause of our perceptions and matter is, but we cannot get behind our perceptions to verify their truthful representation of matter, then we are left with Humean skepticism.\(^{269}\)

Such metaphysical confusion is further confirmed in Note II to *Grammar of Assent* when Newman explains how he understands analogy. If Butler’s method can be described by the phrase “What is one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” Newman rightly states that Butler’s use of analogy is mainly a negative, ground-clearing argument. Newman, however, had gone “beside and beyond Butler” to use analogy to make a positive case for Catholicism.

There is a certain sense in which Analogy may be said to supply a positive argument, though it is not its primary and direct purpose. The coincidence of two witnesses independently giving the same account of a transaction is an argument for its truth; the likeness of two effects argues one cause for both. The fact of Mediation so prominent in Scripture and in the world, as Butler illustrates it, is a positive argument that the God of Scripture is the God of the world…\(^{270}\)

A number of things deserve mention here. The fact that our natural experience includes instances of mediation provides neither positive evidence nor probability that the atonement would occur. It only allows the possibility of mediation. Yet given the fact of Christ's mediation, we can see analogies to our experience. The logical issue is that Butler takes the revealed facts of Scripture to be prime analogues, to which the other term in the analogy is compared. Newman, on the other hand, infers an implied “lawgiver” from the “law” he finds behind the similarities in history. He continues,

This peculiarity I first found in the history of doctrinal development; in the first instance it had presented itself to me as a mode of accounting for a difficulty, viz. for what are


called “the Variations of Popery,” but next I found it a law, which was instanced in the successive developments through which revealed truth has passed. And then I reflected that a law implied a lawgiver, and that so orderly and majestic a growth of doctrine in the Catholic Church, contrasted with the deadness and helplessness, or the vague changes and contradictions in the teaching of other religious bodies, argued a spiritual Presence in Rome, which was nowhere else, and which constituted a presumption [my emphasis] that Rome was right; if the doctrine of the Eucharist was not from heaven, why should the doctrine of Original Sin be? If the Athanasian Creed was from heaven, why not the Creed of Pope Pius?271

Newman thus makes the “cause” of the “likeness” between two things his prime analogue. Stated metaphysically, for Newman, the similarity between Jesus’ mediation in Scripture and instances of mediation in the world are accounted for with reference to a third thing: a formal divine cause behind both. For Butler, Jesus the Mediator is the formal cause of all other similar mediators in creation. In this way, Scripture itself can be the only “law” behind the similarities in the world, and the “lawgiver” does not stand behind Christ but is fully incarnate as him. Newman’s logic and ontology here abstracts the laws of revelation from the created forms in which it was meant to be communicated. This means the content of revelation becomes increasingly distant from human grasp; hence, the charge of skepticism brought against Newman. A proper ontology of Scripture would have prevented this skeptical gap.

7. Newman and Biblical Criticism

By the time Newman wrote his late essay “On the Inspiration of Scripture” (1884), he had entirely lost all traces of a "high view" of Scripture. The question in light of the new biblical criticism was how far a Catholic could participate. His answer drew extensively on Trent and Vatican I as authorities regarding the extent of the canon, belief in the doctrine of inspiration, and the identity of biblical authors. But where authorship has not been authoritatively

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271 Ibid., 385-6.
pronounced by the Magisterium, criticism is fair game. Newman’s conclusions anticipate the direction taken by later Anglican thinkers from Gore to Sanday: he is willing to state that historical facts that do not convey doctrine can be criticized, provided this is done with discretion. Revelation’s form could now be parsed between dogmatic truths and irrelevant details. This was already partially implied by those High Church apologists to whom Pusey early objected (Van Mildert). If some of Scripture’s details were simply fortuitous and mystically irrelevant, then biblical form and content had begun to break apart. Some bits were revelatory and other bits not.

IV. Non-Tractarian and Post-Tractarian High Churchmen

H. L. Mansel and John Hannah were High Churchmen whose scriptural interests were in many ways tangential to the Oxford Movement. The latter was indebted to Mansel, but the difficulty of his thought and his ecclesiastical responsibilities meant Hannah never received proper attention. Mansel, on the other hand, was the centre of controversy in the Church of England. An enemy of emerging British idealism and a precursor of later linguistic analysis, Mansel gained notoriety for his emphasis on the limits of human reason, an emphasis that was at odds with idealism’s metaphysical ambitions. Mansel, as a result, has largely been remembered as a skeptic. This is ironic since it was idealism that called into question the particularities of biblical religion.272 Mansel, however, had simply reformulated Butler’s doctrine of intellectual

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272 In his recent monograph, “Scripture, Skepticism and the Character of God: The Theology of Henry Mansel” (Wycliffe College, ThD, University of Toronto, 2015), Chapter 5, Dane Neufeld has emphasised the skeptical consequences of this idealist framework. T. H. Green (1836-1882) and F. H. Bradley (1846-1924) were two main popularisers of idealism in the British context. The later was a “spiritual monist” while the former attempted to hold on to matter in some way, Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, “Idealism,” in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2015 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/idealism/. Neufeld describes the attraction of Green for the Lux Mundi men due to his opposition to materialism and his engagement with Scripture. To be sure, Green opposed his project to Mansel, who earlier registered his disagreement with Hegelian "pantheism" prior to its importation to Britain because it erased the possibility of a personality of God. The difference here with Green was crucial.
probation for a new era. It was “skeptical,” to be sure. But unlike idealism, Mansel’s philosophy allowed the Bible’s offensive and apparently contradictory (“antinomic”) language and its puzzling historical claims to retain an independent power to render the divine personality. True, it could only render God in analogical language, but among idealist theologians, the systematic need for all-encompassing theories necessarily smoothed out theological difficulties by rendering biblical language vague in some places.273 John Hannah called these systems “harmonizations” because they reduced the antinomical phenomena of Scripture and nature rather than let them stand. Ultimately sidelined, Mansel and Hannah’s theology nevertheless anticipated Thornton after he overcame his Liberal Catholic constraints.

About three generations after the original Tractarian movement, the Anglo-Catholics, under the leadership of Charles Gore (1853-1932), attempted a “liberal” synthesis between creedal Christianity and the new sciences of Darwinism and biblical criticism. The stellar group of theologians in the Lux Mundi (1889) volume successfully set the tone for Anglican theology Mansel stressed the limits of human reason and the givenness of biblical language. He therefore was less of a skeptic than a fideist of a sort Popkin did not discuss — Joseph Butler and his heirs, again, do not get the attention they deserve. (To be sure, Herbert Spenser sealed Mansel's reputation as the forerunner of his own irreligious agnosticism). Green, however, chafed against the limits Mansel articulated, but ironically ended up with even less positive theological content. For, Scripture and the personality of God were penultimate to a God behind the God of theism. Mansel saw that this was the consequence of idealism, and Neufeld shows how the Lux Mundi group had to use Mansel inasmuch as they too wanted to hold on to Scripture and divine personality. Indeed, this was still a concern in Thornton's early work, even as the philosophical context shifted from British idealism to the emergentism of Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), C. Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936), and Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). For this context see Chapter 4. One thread in my own argument is that there are certain shared characteristics in Gnostic, deist, idealist (“pantheist”), and emergentist-process (“panentheist”) theologies. This is a connection under the surface in Thornton's Irenaeian project. It is also a thread in Mansel who wrote on Gnosticism, deism, and idealism. Henry Longueville Mansel, The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries (London: J. Murray, 1875); Letters, Lectures, And Reviews, Including The Phrontisterion, Or, Oxford In The 19th Century (London: J. Murray, 1873). I am hinting in this chapter that there is a way that more "orthodox" thinkers can exhibit some of the characteristics of the Gnostic-deist-pantheist type, which is a similar inability to deal with ignorance of God's ways and the almost-salvific role given epistemology. I would want to underline perhaps with more precision than Neufeld's title suggests, that the clashing views of ignorance about God are less accurately described as rival versions of skepticism but of fideism. "Academic" skeptics come to negative dogmatic conclusions about everything, and "Pyrrhonian" skeptics refuse to even come to negative conclusions but rather suspend judgment. By contrast, there are various versions of foundationalist fideisms that come out of the sixteenth century. Some are Biblicist or Papal, while others emphasize reason-conscience-mystical apprehension. Against all of these I am contrasting the fideism of Butler, Mansel, Thornton, and so on.

long into the interwar period of the twentieth century, when their apologetic method and its idealism finally fell out of fashion. The *Lux Mundi* doctrines of Scripture and nature contained the same problems Newman had: a desire to practice figural reading, but an impoverished biblical ontology and a resultant temptation to collapse the natural and supernatural in one harmonized development. Thornton, by contrast, came back to an emphasis on antinomical phenomena, the asymmetrical analogy of Scripture and nature, the Christological unity of Scripture’s form and content, and the importance of its trivial details. Thus his concerns resembled Mansel’s and Hannah’s.

1. Mansel (1820-1871)

Mansel’s Bampton Lectures for 1858, *The Limits of Religious Thought*, effectively rearticulated Jones’ biblical ontology using Butlerian resources. His argument, in summary, was that representations of God drawn from Scripture or nature were necessarily analogical, given the limits of human thought. These limits were not peculiar to theology, but evident in every area of human inquiry. Over against monistic systematizing philosophers such as “Parmenides, Plotinus, Spinoza, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel,” Mansel endeavoured to show that systematizing metaphysical schemes were forced to deny apparent contradictions of real significance. The apparent contradiction of importance to Mansel was the personality of God, which conflicted with conclusions about Infinite, Absolute existence in the totalizing metaphysical systems of the idealists. His philosophical theology, however, was a general

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274 Kurt Gödel proved Mansel’s point in the field of mathematics with his consistency and inconsistency theorems. Any all-encompassing symbolic system will necessarily be inconsistent, while any consistent system will be incomplete — it will not be able to represent all possible truths even though those truths do in fact exist. For a contemporary natural theological application of Gödel’s theorems see Stephen M. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), chapter 22, appendix C.


276 Ibid., ix.
defence of the Bible’s antinomical language, of which personality and infinity were just one apparent contradiction. Although he believed humans were unable to univocally explain reality, Mansel thought that we could still know about the unknowable. He helpfully drew a distinction latent in Butler’s apologetics between knowing “that” something was a fact versus “how” to conceptualize that fact. For instance, Butler knew that Christ was mediator, that Scripture was inspired, that the commandments contributed to our education, and that evil would work out to our good, but he was clear that such knowledge was not dependent upon instrumental knowledge regarding how these things fulfilled God’s goals. In Mansel’s words, he concluded

We may believe that a Personal God exists: we may believe that He is also absolute and infinite as well as personal; though we are unable, under our present conditions of thought, to conceive the manner in which the attributes of absoluteness and infinity coexist with those which constitute personality. The conclusion thus arrived at may be literally stated in the words of St. Chrysostom: “That God is everywhere, I know; and that He is wholly everywhere, I know; but the how, I know not: that He is without beginning, ungenerated and eternal, I know; but the how, I know not.”

This distinction between “that” and “how,” “between belief in the fact and conception of the manner,” applies to belief in a personal God despite our inability to conceive of his absolute and infinite nature.

Belief in inconceivable objects came by way of analogy, which expressed that object by means of things that resembled it. While biblical analogies did not univocally refer to God, they were nevertheless “regulative conceptions” that expressed “regulative truths,” without which knowledge of God would be entirely vacuous:

A regulative conception … is a conception derived, not from the immediate perception or intuition of the object itself, but from that of some thing else, supposed more or less

277 Ibid., xi-xii. Mansel provides no reference for this quotation from Chrysostom.
278 Ibid., It also applies to the belief that spiritual beings see and hear in some way without being able to conceive of how (xii).
nearly to resemble it; and a regulative truth is a truth expressed by means of such conceptions. Thus when I speak of God as seeing or hearing, or as feeling anger or pity, I do not mean that He has precisely the same modes of consciousness which are expressed by these terms when applied to man, but I borrow from the human consciousness terms which express indirectly and by way of analogy certain divine attributes of which I have no immediate apprehension in themselves. Regulative conceptions are thus accommodations adapted to human faculties, serving as rules and guides to direct our thoughts in relation to things which we are unable to conceive immediately.279

That apparent contradictions arise from trying to apprehend the first principle of theology, Mansel points out, is only analogous to contradictions that arise from trying to get at the first principle of any discipline. This is caused by the limits of reason, which also makes antinomy a problem for philosophy in general. He then lists metaphysical oppositions that have proved to be perennial problems: "Liberty and Necessity, Unity and Plurality, the Intercourse of Soul and Body, and the nature of Space and Time."280

Like Butler and Keble, Mansel concluded that the analogy of ignorance should not promote skepticism, but rather, reliance on practical standards of decision making — on morals. The limits of human thought "shews us that our intellectual trial in this life is analogous to our moral trial, that as there are real temptations to sin which nevertheless do no abrogate the duty of right conduct, so there are real temptations to doubt, which nevertheless do not abrogate the duty of belief."281

*The Limits of Religious Thought* also contained an argument for the equal inspiration of the entire Scripture, a concept which had become a stumbling block for otherwise orthodox theologians, but yet was a basic presupposition of figural exegesis, as Pusey had shown. Mansel began by stating two facts: that reason was not infallible and that "We are bound to believe that a

279 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
280 Ibid., xv-xvi.
281 Ibid., xix.
Revelation given by God can never contain anything that is really unwise or unrighteous…” He therefore concluded

that a Revelation tested by sufficient evidence is superior to reason, and may correct the errors to which reason is liable; and, consequently, that exactly in proportion to the strength of the remaining evidence for the divine origin of a religion is the probability that our reason may be mistaken when it concludes this or that portion of its contents to be unworthy of God.282

Mansel here concludes with a Butlerian argument for the canon as a whole, which might seem like a particularly radical version of fideism. Yet it was on firmer (non)foundations than at first sight. Mansel assumed that people believe Christian things for Christian reasons and not for non-Christian reasons. That is to say, Scripture provides analogues to normal human experiences, analogues that are particularly good at giving coherence to such experiences especially when compared to non-biblical half-way-houses like deism and Liberalism. Having believed on the basis of analogy and moral urgency, a return to the non-analogical pattern of reasoning of deism was a reversion to an apologetically inferior position. There is a reason that Butler is credited with the decline of deism, which, if his arguments are true, would have declined anyway due to its inherent weakness. "Hence," writes Mansel,

there is a special inconsistency in the conduct of those who, while admitting the divine origin of Christianity, claim a right, on rational grounds, to select a portion of the teaching of Christ as permanent and essential, and to Reject the remainder as temporary or unessential. If the divine authority of Christ’s teaching be once admitted, the acceptance of all that can be plainly shewn to belong to that teaching follows as a matter of course: and, on the other hand, if any portion of that teaching be rejected on rational grounds, this can only be legitimately done on the assumption that the whole is of human origin, not a divine Revelation.283

282 Ibid., xviii.
283 Ibid., xvii-xix.
Mansel’s insistence on our inability to separate the Bible’s form from its content anticipates Thornton’s own arguments and places him in contrast to any theologian — from Newman to Sanday and so on — who thought that biblical criticism could objectively achieve this.

2. William Sanday (1843-1920) vs Charles Gore (1853-1932)

Mansel’s conclusion is in direct conflict with Sanday’s doctrine of Scripture set forth in *The Oracles of God*, where he utilized Butler to argue for the disunity of Scripture and the division between its “divine” and “human elements.” Sanday argued that we should have no presumptive biases about Scripture’s unity but rather let science honestly describe its contradictions. We are not competent to judge in advance the method God uses in dealing with humanity, and Butler has shown that presumptions about what Scripture's form ought to look like are falsified by the evidence.

History is strewn with warnings as to the mistakes in which we are involved the moment we begin to lay down what an Inspired Book ought to be and what it ought not to be…. that a revelation from God must be universal, that it could not be confined to an obscure and insignificant people; that a revelation from God must be clear — that it could not be wrapt up in difficulties of interpretation; that its evidence must be certain and such as should leave no room for doubt? All these criteria had been actually put forward; the Christian revelation had been tried by them and found wanting. No one would think of putting forward any such criteria now.

Having pointed out how Butler defeated presumptive arguments against special revelation,

Sanday proceeded to argue that Scripture could be parsed between revelatory and non-revelatory bits on the basis that,
Butler's analogy between Scripture and nature drew attention to the fact that we do not always understand how God is at work in either book, even if we know God has a unified purpose. Sanday would not deny that God had a unified purpose. It was just that his purpose was not embodied in Scripture. Thus the obscurities in Scripture and nature were not due to the antinomical character revelation must take when the infinite communicates to limited creatures. Scripture is a puzzle because it is a product of nature, and nature is a puzzle only because we do not understand it yet. In principle, however, there was no reason why we could not sort out Scripture's puzzles provided we sort out historical issues. Sanday obviously believed this was possible otherwise he would not have applied his mind to biblical criticism. Yet because he believed such explanation was possible, it became increasingly difficult — despite his criticism of dictation theories of inspiration — to avoid falling into an explanation of “how” Scripture was inspired. Sanday could not have it both ways. To avoid a mechanical theory of dictation, he would have had to recognize the limits of human reason. Preferring etiology over phenomenology, explanations over descriptions, "how's" over "that's" — he ended up fideistically endorsing reason as the foundation of all knowledge. This was a fideism not unlike the foundationalist alternatives endorsed by evangelicals and catholics, who found it difficult to think analogically as well. It was also a fideism that Butler's and Mansel's fideism was meant to counter.

285 Ibid., Chapter 7, “True and False Inspiration.”
Sanday and Gore tangled over the extent to which the documents of the New Testament might fail to record historical “facts,” but they both endorsed a bottom-up approach to Scripture’s inspiration. In his *Lux Mundi* essay, “The Holy Spirit and Inspiration” (1889), Gore utilized a conception of multiple meanings to account for certain texts he felt could not be historical. Like Newman’s theory as far back as *Arians*, Gore’s explanation grounded multiple senses in the intention of the human writers. Gore added that the rules for multiple senses were further governed by the genres the writers were using. There is no indication that Gore understood created things themselves as analogical. Coming to terms with Julius Wellhausen

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288 William Yarchin, “Biblical Interpretation in the Light of the Interpretation of Nature, 1650–1900,” in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: 1700-Present*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Boston: Brill, 2008), 41–82. Yarchin argues that the early modern period changed the doctrine of accommodation. It used to be the case that accommodation was a way to say that God had adapted his message to his listeners. With Galileo, the trend becomes one of claiming that the Bible is actually teaching modern science (thus the days of Genesis are reinterpreted, and the Bible is made to fit the geological record). “Here accommodation is no longer a matter of divine truth adapting to the inadequacies of human knowledge about the world but becomes instead a matter of showing how the text can reflect the truth of scientifically established human knowledge about the world. By claiming the essential harmony between scientific and biblical accounts of nature and its history, this revised notion of accommodation represented a significant departure from the classical form” (73).

A different approach can be found in the American evangelical common-sense tradition. Here the theologians will fit the scientific facts to the text, not vice-versa — for example, Moses Stuart utterly rejected accommodation because it was not perspicuous enough (74).

A more closely classical notion of accommodation was retained by those like Gore who claimed the biblical documents imaginatively express truth about the world according to ancient generic conventions. This imaginatively construed truth was the texts’ literal meaning, in the sense that “literal” was understood at this point. Such texts properly lent themselves to nonliteral interpretation, as the history of interpretation shows, and thereby what the ancients had to say about the world and human existence in it could transcend the limitations of the ancient worldview. As in its classical form, here divine accommodation was not to scientific truth but to the cultural vehicles whereby the ancients understood and expressed their experience of reality. For many modern students of the Bible the truth value found through this hermeneutics is not in the Bible’s description of Earth and its history but in its interpretation of them. (74-5)

Yarchin conflates this kind of accommodation with figural reading, but rightly distinguishes it from ancient figural reading since the modern has multiple senses due to the ancient genre, and the pre-modern has multiple senses because it was divine. The pre-modern took the history as literal with the details, things, events, and toponyms as figural. The modern takes the history as largely figural, hiding a latent truth that historical-criticism can illuminate (75).

289 We know from A. G. Hebert that Gore did practice a more traditional, “undisciplined” figural exegesis (a sermon on 2 Kings 4:3, where the empty vessels of Elisha’s widow are missionaries). A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David: A*
Gore claimed that the inspiration of the Old Testament writers did not necessarily consist in the miraculous communication of facts as they originally happened, but in the gradual growth of their written materials into literary types of Christ. Facts were more important for the New Testament and were more readily available. In the Old Testament this was less necessary since its religious purpose was to “produce a need, or anticipation, or ideal, while the New Testament records how in fact it is satisfied.” Thus the Old Testament could use “dramatic composition” to create fictitious characters like Jonah and Daniel, as critical science had discovered, and these could still be typical. “Typology,” therefore, came to include literary correspondences inspired by the Holy Spirit. These were distinguished from types that ostensibly referred to “real” relationships between historical events. Gore wrote,

It is maintained then that the Church leaves open to literary criticism the question whether several of the writings of the Old Testament are or are not dramatic. Certainly the fact that they have not commonly been taken to be so in the past will be no evidence to the contrary, unless it can be denied that a literary criticism is being developed, which is as really new an intellectual product as the scientific development, and as such, certain to reverse a good many of the literary judgments of previous ages. We are being asked to make considerable changes in our literary conception of the Scriptures, but not greater changes than were involved in the acceptance of the heliocentric astronomy.

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290 For a summary of Wellhausen see Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation, Vol. 4: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century*, 1st ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010). Associated with the “documentary hypothesis,” Wellhausen was influenced by Karl Heinrich Graf, who taught that the Pentateuch was written after the prophets. He also took for granted a distinction within the Pentateuch between the Yahwist and the earlier and later Elohist. He then added the priestly source and the Deuteronomist (316). On this historical reconstruction the prophets were not interpreters of the law (320). Rather, there was a historical devolution into inferior priestly and then Deuteronomistic religion, which Judaism and Catholicism still represented (321), and which increasingly squashed prophetic individualism, but which Jesus revived (323).


292 Ibid., 297. It is odd to hear Gore chastise Origen for his “almost reckless mysticism and his accompanying repudiation of the historical character of large parts of the narrative of the Old Testament, and some parts of the New,” while at the same time being grateful that the Church was fine with this method, which thereby allowed for his own different kind of non-historical reading (299).
So far this is not an implausible scheme for accommodating biblical-critical discoveries, but it gets complicated when Jesus’ intentionality is addressed. It would seem that Jesus believed in a literal Jonah and flood. Gore’s response was that it was not Jesus’ intention to instruct us on literary matters, or to “reveal his Godhead by any anticipations of natural knowledge.” This was part of his self-emptying. \(^{293}\) “Now when he speaks of the ‘sun rising’ He is using ordinary human knowledge. He willed so to restrain the beams of Deity as to observe the limits of the science of his age, and he puts Himself in the same relation to its historical knowledge.” \(^{294}\) The truly needful knowledge was the moral and spiritual truths Jesus revealed about His relation to the Father. According to Gore, then, Jesus was fallible in his natural knowledge, though “doubtless guarded by the Divine purpose…” \(^{295}\) But did Jesus know scientific truth and hold back, or did he decide to divest himself of this knowledge prior to the incarnation? Gore seems to flip-flop. If the latter, and God guarded him against believing falsehoods and enable him to be agnostic on just the right facts, how would we know this? And why, then, not claim the same for the rest of the biblical writers?

Gore’s approach is problematic because it relies on a theory of intentionality alone and not on a compelling biblical ontology and theory of accommodation. Case in point: Sanday’s criticism that Gore had no criterion by which the life of Christ could be exempted from the category of non-historical, literary types. \(^{296}\) Clearly, if Gore did not want to go down this road, he had to do better than assert the creed as the bulwark against demythologization. Something was at stake in affirming the “reality” of biblical reference that Gore’s proposal failed to capture.

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\(^{293}\) Ibid., 300.
\(^{294}\) Ibid., 301.
\(^{295}\) Ibid., 302.
\(^{296}\) Michael Ramsey, *An Era in Anglican Theology: From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology Between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939* (New York: Scribners, 1960), 79-80. Sanday had argued that the virgin birth was symbolic and not historical, and that on his own principles Gore could not fault him.
It would be up to Thornton to formulate a doctrine of Scripture that upheld typology, reality, and criticism in a comparable way within a new critical context.

3. John Hannah (1818-1888)

One underappreciated Bampton lecturer followed Mansel in a fuller formulation of the doctrine of Scripture. In his 1863 lectures, *The Relation Between Divine and Human Elements in Scripture*, John Hannah combined a traditional top-down approach with a bottom-up approach in his doctrine of Scripture.\(^{297}\) Butler talked about the coordinated intentions of divine and human writers, and Hannah talked about authorial intent as well. Nevertheless, when he came to articulate the top-down aspect of Scripture, Hannah explicitly drew on Mansel\(^ {298}\) for his claim that the Bible contained God-given rules of speech that were inevitably antinomical due to the Bible’s accommodated language.\(^ {299}\) Lecture III is Hannah’s most creative. There he illustrated inspiration by the “antinomies” of Scripture. Antinomies, he stated, were the mode in which great truths were brought within the range of the human intellect. This runs against our sinful tempers, which resent the fact that the partial truths we champion might require a counterpoise: “Yet it is the characteristic feature of the highest principles, that they cannot be reduced to the


\(^{298}\) Hannah, *The Relation Between the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture*, 300-301, was one of the few who understood that Mansel was not putting forward a version of voluntaristic skepticism, but trying to defend biblical language. The confusion resulted when Mansel wrote “ideas and images which do not represent God as He is may nevertheless represent Him as it is our duty to regard Him; they are not in themselves true, but we must, nevertheless, believe and act as if they were true”; “a conception which is speculatively untrue may be regulatively true”; “a regulative truth is thus designed—not to tell us what God is, but how He wills that we should think of Him.” “Man’s Conception of Eternity,” in Henry Longueville Mansel, *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews, Including the Phrontisterion, Or, Oxford in the 19th Century* (London: J. Murray, 1873), 113. But Hannah quotes Mansel to show that the latter did not mean to deny the truth of language about God, but to assert its analogical meaning: “the word Person … is a mode of expressing the infinite nature of God by that which is most nearly analogous to it among finite things.” Henry Longueville Mansel and Goldwin Smith, *A Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith: With an Appendix Containing an Examination of Some Passages in His Work on Rational Religion* (Hammans, 1862), 29.

\(^{299}\) Hannah’s notes are an almost complete index of the important British works on figural interpretation in the nineteenth century. I have been unable to find any reference to William Jones in them.
simplicity of one expression, but can only be set forth fully in contrasted statements, of which neither is exclusively true.” It was not as if antinomy was unique to revelation either, for the concept of infinity, the relation of time to eternity, and other speculative difficulties were equally antinomical because of restrictions creation imposed on the mind, restrictions to which even revelation must accommodate. Revelation, therefore, was characteristically expressed under the form of double and contrasting statements that were both fully true. Hence the antinomic character of predestinarian, Trinitarian, and Christological controversies. Hannah gathers numerous scriptural examples as well: we are in the image of the unseen God; we see as in a mirror and, yet, we truly see; God is One despite the duality of testaments. Scripture even brings apparent contradictions into the same passage. Jesus says “He that findeth his life shall lose it; Let the dead bury their dead; Whosoever hath, to him shall be given.” St Paul writes, “What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I; The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” In the same chapter, Proverbs recommends both that one answer and not answer a fool in his folly. 1 John 2 relates that love is and is not a new commandment. 1 Samuel 15 says that God cannot repent and that he does; Exodus, both that Moses did and did not see God’s face; John, that Christ both came to condemn and not to condemn; Romans, that faith is both intellectual and moral; Galatians, that we should both bear one another’s burdens and only our own; Luke, that Christ does and does not bear witness to

300 Hannah, The Relation Between the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture, 80.
301 Ibid., 83.
302 Ibid., 81.
303 Ibid., 75.
304 Ibid., 77.
305 Ibid., 78.
306 Ibid., 90.
himself. 307 In many cases these antinomies are beyond our ability to reconcile except through faith. For Hannah, however, there was no contradiction where there was analogical language. 308

Yet Hannah did not establish biblical unity by explaining it systematically. Indeed, he claimed that premature “harmonization” was a sign of dishonesty and faithlessness.

The firmness of the faith [of the biblical writers] which could record these sayings without an attempt to weaken their force by reconciliations, is further exemplified by the perfect freedom with which the sacred writers treat the apparent contradictions of our present life. A weak faith would tempt us to avoid the subject, or would try to gloze over its obvious difficulties…. A strong faith acknowledges the pressure of the difficulty, and proclaims it in the frank and fearless confidence, that the obstacle will be hereafter found to lie in us, not in our maker; in the weakness and uncertainty of our present vision, not in any limitation of either the power or love of God.” 309

The faithful person will be comfortable with real ignorance. Against the usual biblical critic's condemnation of Gospel harmonizers, Hannah argues that the most common way such critics explained away antinomies was through schemes of historical development. 310 For Hannah, on the other hand, “The alleged contrariety is the strongest proof of the unity.” 311 Here was the exact opposite manner of approach from Newman, Sanday, Gore, and the Modernists.

4. J. R. Illingworth (1848-1915)

Historical harmonization was a pervasive temptation for the Lux Mundi group, and no one did it better than J. R. Illingworth. His essays were respected both by the new “Liberal Catholics” and later “Modernists” for their compelling combination of Darwinian, idealistic, and

307 Ibid., 90-2.
308 The logical principle set out by John Wycliffe is that there is no contradiction where there is an equivocation [analogy]. John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2001), 46.
309 Hannah, The Relation Between the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture, 93.
310 Ibid., 94.
311 Ibid., 106.
Christological themes. His claim, set out in “The Incarnation and Development,” was that a narrowed focus on the atonement in Reformed theology had obscured the cosmic dimensions of Christ’s work. In a brilliant move, Illingworth reconciled evolution with revelation using the patristic doctrine of the *logoi* — the inner principles of things created in the beginning but unfolding in time. Because the *logoi* were ontologically tied to the Logos, Christ’s “indwelling presence in the universe” was “the source and condition of all its life, and in man as the light of His intellectual being…” Christ, therefore, was immanent in creation prior to the incarnation, while the incarnation fulfilled in the most articulate way the inner strivings of creation until that time. “Creation,” he argued, was viewed by St Paul and St John

as the embodiment of the Divine ideas, and therefore the revelation of the Divine character; manifesting its Maker with increasing clearness at each successive stage in the great scale of being, till in the fulness (sic) of time He Himself became man, and thereby lifted human nature, and with it the material universe to which man is so intimately linked; and triumphing over the sin and death under which creation groaned and travailed, opened by His Resurrection and then by His Ascension vistas of the glorious destiny purposed for His creatures before the world was.

Besides the fact that the discontinuity between creation and incarnation could become obscured in this providential scheme, scriptural ontology was absent. The divine ideas were not identified with Scripture’s words, but with the temporal creation as such. Instead of being the form of providence, the Bible had become a product of it, having neither formal nor final causal relations with history. We ought to notice how close Illingworth’s Platonism here is to Newman’s, for whom the cause of history’s “laws” was at once veiled behind the phenomena of nature and utterly immanent in them. Here again was a problem Thornton attacked in his early work.

V. Summary of Conclusions

313 Ibid., 184.
In summary, the analogy of Scripture and nature came under strain in the nineteenth century due not simply to the heirs of deism, but due to High Churchmen. Most problematically among the Tractarians, but even earlier with Van Mildert, the polemic against evangelicals and dissenters tended to force Anglo-Catholics into a skeptical spiral without solution except the fideistic assertion of a preferred foundation. Skipping from epistemological foundation to foundation — from Scripture to the Fathers — they hurled skeptical attacks against the rival primitivist ideology of the evangelicals. But they became vulnerable to the same attacks from Newman, who finally settled (if indeed he did) for papal authority over against “antiquity.” In the process, he collapsed the clear distinction between Scripture and tradition. Consequently, the relationship between the natural and the supernatural was strained. Was God's providential law excessively transcendent over the process of development or entirely immanent in it? This dilemma was reflected in the metaphysics of Newman and his heirs in the *Lux Mundi* group, where anything like Jones’ belief in Scripture as the formal “transcript of the Divine Mind” was lost. The non-Tractarian High Churchmen, Mansel and Hannah, took the doctrine of Scripture in a very Jonesian direction. The fact that Mansel and Hannah’s main influence was not Jones but Butler only confirms the last chapter’s claim that both stood within a common tradition. In contrast to Newman, Sanday, and Gore, these men argued for a robust doctrine of analogy and biblical unity based on the limitations of human knowledge and language. *Contra* Sanday, the Bible’s unity was not simply a theory about “how” revelation was manifest in it, but a belief “that” its form and content was united despite the many inevitable paradoxes of biblical language. In their best moments, the Tractarians agreed with Mansel and Hannah that epistemological gaps and antinomies invited analogical interpretation, and were divinely intended “trials of faith.” For, faith and not sight was the purpose of human probation.\(^{314}\)

\[^{314}\text{Keble compares the need for ecclesial assurance to the Calvinist innovation of assurance of salvation — a}\]
unity of Scripture and the moral dimension of providence were at stake in the nineteenth
century’s naturalistic theories of development, a compelling tropological response to Christian
division was also a problem — a theodicy problem veiled by an almost-Gnostic addiction to
epistemology. It is unfortunate that Keble’s analogical proposals are little studied since his
ecclesiology held real ecumenical potential.

VI. Knowledge Instrumentalized

The skeptical dilemmas and competing fideisms we have tracked have important
connections to the early Christian response to Gnosticism. The doctrine of Scripture, as St
Irenaeus understood it, had important implications for what we mean by "knowledge." That is
because as creatures we are meant to grow into what God intends us to be. On naturalistic terms,
this is merely an instrumental question: how do I get where I'm going? What sequence or causal
series must someone or something go through to get there? But the question of the best route is
actually a moral question: what are the good and legitimate "means" for achieving our "end."

document traditional Catholics felt contradicted the entire point of the divine pedagogy:
But why should imperfect beings, such as we are, depend on assurance of either kind? since even on
Roman Catholic principles it is not to be expected on that very point, which concerns us more nearly than
either, namely, our own final perseverance? A very few years’ thoughtful experience will tell us, that a
reasonable hope is in general far better than absolute certainty of good, for such beings as most of us are:
more in unison with all around us: more conducive to steady improvement: more apt to form in us that
resigned, humble character, that “mind of little children,” to which all the promises are made. Scripture
again, describing Faith not as full satisfaction of the intellect, but as πραγμάτων ἐξ ἑξόν οὐ βλέπομεν —
“making a venture on things unseen” would seem to encourage a generous trust in that which it is our duty
to love; and to discourage, as more or less selfish, all restless cravings for a more certain and systematic
knowledge. (lxvii-lxviii)

315 Richard Popkin, History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle. I think Popkin's definition of fideism is rather
imprecise: "In all these possible versions of fideism, there is, it seems to me, a common core, namely that
knowledge, considered as information about the world that cannot possibly be false, is unattainable without
accepting something on faith and that, independent of faith, sceptical doubts can be raised about any alleged
knowledge claims" (xxii). The most radical Pyrrhonian skeptic would accept this definition, but extend it even to
people who, unlike religious fideists, believe in "the possibility of our attaining knowledge by rational means" (xxi).
Thus Christians who believe on faith, Gnostics and mystics who believe based on esoteric knowledge, and
rationalists who believe in their own faculty of reason are all fideists. The question, therefore, if one goes beyond
the Pyrrhonian position, is whose fideism makes the most sense of ignorance? This is not a religious question per
se. It does, however, beg for a compelling theological account of faith.
What is the "way" to the "truth"? For believers in divine providence, these ethical questions are bound to every other fundamental biblical issue — creation, fall, redemption, sanctification, theodicy — issues theologians have commented on particularly in connection with Genesis 1-3.

If, for instance, we follow the influential Augustinian paradigm, then, we would have to conclude that for angelic minds the "way" to the "end" of beatitude may be quite short. The saint tells us that as sempiternal beings, angels immediately grasp all things in their final causes (or "seminal reasons," which basically include both the way and the destination of all historically bound creatures). But historically bound creatures actually have to follow a sequence before they arrive at some kind of angelic vision of the whole creation at the end of time. This does not mean that creatures cannot know their destination, the "why" of their pilgrimage, which is union with Christ. Indeed, the "anagogical" purpose of Scripture traditionally understood is to reveal our, and everything else's, final — heavenly — cause in Christ. For humans, however, knowledge of "ends" is separable from "means." Salvation is by faith and not works.

Nevertheless, Augustine knew that there was a pedagogical purpose to time and he used Genesis' figures as paradigms for his own temporal pilgrimage. But this was a devotional practice of discerning a path that was not always clearly marked while he walked on it. It was a practice of

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316 As usually understood, sempiternity is not exactly God's eternal timelessness, but a creaturely state of perfect knowledge such that time — inasmuch as it is a pedagogical tool of God — is no more. This is a state the angels have already graciously attained, but which the saints will only have in heaven.

"...you made two kinds of creatures which are unaffected by the passage of time, although neither is coeternal with you. One was so formed that without any slackening in its contemplation, without any intervening period of change, and without suffering any mutation in itself in spite of its mutability, it finds its total fulfillment in your eternal immutability. The other was created so formless that it lacked all capacity to be changed from one form to another, whether of motion or of rest, and so become subject to time." (Confessions, XII. 15)

317 According to Augustine, formless earth received a type of form, the seminal reasons (logoi spermatikoi), that the angelic minds could timelessly grasp. These "causal formulae" (sometimes called "numbers") are like "seeds" that are planted in the "roots of time" in order to develop in an orderly sequence in history. Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” V. 7-15, VI 17-19, in On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2004).


319 Augustine, The Confessions, Revised, Book XII.
using the Bible's figures to discern how God had led him to where he was at and where he might go from there.

Augustine's eastern counterpart, St Maximus, interpreted Genesis 3 to indicate that God required the prelapsarian couple to obey a certain sequence: Tree of Life first, then other trees. Inasmuch as the sequence was broken, a transparent knowledge of "how" the moral sequence contributes to human beatitude was obscured and a certain amount of childlike faith was required of the disciple. Of course, we were given Scriptural commandments and sacraments. But the problem of moral deliberation arises in the absence of knowledge of an unbroken sequence. We know that Scripture is both the way and the destination. We know where the goal is: it is heaven; the beatific vision; union with Christ. We can even know that the goal is "anagogically" given under Scripture's figures. We know that all the steps to that goal are "tropologically" in Scripture. But the temptation now is whether we approach the problem of the path as a technical problem for our own intellect, an issue of mystical, ritual, or political execution, or rather as a test of faith; this corresponds to the Gnostic vs orthodox ways, understood typically (rather than historically, perhaps). I want to argue that the more one is distracted from a patient, tropological reading of Scripture under the conditions of fallen time, and is distracted by epistemological problems or, in the case of Modernism, with utilitarian ethics, the closer one is to Gnostic type. Characterized differently, where one falls in this typology depends on how one responds to ignorance, what

321 Ian A. McFarland, “The Theology of the Will,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Maximus' famous doctrine of the gnomic will comes out of his understanding of the consequences of the Fall. Again, Maxmius did not believe the prelapsarian state did not require a sequential following of God into the realm of the supernatural. It is just that the Fall complicated that sequence with a large amount of moral deliberation that would have been unnecessary had we just followed our God-given rational drive for a relationship with God. But having come to "know good and evil," the decision making process has been cluttered with options with which we would have never been distracted had we not set ourselves up as judges of good and evil. I take this to be quite congruent with Joseph Butler's phenomenology of our probabilistic, analogical, and prudential manner of moral decision making.
kind of fideism one chooses: analogical or dogmatic.\footnote{Each of the three legs of Anglicanism's "three-legged stool," Scripture, tradition, reason, can be turned into a dogmatic fideism. I believe Butler's fideism was not based on bare assertion, but analogy and moral judgment.} In Chapter 5 we will see that it also depends on how one thinks about the problem of evil. And in Chapter 6, Thornton, following St Irenaeus, shows that it also has to do with whether one assembles the mosaic of Scripture to depict Christ or not.\footnote{By way of illustration, suppose someone would take the beautiful image of a king, carefully made out of precious stones by a skillful artist, and would destroy the features of the man on it and change around and rearrange the jewels, and make the form of a dog, or a fox, out of them, and that a rather bad piece of work." Irenaeus, Against the Heresies, trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, vol. 1 (The Newman Press, 1992), I.1.} These indices of what I typologically refer to as "Gnostic" are latent in eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century conflicts.\footnote{Roelof Van Den Broek's entry, "Gnosticism," in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2006), states that "an unambiguous definition of what is understood by the much-used terms "Gnosis", "Gnosticism" and "Gnostic" is impossible…” The first great colloquium on Gnosticism in Messina (1966) was unable to produce an agreed upon decision about terminology. Kurt Rudolph, for example, refused to abide by their conclusions. Thus the study of "Gnosticism" has had to rely on minimalistic historical criteria: 1) the soteriological value of esoteric knowledge by which one might return to her divine origin; 2) a mythological expression of ideas. The more decisive criterion is the instrumental place of knowledge (1) over against, for example, St Clement's misuse of "Gnosis" to refer to faith. Broek therefore reserves the term "Gnosticism" for the movements of antiquity, but allows a more expansive use of the terms "Gnosis" and "Gnostic" to apply to all ideas until the present that stress the necessity of esoteric knowledge. The contrast of "Gnosis" with faith is one telling concession to the early Christian heresiologists, as is the difference between esoteric and publically accessible saving knowledge. At the same time, the mythological expression of ideas can also be contrasted with St Irenaeus' or Origen's figural presentation of the faith. For a contrast of hermeneutical methodologies see David Dawson, Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). I believe my indices above fit this minimal standard, with the addition of the theodical import of knowledge, which fits with the antique doctrine of an evil or hapless demiurge. But this was an optional part of historical "Gnosticism" — Marcionism had no theodicy — and only reappears occasionally in "Gnostic" ideas after antiquity. Whatever the case historically, my fifth chapter shows that theodicy was a determining factor for panentheisms in the context of the World Wars. This Gnostic index was well integrated with epistemic and hermeneutical indices amongst Modernists, which is what Thornton picked up on.}
Chapter 3: L. S. Thornton in Context

1. Introduction

This dissertation is about the persistence within modern Anglicanism of (a) a classical “high view” of Scripture as the exemplar of creation, (b) the apologetic and phenomenological advantages of this view in the wake of Joseph Butler due in many ways to (c) the kind of theodicy the Bible displays in contrast to more rationalistic proposals from deism to panentheism. (d) Finally, the view of theodicy and Scripture one takes will determine whether or not one reads the two books of Scripture and nature figurally.

We have thus far seen that after William Jones, the “high view” of biblical ontology and the figural reading of Scripture and nature were undercut by sectarian polemics between Protestants and Tractarians. Yet a minority of High Churchmen kept this tradition on life support. Joseph Butler and William Jones held this view in concert with an understanding of creation as a place of education, testing, and probation. Indeed, scriptural words could be conceived by Jones as primordial creatures in relation to which the things in natural history and human experience were analogically related — the very words that made up the original Adamic language. In accordance with this tradition, Mansel and Hannah noted that analogical language was necessarily antinomic, apparently paradoxical. Yet this strand of non-Tractarian High Church theology was largely eclipsed, particularly in the emerging field of biblical studies, in favour of more linear, “harmonizing” philosophies of history represented paradigmatically in British idealism. Moreover, the anti-evangelical polemics of nineteenth-century Tractarian theology in the Church of England increasingly cast a skeptical cloud over biblical language, flattened its logical and metaphysical priority over the developing doctrines of the tradition, and
substituted epistemology for a theodicy. When straying from his patristic precedents, Newman at once represented the two directions in which the collapse of Scripture and tradition could go: towards an authoritative Magisterium and towards an open-ended canon of cumulative theological developments. Having injected further evolutionary and British idealist strains of historicism into their apologetics, Liberal Catholic heirs of the Tractarians were increasingly unable to hold together the complex package of scriptural ontology, antinomic language, epistemological humility, and divine pedagogy that was not uncommon for the earlier high church.

Lionel Thornton (1884-1960) is important to this project because he (almost entirely) escaped from Tractarian, Liberal Catholic, and Protestant dead ends. Thornton was able to attribute the cause of secularization and skepticism regarding Christian claims to the division of Christendom in a way the Tractarians had been unable to do. This division drove an epistemological wedge between the shape of the Church’s life and the divine content to which Christians were meant to correspond. When Christians failed to sacrifice themselves for one another like Christ, the revelation of God in the Church was obscured. It, therefore, became inevitable that a skeptical wedge would separate Scripture’s created form from its divine content in the minds of Liberal critics who likewise no longer saw Christ present within Scripture. The consequence was the breakdown of Western men’s (and a few women’s) ability to apprehend the analogy of Scripture and nature. Furthermore, creation, which was the connecting link between Scripture and Church, was, in human perception, secularized and increasingly ignored by Western theologians. Catholics, Protestants, and humanists each favoured one of the three “organs of revelation,” Church or Scripture or Creation. But minus the “organic” conception of
unity inherent in creation, both Church and Scripture were “atomized,” as each part could no longer coherently fit within a now-forgotten whole.

I intend to discuss Thornton in the following way. In this chapter, I will give some context for appreciating the originality of his work, the two theological epochs he straddles, and the outlines of his biblical turn. I try to explain why Thornton’s work has not been positively received, and how his own historical description of the disintegration and secularization of Christendom relates to his small influence. Unfortunately, and aside from his unfashionable figuralism, Thornton also hindered the reception of his work through his opposition to ecumenical reunion projects. I would like to argue, however, that Thornton’s theology does have the resources to overcome his personal ecumenical shortcomings. With some correction, I would, furthermore, accept Thornton’s scriptural “Evangelical Catholicism” as a particularly fruitful answer to the problem of authority within Anglo-Catholicism and within divided Christendom. In chapter 4 I then focus on his early, philosophical-theological period as an attempt to defend an incarnational theodicy over against the panentheistic-monist alternative: the “soul-making” theodicy. What I am concerned to show in this chapter is that Thornton’s theodicy led him to take up a realist (“Platonist”) metaphysics and phenomenology in order to resist the monist tendency to smooth over antinomies in Scripture and nature, especially the problem of evil. His theodical concern here has often been overshadowed by his use of Alfred North Whitehead’s philosophy (1861-1947), which, in any case, Thornton came to reject once Whitehead went monist.325 In chapter 5 I then look more directly at the theodical alternatives

325 A note in advance of the next chapter's discussion of Whitehead is in order. The philosophical context of Thornton's immediate predecessors in Lux Mundi was British idealism. This movement quickly waned, and is usually only remembered as that against which Bertrand Russell rebelled. Whitehead of course collaborated on projects with Russell, and both were interested in getting back to "reality" in contrast with idealism. But Whitehead was a part of a movement called "emergentism," which maintained an interest in metaphysics (usually monist) and,
through the lens of Thornton and his mentor, John Neville Figgis (1866–1919), whom I introduce below. Theodicy became urgent during the World Wars; yet in contrast to the Modernist monism of Charles Raven (1885-1964), Figgis and Thornton resisted the temptation to offer an etiology, or causal explanation, of evil. They, therefore, refused to get sidetracked by scientific questions regarding human origins and chose instead to focus on the fact of evil. Indeed, evil could not be accurately accounted for by explaining “how” it happened, and it could not be reversed through any human strategy but rather through Christ’s grace alone. In addition to extending Butler’s phenomenology of belief into the context of the debate with Modernism, they came to conclude that grace overcame evil by reordering the past. This was impossible within the restricted metaphysics of Modernism. Chapter 6, therefore, looks at the temporal and cosmic reach of Christ’s reordering work of “recapitulation” and the hermeneutical consequences that follow: namely, that having reunited creation by rescuing it from the dispersive power of evil — especially Christian evil — every trivial detail of creation came to reflect Christ. Thornton’s late work, then, exhibited an interest in the revelatory power of seemingly inconsequential verbal and pictorial links in Scripture, all of which the incarnate Lord had assumed and redeemed. In sum, I want to demonstrate that this way of handling the Bible follows quite consistently from a biblical, non-monist theodicy. Furthermore, I believe Thornton’s project shared a family resemblance to Butler’s, for, like the latter’s, it implied that the rejection of figural reading involved the rejection of incarnational theodicy and an implicit acceptance of the monist alternative. Like deism, this alternative was methodologically atheistic.

II. Life of Thornton

indeed, natural philosophy. Emergentism is hardly studied any longer, but, along with idealism and vitalism, it was the philosophical framework behind Modernist theology.

326 One should remember that Anglican "Modernism" is the early form of theological "Liberalism," and had an identifiable institutional basis in The Modern Churchmen's Union.
Thornton was born June 27, 1884, to Alice Henrietta Puller, the second wife of the Reverend Claude Cecil Thornton, vicar of St John Evangelist High Cross in Hertford. This parish was where he was then baptized on the 31st of July 1884. Thornton, wrote Harold Ellis, was “[b]red of a strong, pious, Evangelical stock.” The Anglo-Catholic influence must have come through his mother’s side, particularly his uncle F. W. Puller, who was early involved in a controversy over confirmation, which Thornton later continued. Thornton credits his father with introducing him to Richard Hooker, but otherwise, he spoke little of his family and childhood. He was educated at Malvern and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where his biggest early influence was John Neville Figgis. At this early stage, his talents already stood out, as Mascall writes: “He got a first class at Emmanuel College in Theology and the Carus Greek Testament prize in 1907 and he acquired there the photographic memory of the Biblical text that was the essential foundation of his very much later work. But his early published work was apologetic and historical rather than exegetical.” After his Doctorate in Divinity from Cambridge, he took a parish for four years before he joined the Community of the Resurrection (CR) in 1913. He was professed two years later and there taught until 1944 when he moved to CR’s London house. His theological brilliance made Thornton an attractive recruit for CR. In Thornton’s obituary Ellis relates how Fr. Figgis actively sought to bring in the bright young priest:

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One summer afternoon in an early year of this century Father Neville Figgis, CR., asked a student of our College to take a young priest, who was paying a visit to the Community, for a walk, adding in his captivating way, “A great deal rests on this walk.” As no young man ever refused a request made by Father Figgis, the student concerned found himself walking through the countryside with a tall, well-built, goodlooking, young priest with a charming smile. Almost at once the conversation became an intellectual exercise on the current Higher Criticism of the Scriptures wherein the student found himself listening to and expostulating against disturbing and unsettling views sponsored by his companion.

Interestingly Ellis’ portrait already shows Thornton going against the grain in his views on Scripture. At the same time Ellis relates just how important Figgis was for Thornton:

Always reticent about his childhood as he was, there seems little doubt that his schooldays anyhow were unhappy and that it was not until he went up to Cambridge that he began to know the meaning of real happiness. It was there that he came under the greatest formative influence of his life, Father Figgis, and from many angles it is to be regretted that by Figgis’s early death, Father Thornton was deprived of the aid that only he might have given him, to soften some of those asperities which occasionally marred his theological disputations. Be that as it may, it was Father Figgis whom Father Thornton proudly hailed as his master, and it is he together with Father Puller, S.S.J.E. (Father Thornton’s uncle), who rescued him from wasting his brilliant talents in the arid wilderness of destructive Modernism.

Thornton indicated his debt to Figgis on the dedication page of his first book, *Conduct and the Supernatural*. Published in 1915, this was an essay penned by Thornton in 1913 which won him the Norrison Prize. Here he demonstrates his reliance on Figgis’ thought — characteristically occupied with the apocalyptic direction that Nietzschean self-assertion was leading the West. This is also one of the few places where Thornton mentioned external events, namely, the Great War.

Theologically, Figgis turned away from the integrative incarnationalism of the *Lux Mundi* tradition towards the themes of atonement, miracle, crisis, and forgiveness. Prior to World War I,

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332 Ellis, 10.
the breakdown of Edwardian culture and the translation of Albert Schweitzer’s *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*334 had already led Figgis and others to question the Liberal assumption that Jesus was at all understandable in modern categories. In parallel to Barth, but little acknowledged, Figgis and other English scholars had come to see that Jesus was a stranger to all times, a stranger who called into question all times.335 Rather than a theologian of harmonization, Figgis, therefore, was a theologian of rupture. On the one hand, creation’s harmonies had been broken by sin. This had not prevented “pantheist” Liberals, like their deist forebears, from trying to systematize sin. On the other hand, Figgis reintroduced forgiveness to explode such systems. F. W. Dillistone criticized Thornton for not integrating the later apocalyptic continental theologies of crisis into his thinking.336 But Thornton’s interest in Jesus’ Jewish-divine strangeness certainly was due to Figgis’ influence, who, in any case, was doing something similar to Barth far earlier than


336 F. W. Dillistone, “Revelation and the Modern World, Being the First Part of a Treatise on the Form of the Servant,” *Theology Today* 9, no. 2 (July 1, 1952): 248–56. Generally accepting Thornton’s views, Dillistone nonetheless fears that Thornton’s love for order in the universe and in history may have clouded over the ethical emphasis of the Bible (MacArthur would disagree). He also fears that the individual act of faith is overshadowed by the emphasis on corporateness. And finally, Dillistone fears there is not enough justice done to the catastrophic eschatological elements of the New Testament in RMW (253–4). Dillistone agrees in an earlier review of “The Common Life in the Body of Christ,” *Theology Today* 2, no. 1 (April 1, 1945), 140–42. Dillistone liked the corporate emphasis, and he notes how dominant the organic imagery is in Thornton’s account while stating that an alternative, more “neo-orthodox,” language of sin and crisis could also be used. In light of Dillistone’s comparatively recent interest in continental Reformed theology, he goes as far as to claim that Thornton is “gravely one-sided” (254). Where is the emphasis on man’s revolt and the rejection of God’s love? In the end Dillistone thinks Thornton is too Irenaean with his emphasis on recapitulation. He complains that Thornton’s supreme example of sin is merely the breakup of Christendom (255)! For some reason Dillistone sees Thornton as he sees Charles Raven, of whom he would write a biography, *Charles Raven: Naturalist, Historian, Theologian* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975). Yet Raven would not allow himself to be scandalized by the particularities of biblical language, a scandal that also caused Dillistone and the “neo-orthodox” to stumble over the claim that “nothing in Scripture is too trivial to be relevant.” This claim I will defend in Chapter 6.
Dillistone knew. Furthermore, Thornton’s book on *The Doctrine of the Atonement* and his discussion of the Cross in *The Dominion of Christ* show that his early Figgis-inspired work in *Conduct* carried on.  

*Conduct and the Supernatural* is also the place where Thornton discussed his thought processes about the celibate vocation. Thornton here shows that he had already grasped the spirit of the age through the non-Christian ethicists he discusses (including the Teutonic racism of H. S. Chamberlain), and he identifies sex as the defining difference between believers and non-believers. The breakdown of sexual morality certainly motivated Thornton to chart a “heroic” course against the tide. In his own words:

> The Christian monastic community exists, then, to keep the otherworldly and ascetic ideals ever fresh before the eyes of the world. Over against Christian marriage it sets the ideal of a family of celibates. It does this in no sense with a view to depreciating marriage, but in order to preserve it by exercising a strong influence on behalf of self discipline, the only means by which the sex ideal can be maintained in its full purity and beauty. The individual Christian from time to time withholds himself deliberately from a full enjoyment of the natural order by the method of the ascetic principle, in order that he may strengthen his hold upon the spiritual world and his power of using the natural order sacramentally.  

From the beginning of his vocation, Thornton taught regularly for CR’s seminaries, and there are a few stories about his impact on his students. Fr Mark Tweedy’s impression of Thornton’s contemplative style of exegesis is telling. Regarding a series of talks given on the theme of *Apokatastasis* Tweedy writes:

> The whole thing was a mosaic of Scripture, and the serious listener needed to keep fingers in several pages at once of a Greek Testament (not to mention a Septuagint, if he had one). As Fr Lionel proceeded, always slowly, sometimes almost ponderously, one

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338 Thornton, *Conduct and the Supernatural*, 313

339 Ibid., 310-11.
knew that this was Biblical theology at the very source. No matter if one missed a thread or two in his tangled skein: it was a religious experience. Sooner or later there would come the passage — as so often at Mirfield when delineating to his brethren ideas which were fermenting for one of his books — when his eyes would close as he looked upward and his voice would take on a curious semi-chanting tone, as he seemed to lose consciousness for a few moments of everything but the word of God which he was expounding. Almost he was enraptured. For most of us there has been no closer experience of an intellectual contemplative communing to himself as it were, of the things of God.340

It was this characteristic style of exegesis that indeed made Thornton a controversial figure.

Thornton’s Tractarian influence was mostly under the radar, though Thornton did refer to this lineage in a couple of places. Significantly, his first major reference to this lineage comes in a book review (1921) of a compilation of essays by Roman Catholic writers, God and the Supernatural: A Catholic Statement of the Christian Faith. Thornton uses this opportunity to signal his agreement with the “Catholic” doctrine of the supernatural and to set Anglo-Catholic supernaturalism within the catholic mainstream. He also highlights the fact that the supernatural is the doctrine most misunderstood by contemporary theologians:

For its authors the proper theological definition of “the supernatural” and its relation to the order of nature is the foundation upon which a statement of the Catholic Faith must be built. It may be safely said that there is no single point of Christian theology which is more grossly misunderstood by the average Englishman than the Catholic doctrine of the supernatural.

Thornton continues,

But the Tridentine succession is not the only one which has inherited the medieval tradition. If they will turn to the pages of Hooker, Bishop Sanderson, and Bishop Butler,341 to mention only leading instances, they will find a very full and solid continuation of the teaching about nature and supernature which we, as well as they, owe to St. Thomas. And if they will read Keble’s Introduction to Hooker’s works and the

340 Mascall, Saraband, 175-176.
341 A more strictly historical study would follow up on Thornton’s use of Hooker and Sanderson. This study, however, is interested in the similarly structured apologetic and hermeneutical projects of Thornton and Butler.
passages in Cardinal Newman’s writings where he has left on record his debt to Butler, they will learn that this fundamental strand of Catholic thought was wholeheartedly grasped by the Oxford leaders of last century and woven afresh into the mind of the English Church. 342

Three years later in Richard Hooker Thornton sets out just what he thinks Hooker, Butler, and the Tractarians had in common while painting a more negative portrait of Rome. Having accepted the Tractarian theory of a corrupt eighteenth century, Thornton believed Anglicanism still preserved a kind of catholicism foreign to Roman dogmatism, which he now compares with Puritan dogmatism. The latter, in turn, becomes the forerunner of deist dogmatism. Against this trend, Butler still shone out as a lone light in the long eighteenth century.

But there is also a sense in which Hooker’s school of thought must be held to be wider and to include those of his successors who have shared his view of truth and his way of handling the deeper problems of theology. Of these we may single out Bishop Butler as the most conspicuous. These two men above all others have the right to be acknowledged as representative of English theology at its best, not because they taught everything that we should desire to believe but because the intellectual weapons which they employed were of a kind which can never be ignored and which in the lapse of time have shown themselves best calculated to serve the true interests of religion in all ages. 343

Here Thornton claims that Butler's method has an explanatory power that has been and will continue to be useful. 344 He closes his genealogy by saying, "[i]t does not seem likely that this tradition, although subject to change, will ever be displaced; certainly not by agnosticism in any

344 Ibid. At this point Thornton is forced to explain how Newman, despite his repudiation of Anglicanism, fits his narrative:

Cardinal Newman has left on record his dissatisfaction with Hooker’s treatment of this subject; yet he was himself deeply imbued with the principles of Butler’s Analogy which are essentially the same as Hooker’s and there is probably very much closer agreement between the Grammar of Assent and Hooker’s doctrine of faith than Newman himself supposed. The philosophy of faith expounded by these three great Englishmen, allowing for their differences of temperament and method, holds together as fundamentally one and reaches back to join hands with that of men like Origen, Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas in earlier ages. (103)
of the forms which it assumes to-day." This sentence sums up one of the conclusions of this dissertation: that the analogical theology will prove to be the “fittest” theology for survival.

Thornton's attitude to Roman Catholicism brings up the issue of his influences. For, Thornton had a marked preference for Orthodoxy over other versions of Christianity. This was precisely because the doctrine of creation and incarnation was central for them; creation had not been artificially separated off from the other dogmas as it had been for Romans and Protestants. And, as I will argue, this ended up being the reason why Thornton could practice figural exegesis in a patristic manner. Indeed, his indebtedness to the ante-Nicene Fathers is evident throughout his career — he quotes Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Justin, Athanasius, and most importantly Irenaeus. He was well acquainted with Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas as well, but his real theological inspiration lay within the first three centuries. Strangely, he very rarely referred to contemporary Orthodox theologians. But then, he rarely referred to any contemporary theologians outside of Britain except to contest the claims of Ritschl and Harnack, or to reference the Irenaean scholarship of Loofs. And although he could read French, and was in fact influenced by Daniélou, he only discussed French thinkers who had done Gifford lectures (Marcel) or who were Gifford-like (Teilhard).

Robert Virgil Smith suggests that Thornton’s nearest theological kin would have been Hebert, Dix, and Quick because of their interest in the Church and the doctrine of Scripture. The likeness is less that of a sibling than of a distant cousin. Smith concludes: “We have so little

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345 Ibid., 103.
346 Robert Virgil Smith, “The Philosophical Backgrounds of Lionel S. Thornton with Particular Reference to the Doctrines of Creation, Revelation and Incarnation” (Yale University, 1953), 36.
work from Thornton’s pen between 1928 and 1942 that any estimate of influence upon it would be only slightly better than guesswork.”

Nonetheless, a perusal of Thornton’s indexes indicates which authors had deeply affected him. In the next chapter, we will delve into Thornton’s philosophical context. But it is worth commenting on the biblical and patristic scholars that Thornton was reading. Armitage Robinson had translated Irenaeus from the Armenian. Likewise, Thornton relied heavily on the Moffat translation of Scripture. And like everyone at the time, he had certainly digested Dodd. But it was the Old Testament scholars who left the deepest mark on Thornton’s later way of thinking. His writings show a marked enthusiasm for the work of George Foot Moore, the leading Christian scholar of Judaism at the time. The information in his *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* provided Thornton with a window into the metaphysical thinking of the various streams of Judaism that had accompanied the rise of Christianity. At the same time, Thornton was aware of the parallel development of an “apostolic succession” among the rabbis that provided an Old Testament justification for the Church’s own succession. Knowledge of this would have certainly come through Moore. Just as interesting is the “Myth and Ritual” school from which Thornton critically drew certain concepts of “corporate personality,” ritual efficacy, and symbolic hermeneutics.

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347 Ibid., 35.
350 See Appendix 2 on the history of monism, vitalism, and occultism in relation to Modernism. These links also shed light on why this form of myth-criticism was a natural biblical complement to the evolutionary-emergentist philosophy Thornton converted to his purposes. For now I will only register the names of four major Old Testament scholars whom Thornton drew heavily from: H. Wheeler Robinson, Johannes Pederson, S. H. Hooke, and Aubrey...
III. Overview of Works

In an article two years after Thornton’s death, J. S. MacArthur praised Thornton’s first book, *Conduct and the Supernatural* (1915), for the way in which he set the problem of ethics within a supernatural framework. MacArthur nicely sums up the thesis of that book as the impossibility of ethics without reference to the supernatural:

Thornton’s conclusion is that the vicious circle of self-contained nature fails to give man harmony and progress, and that systems of conduct based upon pure nature, though they may start optimistically, are fundamentally fatalistic and are bound to end in pessimism. For this critique of naturalism alone Thornton is worth re-reading, but his positive statement of the supernatural foundations of ethics is no less valuable.

In each of his books, Thornton would consistently pursue the argument that naturalism produces individualism and atomism in every area of human life. MacArthur continues:

In a prophetic passage he says that legislation, law courts, police, force, and persuasion alike, will be powerless to stem the growing tide of individualism, which, lying hidden under the name of “rights,” will eventually swallow up the good of the rights altogether, for the whole theory of the rights and duties of man, based upon the worth and equality of all individuals, which makes up our modern democratic outfit, has been, so to speak, stolen from a Christian pedestal without acknowledgment, and set up as a thing self-evident and able to stand by itself.

Strangely, this is the only book that can be currently found online. Thornton's public profile is confined to his first work.

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354 Ibid., 194.
Thornton’s second book, Richard Hooker (1924), carries over his interest in nature in order to show how High Church Anglicanism in the magisterial figure of Hooker preserved a sense of creation’s relationship to every aspect of religion. Thornton contrasted Anglicanism’s creational, sacramental ethos with the two major Protestant traditions of Lutheranism and Calvinism. In doing this, Thornton had contemporary heirs in mind. On the one hand, Lutheran tendencies had reached their mature form in the Modernism of Albrecht Ritschl and his followers. On the other hand, authoritarian Puritanism had its heirs in contemporary evangelicalism. But neither alternative had an adequate doctrine of creation.

Thornton truly became a theological name through his next major publication. “The Christian Concept of God” (CCG), was a part of the landmark Essays Catholic and Critical (1926). Thornton’s argument in this chapter formed the basis for his monumental The Incarnate Lord. Showing familiarity with contemporary "emergentist" philosophy, the CCG

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355 Thornton, Richard Hooker.
356 Ibid. Calvinist Puritans and Lutherans were archetypal evangelicals and liberals. Both were rationalists who “simplified” and therefore atomised the Church’s structure and its teaching. They severed the institutional and mystical (116). They left no place for antinomy (108). In place of a creation that sacramentally referred back to its creator, they preferred mental abstractions to “things” and thereby laid the groundwork for deism (87, 102). Unlike Lutherans, the Puritans may have had an orthodox Christology. But unlike Hooker, Calvin’s sacramentology was separated off in the second volume of his Institutes, while the former situated this doctrine within a discussion of the sacraments (56-60). In place of an epistemological caution within a providential scheme of divine “probation,” Protestants oscillated between dogmatic certainty and agnosticism about God (103, 110). Their faith was disconnected from the “laws of life” that mediate between religion and human experience. Having misunderstood that divine laws naturally express both God’s nature and our creaturely telos, Scripture’s commandments became arbitrary. Puritans dogmatically insisted on obedience to a transcendent God while Modernists immanentized God and made his laws identical with our “blind urges” (106-107). But “Hooker’s scheme of laws is a more adequate key to experience than any of the types with which it has been contrasted” (107). We have heard this before in Butler’s terms: the analogy of religion with the course of human experience gives supernatural religion an apologetic edge over naturalistic interpretations.

In one regard Thornton agreed with Protestants: nature cannot compel grace. Thornton, however, does not usually talk about our inability to attain moral perfection in relation to faith; rather, it is more generally due to our intrinsic natural limits — including the limits of original sin. The theme of volitional limits runs particularly through his first four books, Conduct and the Supernatural: Being the Norrisian Prize Essay for 1913 (New York: Longmans, 1915); Richard Hooker; The Incarnate Lord: An Essay Concerning the Doctrine of the Incarnation in Its Relations to Organic Conceptions (London; New York: Longmans, Green & Co, 1928); and The Doctrine of the Atonement (London: Unicorn Press, 1937). The general thrust of his critique of Protestantism is that it had systematically disconnected the doctrine of creation from every other doctrine.

sketches out Thornton’s description of reality as a series of graded levels beginning with nature and moving up through man towards the incarnation. As he would continue to do, he insists that this does not make Christ a product of the evolutionary process, nor does it endanger the independence of creation, above which God remained transcendent. Thornton relies heavily on a traditional doctrine of analogical predication of God. Like Aquinas, Thornton does not settle for apophasis but affirms that “God possesses in a more eminent sense all the true goods which exist in this world, all fullness of energy, life, mind and personality.” The general trend of both Anglo-Catholic and Modernist appropriations of British idealism was to try to safeguard God’s personality against absolute idealism, and Thornton here does the same by making personality more eminent in the godhead. He would develop this further in his next book.

Thornton’s reputation as a theologian was established especially by his Whitehead-inspired *The Incarnate Lord (IL)* (1928). In imitation of Books I and V of Hooker’s...

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358 Ibid., 136.
359 Ibid., 145.
360 Ibid., 131.
361 We ought to note Thornton’s enduring debt to his fellow authors in Essays Catholic and Critical, whom he continued to mention throughout his career — far more than his Anglo-Catholic predecessors. First in interest would be A. E. Taylor, the philosopher of religion and scholar of Platonism. Thornton begins his chapter based upon the general arguments for theism Taylor gave in his earlier chapter (123). This was an interesting combination of the traditional cosmological, teleological, and more modern moral argument for God, but these are all set within Butler’s analogical framework. It is important to note that Taylor’s Gifford Lectures, *The Faith Of A Moralist*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1930) were modelled on Butler’s *Analogy*. Also of interest is Edwyn Hoskyns’ “The Christ of the Synoptic Gospels,” which foreshadowed the next decade’s return to biblical theology with his advocacy of reading the Bible from “within.” A. E. J. Rawlinson was also an enduring interlocutor, often on the opposite side of issues from Thornton. His interest extended from problems of authority and church reunion to early form-critical studies of the Gospels. Thornton also early relied on Will Spens’ “The Eucharist” in his own work, while Edwin Oliver James’ essay on “The Emergence of Religion” was an early Anglo-Catholic study in myth-ritualism. Thornton relied heavily on this school, and James was one of its longest lasting members. See S. H. Hooke, ed., *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation Between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: SPCK, 1935). Selwyn, of course, edited the volume as well as the Anglo-Catholic journal *Theology*. N. P. Williams was also an enduring voice of influence, particularly through his hefty *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Longmans, 1927). Finally, Kenneth Kirk edited a volume at the behest of Gregory Dix, *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), which was a major offensive against the Church of South India Scheme. Nevertheless, Thornton contributed one of his best essays in this volume.
362 Thornton, *The Incarnate Lord*. The next chapter will chart Thornton’s views on Whitehead up until the last article he wrote before he died, L. S. Thornton, “An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics,” *Journal of*...
Ecclesiastical Polity, the first book is Thornton’s massive exposition of the laws of nature in analogical relation to the incarnation. He here develops at greater length CCG’s emergentist natural theology with the (overestimated) help of Whitehead. I will claim in the next chapter that this influence was phenomenological: Thornton appreciated the fact that Whitehead took seriously the reality of the different grades of reality he described, realities that presented themselves as oppositions. In time Thornton would distance himself from Whitehead’s later philosophy, which came to reduce reality to total explanation. The second part of the volume again develops at greater length the trinitarian and christological insights of CCG. The analogical framework of the latter publication also remained intact. In anticipation of his later work, Thornton includes several key chapters of biblical exegesis and is at pains to describe the ecclesiological implications of the incarnation.

Thornton took several years off from publishing major works of theology until The Doctrine of the Atonement (DA) in 1937. This work is important because it shows Thornton almost entirely shifting to biblical theology. Methodologically he was still quite tied to the evolutionary theory of religion he sets out in his previous two works, with all its limitations. But it is clear in this book that Thornton had begun to focus on the interconnected imagery in the Bible for atonement. And by contrast with, for example, Gustaf Aulen, Thornton assumes all the images complement each other in a single mystery. Finally, Thornton also resists here the temptation to offer efficient-causal “how” explanations for the fall and atonement, which Modernists increasingly sought in evolutionary terms.

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As a significant aside, I should mention that Thornton was early on appointed to the Church of England’s Doctrinal Commission (1922-38) after the controversial Conference of the Modern Churchmen’s Union at Girton College in 1921 threatened to divide the Church over the question of Christ’s divinity. The goal was to get Modernist and orthodox parties within the Church of England talking about what they could agree upon. The book *Doctrine in the Church of England (1938)* finally came out, however, once old-school Modernism had ceased to be a significant player on the theological scene. The shadow of Hitler had shaken the churches into taking sin, wrath, and apocalyptic discontinuities seriously as matter for scriptural reflection, and the Modernist interest in harmonies between Christianity and culture no longer resonated. Once the Commission ended, Ramsey states that Thornton’s influence lessened. It was only through the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius that he was drawn out of his solitary world. Mascall relates that he first met Thornton in April 1936 at one of their conferences. It is not insignificant that Thornton’s turn to Scripture seems to coincide with his Eastern Orthodox interactions.

It was natural that Thornton should follow *The Incarnate Lord* with *The Common Life in the Body of Christ (CL) (1942)*, for *The Incarnate Lord* included both the individual and ecclesial implications of the incarnation. Indeed, in the transitional DA, he discusses the salvific implications of the incarnation in terms of broken “fellowship” (*koinonia/communion*). A. C. Vidler had high praise for Thornton’s book, it being wholly focused on biblical language rather

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367 Lampe, *Doctrine in the Church of England (1938)*.
than contemporary language, and he saw no problem with Thornton’s belief in the unity of Scripture: “Of course this has often been said, but it is not often, at any rate since biblical theology became critical, that the assertion has been so adequately corroborated by an actual demonstration.” We shall see that the unity of Scripture increasingly became the most uncomfortable of Thornton’s theses for his critics. But methodology aside, *The Common Life* was well received, in Vidler’s words, “as an extensive and comprehensive commentary on Acts ii, 42, and in particular on the implications of the term *koinonia* in the New Testament.”

“The Body of Christ in the New Testament” (*BCNT*) (1946) was Thornton’s contribution to Kirk’s *The Apostolic Ministry*, which was an Anglo-Catholic case against reunion schemes with non-episcopal Protestant bodies. Here he carries forward his ecclesiological concerns by...

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371 L. S. Thornton, “The Body of Christ in the New Testament,” in *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), 53–112. Besides the 1928 Prayer Book, the other biggest controversy of Thornton’s life was over the Church of South India (CSI). In 1919 the first Indian Anglican Bishop, V. S. Azariah, issued a statement in concert with a group of Indian Christians deploring the inefficiency of their missions due to Christian divisions “imposed upon us from without.” From this flowed prolonged negotiations to unite episcopal and non-episcopal traditions in one church for the first time. At the outset the church would be inaugurated and new bishops consecrated from all the previous churches. From then all ordinations would be episcopal. There would be no re-ordination of existing ministers who had not been episcopally ordained. The scheme’s supporters argued that once essentials were agreed, there could be a union in the trust that common worship and mission would produce further convergence. But Anglo-Catholic opponents wanted everything guaranteed in advance. They charged that CSI would be doctrinally vague and its ministries of uncertain validity. They were terrified that a similar scheme would be adopted in England. But CSI was inaugurated in 1947. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, 261.
exhaustively exploring the concept of “body” in the Old and New Testaments, with some particularly interesting conclusions about Judas’ paradosis (betrayal, handing over, traditioning) of Jesus’ body. Much of this builds on threads within CL, in a figural paper titled “The Choice of Matthias,” and in a tract called The Judgment of Scripture: A Biblical Torch Turned on the South India Scheme (both from 1945).372 These all dealt in various ways with apostolic authority and its implications for the betrayal of Israel’s, Judas’, and the Church’s obligation to conform the content of its life to the Christ’s servant-form. Of course, the unity of form and content would be most fully explored in his next book, and Thornton would carry over the theme of tradition and pedagogy into his trilogy The Form of the Servant and his writings on confirmation.

Published in 1950, Revelation and the Modern World (RMW),373 as Ramsey notes, was a theoretical synthesis of the philosophical theology of Incarnate Lord and the biblical theology of The Common Life.374 This was the first of The Form of the Servant trilogy, originally delivered as the Holland Lectures. RMW set out Thornton’s figural biblical hermeneutics and his understanding of the relation of the Church to contemporary scientific society. His claim was that revelation “masters” its environment by subjecting itself to its lowest details — reflecting thereby the servant-form of the incarnate Lord. As such, and by analogy with the incarnation,

Anglo-Catholicism. Some denounced Reynes and his friends as traitors. A few went to Rome. For a time bravely defiant notices at All Souls’ Leeds (and elsewhere) warned CSI communicants that they were not welcome. The controversy, which had preoccupied some of the best minds in the movement for a dozen years, was too quickly forgotten, for important lessons could have been learned from it. It illustrates how distraught Anglo-Catholics become if the delicate balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces in Anglicanism is disturbed. (Wilkinson, 261)

No doubt Thornton’s opinions were flawed on these matters, but Ramsey recognized that they stemmed from a conviction that reunion could not put together the pieces of Christendom without first recovering the picture of the whole puzzle. Within a Butlerian framework of limited knowledge and unlimited obligation, however, reunion must proceed. Here CSI has been a positive example.372 L. S. Thornton, “The Choice Of Matthias,” The Journal of Theological Studies XLVI, no. 181–182 (January 1, 1945): 51–59; L. S. Thornton, The Judgement of Scripture: A Biblical Torch Turned on the South India Scheme (Westminster: Pax House, 1945).


the creaturely forms that revelation takes up become part of revelation itself. With an abundance of detail, Thornton argues that, of the “three organs of revelation,” creation mediates between the organs of Scripture and the Church. Within the Church’s tradition, for example, the details of Christian history are cumulatively added to the life of the Church, while in the scriptural canon that whole history is eminently included within the Hebrew forms of the time. Furthermore, his metaphysics of wholes and parts effectively relativized the linear, evolutionary framework he inherited from the idealists and emergentists. Thornton became increasingly good at articulating the temporally “tenseless,” synechdochal relationship of each part of Scripture and the Church to their respective wholes, relationships that demand both figural reading and catholic ecclesiology. At the same time, he narrated how the fact of sinful division effectively drove a spiritual and epistemological wedge between the form of the Church’s life and its ideal sacrificial content. This led Christendom into further skepticism regarding the content of revelation. Indeed, the eclipse of the scriptural and ecclesial “wholes” resulted in an atomization of the parts akin to the crude atomism theorized by early modern materialists. Yet Thornton was optimistic that modern science had finally rejected atomism for relational concepts that could help illuminate again the kind of organic unity necessary for biblical exegesis and ecclesial unity.

Having laid out his biblical ontology and hermeneutics in the first part of his trilogy, Thornton followed up with The Dominion of Christ (DC) (1952) and Christ and the Church (CC) (1956). These books are less theoretical and more straightforwardly figural in the classical

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375 The eminent inclusion of history within Scripture’s figures is of course the basis of figural providential discernment. While Thornton’s distinction between Scripture and tradition logically implies this, and while Thornton did engage in a certain amount of providential discernment, he could have actually articulated this better. Nevertheless — and particularly in Christ and the Church — Thornton increasingly explored non-linear views of time.

patristic sense. However, since RMW remained undigested, though respected, by Thornton’s audience, the classical style of these books ensured they went less noticed. Dedicated to his fellow members of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, DC was an intricate analysis of the figural theme of redemption as New Creation — specifically as “return to the beginning.” The archetypal pilgrimage of Israel in the Pentateuch and the recapitulative work of Christ as obedient “child” and “Son” allowed Thornton more fully to work out his view of spiritual development, struggle, and divine pedagogy, which had run like a thread through most of his previous works. CC carries forward DC’s discussion of Transfiguration and New Creation, as well as Scripture’s feminine ecclesial imagery, which Thornton had earlier explored in a chapter given at a symposium of The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, “The Mother of God in Holy Scripture” (1949). The figural character of these works defies easy summary, but suffice it to say that they are meant to exhibit the unity of revelation and of the new creation in Christ.

Confirmation: Its Place in the Baptismal Mystery (1954) was published between the last two volumes of The Form of the Servant and is the culmination of a series of controversial writings deriving from Thornton’s fear about various reunion schemes with Free Church denominations. In these writings his emphasis on the episcopate as the necessary basis for sacramental validity led him to doubt the efficacy of Free Church baptisms since they could not be completed by the episcopal seal at confirmation — a step further than even Roman

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378 Thornton, Christ and the Church, Being the Third Part of a Treatise on The Form of the Servant, Preface v.
Theologians would allow.\textsuperscript{381} The book included historical arguments following Dom Gregory Dix’s own contributions to the controversy. Indeed, Thornton dedicated Confirmation to Dix. He went further than the latter, however, in that he mixed his historical arguments with figural explications of the rites of initiation that complemented his previous explorations of the divine pedagogy. Confirmation also expanded on the pneumatology Thornton began to articulate in CCG, IL, and so on. As I will explain in Chapter 6, it was the incoherent mixture of historicist and figuralist arguments that rendered his argument unconvincing, and which gave Thornton’s critics the justification they needed to ignore his figural theology altogether.

I now offer an overview of Thornton’s Liberal Catholic background, that party’s supernaturalist position over against the Modernists’ naturalism, and Thornton’s place in that debate. Afterwards, I will turn to a discussion of Thornton’s post–Liberal Catholic biblical turn.

\textit{IV. From Lux Mundi to Essays Catholic and Critical}

Thornton’s life spans two distinct theological epochs — the earlier Liberal Catholic stage closing with the 1920s, and a biblical-theological stage representative of the ’30s through the 50s. His debts to the earlier Liberal Catholics are acknowledged on the dedication page to The Common Life in the Body of Christ where he mentions Charles Gore (1853-1932) and Walter Howard Frere (1863-1938), his superior at CR. It was Charles Gore more than anyone who made Anglo-Catholicism mainstream by liberalizing it to a degree. The last chapter already made reference to the landmark volume of essays edited by Gore, \textit{Lux Mundi}.

\textsuperscript{381} Confirmation had produced a two-tier membership in the Church of England at the time: most of the lower classes would only be baptised and not, therefore, able to take communion. The Anglo-Catholic renewal meant a new reinforcement of class divisions by reasserting the necessity of confirmation; Adrian Hastings, \textit{A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000} (London: SCM Press, 2001), 67. Not that Anglo-Catholics were tied to the establishment. They held to the Tractarians’ anti-Erastian stance while Protestants often defended establishment.
The Liberal label did not truly fit “Liberal Catholicism.” Ramsey famously stated that liberality is “the temper of free inquiry and intellectual generosity,” but Liberalism was a set of tenets drawn from the Victorian age about the inevitability of progress, the uniformity of nature, and the identity of God and man. \(^{382}\) These tenets biased Modernist thought; consequently, their party became old-fashioned once the World Wars had discredited the idea of progress. \(^{383}\) Gore grasped that the great theological controversies between them came down to a blurring of the line between the natural and the supernatural. Henry Major was representative when he stated: “the difference between Deity and Humanity is one of degree.” \(^{384}\) As such, the Modernist Jesus was not a sacrifice for sin, but a man to the highest degree. Moreover, he was a cipher of the immanence of God in the historical process. As Hastings Rashdall put it: “We cannot say intelligibly that God dwells in Christ, unless we have already recognized that in a sense God dwells in and reveals Himself in Humanity at large, and in each particular soul.” \(^{385}\) The Conference of the Modern Churchmen’s Union at Girton College in 1921 put this movement on the map when Jackson and Lake’s critical reconstruction of Jesus caused scandal. \(^{386}\) Combined with Rashdall’s denial of the virgin birth and further monistic comments by Bethune-Baker, Girton alienated many. Charles Gore’s Liberal Catholicism successfully set itself up as the mediating answer to the questions of the age. \(^{387}\) And, despite Gore’s more “authoritarian” attempts to require subscription to the letter of the creeds, his movement effectively swung many Liberals back towards liberality. \(^{388}\)

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383 Ibid., 75.
386 Ibid., 69-70.
387 Ibid., 76.
388 Ibid., 86-9.
The second generation of Liberal Catholics moved away from Gore's methods to focus more on the Christian "experience." Oftentimes discussions of religious experience assumes a break between religious impressions (recall Newman's terminology) and God himself, which effectively relativizes the impressions of an always-more-transcendent God. In the case of Thornton and A. E. Taylor, however, attention to experience signalled a renewed interest in the phenomenology of belief and on the analogies between the "two books." One can already see the difference from Gore in Thornton's 1923 review his mentor's *Belief in God.* There he stated that Gore's discussion of the question of authority and the grounds of belief was problematic.

A certain view of God's nature and the character of his action upon the world will dispose a man to interpret the phenomena of the Gospels in a Catholic sense, and to find himself in accord with the verdicts of ecumenical councils. To another man the whole of this sequence will appear utterly remote and irrational. However ably and persuasively it is presented, the details of the argument will seem to be simply a series of personal judgments, which do not carry conviction because they come from a strange world of experience to which he does not possess the key. The argument, then, surely needs reversing. We have to ask ourselves what are the real grounds on which we continue to accept the Catholic reading of the Gospel. It is not on grounds of historical criticism, where discussion is never closed. Nor is it on the grounds of theism or of the Old Testament revelation, either taken separately or in combination. For the history of thought shows clearly enough that both of these must rely on the assistance of Catholic Christianity for their continued acceptance rather than reverse. We are driven, then, to conclude that the real starting-point of such an inquiry in the days to come will lie in that field which the Bishop's argument has not yet touched — that is to say, in a searching examination of the constituent elements of the Catholic religious experience. It is there that we shall find an authority for our dogmatic beliefs which can be scientifically justified, so far as the limits of human science allow; for it is in that region that those beliefs actually arise and are sustained."

Ramsey similarly criticized Gore for placing too much emphasis on the evidential power of history: according to Gore moral experience led to the rudiments of theism which led to a fair

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appeal to history which showed revelation happened. Theology came in lastly to interpret what was revealed. But Ramsey pointed out that history and interpretation were not so easily separated.\(^{391}\) Or as Thornton would later argue, revelation's content and the creaturely form of its reception were inseparable. As such there was no independent authority by which to judge the truth of Scripture except on analogy to the rest of human experience.

Calling themselves the analytic school in distinction from Gore’s historical school, the Liberal Catholics in Thornton’s generation distinguished themselves in the publication of *Essays Catholic and Critical*.\(^{392}\) This kind of catholicism was even more mediating toward evangelicalism and more liberal in its criticism, which allowed it to further cut the ground out from under the Modernists.\(^{393}\) The claim of these Anglo-Catholics was that their tradition represented the most comprehensive and inclusive experience of truth, though the experience


\(^{392}\) Edward Gordon Selwyn, ed., *Essays Catholic & Critical* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926). These writers believed the creeds were first of all symbols of spiritual experience. Ramsey, *An Era in Anglican Theology*, 102. This "experiential-expressivism" in relation to the creeds was probably a step further than Gore would have liked.

Thornton shared the Liberal Catholic supernaturalism but differed from them epistemologically and metaphysically. Reflecting on their metaphysics, he wrote to Smith that

My first acquaintance with “Idealism” came through *Lux Mundi* . . . This book brought about an alliance between the Anglo-Catholic movement and idealist philosophy as taught at Oxford by T. H. Green. It converted me to the “Liberal Catholicism” which sang its swan song in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, and which was strongly represented in the Archbishops’ Commission on doctrine (1923-38), of which I was a member.

I grew increasingly dissatisfied with idealism between the wars, read the two *Summae* of St. Thomas, but was never attracted by Neo-Thomism.395

As Thornton’s work grew in scriptural depth, the systematic constraints of idealism and its late heir, emergentism,396 necessarily loosened.

V. Thornton’s Biblical Turn

Thornton’s biblical turn had roots in broader movements. While Anglicanism continued to lose its wider cultural place in the 30s, it experienced a “renaissance” in its own intellectual life. Its theologians no longer blurred the natural and the supernatural. Thornton, Ramsey, Hebert, Dix, Kirk, Mascall, and Farrar led the way. The turn from Protestantism to Anglo- and Roman Catholicism sped up. There was also a turn from Liberalism to what was called “neo-orthodoxy,” early anticipated in Hoskyns’ contribution to *Essays Catholic and Critical* and in his

394 Ibid., 106.
396 For which, see next chapter.
1933 translation of Karl Barth’s commentary on Romans.\(^{397}\) Combined with the popularity of C. H. Dodd and Reinhold Niebuhr, this turn changed the complexion of theology. Those who clung to the theology of the 20s, like Charles Raven, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, were considered irrelevant.\(^{398}\)

Thornton published almost nothing between 1932 and 42.\(^{399}\) When he returned with his *tour de force, CL*, his theological approach had become primarily biblical and his concerns were largely sacramental and ecclesiological. His work garnered a lot of attention, but increasingly other theologians were criticizing his figural method of biblical interpretation. An early object of scorn\(^{400}\) was his chapter “The Body of Christ in the New Testament,” but the real breaking point seemed to follow his somewhat polemical *Confirmation: Its Place in the Baptismal Mystery*, in which his emphasis on the episcopate as the necessary basis for sacramental validity led him to doubt the efficacy of Free Church baptisms. As such, Thornton’s greatest work, *RMW*, has been neglected — and this despite the quite just judgment of “eminent reviewers” that *The Form of the Servant* was “one of the greatest theological works of the century, for the breadth of its undertaking in relating the revelation of Scripture to the life and thought of modern man, and for

\(^{398}\) “Hitler and Stalin had made the old religious mix of mysticism and social concern, both often of a vague sort, doubts about precise doctrines, a stress on love, rowing, and being a gentleman, seem as a package a rather too inadequate way of asserting Christianity.” Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000*, 294-5.
\(^{399}\) The exceptions being an unpublished memo for the archbishops’ Commission on “Marriage as a Sacrament” (a memo for the archbishops’ Commission on Doctrine, September 1935). The Commission’s document came out as *Doctrine in the Church of England* (1938). Thornton also has one unpublished sermon, “The Incarnate Glory” (ms of sermon preached at St Mary the Virgin, Pimlico, on the Feast of St John 1936); a short book, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (London: Unicorn Press, 1937); and two articles, “The Resurrection of the Body,” *CR: Quarterly Review of the Community of the Resurrection*, no. 141 (1938): 5–10; and “The Nature of Salvation,” *The Cambridge Review* LX: 1467 (January 20, 1939): 171ff. This amounts to less than two hundred pages of writing in the latter half of the 30s and none in the first half of that decade. Remarkably there are no book reviews from this time even though Thornton was a prolific reviewer both before and after.
the author’s massive, fearless and far-ranging scholarship.”

It is probably accurate to say that Thornton’s trilogy is the most comprehensive articulation of the logic of biblical unity and figural hermeneutics in the Anglican tradition (at least since William Jones). Indeed, the large body of writings published between CL in 1942 and CC in 1956 represents the major example of figural exegesis in twentieth-century theology. More than historians of exegesis like Henri de Lubac or Jean Daniélou, Thornton actually practiced what he preached.

Thus far only Mascall — in seven brief pages of his memoir — has understood the character of Thornton’s legacy. Both his Liberal and more orthodox critics failed to grasp the continuity of his work and the theological force of his biblical phase. It is time to revisit Thornton on his own terms, to understand the continuities within his oeuvre and the natural progression he made when he went "deep into typology." What was behind this transition? Mascall answered the logical question: that a consistent doctrine of the incarnation implies that “nothing in scripture is too trivial to be relevant,” no detail is too lowly to be assumed in the servant’s form. Further than this, I will argue in the following chapters that Thornton’s turn to lowly biblical language stemmed from an interest in theodicy already signaled in The Incarnate Lord. It was this theodical thread that gave continuity to his life’s work.

Most of what we know about Thornton’s biblical shift comes from his own comments. Thornton writes in the preface to CL that the book had been finished by July 1939 and its publication delayed by the war. There he states that the book complemented IL. He was, however, uncomfortable with his philosophical-theological tone during the 20s, and by DA (1937) he had struck a more biblical note. He states that he became worried by this question:

401 See dust jacket of Christ and the Church.
“What if the Gospel becomes obscured by our presuppositions and preoccupations, so that we neither see the scope of its application nor suffer it to speak for itself?” He continues, “[t]he conviction grew that this danger was present in the theological situation of to-day. In particular it became clear that certain aspects of the New Testament were not receiving the attention which was due to them.\footnote{Thornton, \textit{The Common Life in the Body of Christ}, xiii.} He then articulates certain conclusions he had recently arrived at: “Clearer understanding has been reached concerning three aspects of Scripture, namely (1) its function as the medium of revelation, (2) the unity which it manifests and (3) the nature of the authority it possesses.”\footnote{Ibid., xiii.} These lay in the background of \textit{CL} and would only be discussed fully in \textit{RMW}.

Cautious of totalizing philosophical systems, Thornton introduced \textit{CL} by articulating his concern that no other language substitute for the language of Scripture itself:

> The language of the New Testament is in a peculiar sense “the language of the Church.” Whenever we substitute for it other language we do so at a risk. The non-Biblical language never succeeds in representing adequately all that is implicit in the Biblical forms of speech. Yet the process of changing from one form of language to another begins within the New Testament itself.\footnote{Notice that this is not so different from Keble Talbot’s response to Gore, quoted above.} We cannot therefore evade the process, notwithstanding its dangers. The true safeguard lies in the constant submission of theology to the judgment of Scripture as theories are subject to the judgment of facts. But the facts include the forms of thought and expression which characterize the Bible. The contents of the revelation are mysteriously inseparable from the forms in which they are conveyed; and this is true, notwithstanding the fact that within the New Testament itself the forms are already partially transformed by their content.\footnote{Thornton, \textit{The Common Life in the Body of Christ}, 3.}

This biblical turn was parallel to and influenced by Figgis’ own pre-War theology, and was no doubt accelerated by the specter of another World War. But it also logically unfolded from Thornton’s own theodical concerns. My contention is that as Thornton’s theodicy unfolded, he had to tie his doctrine of creation more consistently to his doctrine of Scripture and break with...
the Liberal Catholic tradition because it was confused about Scripture. Not comprehending this, most interpreters of Thornton have not seen how the natural-theological speculation of his early work could be squared with his later biblical work. This I believe is an indication that Thornton was correct: contemporary theology had failed to find the analogy between Scripture and nature. By contrast, Thornton became more self-consistent over time.

**VI. Historical Epilogue: Secularization**

Thornton was a difficult thinker who wrote from a perspective with which modern people could not sympathize, in a tradition — Anglicanism — that produced few “timeless classics” of systematic theology. Thornton’s work may have fallen into greater obscurity than the other mid-century renaissance writers, but few found a wide ecumenical readership. Furthermore, secularization surely shrunk the audience for theological writing. The mid-twentieth century Anglican renaissance came to an end and the 60s saw a resurgence of 1920s Modernism after Thornton’s death. The most notorious theologian of the time, Bishop John Robinson, rightly understood that the Church of England had failed to connect with the masses. But even his

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407 Yet Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000*, argues that the greatest avoidable failure of the Church was not pioneering a new way to do catechesis for the schools in order to keep up. By the 50s Anglicans were unable to run their own schools due in part due to a shortage of clergy. Looking for help, they overcame their age-old disagreement with the Non-Conformists and in 1941 settled on a generic Christian teaching in these schools. Hastings believes that this more than anything contributed to secularization since it attracted few good teachers (421). Even liturgical renewal seemed to produce a secularizing counter-effect. He writes of these ironic outcomes: There looks to be an almost inexorable law that every effective measure of Anglican pastoral reform also contributes to a narrowing in the Church’s sphere of influence, as well as undermining just those institutions and observances which have hitherto provided some sort of bridge to the poorer classes. The public schools renewed in their youth, the day schools abandoned in their old age. Even the parish communion, so rightly hailed as a pastoral breakthrough, probably contributed to the decline both of church-going among non-communicants and of the Sunday school, one of the Church’s best links with the less ecclesiasticized classes (445).

Decline also dogged the Non-Conformist churches on more than one front. Their differences over public school resolved, Non-Conformists no longer had an Anglican enemy. Anglicans had helped to establish a welfare state and had come into line with Non-Conformist politics thanks to Christian Socialism (424). Moreover, Non-Conformists in the British heartland had been sacramentalized by the ecumenical movement. But Anglicans and Roman Catholics did liturgy best, which led many down the Canterbury Trail or across the Tiber. There was still the ecumenical barrier of the episcopate, though solutions were proposed.
highly popular *Honest to God* did not fill the pews. Thornton matters because he convincingly articulated the cause of secularization in the division of Christendom, the subsequent separation of revelation’s created form from its divine content, and the ultimate breakdown of the analogy of Scripture and nature. As such, Thornton articulated why the ongoing process of Western disintegration prohibited the reception of his own work. With a little ecumenical counter-ballast, however, I believe Thornton’s scriptural “Evangelical-Catholicism” holds promise for the future.

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Chapter 4 Antinomy and the Reality of the Incarnation

I. Introduction

This chapter elucidates Thornton’s apologetic against religious monism of the idealist, vitalist, and emergentist varieties utilized by Modernists. Thornton believed that monism erased personal qualities, differences, oppositions, and antinomies. At the natural level these antinomies included the life-matter, soul-body, individual-society oppositions. At the supernatural level these included the Creator-creation, incarnational, and Trinitarian distinctions. These distinctions mattered, but not merely because Thornton sought metaphysical systematization — indeed, it was systematization that led metaphysicians to overlook exegetical details in the two books of Scripture and nature that refused reduction. Rather, attention to trivial details in Scripture and nature forced one to come to terms with intractable antinomies.

The two most stubborn oppositions were the two natures of the incarnate Lord, and the antinomy of antinomies, the problem of evil. These two antinomies were bound together, for Thornton believed that the first (the incarnation) offered a more satisfying theodicy for the second (the problem of evil) than the monist alternatives. This chapter builds, therefore, towards Thornton’s views regarding the first antimony, including his articulation of personhood in Christ and his defence of Christ’s uniqueness. The second antimony, the problem of theodicy in the face of evil, will be addressed in Chapter 5. The emphasis there will be on Christ’s work and the doctrine of the fall in the urgent context of the World Wars. Crucially, Thornton’s biblically grounded theodicy asserted that forgiveness reordered the past. This claim is important, as

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409 The definition I will be working with is that monism is the belief that only one kind of thing exists, that reality is one and homogenous, thus differences are epiphenomenal and our language about them is merely nominal. This is closely allied with explanations of reality in terms of "composition" rather than in terms of first principles. See footnote 28 on the definition of Platonism as the opposite approach.
Chapter 6 looks at the temporal and indeed cosmic transfiguration effected (somehow!) through Christ’s recapitulation of Adam’s vacant royal high-priesthood.

While Thornton always placed the incarnation in the broadest context, his later work shows the necessity of figural biblical interpretation as a consequence of the New Creation in Christ. “What is not assumed is not redeemed” went the patristic maxim; and Christ, according to Thornton, assumed every trivial detail of creation in order to transform it. As such, nothing in Scripture failed to reveal him. We therefore come full circle as Thornton rearticulated a scriptural ontology quite similar to Jones. But, I stress, this re-articulation was the consequence of Thornton’s consistent interest in biblical theodicy.

This theodical interest set Thornton’s agenda from his early to his later work. Thornton states at the beginning of *The Incarnate Lord*:

The object of the present work is to examine the doctrine of the Incarnation on the wider field of Christian theism. Its scope is the justification of Christian beliefs as embodying the only rationally satisfying form of theism which has appeared in history. Its aim is to show that the Incarnation is itself the true and adequate theodicy of Christian theism. With such an aim in view it is possible to distinguish three main questions that have to be faced: (i) The first is terminology… (ii) The second is terminal concepts…. (iii) The third question is the widest of all and is not easy to define. It asks how, given these terms, concepts and ideas properly defined, can the theodicy of Christian theism be discerned in the doctrine of the Incarnation when fully set forth in its broad outlines.410

Theodicy is the overriding aim, but Thornton makes this contingent on what kind of terms one uses: biblical or conceptual. Chapter 6 shows that Thornton eventually threw out abstract metaphysical conceptions in favour of biblical language. I should note here that these were in tension in his early works because they caused some confusion about how best to combat

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monism — through abstract Trinitarian concepts or through biblically derived language about
Christ’s person and work.

Thornton used two sets of related metaphysical frameworks to translate biblical language
into contemporary terms. The most obvious was his use of “emergentist” categories. I will
explain the origins of emergentism as a natural-philosophical movement below. Suffice it to say
now, emergentism viewed the history of the cosmos in evolutionary terms and tried to explain
the qualitatively distinct levels of being (matter, life, mind, society, divinity) in temporal terms.
Alfred North Whitehead’s (1861-1947) philosophy was the highest expression of this movement,
and Thornton admitted a limited debt to his early work. As I will explain, however, he also
appreciated the early Whitehead because the latter was a Platonic realist who accepted as given
the qualitative distinctions of nature. But where Platonism arguably attempts to hold together
phenomenological oppositions (life-matter, soul-body, individual-society), Whitehead’s later
theology went in a monist direction that Thornton felt undermined the reality of such pairs of
opposites. Crucially, this turn was driven by theodical considerations.

Thornton has had a negative reception among emergentist process theologians from the
very beginning until the present. Indeed, Thornton still receives occasional attention in America,
where a late twentieth-century melange of liberal movements — radical, process, liberationist,
etc. — are the \textit{de facto} orthodoxy of The Episcopal Church. Most recently, W. Mark Richardson
has helpfully written on the logic of this denominational orthodoxy and put it forward as the best
alternative in contemporary theology.\footnote{This is apparent still in TEC’s Catechism of Creation, to which Richardson contributed. See Karl Giberson, “Catechism of Creation,” 2015, http://episcopalscience.org/resources/catechism-creation/.

He argues that the twentieth-century modernists (particularly the process theologians) were simply more \textit{consistent} than Anglo-Catholics like N.
P. Williams (1883–1943), William Temple (1881-1944),\textsuperscript{412} and L. S. Thornton at adjusting their anthropologies, hamartioologies, and soterioologies to the fact of evolution. At least, he argues, an “orthodox” theologian like Charles Hodge saw the conflict between Scripture and science and rejected evolution accordingly. If evolution is accepted, however, Richardson argues that the doctrines of the fall, incarnation, atonement, and creation could not remain unchanged.

Richardson is right. History has shown that process theology advocated the exact opposite results from Hodge; evolution was accepted and biblical particularity was accordingly rejected or unconvincingly reinterpreted. Of course, science is actually a side issue, since most of Richardson’s conclusions are not drawn directly from science but from metaphysical reflections on science, and from within the process tradition that “emerged” at the end of the nineteenth century as “evolutionary emergentism.”

\textit{II. Emergentism}

At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a contest between reductionist materialism and idealism as complete explanatory theories of nature. The younger theories of emergentism were akin to idealism in their relative openness to spiritual explanation and in their opposition to reductive physicalism. Philip Clayton writes: “Emergence theories presuppose that the once-popular project of complete explanatory reduction — that is, explaining all phenomena in the natural world in terms of the objects and laws of physics — is finally impossible.”\textsuperscript{413} Yet because idealism, despite its own evolution-like ontology, often posed as an opponent of materialist science, emergentists distinguished themselves from idealists by their scientific interests. By and large, however, emergentists carried on idealism’s battle against materialism.

\textsuperscript{412} Who, to be sure, could not accurately be described as Anglo-Catholic.

\textsuperscript{413} The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.
One of the dogmas of the old materialism was absolute determinism, allegedly buttressed by the law of the conservation of energy articulated by Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) in 1847. According to his second law of thermodynamics, the world was a closed energy system that was predestined to die a heat death — a gloomy prophecy. It also followed from determinism that consciousness was not a gap in the closed system of causes, but had to be explicable in terms of biology and physics. Carl Vogt (1817-1895), for example, controversially stated that “thoughts stood to the brain as gall to the liver or urine to the kidneys.” Idealists of course claimed that matter could be explained entirely with reference to Mind or Ideas (depending on the kind of idealist you were). Meanwhile, between idealism and materialism, new forms of dualism emerged. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913) had independently conceived of the theory of natural selection, but, being a Spiritualist, he denied that the human mind was a product of evolution. Then there was the philosophy of vitalism put forward by Hans Driesch in his Gifford lectures of 1907-8. He claimed that there was an ontological gap not so much between matter and mind, but between matter and life, a force which helped to explain the teleological direction of organisms. Henri Bergson (1859-1941) adopted vitalism in

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418 Hans Driesch, *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism: The Gifford Lectures Delivered Before the University of Aberdeen in the Year 1907[-08]* (Black, 1908); see also Hans Driesch, *The History & Theory of Vitalism* (Macmillan, 1914).
Creative Evolution (1911),\textsuperscript{419} in which he combined evolutionary theory with a Cartesian doctrine of non-material forces.

Emergentism fully arrived with Conway Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936).\textsuperscript{420} Although his emergentism was monist, it was not reductive in the physicalist sense but in a metaphysical sense. Lloyd Morgan took seriously the qualitatively new levels of being that emerged over time and that were the subject matter of the various sciences: physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, and so on. If physicalist monism was forced to explain away difference as epiphenomenal, Lloyd Morgan wanted to be a realist. Lloyd Morgan and his heirs described a plurality of truly novel emergent realities other than just matter, life, and mind.\textsuperscript{421} Metaphysically, this meant taking on board a realist distinction between wholes and parts. By asserting the reality of emergent wholes irreducible to their parts, emergentists could claim to take freedom seriously as a kind of “downward causation” from the whole to its parts.\textsuperscript{422} Clayton labels this kind of emergentism “strong” in comparison to the “weak” emergentism of Lloyd Morgan’s contemporary, Samuel Alexander (1859-1938). Inspired by Spinoza, Alexander was still fundamentally a physicalist. Like Spinoza he could describe the world under different modes — wholes vs parts, mind vs matter — but this was not because of any ontological distinction between the different levels of nature. It was due to our epistemological limitations. Also like Spinoza, Alexander was willing to call the emergent sum of all minds “deity” (hence the title of his 1916-18 Giffords, \textit{Space, Time, and Deity}).\textsuperscript{423} Both Lloyd Morgan and Alexander were

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{419} Henri Bergson, \textit{Creative Evolution} (New York: Holt, 1911).
\item\textsuperscript{420} C. Lloyd Morgan, \textit{Emergent Evolution} (New York: Holt, 1931). These are Morgan’s Giffords of 1921-1922.
\item\textsuperscript{421} \textit{The Re-Emergence of Emergence}, 13.
\item\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 4.
\end{enumerate}
monists and reductionists according to Clayton, but for Lloyd Morgan, the total explanation of reality would not come from physics but from metaphysics.\textsuperscript{424}

The culminating figure of “strong emergentism” was Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). His Gifford Lectures, \textit{Process and Reality} (1927-28), left an enduring mark on Liberal theology.\textsuperscript{425} Unlike Lloyd Morgan, Whitehead did not believe that the novel levels of reality — from atoms all the way up to God’s “consequent nature” — were real substances but rather new sets of relations. Until the publication of \textit{Process and Reality}, however, Whitehead had not yet subsumed God within his emergentist metaphysics. For this reason Thornton briefly found him helpful.

Several things follow for theology from the fact that strong emergentism is reductive and monist, despite its realism. One is that theology must in some non-physicalist way remain naturalistic by offering a total explanation (metaphysically, logically, causally) for God. Hence there must be radical changes made to every major doctrine if Christian theology makes “emergence,” “process,” and “becoming” the fundamental starting point for thought.

Emergentism and process theology modelled the whole history of the cosmos on the metaphor of biological evolution. As such, all things — including God — were never in a state of being but of becoming. On an emergentist view, creation is continuous and usually not understood as \textit{ex nihilo}. This means there are no fixed created things, hence there is no fixed state to fall from, and thus sin is not quite sin:

“Fall from what?” would be a reasonable question, as we contemplate human life emerging on the shoulders of the many species preceding it. The finitude and constraints at the phase of moral and spiritual awakening probably look more like trial and error in

\textsuperscript{424} \textit{The Re-Emergence of Emergence}, 3.
the process of pursuing value in one’s environment, than rebellion. In the emergent view of human agency, the “fall” explanation appears to over-idealize the primordial finite will; it cannot do the explanatory work it has been given. And if moral and spiritual rebellion of finite creatures cannot sufficiently explain the origins of suffering, death, and evil (that is, if we can no longer deflect from divine responsibility for the world being the way it is), then attention turns to the question: What was God up to in creating a world such as this? One must protect the axiom of divine goodness and holiness in a different way.

Using Butler’s and Mansel’s distinction between factual descriptions of “that’s” and causal explanations of “how’s,” we can see that while emergentism attempts to really describe things, its overriding concern is to explain “how’s.” So Clayton defines strong emergentism in two theses: “that there are forms of causality that are not reducible to physical causes ..., and that causality should be our primary guide to ontology.”

A major philosophical claim in this chapter is that non-physicalist monism renders novelty, difference, and particularity just as impossible as materialist monism. Exhaustive causal reduction necessarily erases such particularities. Emergentism is thus not a successful alternative between materialism and “Platonic” realism, the latter of which, when properly understood, safeguards particularity. The supporting historical evidence is the fact that process theology has failed (often deliberately) to protect Christian particularity, which de facto has rendered it largely irrelevant to the Church. One major theological claim of this chapter is that when “consistency” between Scripture and nature is conceived of in reductionist causal terms alone, Scripture will

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426 W. Mark Richardson, “Evolutionary-Emergent Worldview and Anglican Theological Revision: Case Studies from the 1920s,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 321–45; see 326. Note how divine goodness and holiness are axioms; this is a method continuous with the Deists’. Also note that Richardson admits that the naturalization of evil requires a redefinition of evil, and that this is a problem (345) — but more on this next chapter. According to Richardson’s narrative, the discovery of evolutionary mechanisms in nature forced a wholesale re-evaluation of the main Christian doctrines. They all converged in a reassertion of an “Irenaean” theodicy well articulated by John Hick in 1966, *Evil and the God of Love* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

427 *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, 3.
always lose. But Thornton offers us a classic example of an analogical consistency between the
two books.

III. Thornton against the Whiteheadians

From the very beginning, the followers of Whitehead were unconvinced by Thornton’s
version of emergentism. The major complaint against Thornton’s project was that he was not
sufficiently Whiteheadian, which is to say that Thornton’s supernaturalism is inconsistent with
the metaphysical system most compatible with science. Despite all the criticism, Thornton never
claimed to reconcile the two books in terms of causality but in terms of analogy and theodicy.
As such the influence of Whitehead on Thornton — and according to his own admission! — has
been overblown. I will examine what Thornton has to say about the influence of Whitehead on
his thought and how Thornton and non-Whiteheadians appreciated the early Whitehead for his
Platonic realism alone. This comes down to Whitehead’s reintroduction of formal and final
causes. I then look at why Whitehead’s later theological project was rejected by Thornton and
other theological realists: Whitehead never asked why something existed rather than nothing, his
monism undermined personal particularity, and he was unacquainted with, and largely ignored,
the theodical experience of salvation undergirding the Bible. This will set the stage for
Thornton’s alternative to monism, whether materialist or idealist — what I call “analogical
emergentism.”

a) Criticism: Thornton was not Whiteheadian Enough, or “Inconsistent”

428 I should state here that I am not much interested in offering an in-depth analysis of Whitehead or his followers’
potential responses to his orthodox critics. This is because I believe Whitehead is not that important for the study of
Thornton — a novel claim, but a well-founded one! Emergentism in general is important; the tradition of Christian
Platonism is much more important.
Not all of Thornton’s process critics are monochromatically unappreciative or unaware of the fact that Thornton never intended to conform to Whitehead. They rarely note, however, that Thornton was not a Whiteheadian but a Platonist like the latter. Robert M. Cooper accurately situates Whitehead and Thornton in relation to Platonism and writes,

We do not fault Whitehead for his use of Plato. Some of Thornton’s critics, Dorothy M. Emmet in her *Whitehead’s Philosophy of Organism* (1932), C. E. Raven in Volume II of his *Natural Religion and Christian Theology* (1953), and W. Norman Pittenger in his *The Word Incarnate* (1959), fault him for departing from Whitehead in significant respects…. To insist, however, that he be consistently a Whiteheadian is tantamount to saying that because Thomas Aquinas departed from the philosophy of Aristotle in substantial ways, e.g., in his doctrine of creation, that he was faithless to the system and spirit of “the Philosopher.” It is to suggest that Augustine, and others, who used the philosophy of neo-Platonism betrayed it in not slavishly following it. Thornton’s interest in writing *The Incarnate Lord* was principally apologetic. His interest was to demonstrate what he believed to be a compatibility between certain aspects of the incarnational theology of the Greek Fathers and the thought of Whitehead. This is not altogether farfetched inasmuch as both the Fathers and Whitehead were under the immense influence of Plato, as, of course, was Thornton himself.429

When Cooper then asks, “Have these current writers allowed the criticisms of the writers just mentioned to stand unexamined?”430 it is tempting to answer in the affirmative given the wealth of negative reviews.431

429 Cooper, “Note on Lionel S Thornton,” 184. He continues: “He is known to some writers in process theology, though he is usually only mentioned in passing. It is as if he were not worthy of treatment. One still wonders, however, if that is the case. Have these current writers allowed the criticisms of the writers just mentioned to stand unexamined? Perhaps. I have found his importance, as I have indicated, in affording a methodology for Biblical theology. Biblical theology, however, is not enjoying the days of prominence which it had only several years ago.” For example, Cooper complains, “A recent work of nearly five hundred pages *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, mentions Thornton’s *The Incarnate Lord* twice, judging it to be ‘highly supernaturalistic’ and ‘a very supernaturalistic Christology,’ and leaving the judgment at that as if that were sufficient treatment” (188).

430 Cooper, 188

431 Thornton’s critics faulted him for differing from Whitehead, despite the fact that this was not his goal. Thus, Dorothy Emmet wrote in 1932 that Whitehead’s metaphysics prohibited a supernatural descent of the Word into creation:

He [Thornton] can indeed claim Whitehead’s support for the view that our apprehension of the eternal order depends upon the fact of a developing incorporation of that order into the successions of events in Space-Time through an ascending cosmic series (cf. Thornton, *The Incarnate Lord*, p. 98). But this has really no bearing on the Christology of the latter half of the book, since he claims that Christ is not a
There are some legitimate questions behind the crude criticism that Thornton ought to have been Whiteheadian. This traditional portrait of Thornton is of an inconsistent


Charles Raven agreed that “consistency” prohibited the classical doctrine of the incarnation:

Dr. Thornton’s own doctrine was rendered inconsistent by his insistence that although the creative process disclosed a series of emergents, life, mind, spirit, and thereby foreshadowed the culmination of the series in the coming of Christ, yet that event differed radically from all its predecessors and signalized not the consummation of the process but the intrusion into it of a Being wholly distinct and independent. Charles E. Raven, *Experience and Interpretation: Natural Religion and Christian Theology*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 102.

Pittinger similarly insisted that Christ could not have come from beyond the historical series, and when Thornton claims so, “he denies the significance of the whole series as the vehicle of God’s action. For in fact the world is not patient of deity in any real sense, if at the crucial point it is required that God thus break into his own ordering of things.” Norman Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 108. Later he repeats this traditional criticism of Thornton in terms of “discontinuity”:

...he [Thornton] feels obliged to insist that the whole *Logos*, as we might describe it, is intruded into the world in the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ; thus he succeeds, quite contrary to what must have been his intention at the beginning, in making that event partake of an entirely different order from all the rest of the divine revelatory activity in the creation.... But it does not seem to have occurred to Father Thornton that in asserting this particular notion of finality and transcendence, translating the Patristic view into the idiom of a world-view utterly different from theirs, he is making the Lord a meaningless monstrosity in a world which neither needs him nor (for that matter) can accommodate him. He wants to state that there is some sort of discontinuity within a greater continuity; but what he manages to assert is a contradiction of the very intention of the Fathers themselves, with all that they had to say about the eternal Logos in his various modes of operation including that mode which was appropriate to the incarnation in Jesus himself. W. Norman Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 19-20.

The first dissertation about Thornton concluded in the same way, complaining about a lack of rational “unity” in his thought:

Thornton’s system is not so rationally satisfying.... Consequently the profoundest dualism in Thornton’s system is within the doctrine of the Incarnation in its function as the bridge between creature and Creator. Thornton’s answer to the dualism is theological and does not have about it his own necessary criterion of rationality, namely unity, but introduces a dualism within itself.... we must finally conclude that Thornton’s system is not satisfactory to his second canon of reason, unity.


In 1973 Lewis S. Ford agreed, complaining of the “discontinuity” that supernaturalism introduces into metaphysics:

From the standpoint of process thought, this [Thornton’s] conception of the incarnation presupposes a self-sufficient Creator who need not seek fulfillment in creaturely actualization whose incorporation within the world is wholly discontinuous with its on-going process. It is strikingly similar to the Catholic doctrine of a divinely infused soul into the first man Adam, who otherwise may be understood as the product of the evolution of the primates, and bristles with the same sharp dualisms between Creator and creature which process theism has sought to overcome. Norman Pittenger, Charles E. Raven, and Dorothy Emmet have criticized Thornton on this score. Lewis S. Ford, “Response: Lionel S Thornton and Process Christology,” *Anglican Theological Review*, October 1, 1973, 482.


Thornton did pay a price for his refusal to build his theology upon a thoroughgoing acceptance of Whitehead’s understanding of reality. That price was the inconsistency in Thornton’s theology between his insistence upon God’s relatedness with the world and his retention of a supernaturalism which in some ways excludes God from being related to the world.
supernaturalist whose thought had no rational unity, who failed to resolve metaphysical
dualisms, and whose Jesus is “discontinuous” with the course of nature. I will discuss the last
point more exhaustively in my section on Thornton’s alleged Appollinarianism, but will begin to
flesh it out here in response to Richardson’s representative objection that for Thornton,

Christ himself is not a product of history’s cumulative development but one who enters
history from beyond it, appearing as a new evolutionary species, drawing human beings
into divine life. But this is only emergent phenomenon in appearance, since the new
creation (species) does not really come from within the dynamics of natural processes.
Thornton’s Christology combined with classic theistic commitments lead to a
supernatural solution, realized in time. Christ transfers supernatural gifts necessary to
complete the organic process, instilling what the emergent process cannot itself
produce.432

The incarnation, according to supernaturalists, “rather abruptly” introduces a new and dramatic
presentation of God.433 For such theologians,

[the] Incarnation represents a decisive “before and after” of history, an old and a new age,
either in terms of “fallen, then restored” (Gore), or in terms of “incomplete, then
complete” *imago Dei* (Thornton). For Thornton, this “before and after” within nature and
history was an abrupt closure to the emergent picture he developed earlier in the project,
and the stark transition seems unconvincing and unexplained.434

By contrast,

Modernists, having given up the fall explanation of the human moral and spiritual
condition, require less regarding the saving effects found in the incarnation. Jesus
becomes the supreme instance of the divine promise to bring creation to fulfillment. As a
timely revelation of divine will in a human life, Jesus inspires change in the human heart
and in human community, and offers an example of a corrective path morally and
spiritually. Incarnation *reveals, inspires,* and *pioneers,* and comes as novelty from within
nature and history — it is a special and unique expression of divine presence within
material existence more generally.435

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432 Richardson, “Evolutionary-Emergent Worldview and Anglican Theological Revision,” 335-336.
433 Ibid., 336.
434 Ibid., 341.
435 Ibid., 342.
This, in short, is the traditional objection to Thornton.

b) Whose Platonism? Thornton vs Whitehead

Cooper correctly stated that Thornton did not intend to follow Whitehead except insofar as he agreed with the latter’s version of Platonic realism. Once Whitehead published *Process and Reality*, Thornton left him behind. Thornton was in agreement with the similar evaluation of his friends, A. E. Taylor and Mascall — namely, that Whitehead’s rehabilitation of formal and final causality was useful for describing nature. But he was problematic as a theological resource because he denied creation *ex nihilo*, his monism rendered personality epiphenomenal, and his theodicy was inferior to biblical theodicy.

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436 My definition of Platonism derives from Lloyd P. Gerson, “What Is Platonism?,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy: Baltimore* 43, no. 3 (July 2005): 253–76. There he gives the basics based on knowledge of the eight hundred years of Platonism’s dominance during antiquity, and he adds a definition by negating what Platonism was not. Of the four positive marks I will just mention the first two. What is most distinctive of Platonism is, first, its "top-down" approach. It rejects the claim "that the most puzzling phenomena we encounter in this world can be explained by seeking the simplest elements out of which these are composed." In other words, the "bottom-up" approach is materialism, and Platonism is an *ur* anti-materialism. "The top-down approach holds that answers to questions about these phenomena are never going to be satisfactorily given in terms of, say, elementary physical particles from which things "evolve" or upon which the phenomena "supervene."" By contrast, and on analogy to a theology that takes for granted Scripture, Platonism believes that a systematic philosophy is not possible without the assumption of cosmic unity (260). This systematic unity is an explanatory hierarchy, which is to say that the "ultimate explanatory principle in the universe, therefore, must be unqualifiedly simple." It is this conceptually reductivist, not materially reductivist. "The simplicity of the first principle is contrasted with the simplicity of elements out of which things are composed according to a bottom-up approach" (261). Second, ontology and theology are inseparable in this view; for the divine (with some residual personhood) constitutes an irreducible explanatory category (261). We should note here that a particular theory of the Forms is not a part of the "essence" of Platonism because the Forms are not ultimate explanatory principles. What Platonism is committed to is the ontological priority of an immaterial, incorporeal intelligible realm of ultimate explanatory principles over a sensible realm. And this is the consequence of its attempt to *explain real phenomena* not just talk about their *composition* (we will see that this difference characterizes the orthodox vs. Modernist doctrines of the incarnation below).

Platonism by negation is Gerson's second method of defining what Platonism is. The *Parmenides* offers a convenient summary of four opposing positions. Platonism is neither Parmenidean monism nor pluralism nor materialism nor a theory of Forms absent a theory of mind (264-269). Gerson here concludes that "the core of Platonism negatively defined is the enterprise of drawing out the conclusions of the rejection of nominalism and materialism which are in fact two faces of the same doctrine" (268).

The last way Gerson defines Platonism is to ask whether Aristotle was an anti-Platonist. Since the time of Werner Jaeger — but not before and especially not among Platonists — Aristotle has been opposed to Plato. But Gerson concludes that on the key index of belief in "the ontological priority of the intelligible world to the sensible world," he was a variety of Platonist (272).
Thornton prefaces *The Incarnate Lord* with a brief statement of his and the early Whitehead’s Platonic realism over against the time-philosophies of Bergson, Alexander, and C. D. Broad⁴³⁷ and the quasi-Platonism of Wyndham Lewis,⁴³⁸ who had lumped Whitehead together with Alexander. At this point Thornton defended Whitehead: “To identify the God of Whitehead with the emergent time-god of Alexander is a first-class blunder…”⁴³⁹ At the end of *The Incarnate Lord* in “Additional Note C,” Thornton explains his debt to Whitehead. At the time of writing Whitehead had not written *Process and Reality*, and Thornton had only referenced four books.⁴⁴⁰ The latest books included a whole metaphysic “including God, a Platonic order of reality, and finite minds.”⁴⁴¹ Nevertheless, Thornton admitted that he “had only recently become acquainted with Dr. Whitehead’s writings,”⁴⁴² that he read *Religion in the Making* “somewhat hurriedly,”⁴⁴³ and that in any case

[i]t would be a mistake to look for an exact reproduction of Dr. Whitehead’s terminology in this book. To attempt such a thing would in any case have been precarious, cramping to thought, and of doubtful value, even if carried out systematically. In so far as the book is under obligations to this way of thinking, this dependence must be regarded as issuing in an interpretation and application of his principles rather than as involving anything in the nature of a point-to-point reproduction. Moreover, it is obvious that Christian theology has its own problems and its own “special evidence”…⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Thornton, *The Incarnate Lord*, 464.
⁴⁴³ Ibid., 466.
⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 464.
Thornton acknowledged his debt to Whitehead and to the emergentism of J. C. Smuts, Lloyd Morgan, and Alexander. He felt that the latter’s “scheme of a graded universe” could “be detached as a scheme from the Spinozist and monistic interpretations which he gives to it.”

Any indications of Whitehead’s later monist tendencies were lost on Thornton. For the later Whitehead, God became a self-creating subject who encompassed all the potentialities of all existing entities at all moments. All potentialities were abstractly in God's primordial nature, and the accumulation of concrete actualized choices was in his consequent nature, a nature that was conscious and changed along with the creative advance of the world. Note, however, that once Whitehead added a “concrete” pole to God, he was still not using this term analogically in the same way as Thornton. Rather, his God encompassed and was subject to time and its potentialities. Furthermore, the process from actual to concrete was not true creation ex nihilo, but a coming-to-pass in time. This system also contained a theodicy. Freedom was possible because of each entity’s participation in God’s primordial nature, a freedom that also made evil

446 Thornton, *The Incarnate Lord*, 464.
447 To be sure, other theological naturalists thought that the early Whitehead had left too much room for supernaturalism. At the University of Chicago, Henry Nelson Wieman, having read *The Incarnate Lord*, began to worry that Whitehead could be used for orthodox purposes. Even the late Whitehead was too supernaturalist for Wieman, who went on to reject Whitehead’s doctrine of God’s consequent nature as too teleological, speculative, and motivated by the human urge to find hope in the face of evil. Indeed this was true, for Whitehead had turned to theological speculation after the death of his son in WWI. Larry Witham, *The Measure of God: Our Century-Long Struggle to Reconcile Science & Religion*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2005), 112-113; Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and his Work, Vol II* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1990), 34. Although Whitehead did not affirm the immortality of the soul, his God conserved the past in his consciousness. But this minimal view of immortality was rejected by Wieman as well. Similar reasoning led another Chicago process theologian, Bernard M. Loomer, to the incredulity of friends like John Cobb, to become an avowed pantheist. He felt Whitehead only introduced the distinction between God’s primordial and actual nature as a way to relieve God from the responsibility of evil and to fulfill Whitehead’s own emotional needs. God’s being, according to Loomer, included the world’s evil. Furthermore, Whitehead’s “consequent nature” was not empirically verifiable. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*, 128-129. Loomer’s position conflicted with classic liberal criticisms of orthodoxy that were based on *a priori* assumptions about the moral character of God. But Loomer, with Butlerian intuition, felt that the perfect goodness of God was an abstraction. He simply drew the opposite conclusion from Butler and his heirs.
449 Dorrien, 64-65.
possible. But God had no power over evil. Rather, he lovingly lured each subject to make life-enhancing choices.

*The Incarnate Lord* was a defence of the Creator-creation antinomy against monism. Thornton and his allies believed *Process and Reality* failed to reckon with the distinction between Being and beings, Creator and creation. This criticism has existed for a long time. By subjecting God to a metaphysic, process theology failed to ask “why is there something rather than nothing?”

Whitehead’s neglect of the question of being was noted by A. E. Taylor (1869-1945) and Eric Mascall (1905-1993), who found Whitehead’s natural philosophy relatively unobjectionable compared to his later theology. In his review of *Process and Reality*, Taylor praised Whitehead for essentially bringing back Platonic forms and Aristotelian final causes into natural philosophy. Whitehead, contra older materialists, was able to account for “sameness and novelty.”

Theologically, however, Taylor was critical of his “Spinozistic thesis” that the world is necessary to God.

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452 Ibid. Taylor objected to “two features of his treatment, the series of theses enunciated at the end of the volume (p. 492) in which the world is declared to be necessary to God, to transcend God, and to be in some sort creative of God, and the distinction made from the start between creativity and God, who is declared Himself to be a ‘creature,’ though an eternal creature and the ‘primordial’ concretion of creativity. I cannot help thinking that I trace here uncriticized prepossessions, due to the influence of Spinoza in the one case and Bergson in the other, which would not stand close examination. In fact, I feel for my own part that both influences, especially that of Bergson, are leading Dr. Whitehead into unconscious tampering with his own sound principle that all possibility is founded on actuality…And I think the influence of Spinoza intellectually always a dangerous one for a metaphysician. A natural admiration for Spinoza’s character seems to me regularly to blind most students to the hopeless incoherence of his thinking” (78).
E. L. Mascall, writing from the Thomist tradition, also thought that Whitehead had adequately described the reality of nature. But he wrote that Whitehead was not interested in the question of Being. His God was not outside the system of nature and so could not be its source. This is a criticism Mascall earlier made in his landmark *He Who Is* (1943), where he wrote that Whitehead’s God really was only a final and a formal cause, a sort of aesthetic lure. He was not, however, the efficient cause of all beings. Rather, “creativity” itself had a priority over both God and the world. As such his God was essentially immanent, regardless of what Whitehead said about God’s simultaneous transcendence. His God was “the great companion — the fellow-sufferer who understands.” Thus one of the defects of Whitehead’s system was that he did not ask why something exists rather than nothing: “…Whitehead has concentrated his thought so thoroughly upon *the way in which things behave* as never really to inquire *why they are*. He has never properly understood what finite being *is* and so has never apprehended its radical contingency.” But, as Taylor also pointed out in his *The Vindication of Religion*, things are not self-explanatory. A God who is limited by the world contains no more reason for his existence than the world does for its own. Without further explanation, both are just brute facts.

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455 Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 169.
457 Ibid., 158; see also Taylor, “Some Thoughts on Process and Reality,” 77.
458 Mascall, *He Who Is*, 159; A. E. Taylor, “The Vindication of Religion,” in *Essays Catholic & Critical*, ed. Edward Gordon Selwyn (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 29–82. Taylor points out that the cosmological argument is not about the succession of time, as if there were a point when all atoms were at rest and afterwards began to move, “so that you have only to start, as the modern physicist does, with a plurality of moving particles, or atoms, or electrons to get rid of the whole question.” A first cause here means a complete knowledge and full reason for the event. It is a “why” question, not a “that” question. On the other hand, “If you prefer, with Herbert Spencer, to start with a strictly ‘homogenous’ nebula, you have to explain, as Spencer does not, how ‘heterogeneity’ ever got in, you must have individual variety, as well as ‘uniformity,’ in whatever you choose to take as your postulated original date if you are to get out of the data a world like ours… Neither uniformity nor variety is self-explanatory; whichever you
In short, by emphasizing the efficient “creativity” of creaturely beings, Whitehead left out the larger question of the efficiency of Being itself. Things have to be in order to become, which means that they must be caused. One might reject this proposition if she thinks about the God of theism as a being among beings, acting in competition with other beings. As Mascall pointed out, this prejudice resulted from the absence of a doctrine of the “analogy of being” among Whitehead’s followers. Yet having rejected a Creator-creature distinction, they are still left with the fact that something exists rather than nothing. Such thinkers imagine that they can bridge the qualitative gap (non-existence/existence) quantitatively — what David Bentley Hart has recently called the pleonastic fallacy.⁴⁵⁹ If God is not invoked as the primary cause of existents, it is hard to see how process metaphysics will not regress back into the materialism from whence it came with its logically necessary causes and epiphenomenal freedoms — a point, again, made at the time by Taylor.⁴⁶⁰

It is worth stepping back and reflecting on the issues with which Thornton himself began to struggle in the developing context of process thought among his peers. An initial problem that Thornton had to deal with is captured by Inge’s quip⁴⁶¹ that emergentism is not in the end much different than materialism. Despite disavowing physicalism, emergentists tried to have their ontological cake and eat it too by asserting both realism (the things we see are not merely epiphenomenal) and total causal explanation (all things can be accounted for in terms of one and the same underlying thing). But in their system sameness became more basic than difference:

start with, you are faced by the old dilemma. Either the initial data must simply be taken as brute ‘fact,’ for which there is no reason at all, or if there is a reason, it must be found outside Nature, in the “supernatural”⁴⁵⁹ (50-1).

⁴⁵⁹ David Bentley Hart, The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 98, 148, 156, 183, 194-95, 203. This may, however, be too fine a point for monists for whom the language of quantity and quality is synonymous, and indeed must be synonymous. Hence one should not look for too much consistency in the use of quantitative “degree” and qualitative “kind” language among modernists for whom quantities just are qualities.


they regarded “dualism” as a bogey-man. That is what it means to be monist, physicalist or otherwise; “that’s” must always be reducible to “how’s.” Thornton’s epistemology and phenomenology resisted this temptation.

Indeed, Thornton was attuned to the fact that monism and realism are opposites. Monism is the belief that only one kind of thing exists, that reality is one and homogenous. Monists might think of reality as a single uniform substance, or perhaps a large or infinite number of identical atoms, or even as an all-encompassing process. The alternative to monism, which Thornton espoused, was the belief that reality contains both sameness and difference, unity and diversity. We might call this position Platonism or just “realism,” because we believe the basic phenomenological reality of our experience of sameness-in-difference (say, of different people that are all nevertheless Similarly “human”) should not be reduced as the monist (who claims difference is illusory) or the pluralist (sameness isillusory) would have it.

Here we come to the central problem Thornton had with Whitehead: his metaphysics undermined the personal uniqueness — the difference — of Christ. As a result, Whitehead offered an impoverished theodicy. After The Incarnate Lord, Thornton had almost nothing to say about Whitehead. Thornton’s death prevented him from writing a planned comparison of Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin. All we have are two posthumous reviews published on each thinker. One was of Teilhard’s The Phenomenon of Man, which Thornton liked because Teilhard did not deprecate personality “in favour of a scheme of universality (scientific,
philosophical or political)."\textsuperscript{464} Teilhard showed how evolution produced a “convergent integration of parts in wholes,” and he left room for a supernatural integration of humans at the highest level within the Body of Christ, thereby transcending individualism. By contrast, his review of a book on Whitehead stated that the philosopher had earlier sided with Plato over against the materialists and idealists. But by the time of \textit{Process and Reality}, Whitehead had effectively denied the individuality of God and of human persons. Quoting the latter book where Whitehead states, “It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God,” Thornton complains,

This picture of a limited God who is dependent upon the creation in which he is immanent is supposed to eliminate problems of Christian theism such as the relation of divine omnipotence to the problem of evil, with a further presumption that unlimited supremacy would inevitably be arbitrary. Such an attitude implies that the revelation of God recorded in the Bible and accepted by the whole Christian Church can be ignored. This attitude with its implications will explain several other negative features in Whitehead’s works. This brings us to the subject of human personality, its nature and destiny.\textsuperscript{465}

Thornton thought that it was not possible to have communion with this limited God.\textsuperscript{466} He also clearly thought that the Bible offered up a better theodicy than Whitehead’s, who ignored the Christian experience of salvation.

\textit{IV. Thornton’s Analogical Emergentism}

Thornton’s \textit{The Incarnate Lord} claimed to be both a theodicy and an alternative to monism. These two things are connected since there were two theodicies on offer, a panentheist and an incarnationalist alternative. I will discuss these alternatives in more detail in Chapter 5.

Here I want to pursue a few issues as I describe Thornton’s early work. First, I want to point out

\textsuperscript{465} Thornton, “An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics,” 160.
\textsuperscript{466} Ibid., 161; Taylor, “Some Thoughts on Process and Reality,” 78.
that Thornton was still tempted towards Platonic abstraction. The Platonism problem split in two
directions. On the one hand, the Trinity could become the formal cause of creation, in which case
the “solution” to the Creator-creation antinomy was merely conceptual. Get the Trinitarian
antinomy right, and the whole world can be seen as a cascading series of analogous antinomies
(Creator-creation, incarnation, body-soul, life-matter, etc.). On the other hand, Smith wondered
whether Thornton’s use of Plato’s-Whitehead’s forms (“the eternal order”) meant he had not
fully taught creation ex nihilo. Was God’s being still continuous with creation? My argument is
that Thornton’s better instincts prevailed. His attention to the theodical consequences of the
incarnation derived from his belief that the regulatory language of Scripture was the bulwark
against monism. Pay attention to Scripture, and one sees a Christological salvation not available
on monist terms. This salvation presupposes all of the natural and supernatural antinomies he
was trying to preserve. Thus biblical religion was both existentially and intellectually satisfying.

In “The Christian Concept of God” (1926), Thornton laid out an analogical theology of
God and creation that he would develop further in The Incarnate Lord (1928).467 As in the latter,
Thornton argues that special revelation sums up general revelation.468 He then utilizes the
traditional triad of apophasis, cataphasis, and eminence to argue for an analogical approach to
God through both kinds of revelation. But the analogical ascent to God is more than just
vertical; it happens on the horizontal plane of history. Though he will later readjust the
proportions of eternity and temporality in his system, the Incarnate Word is the place where
vertical and horizontal stages meet.

121–50; Thornton, The Incarnate Lord.
The problem of analogical language is, firstly, a vertical one imposed on us by the language of Scripture and the limits inherent in human experience. Given these, we are forced to speak anthropomorphically, “relating God either by affirmation or negation to human experience.” But if cataphasis is anthropomorphically conditioned, so is apophasis. We therefore have to go beyond simplified oppositions, oppositions between abstract ideas and concrete experience, oppositions between God’s transcendence and immanence, oppositions between the subject and object of knowledge, oppositions between lines of thought that show God is either impersonal or personal. Not that the oppositions and antinomies are simply dissolved. For the incarnation is the “final ratification of the principle that God is revealed to us under contrasted aspects,” the final revelation of a “double polarity” that is found in general revelation. Further, the incarnation also gives us a new affirmative language in an “eminent” register.

We move from the negative to the positive, from the abstract to the concrete, from transcendence to immanence, from the limitations of our knowledge to the light of the positive revelation; from nature to man as set in the order of nature and then to man on the field of history, from man in the social order of history to man the individual recognizing his God through religious and moral intuitions; finally from man and his aspirations to their fulfillment in the Incarnation.

The higher oppositions between nature and humanity, the individual and society, and humanity and incarnation are all laid out, secondly, on the developing plane of history and summed up in Christ. This is essentially an early version of Thornton’s later doctrine of

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469 Ibid., 126. Compare this to Charles Raven’s mature theological writing in his Giffords, *Experience and Interpretation*. Religion, he argues, evolves through infantile personalism, the temptations of adolescence, to Raven’s full maturity. The human evolves from an individual into a personality that is “the quality of Christ.” We can use personal categories derived from ourselves, then, as the highest and truest, and most effective interpretations of God, who is only known through his effect on us (56-7). Despite the risk of anthropomorphism, human personality is better than anything else (58). That means that the perfect man will be the best representation of God we can get (69).


471 Ibid., 131-132.
recapitulation: “God possesses in a more eminent sense all the true goods which exist in this
world, all fullness of energy, life, mind and personality.”472 This included the different grades of
reality — nature, man, history, and Israel’s history in particular,473 which all followed an
analogical route towards an eminent embodiment in Christ. This development was not the kind
of mechanistic-causal history offered by Alexander, whose evolutionary monism ultimately
reduced the “given-ness” of phenomena to epiphenomena.

To the later dismay of process theologians, Thornton here asserted that the Incarnate Lord
was not “the last term in a series, but … He is the summation of the whole series”;474 he is not
the product of the evolutionary process, because “He transcends it entirely.”475 Thornton could
justify Christ’s transcendence over creation on analogy to the fact that each emergent level of
reality transcended the previous one: “The Christ of history stands in an historical succession; yet
He cannot be explained from within it. He enters it ab extra; and, to say the least, such an idea
appears both rational and intelligible on the view that all revelation exhibits characteristics of
transcendence.”476 The analogy works because in any case creation and incarnation are “two
stages in one divine action, and which finds the ground of both in the deity of the Word or Son of
God.”477 It should be apparent that Thornton’s method here is similar to Butler’s view of a
single providential scheme connecting creation and redemption.

In The Incarnate Lord Thornton further fleshed out the basic difficulty of monotheism he
had earlier worked on — namely, that “reason is dissatisfied with any form of dualism which

472 Ibid., 131.
473 Ibid., 125.
474 Ibid., 135.
475 Ibid., 136.
476 Ibid., 136.
477 Ibid., 137.
cannot be resolved into unity.”

A major theme of this book is that “the Incarnation when accepted as true is found to bring invaluable aid to theistic beliefs … by disclosing the true nature of the bond between God and his creation.” That unity and bond, he continued to show, was analogical because the phenomena of revelation were antinomical. At times, however, the fact that Thornton thought the incarnation was the bond could be overshadowed by his Trinitarian concepts. This was a problem that could be sorted out. More seriously, his emergentism would continue to sit uneasily with biblical theism until Thornton finally rejected its linear view of time.

Thornton was right that the Creator-creation distinction lay at the heart of monotheism, and he continued to argue that Trinitarian orthodoxy was monotheism’s best safeguard. For without the revelation of the incarnation and the Trinity, reason is strongly tempted to collapse God and creation into monistic abstraction — the tendency to “relegate all plurality to a world of appearances.”

Among non-Trinitarian “unitarian” monotheisms stood Islamic and “modern philosophical theism,” both of which were historically dependent upon Jewish-Christian tradition. But Thornton sets aside Judaism and Islam to focus on rational theism. If it were up

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478 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord., p. 3.  
479 Ibid., 6.  
480 Ibid., 388.  
481 Ibid., 302. Even though Thornton does not explore the trajectories of the latter forms of unitarian monotheism, he might have marshalled some historical evidence from them to prove one of his hypotheses: without the balance of revelation in Scripture, theisms easily slide into monism. One only needs to scan the history of Islamic philosophy of religion to see why they often sit uneasily with canonical Islam and its absolute distinction between God and creation and its (non-philosophical) faith in creation. An excellent contemporary example can be found in the “Perennial” or “Tradition” theory of religion taught by René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt, and Syed Hossein Nasr. See entries on Guénon, Schuon, and Tradition in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2006). Essentially an Islamic universalism, its advocates blur the line between monotheism and emanationist monism in order, on the one hand, to legitimate Indian religion while, on the other hand, encompassing Judaism and Christianity in one theory. This strategy has deep roots in earlier Islamic theories. It is not, however, compatible with Trinitarianism. See Perennialism’s Christian representative, James Cutsinger, in Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East
to this kind of monotheist’s powers of abstraction, he would include God and the world in one monad, and this at the expense of a personal God. What normally prevents this move is a commitment to scriptural language — which is the reason why scripturally regulated religion (Judaism) and its offshoot (Islam) do not slide down this slope, while the theists who set themselves up as biblical critics do. Here, on a firmer footing, Thornton turns to scriptural language as somehow the bulwark against monism.

Biblical language and the language of our religious experience, Thornton repeats, is essentially anthropomorphic; its life-blood is the analogy between God and man. Religious experience is essentially concrete and plural, not abstract and systematic. Yet the creative tension between reason and revelation, the abstract and the concrete, must be held together. If not, the God of reason becomes entirely abstract and impersonal.

Thornton thus further expanded his criticism of philosophical theism by arguing that, like the anthropomorphic God of religion, rational monotheism relied upon an analogy between God and man, albeit of a different kind. In agreement with Hume, Thornton believed unitarian analogy selectively ignored plurality. By moving from the unities — or “individualities” in Thornton’s terms — of creation to the absolute individuality of God, philosophical monotheists must arbitrarily ignore the possible analogy that would move from the plurality of creation to a plurality of gods.

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Footnotes:

482 Islam, like old-school modalism and Arianism, is partially protected from monism due at least to reverence for an infallible Scripture and an ex nihilo doctrine of creation. The moment Scripture becomes negotiable, however, the slope becomes slippery.


484 Ibid., 390.

For Thornton, however, unity and plurality were not incompatible, and this was not simply an assertion of their synthesis within the divine life of the Trinity. As a Christian, Thornton believed the Trinity was in some way an archetype of the unity and plurality in creation. But it was not as if the unity and plurality in creation were any more separable or reducible one to the other than in the Trinity.

An inherent difficulty in “archetypal” language about the Trinity’s relationship to creation in both Thornton and in other modern Trinitarian theologians is that the relation of created “types” to their divine “archetype” can be taken to deductively indicate a necessary causal relationship. But they are not so related. If they were, one might conclude without the help of revelation that Absolute Reality must be a synthesis of unity and plurality. Here logic would surely again reflect a monistic ontology: continuity between the being of God and the being of creation. Instead, the revelation of the Trinity provides an analogy to our experiences of the antinomies of life that marvellously fits. Insofar as Judaism refuses to reduce the Creator-creation opposition, reductionism is warded off and the faithful will similarly find analogies with the course of experience.

Thornton was clear that the Trinity can only be known through revelation. He did not intend to claim that Trinitarian reflections in creation logically indicate God. They analogically indicate him, reflecting the essentially free and non-necessary relationship of the Creator to his creation. Not only did this fact guarantee the place of Scripture for theology; it reflected the way

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487 Whether one believes the doctrine of creation can be discovered by philosophical argument or by faith alone, the antinomy remains. Thornton seemed to accept the traditional cosmological argument, but he would question whether the philosophical theist could stay theist. This is an abstract question anyhow. Even if creation can be known by reason alone, historically its impact on philosophy followed biblical religion. About this Thornton would agree with Etienne Gilson, *Spirit Of Medieval Philosophy*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).
in which the biblical canon has historically regulated monotheistic language and prevented it from sliding towards monism.

In a way similar to William Jones’ anti-unitarian argument, then, Thornton believed a reading of creation supported biblical theism and not philosophical theism, with its offshoot, religious monism. The difference is that the early Thornton is not thinking emblematically. Rather, the different emergent levels of reality are analogies one of the other, with the Trinity at the highest point. What I have been demonstrating, though, is that Thornton uses a rather abstract analogy of unity-in-plurality for the Trinity.

Take his doctrine of “individuality” as a Trinitarian analogy. This is a more developed discussion of "The Christian Concept of God’s" idea that revelation expresses itself in antinomy. Nature contains antinomical “individualities” at every level (his late works will prefer the term “wholes”), and these are analogous to God’s “individuality.” Thus in his polemic against monism, Thornton distinguishes between absolute unity (monism) and absolute individuality in God. This individuality, he claims, is analogous to the finite individuality we concretely experience in creation. Creation includes a series of ascending levels of increasingly distinct individual entities, at the top of which are human beings. Each level is increasingly distinct because, while at the bottom level of creation atoms are rather generic, at the highest level human persons are each unique.

The increasing individuality of each stage of creation, however, is not accompanied by a decreasing “social” interconnection with other individuals at the same level. In fact, the individual is only unique insofar as it fills a place within the social organism — has a unique

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“vocation.” This is certainly not to claim that creation itself exhibits a perfect balance between the social and the individual. Still, creation truly indicates that individuality is constituted both by an inward, personal harmony and an outward, social harmony.\textsuperscript{489} Unity and plurality are two aspects of individuality.

At every stage in its manifestation, the created principle of finite individuality is seen to have two aspects, unity and plurality. It moves steadily towards higher forms of unity. But at no stage in the organic series is the aspect of plurality eliminated. Consequently, if the analogy between finite and absolute individuality is to be drawn at all, it is a highly arbitrary procedure to select one aspect of individuality for the purpose of the analogy and to ignore the other — to regard individuality in God as an undifferentiated unity, when the experience of individuality, from which the analogy is drawn, is of a wholly different character.\textsuperscript{490}

This argument, however, is unclear in lumping together the Trinity and incarnation as two instances of the same principle of individuality. With the Incarnation and the Creator-creation distinction, one might recognize an analogy of proportion between four terms: divine-human / Creator-creation. This proportion, then, can be compared to other pairs like life-matter, or body-soul. At the same time Thornton taught that Christ synthesizes the many members of the Church in his one person, thereby bringing a kind of resolution to the incompleteness of creation. St Paul’s bodily “head and members” image, which Thornton is using, is of parts to a whole. The relationship here is not so much an analogy of proportion but a \textit{pros hen} analogy (many parts, or “effects,” are related to one whole, or “cause”). The problem with the Trinitarian analogy is that it is neither “proportionate” to two-term analogues (e.g., body-soul), nor are the three persons

\textsuperscript{489} Thornton, \textit{The Incarnate Lord}, 374.

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 390.
analogous to the plurality of created things. True, creatures are related to the single creative will of the Trinity in an efficient-causal relationship. But a formal or exemplary-causal relationship of Creator to creation is reserved to Christ alone. The analogy of the Trinity to the unity-in-plurality of creation must, therefore, be a third kind of analogy. Following Mansel, the analogy is between different antinomies that have resulted from the limits of human reason (of which body-soul, divine-human, Creator-creation, and so on, are examples). Thus the Trinity cannot be an exemplary cause of creation’s particulars. Indeed, by his later writings Thornton increasingly uses Christ’s Body as the exemplar of social harmony and the New Creation rather than the Trinity, which, in any case, still has its vestiges in Thornton’s “three organs of Revelation”: Scripture, Creation, and the Church.

The Pauline theology of the Body of Christ also qualified Thornton’s version of Plato’s “forms” or “ideas” — the “eternal order” made up of all the transcendent individualities that would emerge immanently in time. The issue here is that if the “ideas” lay within the immanent Trinity, then God is a formal cause of creation. And if God is a formal cause of creation, he is somewhat in ontological continuity with it since a formal cause contains its effects. Several of Thornton’s critics have circled around this problem, wondering how the “forms” finally fit with the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation. Cooper, for one, was not satisfied with the status of the Platonic Ideas in The Incarnate Lord. He writes of Thornton’s “eternal order” that

There are many questions left unanswered. The most difficult of these was implicit in his Platonic and Whiteheadian background. It is the question of the ontological status of those ideas or forms, or eternal objects, which we think to be ingredient in our experience. Thornton attempted to treat them speculatively, and I think wonderfully suggestively, in terms of our experience of Jesus as Logos and Redeemer. I am sure that he did not think that his Incarnational theology was the last episode in either Christian theology, or in Platonistic metaphysics. I am certain that I do not think that it is the last
episode in either of them, or in process theology, for that matter; but he is a worthy early
process theologian.491

Cooper’s question about the status of the Ideas in Thornton’s theology was fleshed out by Ford,
who wonders whether their identification with the divine nature makes creation redundant:

This reification of what for Whitehead is purely possible, needing concrete embodiment
in the actual world, leads Thornton to conceive of the eternal order as absolutely actual in
its unchangeableness, identical with God. Then the world becomes an unnecessary
appendage to God, a strange reduplication in time of that which is already unchangingly
actual in God.492

Smith then wonders whether Thornton thereby undermines creation ex nihilo.493 To state the
problem, I would like to discuss more specifically whether the Ideas reside in the divinity of the
Son or in his humanity. If the former, then Smith is justified in wondering whether Thornton
verged on monism. If, however, it is Christ’s humanity that becomes the eternal world of Ideas,
Thornton’s critics will wonder whether his Jesus remains fully human. Thornton did think the
non-temporal world of eternal objects was contained in Christ’s humanity:

Consequently the revelation in Christ spans all stages of history; not by chaining history
down to that duration of time which corresponded to the historical life-story of Christ, but
by incorporating into a concrete historical development the transcendent goods of the
eternal order, which were manifested and embodied once for all in His life-story, and
which are now gathered up, in His Person and through His exaltation, into a realm of
eternity. All this becomes intelligible if Christ belongs to the level of the eternal order.
But if we regard Him as a human individual within the organic series in whom there is a

491 Robert M. Cooper, “Note on Lionel S Thornton: An Early Process Theologian,” Anglican Theological Review,
April 1, 1973, 188.
493 “Did God create the eternal order or not? Thornton does not answer this question. This being the case one might
say that for Thornton God created the world out of himself as the eternal order in terms of creative activity.
Assuming, as we must, that the eternal order is not created, then it would be, it seems, possible to affirm that God
did have something which was neither fully himself (hence the conception is not pantheistic) nor fully apart from
himself (hence the conception is not dualistic) but was rather a part of himself but not the creative part. This may not
be the interpretation Thornton himself would give to his conception of creation, but it is a possible one. It is related
to the ex nihilo doctrine in that God is … its Creator, but it veers away from the doctrine because it invests the
creative activity with a kind of pre-existence in the eternal order.” Robert Virgil Smith, “The Philosophical
Backgrounds of Lionel S. Thornton with Particular Reference to the Doctrines of Creation, Revelation and
Incarnation” (Ph.D., Yale University, 1953), 65-66.
unique manifestation of the eternal order, then we have no ground for supposing that Christianity has the final character which Christians have ever found in it.494

We see here that Plato’s ideas are identical with the body and “life story” of Jesus, which radically concretizes and historicizes the ideas. In Thornton’s later terms, Jesus recapitulates created things and extends himself in them. Thus transfigured and exalted, these creatures make up the biblical cosmos, to which all temporal things will be conformed. This is the answer to Cooper’s question, and it assumes the incarnation actually is a theodicy.

We should also observe that Thornton’s Christian Platonism mostly displaced his emergentism since Thornton increasingly saw temporal succession as logically posterior to the Bible’s “eternal order.” This line of reasoning supported Figgis’ anti-monist argument that time had no hold over God and, indeed, set the ground for the possibility of the figural reading of Scripture. Philip Shen gets the difference between the early and late Thornton right when he observes that after The Incarnate Lord “this picture of an organic universe disappears” for the mature Thornton. In his later works

[t]here is no mention of a progressive, evolutionary cosmic series with a creative nisus moving toward some fulfillment at the highest stages. What is left is the single, total reality of Christ, describable still in fully organismic terms…. Thornton retains the language of organism. He seeks to associate it with and derive it from the Hebrew conception of personality and the Pauline idea of the body of Christ, instead of a philosophy of organism as before. The biological analogy now proceeds more exclusively on the human and spiritual level rather than being extended below to a vaguely panpsychic and cosmic background…. Whereas before the Christ event occurs in the world, now the whole creation takes place in the body of Christ in it's extended, most significant sense. We find here the notion of an all-inclusive organic whole already revealed and essentially achieved. The process of fulfillment is understood to be within this whole rather than toward it as before. The cosmic process, in other words, is one of unfolding rather than emergence of an event in a strict sense. The problem for Thornton

494 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 259. This will have tremendous effects on Thornton’s figural reading discussed later.
is more one of unravelling of the detailed significance of the Christ pattern than that of
fitting the Christ event into some larger framework. The problem is not how to relate the
reality of Christ to the reality of the world, for the world is in Christ, and there is no
question of Christ’s being possible in any kind of world, a question so important before.
What is indubitably real is not the world itself, but what has been revealed and known in
Christ, and in Christ alone. What is outside of it — if anything significant at all is
possible outside of it — is no longer Thornton’s real concern.495

Thornton ended up largely replacing developmental schemes he inherited from emergentism
with a more strictly “synchronic” view of different metaphysical levels in creation.

V. Cur Deus Homo?

I have indicated that Thornton preferred Teilhard to Whitehead because the latter was
reductive with regard to personality, that is, “individuality.” This same reductive tendency
characterized the modernist Christology to which Thornton was responding. Conversely,
Thornton has therefore been accused by Charles Raven’s followers of “Appollinarianism,” the
allegation being that his doctrine of “individuality” or “personality” did not safeguard the
humanity of Christ. G. M. Gwatkin (1844–1916) and Charles Raven (1885-1964) re-minted this
heresiological category to refer to more “orthodox” theologians. J. K. Mozley,496 D. M.
Baillie,497 R. V. Smith,498 and Norman Pittenger499 all applied it to Thornton.

495 Philip S. Y. Shen, “The Christology of Lionel S. Thornton: A Study in Interpretation” (Ph.D., The University of
Chicago, 1963), 19-21.
498Smith, “The Philosophical Backgrounds of Lionel S. Thornton with Particular Reference to the Doctrines of
Creation, Revelation and Incarnation,” 193-198.
499 W. Norman Pittenger, The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ (Digswell Place,
criticized John Hick for Apollinarianism as a segue into Thornton.
Contemporary with Thornton, Charles Raven was heir to Victorian and Edwardian modernism. As a young man at Cambridge, Raven came under the influence of James Bethune-Baker (1861-1951), the leader of the Modern Churchmen’s Union, from whom he learned to read the Fathers and to reject the traditional Christology of St Cyril of Alexandria (378-444). Perhaps in opposition to Newman’s valorization of Alexandrian theology in *Arians*, Raven and Bethune-Baker rediscovered Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) and Nestorius (386-451) as Antiochene sources that allegedly took Christ’s humanity and the historicity of Scripture seriously.

Bethune-Baker had early on registered his agreement with the traditional opinion that Cyril’s nemesis, Nestorius, taught a two-person Christology. Yet with the discovery of the Syriac

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501 He writes, “It may almost be laid down as an historical fact, that the mystical [Alexandrian] interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together.” John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 3rd ed. (London; New York: Longmans, 1871), 405. This comes in his Appendix on “The Syrian School of Theology,” where he states that the Antiochene school was devoted to “the literal and critical interpretation of Scripture” and “that it gave rise first to the Arian and then to the Nestorian heresy” (404). Newman repeats some traditional tropes about Theodore Mopsuestia (408-409), whose works, known only in short excerpts, had yet to be rediscovered.

502 See chapter 2 in Frederick McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), for the liberal Protestant scholarship on Theodore from the 1860s through Adolf Harnack’s work in 1958. The trend already was to see Theodore as something of a moralistic precursor to liberalism.

503 To be sure, Nestorianism was on the radar of CMS and SPG missionaries as early as 1841 when they began to make contact first with Chaldean (Roman uniate) and then Assyrian Christians (both contemporary names for historic “Nestorians”) in Mesopotamia. Under the influence of the Tractarian William Palmer — more famous for his Russian Orthodox contacts — the previous CMS missionaries Percy Badger and Christian Rassam (himself a Chaldean) became strident Tractarians whose goal was to persuade Chaldeans to break with Rome and refuse help from American evangelical missionaries, and to persuade Assyrians to drop Nestorius from their liturgies. In fact, their political meddling may have had something to do with the Kurdish massacre of Assyrians in 1843. Badger was more accommodating of Nestorian formulations than Palmer, J. M. Neale, and Thornton’s uncle, F. W. Puller, who wanted assurances that they accepted the Council of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Luckily the partisan engagements of Tractarians were moderated when the Archbishop of Canterbury officially authorised a commendable mission to the Assyrians, though it was not terribly successful. Nevertheless, it is within this context that Bethune-Baker’s re-evaluation of Nestorius was made, and whose book *Nestorius and His Teaching* begins with Archbishop Benson’s prayer for the Mission. See J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Assyrian Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
translation of Nestorius’s *apologia, The Bazaar of Heraclides* in 1889,⁵⁰⁴ Bethune-Baker changed course in *Nestorius and his Teaching* (1908) to argue that Nestorius was not a Nestorian.⁵⁰⁵ In the same year, Raven was defending a dissertation called *Apollinarianism* under his supervisor, G. M. Gwatkin, who had originally sparked his interest in the topic when he told Raven, “Apollinarianism is the prevalent heresy of to-day: why don’t you make a study of it?”⁵⁰⁶ Raven’s thesis was only published in 1923, and it was notable for doing for Nestorius’ mentor and main influence, Theodore of Mopsuestia, what Bethune-Baker had done for the other heresiarch.⁵⁰⁷ As Freidrich Loofs furthered Bethune-Baker’s thesis to argue that the whole orthodox tradition was heretical and that Nestorius was orthodox,⁵⁰⁸ Raven also did with Theodore. Indeed, Raven claimed that Apollinarius of Laodicea (310-390) — on his reading something of a crypto-Alexandrian — was scapegoated as a heretic so that the “orthodox” Fathers could retain his teaching in an only slightly altered form. There was really no difference in saying with Apollinarius that the Logos took the place of the human mind in Christ or with Cyril and later Neo-Chalcedonians like Leontius of Byzantium (485-543) that the Logos was a

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⁵⁰⁵ “According to Bethune-Baker, Nestorius did not teach a doctrine which so distinguishes the Godhead and the manhood of Christ as to treat them as separate personal existences, i.e., as two persons instead of one. … Bethune-Baker summarized his interpretation of Nestorius by saying that ‘he did not think of two distinct persons joined together, but of a single Person who combined in Himself the two distinct things (substances) Godhead and manhood with their characteristics (natures) complete and intact though united in Him.’” Carl E. Braaten, “Modern Interpretations of Nestorius,” 254.


⁵⁰⁸ Loofs’ work on Irenaeus became one of Thornton’s main sources and interlocutors in his *The Form of the Servant* trilogy. Braaten, “Modern Interpretations of Nestorius,” 256: “F. Loofs delivered four lectures on Nestorius before the University of London at King’s College in 1914, later published in book form. Here we are presented with the now famous thesis that Nestorius is not orthodox, but orthodoxy is unorthodox.”
divine person who took the place of a human hypostasis in Christ. To Raven, soul, mind, consciousness, and personality seemed to be synonymous:

For the attempt to represent him [Apollinarius] as an instance of rebellion or perversity, or his doctrine as essentially different from the traditional faith of his fellow-countrymen, can only be supported by ignoring or distorting the work of his predecessors, Justin, Clement, the Origenists and Athanasius, of his contemporaries, the Cappadocians, and his successors, Cyril, Leontius and John of Damascus. The precise formulation of their belief, whether in terms of the Logos veiled in flesh, or of the denial of a human mind, or of the enhypostasia, the divine person with His two Natures and two Wills, does not greatly matter. The result is still docetic: there has been no real union of God and man.\textsuperscript{509}

Theodore (the opponent of Apollinarius), came to represent a kind of proto-modernist theology traceable back through Paul of Samosata (200-275)\textsuperscript{510} that allegedly took Christ’s humanity seriously. Meanwhile, the list of mainstream theologians above, culminating in Cyril and the Anglo-Catholics, were allegedly incoherent on Christ’s humanity.

Several things need to be noted in Raven’s presentation of his preferred Christology. First, as mentioned, is that he functionally saw no difference between Appollinarius’ equation of the eternal Logos with the soul (mind + will) of Jesus and the later Cyrillian and Chalcedonian identification of the Logos with the hypostasis, or personal subject of predication in the Gospel narratives. Because emergentist metaphysics taught that mind emerged from matter, Jesus must have also emerged from matter, bottom-up as it were. The difference between Jesus and other humans was that Jesus’ consciousness was more highly evolved. This position has been called “degree-Christology”: Christ was not different from us in kind but in degree. Second, as the quote above indicates, the equation of soul and person also meant that Raven was a monothelete — he believed that Christ could only have one will rather than both divine and human wills.

\textsuperscript{509} Raven, \textit{Appollinarianism}, 273-274.

\textsuperscript{510} Ibid., vii. On this father of the heresy of “Adoptionism” see John Behr, \textit{Way to Nicea} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 207-235.
Raven indicates this when he states that a cooperation between the divine and human in Christ would be “impossible if His Person was wholly divine.”\textsuperscript{511} Here Raven admits that Christ, having no divine will, was, therefore, not divine. But perhaps this did not matter since for modernism God and humanity were only different by degree as well.\textsuperscript{512}

Ignoring the original exegetical context of Chalcedonian and Neo-Chalcedonian formulas, degree-Christology flattened language by the way it ignored Gospel grammar and placed God and man on the same continuum of being. This metaphysical priority meant that grammatical observations about biblical language were ignored.\textsuperscript{513} Traditionally, one would

\textsuperscript{511} Raven, \textit{Appollinarianism}, 290. Relevant to our discussion of Raven, Maximus thought both monophysites and Nestorians were monotheletes. See John Meyendorff, \textit{Christ in Eastern Christian Thought} (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 146-147. One should remember that the works of St Maximus the Confessor (580-662) — the great Neo-Chalcedonian proponent of dyotheletism and, \textit{contra} Raven’s intuitions, of Christ’s \textit{human} will — had to wait for the 50s until English translations began to appear. Balthasar put Maximus on the map in 1941 with \textit{Kosmische Liturgie}, but it was not until the 50s when Polycarp Sherwood started publishing that Maximus began to get attention amongst English theologians. Joshua Lollar, “Reception of Maximian Thought in the Modern Era,” ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Mozley, \textit{The Doctrine of the Incarnation} seems to recognize the importance of dyothelete theology for maintaining Christ’s humanity within the Neo-Chalcedonian paradigm, but this was far earlier (113). Mozley’s critique of Thornton does not register the relevance of Thornton’s clear dyotheletism. Had he been able to make the comparison, I believe he would have found Thornton eminently Maximian in both his incarnational and cosmological reach. Indeed, as a member of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, Thornton was probably aware of Maximus’ work. The original Russian of Sergius Bulgakov’s, \textit{The Lamb of God}, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans’, 2007), was from 1933. Bulgakov had a close acquaintance with Anglican theology evident in this book, referencing \textit{The Incarnate Lord} twice (269, 273). This was no doubt due to his membership with the Fellowship. He also referenced Maximus, Palamas, and other Fathers not frequently read by British theologians. It is probable that Thornton, therefore, would have had some basic knowledge of Maximus, though he never references him or, strangely, any Russian theologian. For the history of the Fellowship see Bryn Geffert, \textit{Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans: Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Intervar Ecumenism} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), chapter 10. Of particular interest is Geffert’s account of the mutual incomprehension between Anglican and Orthodox approaches to Genesis — the Orthodox called it “meta-history,” which “only confused the Anglicans” (150).

Another indirect source would have been through Aquinas’ two \textit{Summae} (particularly ST 3a. 7-15), which Thornton read. For, Aquinas seemed to have grasped what was at stake in the sixth ecumenical council.

\textsuperscript{512} H. D. A. Major (1871-1961) was representative when he stated that, … Dr. Gore is correct in affirming that we believe that there is only one substance of the Godhead and the Manhood, and that our conception of the difference between Deity and Humanity is one of degree. The distinction between Creator and creature, upon which Dr. Gore and the older theologians place so much emphasis, seems to be a minor distinction.


\textsuperscript{513} Indeed, it must be admitted that extended biblical exegesis was conspicuously lacking in Raven’s, let alone Pittenger’s, work \textit{Christology Reconsidered} (London: S.C.M. Press, 1970).
observe the fact that the Gospels predicated human actions of a divine agent, the Son of God.

This justified a distinction between theology — titles and names for a divine subject — and economy — verbs predicated of that divine subject in both the New and the Old Testaments (a grammatical phenomenon that is known as the communicatio idiomatum). This distinction cut off certain metaphysical proposals in advance that supposed divinity and humanity somehow occupied the same ontological space, parts of which were reserved for one entity or the other. Whatever else one might say about the being of divinity and humanity, in traditional terms they are no more in competition than nouns and verbs in a Gospel narrative. But Raven is a good example of a particular patristic scholarship criticized by John Behr which begins with questions of metaphysical “composition” rather than with biblical exegesis. Thornton made the same criticism when he stated that “the fathers were a great deal more interested in Scripture than in philosophy.” In short, the problem was that modernist metaphysics prevented a literal reading of the Gospel as the actions and passion of the divine Son of God.

It is not that Thornton was unaware of Raven’s work. He laments that because of Raven’s critique, “there is a widespread theological opinion that orthodox Christianity cannot be

514 Raven, Appollinarianism, 293, is forced to reject as sophistry the analogical doctrine of the communicatio idiomatum. This is the doctrine that human actions and passions are predicated of a divine subject. Nestorianism, traditionally construed, was said to have prevented the communicatio because its metaphysics would only allow human actions to be predicated of a human subject and divine actions of a divine subject. The opposite heresy, “Eutychianism,” was said to collapse the distinction between divinity and humanity in Christ, turning him into a tertium quid or a demi-god, which is also what Apollinarianism did (divinity and humanity fitting together like two pieces of a puzzle). On these latter readings, verbs predicated of Christ did not really indicate human actions. With Nestorianism, the latter heresies denied the communicatio in their reading of the Gospels.

515 Behr, Way to Nicea, 73-80. While I believe Behr is fundamentally right, there is the stubborn fact that Cyril and all the other Fathers continued to use “compositional” language. This is fair, to my mind, if the Bible is first allowed to cut off metaphysical options that do not square with the way sentences work. And I remain convinced that the metaphysical distinction between hypostasis and physis or ousia is justified by the simple distinction between the “theological” subject of the Logos and his “economic” (“physical”) acts in Scripture. Nonetheless, theological “nouns” and economical “verbs” “compose” sentences.

516 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 7-8.
emancipated from the taint of the Apollinarian error…”517 This was not true. Indeed, the alternative degree-Christology was just as bad. Despite its intention to honour Jesus’ humanity, it ironically differentiates Jesus from the rest of humanity — not in kind but in degree of moral excellence. As such, Jesus is a demi-god, which is why Thornton complained that modernist Christology resulted in “mythological ideas,” a complaint usually levelled at the orthodox.

Writing of Loofs, who had just given his lectures on Nestorius in London (1914),518 Thornton states,

On the last page of those lectures he asserts of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation that “the first beginnings of this doctrine are made by nothing other than the introduction of popular mythological views into Christian theology.” But it appears more reasonable to hold that Loofs himself has fallen a victim to mythological views. For he offers us a Christ who is utterly unique, who is the focus of religious faith from age to age, in whom we behold the glory of God, of whom it can be said that such convictions justify “our finding God in Christ when we pray to him.” If such a being is not very God, but shares our humanity, then how does his status differ from that of ancient demi-gods? All other heroes of our race stand apart from ordinary men, separated by their greatness. Of this one, however, Dr. Loofs appears prepared to accept all the Pauline language about his dwelling in human hearts. But a being who shares our humanity, yet contradicts the normal characteristics of humanity in certain respects, a being about whom we can have no clear assurance as to his metaphysical status, but who none the less must be accepted as a unique mediator between God and man — to put religious trust in such a being, what else is this but a return to mythological ideas? Such are the dilemmas of a Christology which dispenses with metaphysics.519

German liberals in the wake of Ritschel differed from their English counterparts (who had taken up the mantle of idealism) by their dislike of metaphysics. But whether expressed in terms of monistic degree-ontology or not, they agreed that Jesus’ difference was moral, not metaphysical in a real sense. Thus degree-Christology admitted a “Nestorian” distance between Christ-as-hero and Christ-as-God-with-us (again, a difference Nestorius would have never countenanced).

517 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 262-263.
518 Braaten, “Modern Interpretations of Nestorius,” 256.
519 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 237.
Why does Thornton think all of these Christological distinctions matter? Modernism’s Christ is neither God-with-us nor God at all. Furthermore, he writes, “this doctrine makes the crowning manifestation of individuality in creation something other than God.”520 This means three things. First, the duality of God and creation continues to appear irrational, and so there is no longer a particularly Christian safeguard against monism.521 I believe this is clearly true of Raven and many other Modernists. It also means that because the unity and plurality within human beings and societies cannot be reconciled within creation, Christ is only a penultimate prophet.522 Finally, it means the problem of evil is unresolved. For people are neither liberated from their sinful pasts nor reconciled to each other in the Church — let alone to God.523 A discussion of this last point is the burden of my next chapter. We will see that for Thornton, Modernism neither allows for a reconciliation of God and Creation nor does it understand what the incarnation means for theodicy. Indeed, few commentators note that Thornton says The Incarnate Lord is a theodicy.

VI. Conclusion

Thornton’s attention to exegetical details, antinomies, analogies, and “individualities” in the two books of Scripture and nature was not driven by realist metaphysics, no matter how believable the arguments. His rejection of emergentism and acceptance of realism was driven by a distinctly biblical theodicy that “emerged” from the details, details that persuaded him that realism was more consistent with the two books than monism.

520 Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 257.
521 Ibid., 257-258.
522 Ibid., 259.
523 Ibid., 261, also 273.
To be fair, the process theologians noticed that Thornton's concept of "individuality" could not bear the transcendent weight he wanted it to. Thornton conceded evolution and process. On emergentist terms, however, this necessarily meant that distinctions between the various levels of being could be metaphysically reduced to the force that caused them to emerge. Thus emergentism was inherently monist. Thornton needed to become a fully "top-down" Platonist if he wanted the Incarnation to be a possibility. This is where he tended. For, he really seemed to teach that individualities did not emerge at all because they were pre-existent in the eternal order, which he eventually identified with Scripture. Thornton’s importance lay precisely here. Modernist metaphysics rendered impossible the kind of theodicy Butler’s heirs put forward. In so doing, they made Scripture finally irrelevant for the life of the Church. But the Church found the modernist alternative less believable than supernaturalist Christianity or absolute agnosticism. The next chapter will show that Modernist theodicy has seemed inadequate to many for whom a God of limited power is less than liberating. I will argue that the traditional doctrines of the fall and atonement still have contemporary purchase. At the same time, and despite Modernism’s claim to scientific, philosophical, or theological superiority, the World Wars made theodicy their primary motivation as well. In the midst of suffering, there is a certain kind of comfort that their co-suffering God gives. But, in accordance with Butler’s method, I will argue next that despite the experience of radical evil in the twentieth century, Thornton’s and Figgis’ theodicy of grace — which does not offer a total explanation for evil — has greater apologetic value than Modernist theodicy. Of further importance for my argument is the way a biblical theodicy of grace led Thornton to articulate the absolute temporal and cosmic reach of grace’s reordering power. This real redemption and recreation of all nature was captured in Scripture, which Thornton (like Jones) thought of as an exemplar guiding Christ’s
purposes in time. Because this was what Scripture was, Thornton could unapologetically read the Bible figurally as a whole. This was an option that was off the table for those without recourse to a fully incarnational theodicy.
Chapter 5: Etiology vs Analogy: Two Views of Theodicy

1. Introduction

In chapter 3 I introduced Lionel Thornton as a uniquely important Anglican thinker discussing the relation of the books of Scripture and nature in the twentieth century in a way that transcended the dead ends of Anglo-Catholic and Modernist alternatives. In the previous chapter I argued that the way in which Thornton achieved consistency between Scripture and nature was by opting for an incarnational theodicy, attending to biblical language, and respecting the reality of antinomies rather than reducing them. Indeed, the issue had less to do with science and more with whether emergentism’s metaphysical explanations crowded out phenomenological descriptions of natural and revealed reality. Much like Butler and unlike the Modernists, Thornton was a realist and not a monist. This meant he took both sameness and difference, unity and plurality, Creator and creation seriously because he resisted the pressure to substitute metaphysical and historical harmonization for the unsystematic facts of natural and revealed religion. Not feeling obliged to offer total explanations, he was thus unconstrained in his ability to receive revealed facts as givens and find analogies between the natural and supernatural. He also held a general doctrine of analogical language as applied to God and in particular to the incarnation. Thornton argued that absent an analogical impulse, rational theism easily morphs into monism under the pressure to bring God and creation under a single explanatory principle – something that analogy does not provide.

This chapter continues to discuss the analogy of Scripture and nature in relationship to theodicy, especially the theodical doctrines of fall, atonement, providence, and grace as explicated by Figgis and Thornton. Thornton’s realist objection to monism derives from Figgis’ own arguments. His concerns about grace, forgiveness, ethics, and atonement were also from
Figgis. Thornton’s approach to the fall as fundamentally an existential rather than an efficient-causal, “etiological,” problem was again the same as Figgis. Indeed, Thornton’s early works were influenced by his mentor’s language (“law of consequences,” “otherworldliness”), and interlocutors (Shaw, Nietzsche) as well as interest in ecclesiology, historical theology, and Christian socialism. Most crucially for my continuing argument, Figgis’ view of time cut across the assumptions of Liberal Catholicism and Modernism alike, causing Thornton to view scriptural relations non-linearly. Where Figgis emphasized that God was free to break the law of consequences and liberate us from our pasts, we will see in chapter 6 that Thornton utilized St Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation to fully illustrate this. Christ had objectively reconfigured creation — every trivial detail, and Christ was in the details.

Theodical issues were urgent in the run-up to both World Wars, which, far more than science, tempted Christians to revise doctrine. Figgis and Thornton returned to Scripture as the Wars loomed, while Charles Raven claimed to have learned his theological revisions in the trenches of WWI:

We had been exhorted “to live each day as if thy last” and had on occasion taken the exhortation to heart. But death is an event which even cowards cannot really face in imagination or at second hand. Life in its presence is liable to undergo unprecedented experiences which demand a drastic revision of religions and philosophies. That is why those who have come to terms with it — who have passed its great examination — carry a certificate which their colleagues can recognize. Those who are not so certificated ought not to be encouraged to write about eschatology; in too many cases they do not know what they are talking about.  

Raven, the scientist-priest, here signalled that it was his suffering that rendered his reformulated teaching authentic. In the deteriorating culture of Christendom, Raven demonstrates that liberal

theologians really sought “consistency” between the fact of suffering and the claims of theism, a quest to which “consistency” between science and religion was related but subordinate.\textsuperscript{525} I must stress that the issue of theodicy most clearly illustrates how a theologian views the relation between the two books.

The Modernist shift in interpretations of the fall, atonement, and providence (grace was largely forgotten) was driven by a panentheistic theodicy. To be sure, prior to Darwin's description of the ruthless law of natural selection, prior to the sufferings caused by modern totalitarianism, all the elements of Modernist theodicy were in place — indeed, have always been in place — as one existential response to suffering. If evil is a fact, then God is either responsible for it or he is not. If he is not, it may be because human freedom at the very least makes trivial sins inevitable, and it requires suffering for the development of virtue. Furthermore, evil may be thought to be unavoidable because God lacks omnipotence. Unlike atheism, which concludes that God does not exist, or pure “pantheism,” which baldly equates good and evil, panentheism thus answered the theodicy problem by denying God’s omnipotence and focusing on human responsibility. History, then, had meaning depending on the response one made to suffering — does suffering cause one to spiritually grow? Raven also illustrates that Modernism largely based these doctrinal revisions on metaphysical and existential considerations and not much on exegesis. Genesis 2-3, they assumed, was a scientific theory about the etiology of suffering and death, now outdated by Darwinism. The atonement, on the other hand, had been subordinated to mechanistic interpretations by “orthodox” theologians, but Modernists like Rashdall believed the Gospels supported a moral influence theory or “exemplar” view of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{525} The example of Joseph Priestley’s resistance to “the chemical revolution” is one instance of monism actually hindering the acceptance of science. See Appendix 2.
While I do not find this “soul-making”\textsuperscript{526} theodicy satisfying, for reasons I will explore below, my question is whether its very real existential purchase is comparable to the “orthodox” alternative of Butler, Figgis, and Thornton. Here I argue that Modernism’s failure to flourish in the churches has to do with the fact that orthodoxy, in the words of Neville Figgis, “includes more facts”\textsuperscript{527} than Modernism because it takes radical evil more seriously and brings forgiveness into play. Forgiveness, furthermore, is both a natural and revealed datum. Of the resulting analogical way of viewing such phenomena in Scripture and nature, Thornton presciently stated, “It does not seem likely that this tradition, although subject to change, will ever be displaced; certainly not by agnosticism in any of the forms which it assumes to-day.”\textsuperscript{528} I believe this is true because texts like Genesis 2-3 and the crucifixion accounts are neither etiologies of sin and redemption, nor are they husks of timeless moral lessons. True, they offer us “exemplars,” but in the figural sense. The figures of the first and second Adam included all people as a formal cause includes its effects, but they provide no etiological explanation. Thornton explored many such figures (sacrifice, law, ransom, etc.) in *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (1937), discerning that a figural approach was “concentrated upon exposition of Holy

\textsuperscript{526} This theodicy was popularized in John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Although it is doubtful that St Irenaeus was an exemplar of this “soul-making” theodicy as Hick claimed, Hick nevertheless sums up an old theological trend: evil in this world is necessary either because God is not omnipotent, or because he chooses to “empty himself” of omnipotence in order to give space for human freedom, or because human freedom necessarily constrains God whether he likes it or not. In agreement with Hick, my historical claim is that soul-making theodicies, broadly speaking, preceded Darwinian evolutionary science and, therefore, were not occasioned by Darwinism. Richardson thus puts the historical cart before the horse. Indeed, soul-making theodicies have had various uses in response to historical context. For example, prior to World War I they were used to justify war (Teilhard de Chardin) and racism (Hastings Rashdall). After the unprecedented bloodshed of the two World Wars, the soul-making theodicy came to be used by modernists as an explanation for God’s inaction and a justification for human activism. The Modernists certainly sought “consistency” between the fact of suffering and the claims of theism, but “consistency” between science and religion was at best a secondary motivation for such efforts in the twentieth century. Existential issues were more pressing than intellectual ones.


\textsuperscript{528} Thornton, *Richard Hooker*, 101-103.
Scripture” and does not “provide a ‘philosophy’ of the Atonement” or a “theory.”529 In the end, theory-less theodicy has more existential purchase.

Prior to his experience of the Great War, Charles Raven articulated a “soul-making” theodicy as early as 1908 in the dissertation that became Apollinarianism. Here I will analyze Raven’s juxtaposition of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s soul-making doctrines of fall and redemption with Augustine’s. I argue that theodicies driven by causal etiologies end in Gnosticism530 (suffering and evil are in some way necessary within creation) and in the rejection of the relevance of Genesis 2-3. My claim is that this biblical passage is not revealing “how’s” but “that’s.” Biblical theodicy, according to Figgis and Thornton, is driven not by harmonizing logic, but by the fact of personal and social disharmony, radical evil, and the felt need for forgiveness. In short: the less etiology, the better the theodicy. In fact, Figgis and Thornton were clear that atonement and forgiveness break causal laws in a miraculous way, and that Modernist metaphysics was actually motivated by moralism and unforgiveness, not science. Figgis’ non-linear view of time crucially influenced Thornton’s own supercession of historicism in favour of a Christologically ordered doctrine of time that I discuss in chapter 6.

530 With reference to my final footnote in Chapter 2, I will reiterate that, in making theodicy one of my indices of Gnosticism, I am making a controversial claim. That is because not all antique Gnostics taught creation was evil, that is to say, they were not all "anti-cosmic" "body-haters." In order of importance, the basic marks of Gnosticism were salvation through esoteric knowledge and a mythological expression of teaching. Marcionism only really exhibited the first mark, and had not dealt with the theodical problem their belief in an evil demiurge set up. But Basilidean, Valentinian, and Manichean Gnostics did try to offer an etiology of evil. For a discussion of this development in Gnosticism see Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983). Since the two great orthodox thinkers on theodicy, Irenaeus and Augustine, both were explicitly fighting against Gnostic theodicies, orthodoxy has in some way been defined in opposition to such systems. My inclusion of theodicy as an index for my typology derives from this fact. If Gnostics thought theodically, it was at odds with orthodoxy. Indeed, Gnostic theodicy was organically connected with their mythological, not figural, and esoteric, not public, doctrine. What I am interested in paralleling by my description of "soul-making" theodicies as "Gnostic" is that sin, suffering, and ignorance are explicable with reference to a naturalistic metaphysical etiology. In the modern context, this has usually gone the monist "Valentinian," rather than dualist "Manichean" route, as Cyril O’Regan has argued in Gnostic Return in Modernity (Albany: State Univ of New York Pr, 2001).
II. World War

The World Wars forced the later Modernists to deal with suffering first-hand and made plausible the idea that God was impotent and that omnipotence, in any case, could only be exercised arbitrarily and violently. The worry here was both that the doctrine of God ought to provide us with a moral example for social life and that the only way to solve the problem of evil was to downplay God’s power. Alan Wilkinson agrees that the Great War was the catalyst for a new emphasis in theodicy, identifying another military chaplain, Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929), as the main populariser of the powerless God. In *The Hardest Part* (1918) Kennedy argued that the notion of an Almighty God was “the soul of Prussianism,” which turned God into a “Kaiser.” Kennedy writes: “We can no longer interpret ultimate reality in the terms of absolute monarch if we are to reach the heart of men.”

Jürgen Moltmann’s experience of WWII would have a similar theological effect, and he wrote in hindsight of Studdert-Kennedy that:

His book *The Hardest Part* has a prophetic and radical force rather like that of Barth’s *Epistle to the Romans*, which came out at about the same time. In fact it deserved even greater attention than Barth’s book, for the theology of the suffering God is more important than the theology of the God who is “Wholly Other.”

This was a statement that Raven could wholly affirm. Indeed, his book on another wartime priest, Teilhard de Chardin, was in many ways an attempt to show the two directions theology could move in response to the Wars:

It is a strange fact that the First World War which to Teilhard and to most of those actually under fire disclosed not only the tragedy and evil of our humanity, but also and compellingly its fortitude and fellowship, should have meant for others, and especially

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for those with no immediate experience of battle, only the depravity and helplessness of mankind as a whole, and the sin and folly of its individual components. That Teilhard and Barth should have been contemporaries, each deeply affected by his wartime environment is enough to warn us of the dilemma which lies at the depths of human thought and life. Their responses represent the problem of the two worlds in its clearest Christian form. We must recognize the sincerity and the convictions of the Barthian message of God’s “otherness” and man’s impotence, even if we must deplore its theology and much of its effects.533

The Teilhardian theodicy gained momentum in the theological academy, where a number of panentheist proposals flourished in the latter half of the twentieth century. And while Raven strongly disliked the Germanic direction Anglican panentheism went with Bishop John Robinson (1919-1983),534 both Raven and Robinson were well within the boundaries of Modernism. The main difference between the latter and the former was that the existentialist panentheism of Robinson mostly used science to debunk the Bible’s “three-story universe”535 and not to construct grand systems of cosmic evolution.536

By 1931 Raven began his career as Regius Professor of Theology at Cambridge by criticizing supernatural religion as being unconcerned with the natural world and with everyday experience. The only problem was that times had changed, and Raven’s colleague Edwin Hoskyns was attracting many students who were unsatisfied with the fact that Raven did not grapple with the Bible or relate it to the alarming social issues of the time (206). Hoskyns had grown up in the grim surroundings of East London, quite different from Raven’s background. He also had connections with the world of German scholarship, which Raven reacted strongly against. Thus, in the 30s Raven found himself alone and unwanted within his church. People were looking for an authoritative Word and an authoritative ecclesial order, whereas Raven was rather sheltered from these concerns (279). Indeed, despite his harsh criticism of Barth, when others criticized him he was quite sensitive (290). One friend, Franz Hildebrandt, responded with This Is the Message: A Continental Reply to Charles Raven (London and Redhill: Lutterworth Press, 1944). Part Jew, he had worked in the confessing Church with Bonhoeffer and had been deeply formed by that theology. For Hildebrandt, suffering was more than passive resistance and self-purgation, as it was for Raven. It was the result of witnessing to the truth of Christ in the face of demonic paganism. This was a missed opportunity for Raven to engage continental theology. Dillistone relates a comment of one of Raven’s acquaintances: “He did not become the leader he might have been because of his utter inability to absorb or relate himself to a contrary idea” (415). There could only be one way of looking at history, and it could not be Barth’s apocalyptic approach (419). So opposed to continental theology was Raven that he even criticized other liberals like John Robinson for trying to reinvent the wheel that earlier liberals had already fashioned, while doing it with the wrong kind of German resources. For John Robinson’s panentheism see Michael Brierley, “Panentheism: The Abiding Significance of Honest to God,” Modern Believing 54, no. 2 (April 2013): 112–24.
Since World War I, Liberal “soul-making” theodicies have generally been coupled with a panentheist doctrine of a passive, suffering God. A note on this “panentheism” is in order. The continuum between deism and Modernism within which Raven was situated was not comfortable with the label of “pantheism.” “Pantheism” was used by both Modernists and Anglo-Catholics to label the monism of reductive idealists, but the name sat more easily with occultists than with

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Per Lønning, *Creation — An Ecumenical Challenge?: Reflections Issuing from a Study by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1989), 1. The Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg began a project in the 80s to see whether the doctrine of creation could be unifying or divisive for ecumenical theology. This primary doctrine turned out to be divisive, with the most basic criticism coming from the Eastern Orthodox. Western theologians, they charged, had misunderstood creation and had opposed humanity and nature. The result was the same whether one stood in the tradition of Bacon, who moved from “mystery” to “mastery” over creation; whether one separated off the human mind from creation like Descartes, Kant, and Schleiermacher; or whether one gave redemption priority over creation like Barth, Von Rad, Moltmann, and the liberation theologians. Finally, with the resurgence of liberal theology in the 60s, John Robinson and Harvey Cox further utilized Bonhoeffer’s critique of religion to secularize theology. Yet they neglected to comment on the ecological crisis (7-20). Raven’s dislike of Robinson’s new panentheism was justified, then, insofar as the latter’s existentialism turned its back on the Anglican tradition of natural philosophy and science. See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001). 320-340, on the connection of existentialist reactions to science as a parallel to Gnostic reactions to nature. If process theology tried to rescue creation in the 70s, its collapse of God and world exhibited the same anthropocentric trajectory criticized by the Orthodox contributors (Lønning, 21-22).
Christian liberal reformers. Figgis, to be sure, saw no distinction here and called Modernists pantheists as well. It was not until Karl Krause’s (1781-1832) invention of another name for religious monism, “panentheism,” that this trajectory of thought could be fully distinguished from theism and older pantheisms like Spinoza’s.\(^{537}\) Originally applied to German idealists like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, it was used by Dean Inge (a Platonist) in 1899 to describe his fellow Modernists in the Church of England who would have qualified this association with the Germans. The term was then popularized by Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000), who made Whitehead its outstanding representative.\(^{538}\)

The Wars did not change the logical structure of the soul-making theodicy. But they temporarily diverted the emphasis from human power (pre-War) to God’s powerlessness (post-War). If Charles Raven, the pacifist “passivist,” and Studdart-Kennedy argued that it was unacceptable to conceive of God as an omnipotent Kaiser, their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors revelled in the scope of human power made possible by an impotent God. In this regard it is instructive to read Hastings Rashdall’s old-school Modernist criticism of Butler’s theodicy in light of his racism: Providence’s moral purposes would be achieved at the expense of “the lower races.” The soul-making theodicy here justified social Darwinism. Another example of evolutionary teleology gone mad was Teilhard de Chardin’s enthusiasm for the Great War and the Communist revolutions. The process panentheists, to be sure, became more cautious about teleology by emphasizing that the end of evolution was not Teilhard’s utopian omega-point, but

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\(^{537}\) Jacobi thought they were Spinozists, atheists, and pantheists anyway; George di Giovanni, “Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi,” in *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 1994), 3-66.

an endless process of freedom and love. Yet this was just teleology by a different route, from which several things followed. First, their panentheism was practically no different from Driesch’s and Bergson’s vitalism, from which the early emergentists tried to distance themselves.\textsuperscript{539} There were supposed to be more emergent levels than just matter and \textit{vital life}. But it was hard not to reduce the emergence of all novelty to something like \textit{vital will}.\textsuperscript{540} Second, despite their best efforts, the difference between freedom and determinism was blurred. This will become evident below, but it is generally true of a variety of representative thinkers.\textsuperscript{541} Third, panentheism differed from orthodoxy in the way its metaphysics of co-creation with God encouraged moral-bootstrapping and political activism at the expense of a robust doctrine of grace and forgiveness. Above all, this prevented the emergence of a new Christian consensus upon which to base a rebuilt Christendom. For, panentheists denied creation \textit{ex nihilo}, thereby turning the doctrine of creation into the most contested of all doctrines because of the implications it had in the realm of ethics.\textsuperscript{542} Modernists ethicists like Hastings Rashdall believed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{539} See Chapter 4.
\item \textsuperscript{540} A. E. Taylor, “Some Thoughts on Process and Reality,” \textit{Theology} 21, no. 122 (August 1, 1930), wrote of Whitehead:
\begin{quote}
I feel for my own part that … Bergson, [is] leading Dr. Whitehead into unconscious tampering with his own sound principle that all possibility is founded on actuality. In particular, the attempt to get back somehow behind the concreteness of God to an \textit{elan vital} of which the concreteness is to be a product really amounts to a surrender of the principle itself. I honestly think Dr. Whitehead is here himself falling a victim at the outset to the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." (78)
\end{quote}

\item \textsuperscript{541} See Appendix 2.
\item \textsuperscript{542} Lønning, \textit{Creation—an Ecumenical Challenge}? I believe Lønning is correct to argue that the doctrine of creation is now \textit{the} most divisive doctrine in the ruins of Christendom because of its moral consequences. This is confirmed by a reading of Paul Ramsey and Gene Harold Outka, eds., \textit{Norm and Context in Christian Ethics} (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1969), which demonstrates over and over again how Joseph Fletcher’s (1905-1991) baptized utilitarianism (“situation ethic”) reduced all moral reasoning to one vague end, “love” (surely no Christian ethicist has had to take such a sustained beating from so many authors in one volume!). This is what Stanley Hauerwas has called “love monism.” Stanley Hauerwas, “Love’s Not All You Need,” \textit{CrossCurrents} 22, no. 3 (1972): 225–37; Stanley Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, ed. John Berkman and Michael G. Cartwright, 1st ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2001). To my mind monist ethics of this sort are distinguished from Butler’s prudential ethics by the way in which they require knowledge of how actions contribute to the end of “love,” whereas Butler characteristically admitted that while our knowledge of revealed “ends” might be clear, the way in which divine commandments contribute is not always clear and must be discerned in hindsight since in this life we are “children.” Here again the moral is relative to the intellectual. (As an aside, one should also note Fletcher and Teilhard’s role as forerunners of the monist “transhumanist” spirituality.)
\end{itemize}
an intellectual solution to the theodicy problem would provide this new cultural consensus.\textsuperscript{543} Figgis and Thornton believed the solution was spiritual — a Christendom reconciled to itself and to God. This solution was beyond human strength since it depended on God’s grace.

III. Modernist Theodicy

We should lay down, first, the outlines of Modernist theodicy before we move on to Figgis’ and Thornton’s alternative. I will describe both sides historically in relation to a few themes: fall, atonement, providence-divine pedagogy, grace, and forgiveness. Afterwards I will typologize the two theodical trends, ask why either have existential purchase, and then set up the issue of biblical interpretation for the next chapter.

1) The Fall according to Modernism

Raven’s \textit{Apollinarianism} again gives us an occasion to highlight the Modernist approach to theodicy. Our entry point here is Theodore of Mopsuestia’s and Raven’s anti-Augustinianism. A friend of Augustine’s most worthy Pelagian opponent, Julian of Enclanum,\textsuperscript{544} Theodore found himself on the other side of the theodicy problem in antiquity. Having inherited Irenaeus’ Antiochene theology of historical development, though taken to a linear extreme, Theodore stressed that providence’s school assumed freedom of the will and that virtue was attained incrementally over time. Raven in fact finds in Theodore the very modern evolutionary claim that mortality preceded disobedience as the reason for the divine pedagogy. On this view it therefore made sense that human freedom necessarily entailed mistakes and minor sins. Raven’s description of Theodore could be a description of his own position:

\textsuperscript{543} Hastings Rashdall, “Bishop Butler,” \textit{The Modern Churchman} XVI, no. 12 (March 1927): 678–94.
Theodore argues alike from the wording of Genesis and from the fact of sex that death was no angry afterthought but part of God’s original purpose. “God made this present life mortal in order to train us in the pursuit of virtue and to educate us in all things needful.” Mortality involves the possibility of change and progress and the exercise of free choice. “God has made us masters of our will so that we can choose what we like.” But improvement implies temptation and the likelihood of sin: risk is inevitable if freedom is to be used and trained.⁵⁴⁵

By contrast, Raven believed that Augustine taught the exact opposite of Theodore:

Briefly recapitulated, the steps of the determinist argument are these. Adam, created immortal, disobeyed God and his sin was punished by sentence of death: to prevent the undoing of God’s creative work God gave man the power of procreation, sex being thus the consequence of sin: sexuality is itself sinful as involving concupiscence: by the act of begetting children are physically tainted, being literally born in sin: mankind is a mass of corruption in whom dwells no good thing: Christ alone has brought a remedy: baptism into His body the Church washes out our guilt, and His resurrection restores immortality, though sinners and the unbaptised will spend this immortality in hell: God knows who will be saved, and only those predestined to receive His grace can escape damnation.⁵⁴⁶

Note, however, that Raven’s theodicy had very little to say about grace except that it is a “summons.”

2) Atonement according to Modernism

The other major theodical doctrine Modernists altered was Christ’s atonement. For the same reason as Butler’s deists, Modernists found the rather mechanical theory of substitutionary atonement unjust. They instead construed Christ as a moral exemplar, which fit better with their Pelagian leanings. Instead of some kind of mechanism by which God’s wrath was “satisfied,” the mechanism became moral influence — whatever that means. According to the notorious reinterpretation given by the prominent Modernist, Hastings Rashdall (1859-1924):

⁵⁴⁵ Raven, Appollinarianism, 284-285.
⁵⁴⁶ Raven, Appollinarianism, 283.
The Church’s early Creed “There is none other name given among men by which we may be saved” will be translated so as to be something of this kind: “There is none other ideal given among men by which we may be saved except the moral ideal which Christ taught by His words, and illustrated by His life and death of love; and there is none other help so great in the attainment of that ideal as the belief in God as He had been supremely revealed in Him who so taught and lived and died.” So understood, the self-sacrificing life which was consummated by the death upon the Cross has, indeed, power to take away the sins of the whole world.547

We should note a few points here. The Resurrection is not essential for this scheme; and Christ’s life and death offer us an inspirational example for our own Pelagian attainments, one of which may be an imitation of Christ’s forgiving attitude. Personal forgiveness by Christ, however, plays no role.

3) Self-Education or Divine Pedagogy?

Jesus’ role changed in another direction. The Modernist Christ — possible, ignorant, and subject to the same laws of nature like us — could not simultaneously function as the pedagogue behind providence. If Jesus was exemplary, he was an exemplary learner. If Jesus was a model — if God was a model — he could not issue commandments.

For example, in one of his papers for the Ecumenical Institute in 1984, David Ray Griffin denied creatio ex nihilo because it was allegedly tied to a concept of “coercive” divine omnipotence. If imitated, he said, this model of activity would be disastrous for humans because it would lead to violence. Thus we needed a relational God.548 Per Lønning has rightly questioned whether God is supposed to be an unambiguous model for human imitation. For in the tradition, God is just as often not to be imitated: “Since authority in the strict sense is a divine

548 Lønning, Creation — an Ecumenical Challenge?, 107.
attribute, it should not be usurped by any earthly ‘ruler,’” and “[creatures] should not be like God in self-supporting wisdom and unrestricted dominance.”

An odd thing happens, though, when we presume that God is an exemplar. If God is a model, it follows that God should be disobeyed. Again, take the liberation theologian, Dorothy Sölle, at the same conference:

To talk about the “disobedience” of Adam and Eve is misleading…. The story of the Fall is in many ways the story of a rise in human development rather than the story of our fall into guilt and sin…. There is only one moral choice: to disobey, to eat of the tree of knowledge, and thereafter to live through the hardships of life…. Adam and Eve are now confronted with the consequences of being workers and lovers. And because they have changed through their courageous step, God the relational being also changes. God moves from parenthood to companionship…. They come in touch with a new God….  

No doubt this idiosyncratic Ophite hermeneutic is controlled by prior ontological decisions. Process theology and liberation theology were distinct movements, but an ontology of becoming and an ontology of liberation are quite close. In both cases the emphasis becomes creativity rather than creation.

Contemporary with Figgis and Thornton, Hastings Rashdall exhibited this same combination of exemplarism, “situation ethics,” and a resulting preference for self-education over divine pedagogy. While he disavowed Hegelian “pantheism,” it is reasonable to call Rashdall a panentheist, as his theodicy was neither pantheist nor theist. His degree-ontology and ethical concern supports this fact. Yet his moral theology failed to free itself from the monist

549 Ibid., 108.
550 Ibid., 108-109. If I had more space to expand on ethics, I would note how “the new morality” of late twentieth-century liberalism — i.e., “situation ethics” — effectively combines both moralism and antinomianism. Essentially utilitarian, the situationist can both insist on the highest moral ideal and thus assume the mantle of the moralist. At the same time, since it is so difficult to accurately forecast how behaviour contributes to utilitarianism’s goal of “love,” and since there will be a variety of similarly efficient routes, the ideal in practice admits of almost limitless exceptions. Moralists, then, can also market themselves as the most sympathetic alternative. But sympathy is not the same as grace.
552 Lønning, Creation — an Ecumenical Challenge?, 129-131.
requirement of total explanation — in this case explaining “how” conduct contributes to the good. If in distinction from utilitarianism he claimed some sort of intrinsic value for his moral principle of goodness, for all intents and purposes he was utilitarian. At the same time, because religious monism conflates (as it conflates all things) quality and quantity, the quantitative evolutionary differences between different races justified qualitatively different treatment.553

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553 Gary J. Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Dorrien has shown the loophole in Rashdall’s project of an “ideal utilitarianism” for his white supremacism. While he was praised by liberals for his enlightenment, tolerance, kindness, and opposition to bigotry (404), on evolutionary principles Rashdall claimed that personality admitted of higher and lower degrees: “The more developed intellect reveals God more completely than that of the child or the savage, and (far more important from a religious point of view), the higher and more developed moral consciousness reveals Him more than the lower, and above all the actually better man reveals God more than the worse man” (400). Thus while Rashdall’s *The Theory of Good and Evil* (1907) set the end of moral striving as maximal “equality” and “justice,” the different capacities of the races meant there could not be equality. Echoing already obsolete phrenological spiritualism he could write, “We never find the intellect of a Shakespeare in connection with the facial angle of a Negro…”, *Philosophy and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 95. More ominously, Rashdall maintained that the maximum of good was relative to the degree of consciousness a person, class, or race possessed: “That means that, sooner or later, the lower Well-being — it may be ultimately the very existence — of countless Chinamen or negroes must be sacrificed that a higher life may be possible for a much smaller number of white men.” *The Theory of Good and Evil: A Treatise on Moral Philosophy, Volume I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 238-239. While “radical” in his rejection of Christian orthodoxy, Rashdall and the Modern Churchmen’s Union were quite reactionary. Charles Raven was apparently the most politically radical member (Dorrien 407). Yet Raven also had his moments of racism and class snobbery in reaction to the avant-garde irrationalism that was becoming fashionable. Raven complains that “the modern craze for the barbaric as superior to the civilized, the craze which professes to prefer the art of the Baga tribe to that of Pheidias and the jazz-band to the Bach Mass; it is to endorse the heresy which denies the possibility of progress, the cowardice which dare not face the adventure of going forward.” Raven, *Experience and Interpretation*, 35.

Rashdall’s degree-anthropology foreshadowed Cobb and Birch’s justification for abortion made at The Ecumenical Institute (Lønning, *Creation—an Ecumenical Challenge*). Their situation ethic was a sort of “… neo-Darwinian model of coinciding and conflicting interests, whereby no single concern is ever allowed to come through as being ultimately binding and any plea of obedience to an unapproachable ‘voice of God’ has to be toned down.” But, Lønning continues, “[w]hen standards of human conduct are defined as being predominantly relational and having no substantial weight of their own, what is at stake is above all the vision of individual worth as being equal, incomparable, and correspondingly inviolable.” In other words, particular human personalities are made epiphenomenal by monism. Moreover, the particularity of Christian moral standards also dissolves in the monist solvent, as Cobb and Birch illustrate in their defense of abortion and euthanasia:

If the locus of the intrinsic value of the human is in human experiences, and if these vary from persons to persons, then it seems clear that in fact there are differences of individual worth…. There is no substantial reason to believe that all persons have equal intrinsic worth…. The rejection of anthropocentrism entails the rejection of absolutist arguments for human rights. Human beings, like all other living things, are both ends and means…. Human rights … should be worked out without the appeal to absolutes which have led to distortion and inconsistencies in the past (Lønning, 82).

Again, my conclusion is that temporal schemes of "progress" are probably inherently racist and ethically reductive, which is why I favor Augustine's phenomenological approach to time and his belief that time is given by God with the pedagogical purpose not of evoking Pelagian efforts but faith.
All of this was driven by a theodicy that Rashdall conveniently contrasted with Butler’s. First, he took issue with Butler’s distinction between natural and revealed religion. Since any revelation at all is a communication of the divine mind, and conscience is a direct vehicle of revelation, Scripture only has relative authority. Reason-conscience is equivalent to revelation. Second, Butler was too simplistically obedient to clear and unexceptionable moral laws. “He seems to think that every particular question of right and wrong has to be decided absolutely without any thought or calculation of consequences ‘by almost any fair man under almost any circumstances’…. He had no notion of evolution or development, whether in the sphere of religion or of ethics.”\(^\text{554}\) I do not intend to defend Butler’s moral philosophy,\(^\text{555}\) only to note how blatantly false this is in relation to his wager argument. There judgment came in to weigh what moral route was “safer,” the answer to which then became a clear obligation. It should also be noticed how Rashdall used the Victorian evolutionary framework not simply to advocate doctrinal development, but to justify a progressive moral revelation: morals changed over time as humanity gained more information about the most efficient means to intrinsically good ends.\(^\text{556}\) But the intrinsically good was known by reason. On Butler’s view, however, obligation was mostly independent of information — not, that is, of the given facts of Scripture and nature and “what” the eternal consequences of disobedience might be, but of “how” actions related in every case to these consequences. In this life humans are like children to God, their Father, but in the next life they will be like adults. Rashdall’s claim to have the most up-to-date knowledge of

\(^{554}\) Rashdall, “Bishop Butler,” 690-1.  
\(^{555}\) A. E. Taylor systematically refutes these points in “Some Features of Butler’s Ethics,” *Mind* 35, no. 139 (July 1, 1926): 273–300.  
\(^{556}\) Rashdall, “Bishop Butler,” 691.
both good means and ends thereby allowed him to dismiss biblical commandments and miracles as inexpedient or worse.\textsuperscript{557}

Third, Rashdall thought we should place the argument for God from conscience at the forefront of our apologetic. The acceptance of this apologetic will lead modern atheists to Christ, who was the supreme revealer of God because he was exactly in accord with the ideal of conscience. Finally, the authority of conscience formed the basis for belief in immortality. Rashdall wanted to distinguish his view of rewards and punishments from Butler’s view. As such, he was clear that the consequences of good acts lead to the highest life now, while in the future life there would continue “the process of divine education for human character which is begun by the struggles and efforts, the joys and the sorrows, of the present.”\textsuperscript{558} This shows that Rashdall’s view of the afterlife was palingenetic\textsuperscript{559} and that heaven was not conceived on analogy to adulthood as it was with Butler. Indeed, Rashdall’s only positive take-away from Butler was a tenet that both Butler and the panentheists taught: the necessity of freedom for virtue and the near-inevitability of evil.\textsuperscript{560} Butler, however, did not use the free-will defence as a total explanation for evil, preferring instead to highlight analogous situations in which we are ignorant of God’s plans for creation.

We can already lay out one of the key distinctions between panentheism and the position of Figgis and Thornton. The practical upshot of panentheism was that where there was no commandment breaking, there was no need to mention the central Christian theme of

\textsuperscript{557} I must underline the irony of Rashdall’s disavowal of the conquest of Canaan while believing that “negroes” and “Chinamen” might be culled for providential purposes (687). But this is precisely the kind of subversion Scripture performs through its figures!
\textsuperscript{558} Rashdall, “Bishop Butler,” 694.
\textsuperscript{559} This was the main alternative to eternal heaven and hell. Deriving from the old notion of metempsychosis, it came to be seen as a recurring process of phoenix-like rebirth and purgation. See Appendix 2.
\textsuperscript{560} Rashdall, “Bishop Butler,” 685.
forgiveness. All the emphasis was on liberation and justice with no ballast on the side of mercy. But again, mercy for what? For Thornton, divine law preserved life and redemption brought one from a state of disorder to order again; but once Liberals jettisoned “heteronomous” divine laws, the only logical definition of sin was that of stubborn stasis over against flexibility. Now, these two terms are opposites, which meant that forgiving the unevolved “legalist” necessarily affirmed unjust order. Hence, just as panentheist ontology rendered disobedience impossible, forgiveness became unimaginably incompatible with justice (which made the panentheists all the more moralistic!). Indeed, an Augustinian cynic like Figgis would interpret panentheistic ontology as an elaborate justification of disobedience, unforgiveness, and self-righteousness. He would also stress the contradictory place Modernists held as both champions of free will and defenders of an unbreakable law of consequences.

4) Grace

Redemption has been premised traditionally on forgiveness, on grace. On a more basic level, however, grace is logically prior to redemption. Because creation is a gift, if one rejects the doctrine of creation, one also rejects the doctrine of grace.

Can creation — when essentially linked to human creativity — really be understood as the work of God in a generosity that is infinitely beyond all human accomplishments?

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561 John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963), chapter 6. Lønning observed that in rejecting the idea of a creator, the process-liberationist vision collapsed creation into redemption: human creativity is simultaneously liberating. It follows from this that “essentialist” appeals to a created *status quo* as an ethical foundation and “constructivist” appeals to the liberating potential of every new situation work out to the same thing. The order constructed by human Creativity is the *status quo*, which is why process theologians can use either the essentialist arguments of modernity (“I’m just as God made me”) or the constructivist arguments of post-modernity (“I’m just as I made me”) and be saying the same thing. (The idiom is different, but the conclusions about, say, sexuality will converge). They can be reactionary and revolutionary at once. Raven and Rashdall both embodied this contradiction.

562 Joseph Fletcher’s word for those (like Butler) who believed in commandments.
And is salvation — when seen as essentially effectuated in and through the human struggle for liberation — really conceived as divine grace in a biblical meaning?\textsuperscript{563}

No, for there has to be a distinction between Giver, gift, and receiver. One might try to reinterpret the doctrine of grace as a gloss on the sentiment of love, community feeling, or whatnot.\textsuperscript{564} Lønning, though, concludes that,

> In this perspective, process theology does not really side with contemporary efforts to reinstall creation in its seemingly self-evident role as the point of departure for the whole theological enterprise; it rather conforms to the post-Kantian appraisal of the creative role of the human mind. Creation is not there as a gift from the Creator’s hand, but as an uninterrupted common enterprise of self-production, projected most intelligibly in the human realization of personal freedom in becoming.\textsuperscript{565}

In sum, it is precisely here that Modernist theodicy clashed, and continues to clash, with orthodoxy: it disallowed grace.

\textit{IV. Figgis’ and Thornton’s Theodicy of Grace}

It is clear that Thornton’s apologetic against monism derived from Figgis, who took aim at Modernist “pantheists,” that is, idealists. In the previous chapter we saw that Thornton felt monism was insufficiently realist, that it ran roughshod over distinctions and antinomies, that it ignored religious experience and exegetical detail. We will see that these are all elements of Figgis’ own apologetic, which focused on Modernism’s Achilles heel: the repression of the need for forgiveness. What makes this theodical issue important for my argument is the direction Thornton took it with his figural exegesis.

\textsuperscript{563} Lønning, \textit{Creation — an Ecumenical Challenge?}, 131.
\textsuperscript{564} Raven, \textit{Experience and Interpretation}, 200. For Raven it was the combination of deep military comradeship and being “intensely alive.”
\textsuperscript{565} Lønning, \textit{Creation — an Ecumenical Challenge?}, 133.
Thornton and Figgis followed a biblical approach to original sin and atonement evident in their reticence about causal explanations.\(^{566}\) Both disavowed etiological “how’s” in favour of phenomenological “that’s.” Both found Butlerian analogies between these doctrines and the course of human experience, which allowed Christianity to “include more facts”\(^{567}\) than “The New Theology.” And both — but especially Figgis — emphasized that sin and forgiveness broke causal and temporal laws in a way disallowed by moralistic monism. To repeat, the Pelagian and moralistic character of modernist theodicy was not premised on divinely commanded natural laws, but on using one’s creativity responsibly and in a way that did not stymie the advancement of knowledge and the palingenetic evolution of humanity. Moral consequences remained even if rules of conduct evolved. Indeed, Figgis believed that the law of consequences became even more binding for the monist than for the theist; thus he emphasized the fact that God was free from this natural law. God forgave. Thornton emphasized this as well, and we will see that his later work showed that divine forgiveness reversed the law of consequences through Christ’s recapitulation of Adam. Where Adam failed as a student of providence, Christ passed the test and thereby set in motion a positive law of consequences that took in the whole of creation.

\(^{566}\) Within the Liberal Catholic school, N. P. Williams is notable for trying his best to reconcile Genesis 2-3 with evolution in *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Longmans, 1927). Admitting that there could be no historic Adam and Eve on the ladder of hominid development, and having admitted that sin was relative to the psychological stage of evolution, he still felt he had to explain natural evil (including the bloody process of natural selection) with reference to the fall of a metaphysically prior world-soul. This solution had the benefit of preserving the innocence of God and the reality of evolution within a linear temporal scheme. It was odd, however, that he did not take the obvious step of identifying Adam with the world soul, and place the pre-lapsarian world outside of time.

E. L. Mascall was perhaps the most in line with Augustine’s theodical intentions by offering a metaphysical explanation of our connection with Adam while doing away with natural philosophical speculations about causal mechanisms. He begins by stating that the unity of the human race is a metaphysical and not a biological unity. As such we do not need to conceive of this in terms of the quasi-biological transmission of a sinful taint. In his own words: “Two things, as I have already suggested need to be remembered. First, original sin is a negative principle of incoherence, rather than a positive taint; it is propagated not, as it were, by some specific mechanism which exists for the purpose but rather by the absence of a principle of unity which would maintain the human race in unity and integrity.” E. L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Questions in their Relations* (London: Longmans, 1957), 287-8.

I will describe all of this in more detail in chapter 6, but I want to highlight in advance a few things. First, figuration is the hermeneutical consequence of Christ’s ontological recapitulation of creation in himself. This recapitulation set humanity free from the illusion of an impersonal causal succession that bound one to the past. If Christ was Lord, then the past changed its proportions when redeemed. This meant that the exegete was not bound by linear reconstructions alone, but could freely correlate words and images to discover a providential lexicon within Scripture. Second, Thornton was “Calvin” to Figgis’ “Luther” in that, where Figgis asserted the freedom of grace, Thornton showed how recapitulative grace re-established natural law. In this way Thornton took seriously Lux Mundi and Modernist concerns about temporality, and in doing so he more thoroughly undercut their metastasized doctrine of development.

Figgis was the more original and rhetorically interesting writer on forgiveness. He came to reject “The New Theology,” to which he was early an adherent, arguing that it was “but a recrudescence of “natural religion” in a Christianised form, expressed under the conditions of pantheistic rather than deistic assumptions.” Several things need to be clarified in order to understand why Figgis came to see the experience of sin and forgiveness as the central features of Christianity. First, we must ask what pantheistic thought is in distinction from deist and

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568 Ibid., 161. After his ordination to the diaconate in 1894 and the priesthood in 1895, Mark D. Chapman, “Figgis, (John) Neville (1866-1919),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), writes, “Figgis possessed ‘crowding doubts’ (J. N. Figgis, Gospel and Human Needs, 1909, 15), and initially adopted a liberal theological position, giving up belief in the Virgin birth and real presence. Such doubts, combined with overwork, gluttony, and his mother’s mental illness, led to a breakdown; and in order to recuperate he took the college living of Marnhull in Dorset from 1902 to 1907. He enjoyed this period, devoting much time to parochial tasks. He once remarked: ‘old women have souls, like more interesting people’ … He returned to orthodoxy, adopting a supernaturalist faith greatly influenced by Albert Schweitzer and George Tyrrell as a witness against what he regarded as the pantheism and materialism of the age. This led him towards monasticism, and in 1907, after seeing a play by Bernard Shaw, he was received into the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield under Walter Frere.” The Gospel and Human Needs, therefore, marks Figgis’ theological turn. It came after he joined CR and after his earlier works of ecclesiology and politics such as From Gerson to Grotius 1414-1625: Studies of Political Thought (Forgotten Books, 2017) and Churches in the Modern State (Hardpress, 2013).
Christian thought. Second, we must understand what the respective attractions of pantheism and Christianity are and for whom.

So what made the new pantheist theology different from both deism and Christianity? Figgis believed the new pantheistic natural theologian “treats the world as a ‘closed circle,’ abhors the thought of the ‘miraculous,’ and harps upon the unity of Being, riding roughshod with the Juggernaut-car of universal notions over the intimate, the individual, over the suffering and the sad and the sin-stricken.” The “unity of Being” is certainly tied in Figgis’ mind to its progressive evolutionism, and would be the distinguishing feature of pantheist versus deist and Christian apologetics. The pantheist preoccupation with “abstraction and ideas” would distinguish both pantheist and deist from Christian. For “[t]he Christian faith is primarily bound up with the concrete.” This means several things. It means that “Christianity by its whole idea consecrates a particular moment in past time, the moment (shall we say?) of the Resurrection…” It means that natural religionists “ignore and thrust aside” sacramental doctrine, which in fact differentiates Christianity absolutely from deism and pantheism as a religion of “the concrete presentment of eternal truth.” Supremely this has to do with Jesus’ life and death, but also with the ritual and authority of the Church.

Most interesting for our purposes is how Figgis contrasts the way miracles and the reality of forgiveness are in absolute distinction from pantheist theology, and how this accounts for the different populations for whom the two forms of religiosity are attractive. Both contradict the

569 Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, 166.
570 Ibid., 167.
571 Ibid., 166. The way in which Figgis elevates one time on the diachronic plane of history hints at Thornton’s own identification of the timeless Platonic ideas with biblical figures. Different times have ontological weight independent of their place in historical succession.
572 Ibid., 167.
pantheist’s “love of law” and of “iron uniformity.” Figgis is clear that the audience for whom this religiosity is attractive is the very large class of people, removed by position and training from the grosser evils of life, of which they know only by hearsay, interested in religious topics and desirous of finding some ideal with which they can square their intellectual convictions or assumptions. Indeed, for two hundred years the great discussion between Christianity and its opponents has been carried on within this charmed circle. Nearly all apologists make the assumption that their opponents are equally disinterested with themselves, and equally certain of the main dictates of conscience, if not of creed. Consequently, the condition *sine qua non* for Christianity, man’s need of redemption, is apt to be ignored or thrust aside by apologists...  

This gap in social status, to be sure, was there for orthodox Anglicans as it was for Modernists who were educated in the same upper-class institutions. The Liberal Catholics of The Community of the Resurrection were at least aware of the Gospel’s relevance for the working class they sought to identify with. The same was true, however, for the later “pantheists,” Raven, Kennedy, and the tradition of “honest” Liberal works of popular theology from Bishop Robinson through Bishop Spong. This attempt at populist Liberalism never translated into ecclesial growth. This is due to the fact that while it set its co-suffering God alongside “Everyman,” it did not deal specifically with sin as sin. And because it did not deal with sin, it could not talk about grace, and because it could not talk about grace, it could not meet the needs of the average person. Contrasting the two religious attitudes, Figgis wrote:

Such minds will accept an immanent God, provided nothing is said to disentangle Him from His works; they can bow before the majesty of eternal law and strive for some harmony of emotion which may bridge the gulf between themselves and the universal mind; they may even go the length of saying, “Our Father,” and, of recognising the duties of human brotherhood, may strive for noble and disinterested service; this ideal, they think, is sufficient to drive out the relics of sin, and they can “move upward working out

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573 Ibid.
574 Ibid., 162 -163.
the beast,” not without effort indeed, but with no need of supernatural assistance; and the theology of “grace” is to them not so much false as superfluous. In some degree this is true for men with happy temperaments and cultivated interests and sheltered lives. But for the toiling masses, for the profligate, the luxurious, and the scoundrel; for those who are ruined by pleasure, and those who ruin themselves in the effort to acquire the means of it, no such rosewater creed can ever be a gospel. It is useless to talk to the drunkard or the harlot, to the man enslaved either by passion or greed, of the upward progress of the race and the gradual amelioration of life — useless, even if it were true to the facts, which it is not. Either he will not listen, or if he is in a mood to listen — in other words, under conviction of sin — it is redemption, atonement, miraculous grace, that he cries for, and repudiates the abstractions of idealism as the stone offered for bread.575

Figgis excels when he describes the attraction of Christianity in terms of just this sense of the need for grace. Figgis had personally experienced the dissonance of the need for a saviour and the doubts of the agnostic pantheist for whom natural religion was enough. Without triumphalism, he wrote that while Christianity and pantheism were the two incompatible options on the table for Europeans, he was forced to go with Christianity. It was this biblical world, a world of real chances and incalculable catastrophes, a world of broken harmonies, of pain and sin; withal its Maker known to us as Father and Friend, His love flashing out in the most astounding marvels, the Incarnation and Death of the One-begotten—whoose rising is less a wonder than His dying if He be who He is—who by His Cross redeems us now, and in His body the Church gives us in Baptism and the Eucharist the very spirit and essence of eternal life. This world with God its blazing fact, and prayer and faith real forces stronger than the armies of evil, though quite congruous to common sense and our inner life, is incongruous with any mechanical system, whether of forces or ideas, or with an Absolute which is unreveable even in symbol. Above all, this world in which God cares for us, and we can be “in love with God,” is not to be reconciled with any of the myriad forms of pantheism. Pantheism and Christianity, it has been well said, are the two views of life which between them divide the allegiance of men; and that thought may help us in making the great choice.576

The choice between the two was not speculative, but practical. This “great argument” was about the faith of millions: “the faith of the worker and the soldier, the redemption of the

575 Ibid., 168-169.
576 Ibid., 14.
harlot and the rake, the hope of all who suffer, the joy of all who die: is He real or a phantom, this Lord of ours?"\(^{577}\)

Like Butler, to whom he often referred, Figgis was interested in describing faith and bringing out its all-encompassing moral and existential dimensions. His conclusion was that insofar as it “meets the common religious needs of man,” Christian theology “includes more facts,” while pantheist skepticism “narrows the real problem,”\(^{578}\) and this despite the apparent explanatory power of its “mechanical system.” But also like Butler, Figgis wrote with humility about the epistemological lacunae of supernaturalism:

[I]f for this faith I stand to-day, I ask you to believe that it is not to make vain show, or to shatter in argument a disdained opponent. To others faith is the bright serenity of unclouded vision; to me it is the angel of an agony, the boon of daily and hourly conflict. In these years as God’s priest I have felt the pressure of crowding doubts, and learned in bitterness that to give up agnostic views may yet leave one far from the Kingdom of God—farther save by His grace, than ever before. I would ask in humbleness your prayers, both young and old, that neither to me nor others these words be vain.\(^{579}\)

We must note the contrast here. The pantheist Absolute was “unrevealable” and led to agnosticism, while the Christian God was revealable but believed on faith, not certainty. For Figgis the opposite of agnosticism, then, was not certainty but a faith given by grace.

Grace was precisely the sticking point that counted in favour of Christianity. But grace was an answer to sin, and sin was ultimately the issue over which Christians and the new theologians diverged: “they belittle the Christian doctrine of sin.”\(^{580}\) Figgis thus helpfully clarified the difference between a theodicy that accounts for sin and one that only deals with suffering.

\(^{577}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{578}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{579}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{580}\) Ibid., 94.
Sin is not merely a tragedy to the individual. It is a nuisance to the systematic thinker. It destroys the idea of a single self-consistent order harmoniously developing under unalterable laws, and displays an incoherent world.

Suffering creates a somewhat different problem. However many the difficulties it raises, we cannot but discern in practice the vast utility of pain. And this quite apart from its alleged refining influence, which is by no means necessary or universal. But many of the virtues are to us unthinkable apart from suffering. With sin, however, the case seems different.581

Suffering could be synthesized by the pantheist. But just as the supernatural was prohibited on the basis that it broke the order of their necessary system, so too did sin. And these two disorderly principles came together in the doctrine of forgiveness. Once again, the pantheist had to narrow the facts of experience to exclude two things: the inward sense of one’s own corruption and the everyday experience of forgiveness, which was a Butlerian analogue for the atonement. The first experience Figgis was clearly familiar with. Thus, he found the fall and atonement both theodically acceptable and necessary for his soul.582 He was emphatic that this fact was independent of an evolutionary explanation of ‘how’ this state of affairs came to be. The question of where Adam was on the historical plane, and how we connect back to him was left to the side. We just have the contemporary experience of evil, and we know that it runs through our own heart.583

581 Ibid., 92-93.
582 Ibid., 103.
583 Ibid., 101-102. "Moreover this sense has nothing to do with the origin of this corruption, so poignant and tragic in its consequences. It is not for our purpose material whether or no this sinful tendency be due to the fault and corruption of Adam, or the willing acceptance of certain animal passions that have come up through the course of evolution. The question is, Is it there this sense of sin? not, How did it get there? Do we as a fact experience this sense of guilt, of weakness, of a diseased will; and are we most conscious of it when we are most conscious of the call to the higher life? And to answer this, each of us can only appeal to his own consciousness; he can go no further. St. Paul had to go to himself for his evidence: "We know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I. ... To will is present with me, but how to perform: that which is good I find not; for the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do .... Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"
Having denied this first fact of sin, however, the pantheist was drawn into two contradictions. The first was that the rejection of sin was based on an aristocratic penchant for order. The same penchant, however, made forgiveness impossible because forgiveness freed one from the order of the past. Not only did this lead pantheists to overlook the second, quite ordinary, fact of forgiveness in everyday experience. It led them all the more to insist on the fact of sinfulness and its necessary consequences. Wrote Figgis,

we are told that forgiveness is against the nature of things, and that it is immoral to expect it. It is true that we see it daily among lovers or in families, in all personal relations. But that mere human fact is ignored. And pardon, where it is not said to be a matter of course, costing nothing, is pronounced beyond even God’s power to grant. The assumption on which this notion rests is that the world is made up of forces interacting with mechanical necessity and not of free spirits. Forgiveness is impossible unless God be free, and not the slave of His own laws. The iron uniformity of nature, the unalterable bonds of cause and effect are insuperable difficulties to those who look only without.584

The second contradiction is Modernist theology’s collapse of freedom and necessity. Figgis indicates that while they taught freedom and responsibility, they effectively denied freedom when they denied forgiveness — forgiveness, after all, is the pinnacle of freedom. “Hyper-moral” Modernism had the contrary result for Figgis.585 Figgis believed that, far from leading to lax morality, which would make forgiveness itself immoral, forgiveness actually prevented immorality: “if there be no pardon, we shall all, or most of us, sink lower in the scale of being, and morality and law will be saved at the expense of the damnation of the race.”586 The pantheist, Figgis indicates, is not only offended that forgiveness ruins the consistency of his system of nature, he is morally outraged:

584 Ibid., 106.
585 Ibid., 114.
586 Ibid., 107.
For what they tell us is not so much that forgiveness is impossible as that it is immoral. It is indeed remarkable how all the principal objections are now urged from the ethical rather than the intellectual side. Non-intellectual presuppositions are by no means the monopoly of the Christian. It is immoral and superstitious even to hope for miracles instead of resting in the natural order; immoral and obscurantist to desire mystery and withdraw from the cold abstractions of rationalism; immoral and childish to worship in the stable, and offer gifts to a babe; but above all things it is immoral, the proof of a mean and coward spirit, to seek for forgiveness, fit only for children.587

This objection to forgiveness in general was exactly what was behind the Modernist’s distaste for the traditional doctrine of atonement. There again, the objection was that it was immoral.588

Figgis uses another Butlerian analogy to everyday forgiveness. More importantly, he notes the consequence for a theology of time when cause and effect cease to rule over God and in fact come to serve his gracious purposes.

The notion of revelation and miracle is of necessity repugnant to those who make of the uniformity of nature an idol instead of an instrument, a law to govern God instead of His creation. But it is precisely because the miraculous exhibits the truth of God, as not Himself entangled in the endless chain of natural causes, that it has so uplifting and exhilarating a force.589

Few orthodox apologists were as radical as Figgis with his Butlerian critique of modernism. He had no time for pantheist natural theology as a half-way house on the road towards Christianity. The two were opposite in their respective emphases on abstract generalities versus concrete particularities — especially sin and forgiveness. Pantheists, failing to

587 Ibid., 107-108.
588 Ibid., 111. "It were better to accept the crudest and most forensic doctrine of substitution rather than surrender the truth it is intended to set forth. Yet in the alleged immorality of pardon there lurks a profound truth, the truth that love is above all codes, and God’s mercy goes beyond man’s deserts. What Christians mean when they use the words —

"Just as I am — without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come,"

is but the counterpart of what our adversaries mean when they tell us the Atonement is immoral. It would be immoral if it were not true. That is, it affords the same revelation of love as above all law as that we find in a child’s or friend’s or lover’s pardon, and indeed in all self-sacrifice. It springs from no merit, nothing done."

589 Ibid., 113.
comprehend these facts in their totally consistent system, failed to see how original sin and atonement were analogous to the course of human experience. In the process they not only failed to describe what made Christianity believable to the average person, but they also landed themselves in two paradoxes. First, rejecting sin and forgiveness as cracks in the system, they became all the more moralistic. Second, their moralism presupposed freedom and responsibility, but moral revulsion at forgiveness and atonement undermined freedom, which is supremely expressed in forgiveness. This freedom was so absolute in God’s case that it overrode the past’s constraining power. Figgis here opened the way for a completely different, figural view of time in Thornton’s work.  

We can discuss Thornton more briefly. His non-linear method of figural exegesis began to manifest itself in Atonement, but we will explore his hermeneutics in the next chapter. Here I will indicate where Thornton made similar points against an etiology of sin and redemption and in favour of analogies drawn from attentive exegesis of the two books of Scripture and nature. 

As for Figgis, the “moral dilemma” of the disintegration of human personality and society is the existential beginning of Thornton’s doctrine of grace, which he discussed in all of his early works. This fact did not necessitate the incarnation, but it left room for Christ’s reconciling work. Indeed, as with Butler and Figgis, the counterpart of social disintegration was

590 Compare to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1984). “The main principle of repentance is that the future dominate the past and there reign over it in unbounded fashion. Sin, as a cause and as the beginning of a lengthy causal chain of destructive acts, can be transformed, underneath the guiding hand of the future, into a source of merit and good deeds, into love and fear of God. The cause is located in the past, but the direction of its development is determined by the future” (115-116).

self-giving love, which provided an analogy for atonement.\textsuperscript{592} But Thornton also refused to offer an etiology of sin or atonement. Thornton gives us no “how’s,” and he nowhere tried to reconcile Adam with contemporary science. This, I believe, was a virtue. Rather, he summarized original sin:

> The beginning of sin must lie in a turning away of the created will from the love of the creator and from what He wills. Sin being what it is, no other explanation is possible. If man is estranged from God, this cannot be due to any failure of God’s love, any voluntary withdrawal of His gracious self-giving from those whom He made for fellowship with Himself. It must be traced to the self-will of finite spirits. How this should occur is beyond the horizons of imagination. We can see only its possibility in our nature and the fact that it has actually occurred.

The minimal efficient-causal explanation of sin is human agency. Continuing, he asserts that the problem of evil is in no way something to be solved by conceptual systems. Theories do not destroy evil, God does:

> We are under no obligation to provide a “solution” of the origin of evil in the world we know. No such solution is offered in the Bible, except in symbolic or mythological form, which leaves the mystery unresolved. The symbolism of the mystery is such as faith can accept in the light of the Christian revelation as a whole. For there it is met and answered by the other mysteries, which, if they do not dispel this enigma of sin and its origin, at least show us a way out of its dark entanglements. The Christian answer to sin is not a theory as to how it came to be, but a revelation of God’s plan for its destruction, together with an age-long witness of redeemed sinners to the fact that this plan has been and is being triumphantly realized.\textsuperscript{593}

> The desire to turn away from the discontinuities that sin brought into the world had produced a new theology in continuity with eighteenth-century deism.\textsuperscript{594} And while Thornton wanted to chart a middle course between them and Barth’s “new Augustinianism,”\textsuperscript{595} he preferred to acknowledge the fact of discontinuity — indeed, to see the discontinuity of the

\textsuperscript{592} Thornton, \textit{The Doctrine of the Atonement}, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{593} Ibid., 30-31.
\textsuperscript{594} Ibid., 32-34.
\textsuperscript{595} Ibid., 34-37.
Resurrection as bringing a higher kind of continuity. Certain facts, namely “the Sufferings of the innocent and of the righteous,” are not harmonizable but are “the most sinister riddles of human existence,” he continues. Far from transparently displaying any divine purpose or having value in offering up life-lessons, the sufferings of the righteous “do not in themselves point to the goodness of God. Exactly the reverse is true. They constitute an obstacle to belief in God’s goodness. They suggest the question: how can God be both just and almighty if such things happen in His world? And if faith holds fast to God in spite of such an unsolved enigma, it can only do so in passionate expectation that God Himself will take action to vindicate his righteousness.” Quite in contrast to Rashdall, then, Thornton believed that the theodical significance of Jesus is more than his exemplary status as hero-learner-sufferer, it must have something to do with his resurrection. If it does not, then in some real way (again, in a way that we do not yet grasp) the effects of evil cannot be reversed. He continues,

… the death of Christ without the resurrection would be the darkest riddle of all, the greatest of obstacles to belief in God. It would be so, just in the measure in which men recognized in the life and teaching of Jesus the highest manifestation of goodness which this world has seen. The death of Jesus (He being what He was), without a victorious reversal of its disaster, would be, perhaps, the final expression of a law that goodness must always be defeated in such a world as this — in short, a final and irretrievable blow to the possibility of believing in the goodness of God.596

Thus, while it breaks the “law of consequences,”597 Christ's atonement and resurrection also births “the positive law of consequences.”598 Thornton will give quite a lot of attention to this law, the law of "recapitulation," in his later works.

In sum, Figgis and Thornton both rejected theodical etiologies in favour of a phenomenology of evil and a Butlerian hermeneutic of analogy. They paid attention to details

596 Ibid., 72-73.
597 Ibid., 123.
598 Ibid., 125.
within the two books of Scripture and nature and felt no need to naturalize evil or jettison biblical texts. This same attention to apparently trivial details led Thornton to put forward a radical doctrine of figural reading, to which we will turn in chapter 6.

V. A Typology of Theodicies: Etiology vs Analogy

We are now in a position to state the difference between the Modernist and Anglo-Catholic theodicies as representative of two basically opposed alternatives: the "soul-making" theodicy and an "orthodox," Augustinian-Butlerian doctrine of original sin. These alternatives have their representatives throughout Christian history; science and modernity did not “prove” once and for all the superiority of one over the other. Nonetheless, I do believe the monist alternative has some basic phenomenological shortcomings that have rendered “orthodoxy” more plausible to a larger number of Christians. As a result, the soul-making theodicy’s lineage has not had comparable institutional stability. The experience of suffering makes it a perennial option, but its lineage is less familial, more bookish. In short, the “point of contact” made by the orthodox theodicy of the Augustinian-Butlerian variety is suffering itself, which provides a plausible structure for accepting original sin, atonement, and divine pedagogy. The Butlerian sees that original sin is analogous to the unfair course of nature, and atonement to the way life’s unfairness sometimes works for our benefit. The soul-making theodicy, on the other hand, depends on an air-tight etiology. The difference, again, is “that’s” versus “how’s.”

Raven, like many others, took Augustine to be offering a particularly poor theodicy-as- etiology. It was not only scientifically outmoded but philosophically inferior to Theodore’s etiology of sin, premised as it was by the fact of human finitude and mortality. But etiology is the wrong framework within which to read original sin. To the degree a theologian reads Gen 2-
3 as an etiology (the “how”) of sin’s origin and transmission, it ceases to function as a convincing theodicy. 599 To the degree that a theologian reads it as a theodicy that makes sense of contemporary evil, the etiology of sin becomes more obscure and less rationally satisfying. The traditional doctrine of original sin held together both phenomenology and etiology. The former entailed a set of claims (“that's”) about the human condition in the present: the universal human experience of weakness and bondage to sin, but also the fact of suffering, in particular the death of infants. Etiologically the doctrine made it clear that creatures’ wills were the efficient cause of evil (“how” sin originated) and claimed that concupiscence was perpetuated through procreation. Together both axes served as a theodicy defending God’s goodness in the face of manifest evil.600

The Liberal tradition reacted against Augustine’s doctrine on etiological grounds. First, they felt that the idea of the transmission of guilt was biologically bizarre, and that his doctrine of a corrupted human nature reflected his Manichean background with its doctrine of intrinsically evil natures. Modernity only added the problem of how to reconcile the story of Adam and Eve with the evolutionary story of origins.601 On the Modernist etiological assumption, we are therefore left with a stark decision between Liberal and fundamentalist options with regards to Scripture. The latter will indeed be inconsistent with science, while the former will have to sideline Genesis 2-3 and graft the synchronic experience of concupiscence and evil onto the evolutionary etiology. Many have rightly pointed out, however, that the liberal etiology gives evil an ontological status that, like the converse Manichean portrait of Augustine, results in a Gnostic theodicy for which suffering and evil are unavoidable. Here Augustinianism

600 Ibid., 408.
601 Ibid., 414-16.
rewards descriptive honesty. The tradeoff is that while Augustinianism is not able to ultimately explain evil and its transmission in causal terms, it is nonetheless better equipped to speak of radical evil than its Liberal alternative. It also maintains Genesis 2-3 as canonically useful by attending to its function. On Matthew Ashley’s view, to read Genesis for etiological information is to try to make the text reveal more than it can. We must, therefore, recognize the limits of our knowledge in this area in order to have a more satisfying theodicy.\footnote{Ibid., 434.}

The tension between deploying the story of the Fall as etiology versus a theodicy emerges again: to the degree that modern science is used to enhance the doctrine’s etiological function, evil tends to be naturalized (as in Teilhard, for instance), and real problems arise concerning the goodness of the God who is nature’s author and sustaining ground. To the degree that, as a response, the culpable evil of this state is downplayed by identifying the sin/defect of “origin” with the finitude of a system in process, the question remains whether this more innocuous view of evil does justice to the ferocity of evil experienced in the last century of world history (although not only then) — which is precisely the experience on which the doctrine is often understood to shed the most light in its synchronic dimension.\footnote{Ibid., 431.}

By naturalizing evil, the Modernist is left with a morally ambiguous God and a weak description of actual evil. Figgis would add, further, that a preoccupation with etiology leaves this theodicy with a paradox. Freedom and necessity are blurred; everything is possible for the responsible man except giving and receiving forgiveness.

Butler was aware of the fact that the atonement could be construed in etiological terms, but he dismissed mechanical theory with an acceptance of the givenness of Christ’s mediation and its similarity to forgiveness as commonly experienced. The rejection of mechanical theory was the motivation behind Rashdall’s doctrine of exemplary atonement. The modernist Christ influenced us morally; he did not satisfy God’s wrath. Yet a trace of etiology remained in its
exemplarism. We take the idea of “moral influence” for granted, but by what mechanism is this effected? The Butlerian view of atonement, by contrast, only needed analogy for its plausibility; it was compelling precisely because it made sense of lacunae in our etiologies. More to the point, Thornton read the atonement as a set of given figures, not as a mechanism. It was not useful somehow for moral improvement but for the appropriation of grace within a view of temporality as divine pedagogy, not self-pedagogy. The hallmark of the latter is a rejection of divinely instituted natural laws that are permanently binding in favour of a vaguely defined telos attained by means that change as knowledge increases. The Butlerian theodicy takes commandments as grace, as given, and finds their fulfillment and permanent life-giving value in Christ. For Butler, obedience is independent of knowledge regarding a command’s usefulness, since both the commandment and the beatitude towards which it is directed are givens. Indeed, if the New Creation is actually fulfilled in Christ, then humanly obeyed commandments do not even clearly add up to that telos. In Christ, commandments are more like figures nested within the ultimate Figure.

VI. Theodicy and Hermeneutics

The different approach to commandment is symptomatic of a broader hermeneutical difference between incarnational and panentheistic theodicy. In the context of panentheist metaphysics, Christ was more than a moral influence. Raven’s co-suffering Christ was the consummator and archetype of the whole evolutionary process, the key to the book of nature.

604 A Platonist might talk about how the immaterial mind conforms itself to an intentional object of knowledge — like attracts like — in this case the exemplar of Christ. But if one rejects hard materialism and yet remains a monist, is the mechanism of influence something like Mesmer’s magnetic fluid? How does the idea of Christ reconfigure the brain? Modernist scientism occluded the fact that its roots lay in early modern occult science. Raven and Rashdall betrayed these influences when they accepted spiritualist doctrines of the immaterial soul, clairvoyance, clairaudience, phrenology, and palingenesis. One must wonder, therefore, whether occult science touched this theory of atonement in some way, a theory that could be enhanced once further esoteric concepts of the unconscious, the archetypal Christ, or the theory of “memes” had developed. See Appendix 2 for further background.
From Valentinian Gnosticism to the mythology of Jacob Boehme to the metaphysics of process theology, this version of theodicy conceives of God’s relationship to the world in agonistic terms.\(^605\) As such, Jesus’ suffering was not unique but typical — monism’s anti-realism rendering the particularity of Christ epiphenomenal. Jesus was less valued as a particular individual than as a cipher, or an instance of a more general abstract law of palingenesis. True, Raven made him an eminently sympathetic figure. But Christ’s work, and our salvific imitation of him, was reinterpreted in just such sentimental-psychological terms.\(^606\) Jesus’ kind of “consciousness” was exemplary of the kind of consciousness we can all have, consciousness of being more “intensely alive,” of a new heavenly “quality of life.”\(^607\) Thus monistic Gnosticism offered a reinterpretation of salvation that was rather less than the objective cosmic transfiguration Thornton taught.

The truth is that Raven was not quite sure where the process was going, even if he was cautiously optimistic about the almost theurgical significance of moral action. In our lives we discover the “broken bits of being”; and our task, like Christ’s, is to interpret them and integrate them into a coherent whole. Thornton, however, received the whole from Christ. Raven’s naturalism left him in a skeptical impasse without knowledge of the telos of creation given in Scripture. As to what creation added up to, Raven could only admit (as Bishop Robinson would say) honest doubt: “That we are justified in making any guess at the meaning of the whole; that

\(^605\) For a detailed typology of this kind of worldview, see Cyril O’Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

\(^606\) Raven, *Experience and Interpretation*, 146.

\(^607\) Ibid., 191, 200. In this way Raven foreshadowed the existentialist direction panentheism would go with Robinson. Let us recall that one of the two minimal indices of Gnosticism include a mythological expression of ideas.
we, being what we are, can claim any knowledge of its real nature; that for us any ultimate reality can be revealed; to such doubts we may rightly hesitate to reply.”

Hermeneutically, this left Raven without recourse to biblical typology, which depends on providential shaping. To be sure, Raven might posit analogies with reference to (pros hen) an unknown formal “whole.” But this unknown whole could not be regulative in the way it was for Thornton. Indeed, where the final cause of creation is not revealed, there is no way to tell whether apparent contradictions seen in Scripture and nature are just antinomies or real contradictions. Thus Liberal biblical interpretation contained a contradiction that Butler pointed out long ago. It presupposes a certain lawfulness to history, but by necessity it has an arbitrary criterion by which it judges between real and apparent contradictions. This arbitrary hermeneutical method can be called naturalism.

Thornton, like Butler, knew time’s telos even if he was ignorant about “how” it would unfold. The eschaton was not a mere “summation” of “the bits of being,” but rather a gracious recreation and gifting of the whole creation back to mankind in Christ. Christ, furthermore, had broken the iron law of consequences that ruled in the aftermath of the fall. The relationship between the different “bits” of the New Creation could not be summative, it had to be synecdochical: each bit reflected the whole and was related to every other bit in time directly through the whole.

VII. Conclusion

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608 Ibid., 203.
609 Ibid., 85.
610 Put differently, if Scripture is the set of exemplary causes, each exemplar can be ranked hierarchically from more to less inclusive. Yet the higher is not the efficient cause of the lower. God is. I will say more on this ranking in chapter 6.
The basic claim of this chapter is this: Theodicies driven by causal etiologies end in quasi-Gnosticism. An Augustinian-Butlerian theodicy, however, driven by the present phenomena of personal and social disharmony, radical evil, and the felt need for forgiveness, may be incompatible with etiology but is based on an analogy between the troubling facts of Scripture and nature. The Butlerian believes that a preoccupation with mechanical causation in the moral realm is often driven by unforgiveness, not science; that neither sin nor forgiveness is “harmonizable” with monist metaphysics; and that monists are less capable of accurately describing one of the largest reasons why people are attracted to the Gospel, because they do not account for forgiveness.

Let us expand on the latter issue of the phenomenology of belief. In my chapter on Butler I argued that the analogy between Scripture and our experience of the course of nature allows for the simplest description of how Christians come to believe despite their experience of suffering. And despite the fact that the soul-making theodicy is also easily describable in terms of concrete historical experiences of suffering (for instance, World War I), it is worth asking why those who expound the etiological theodicy nevertheless have great difficulty describing Christian belief as simply as Butler, Figgis, and Thornton. Thus a combination of ad hominems and conspiracist explanations are marshalled to explain away Christian persistence

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611 I am tempted to speculate that the reason why not all Gnostics exhibit an explicit theodicy is that the naturalization of evil effectively veils the fact of evil. Thus Gnostics will oscillate between awareness of the existential basis of their belief in the experience of suffering and an "ivory-tower" loss of awareness of this fact as their systems overshadow attention to phenomena. For a criticism of a form of modern Gnosticism forgetful of its compelling existential roots in the problem of evil, see David Bentley Hart, “Jung’s Therapeutic Gnosticism,” First Things, no. 229 (January 1, 2013).

612 Arthur Versluis, The New Inquisitions: Heretic-Hunting and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Totalitarianism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). I do not want to give the wrong impression about this book. Its author rightly objects to the way his subjects of study, Western Esotericists, have been dismissed (frequently violently) by mainstream Christian, secular, left-wing, and right-wing writers. The somewhat strained thesis is that a thread runs from the early heresiology of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius through the Catholic Inquisition to modern totalitarianism. Ironically, the non-violent private religion of Gnosticism has been unfairly blamed for these totalitarian impulses by thinkers such as Eric Voegelin and Cyril O’Regan. As with other contemporary defenders
while nevertheless predicting that the progress of science or the inevitability of secularization pressures Christianity to “change or die.”613 My explanation of the failure to describe the obvious is this: because Gnosticism requires total causal consistency, it is blind to the way in which orthodoxy has compellingly addressed the same problem for billions of people with mere analogical consistency. The same doctrines that “must change” — creation, fall, incarnation, Trinity, impassibility, atonement, commandment, biblical infallibility — are the ones that in fact cause Christianity to persist and the liberal mainline to perish (not without irregular palingenetic rebirths!).

To guard against conservative triumphalism, however, in chapter 6 I will survey Thornton’s argument that the loss of faith, in the form of secularization, gnosticization, and the contraction of orthodox Christianity in the West, is not due to historical inevitability but to the contingent breakup of Christendom. Being contingent, the resultant suffering caused by the Church cannot be naturalized and chalked up to a “learning experience” in the way that the liberal soul-making theodicy might do. Qualitatively different in orthodox terms, the suffering caused by the Church is a suffering caused by sin, a suffering that is an experience of evil. For the orthodox Christian, then, theodicy is inseparable from sin (another one of those doctrines that had to “change or die”). And sin is a condition in need of forgiveness. Neville Figgis was particularly forceful in arguing that religious monism and its iron law of cause and effect made forgiveness impossible, and this despite our analogous experience of it in our familial relationships and friendships. Thornton followed Figgis in this. But Christian orthodoxy — or

“orthodoxies” — has also woven a veil over the obvious cause of Christian impotence in Western society, particularly in its ecclesiologies. (This was a conclusion from chapter 2.) Thornton, therefore, began his career writing about forgiveness and ethics, but found that this led him into ecclesiology, an ecclesiology viewed through the lens of a doctrine of the new creation in Christ. Moreover, by hermeneutically connecting Scripture and nature, Thornton was able to address the problem of Christian evil with his figural reading. This is one of the reasons Thornton is important to this project. Scripture, when taken as a given, offers up a theodicy that justifies figural reading, and figural reading provides insights into the problem of evil. This is what the next chapter will demonstrate.
Chapter 6: The Two Books Reconsidered

1. Introduction

Theodicy has been the main thread upon which I have been weaving a historical and theological case for close biblical reading. It is the Bible’s regulative language that offers analogies (original sin, atonement) to unfair experiences of suffering and gracious experiences of pardon. A phenomenology of Christian belief is nonsensical without the Bible (Chapters 1, 5). The division of the Church, however, throws up a more specific experience of injustice that many theologians have tried to avoid by transmuting this theodicy problem into an epistemology problem (Chapter 2).

Thornton was not immune to this abstract approach to the issue, but he struggled to break with Tractarian and Liberal Catholic dead ends. Under the influence of John Neville Figgis he came to see that the decisive issue between orthodox and monist theologies was theodicy. Figgis’ recovery of the Jewish-divine strangeness of Jesus, and his emphasis on un-Modernist themes like grace and forgiveness, led Thornton back to the Bible. Indeed, Thornton’s rejection of monism in favour of Platonic realism was not a consequence of metaphysical reasoning, but a consequence of his ability to hold in tension natural and supernatural antinomies. The latter included the Trinity, creatio ex nihilo, and the incarnation, which was the most acute instance of the antinomy of antinomies — the fact of evil alongside God (Chapters 3-5).

In sum, I have been emphasizing the way in which Scripture’s regulative language — accepted as a whole by faith (Mansel) — provides analogies which account for the fact of Christian faith (Butler, Figgis), antinomies that resist reduction (Mansel, Hannah, Thornton), and theodical insights from Genesis to the Gospels that are unavailable to the monist, let alone his
deist ancestors (Figgis, Thornton). The next stage of the argument follows up on Figgis’ claim that the theodicy set forth in the Bible’s atonement imagery re-proportions the past. God’s forgiveness means that the moral law of consequences that otherwise dictates temporal succession has been broken. Time, in Christ, is subject to God. Thornton’s way of talking about the temporal reordering effected by grace is the Pauline-Irenaeian notion of recapitulation. Here Christ’s work is viewed in the broadest cosmic and historical terms — literally taking up and transfiguring every trivial detail of creation in the person and work of Christ. On the objective basis of this new creation, Thornton founds his figural hermeneutic. Figural reading is possible and necessary because of Christ’s work of new creation on display as a unified whole in Scripture. At the same time, figural reading is the means God uses to conform us to that end. Indeed, Thornton’s reading of Judas shows how figural reading contributes theodical insight.

II. Revelation and the Modern World

1) Development: Thornton vs Newman

A foundational error that contemporary Anglican scriptural theology inherited from both Modernism and John Henry Newman was the belief that Scripture’s verbal forms could be pulled apart from the divine content of revelation. Four generations into Oxford Movement Anglicanism, Thornton took for granted this dualism in The Incarnate Lord. There he affirmed the priority of revelation, but he set experience between it and the Bible’s language. Thornton’s thesis in this book was the following:

The object of the present work is to examine the doctrine of the Incarnation on the wider field of Christian theism. Its scope is the justification of Christian beliefs as embodying the only rationally satisfying form of theism which has appeared in history. Its aim is to show that the Incarnation is itself the true and adequate theodicy of Christian theism. With such an aim in view it is possible to distinguish three main questions that have to be faced: (i) The first is terminology… (ii) The second is terminal concepts…. (iii) The third
question is the widest of all and is not easy to define. It asks how, given these terms, concepts and ideas properly defined, can the \textit{theodicy of Christian theism} be discerned in the doctrine of the Incarnation when fully set forth in its broad outlines.\footnote{L. S. Thornton, \textit{The Incarnate Lord: An Essay Concerning the Doctrine of the Incarnation in Its Relations to Organic Conceptions} (London: Longmans, 1928), 11.}

Thornton believed that the theodicy problem could only be addressed once he had decided on what kind of language we use of God. In this book he frequently claimed that the experience of revelation was pre-linguistic and conceptual. Thornton thereby suggested that pre-linguistic or “terminal” concepts stood behind varied doctrinal developments.\footnote{Ibid., 15, 199-200, 308.} The idea was already a concession; Thornton recognized that concepts and language were sometimes inseparable, which meant that on certain vaguely defined occasions a change in language would distort the concepts that the language expressed.\footnote{I am indebted to Philip S. Y. Shen for this insight: “The Christology of Lionel S. Thornton: A Study in Interpretation” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 1963), 61-73. Among all the secondary literature on Thornton, the vast majority of which was written before the end of the 1970s, Shen’s is the only indispensable resource. At the University of Chicago in the orbit of America’s main process theologians, Shen’s supervisor, Jaroslav Pelikan, suggested Thornton no doubt due to his attraction to Eastern Orthodoxy. With the dual influence of Whiteheadians and Pelikan, Shen was uniquely situated to do so. His success is all the more remarkable given that he only worked with primary materials (almost a necessity for studying Thornton).} Indeed, we saw in chapters 4 and 5 that Thornton grounded his doctrines of incarnation and atonement exegetically.

The formulation of terminal concepts was Thornton’s short-lived attempt to plug a hole in a theory that he soon dropped. In his next major work, \textit{The Common Life in the Body of Christ} (1942), he worried, “What if the Gospel becomes obscured by our presuppositions and preoccupations, so that we neither see the scope of its application nor suffer it to speak for itself?”\footnote{L. S. Thornton, \textit{The Common Life in the Body of Christ} (Dacre Press, 1942), vii.} In \textit{Revelation and the Modern World} (1950), he fully articulated a view of Scripture that did not set experience between divine content and Scripture’s linguistic form. Both concepts and language were forms of human response to revelation, and they were inseparable from the divine content of revelation.
2) Christ and Culture

What brought Thornton to this position? I suggest that although he rarely mentioned the two World Wars, it was the experience of nominally Christian cultures killing each other on a mass scale that stood behind his reassessment of the role of culture in revelation. Chapter 5 described how the suffering of war made theodicy the decisive factor for both neo-Augustinian-Butlerian projects (Figgis, Barth, Hoskyns, Thornton) and Modernist soul-making projects (Rashdall, Raven, Kennedy, Teilhard, Moltmann). Thornton therefore sought to understand the gulf that had opened between the fatally injured culture of Christendom and the culture of the Prophets and Apostles as given in Scripture and handed over in tradition. This led to a biblical hermeneutical question on the one hand. On the other, because post-Christian culture was now centred around science, it forced Thornton to tackle this issue.

In the first chapter of *Revelation and the Modern World*, Thornton discussed the relationship of revelation to cultural context, which is really a question about the relationship of revelation to the social level of creation in its synchronic and diachronic depth. The extremes he sought to avoid were the claims that revealed religion is either reducible to its cultural environment or transcendentally detached from it. The “crux” of Thornton’s answer, indeed the crux of his vast figural cosmos, was “the form of the Servant” as manifest in the incarnation. In Christ, said Thornton, revelation “masters,” has “dominion over,” “transforms,” and “fulfills” its religious environment through the

…agonizing conflict in which the Creator wrestled the fallen world in order to redeem it; a conflict like that of Peniel in which the divine wrestler emptied his own strength into the human wrestler, in which, as on Calvary, God suffered defeat in order that Man might be victorious…. 

Jesus stamped the Servant-Form on the whole environment from which he was inseparable. The stumbling stone of “verbal associations” clearly followed. Echoing the patristic principle that “what is not assumed by the Incarnation is not redeemed,” Thornton wrote,

…God came down to the level of our trivialities in order that those same trivialities might be taken up into a context of surpassing significance. Such is the general character of revelation; and it carries this corollary, that nothing in scripture is too trivial to be relevant.618

But culture is not something that revelation simply takes up. Rather, revelation “creates” the response of true religion.619 “The creative grace of revelation,” wrote Thornton, “can and does use human life at all levels as the instrument through which it acts.” Said differently, revelation is not only given to creatures but in and through them; revelation is creative in that it moulds creation for its own ends. This is why Scripture can be characterized as “organic.”620

In sum, Thornton sought an answer to the problem of culture and revelation by going back to the Incarnation. Inasmuch as the Incarnate Lord shaped culture to fit his Servant-Form, Christ’s transfiguring dominion extended over every detail of Creation’s order. But this led Thornton to an exegetical practice that seemingly clashed with biblical criticism.

3) Verbal Associations and the Role of Biblical Criticism

On analogy to natural science, Thornton taught that the unity of Scripture, like the unity of nature, was the condition of knowledge. In both cases the scientific interpreter was not trying to prove this unity but to show how particular things could be lawfully reconciled given the fact of unity. Faith and biblical criticism were complementary approaches to truth. In Thornton’s words, the “totality principle of faith” was the assumption of unity and order in nature and

619 Ibid., 18.
620 Ibid., 22.
supernature without which biblical science was impossible. It followed that within the biblical cosmos, as in the natural world, every verbal detail, no matter how small, represented some unifying law. Indeed, the most overarching law ordering Scripture and nature was, by virtue of the incarnation, the humble “form of the servant” embodied in Jesus.

The “infinity principle of science,” on the other hand, analyzed the objective facts. Within the unified framework of creation, these were inexhaustible in character — i.e., they related in infinite ways to every other fact. Science only delivered approximate truths, which meant that its relationship to religion was part of an apophatic moment. Without the infinity principle of science, faith would be satisfied with simplicities. Without the assumption of a supereminent unity, science would become increasingly dispersive, specialized, restricted, and reductive. Happily, Thornton believed that scientists had shed this habit: every field of study was showing the interrelation of everything.

4) The Deterioration of Christendom

Yet theologians and exegetes remained hindered by “simplistic” and “atomistic” approaches to Scripture and ecclesiology because of the dispersive effects of Christian division. This is more than a conceptual failing. It is due to an objective schism in the fabric of creation. It is evident in the discontinuity opened up between modern culture and the culture of the early Church. That is to say that culture, a created medium of grace, has been torn. Yet blame for this

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621 Ibid., 76.
623 When John Baillie asked in The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), “We wish to know what Father Thornton understands by ‘the scientific scrutiny of the outward form’ which ‘must be freely welcomed by the believer’” (124), Thornton was not claiming a straightforward scientific realism. He would be closer to a scientific anti-realist position (which is not to deny his phenomenological-metaphysical realism). Analysis of particulars, he is saying, only approximates knowledge inasmuch as nature’s relations are, in a sense, infinite. See below for a further discussion of Baillie’s objection.
state of affairs lay squarely at the Church’s feet and was tied to the division of Christendom at the Reformation and earlier. In Thornton’s understanding, the Object revealed in revelation was always incarnated in a created context; and at the highest levels, that context must include the human response of the Church both in its religious culture, institutions, and traditions, and in its Scriptures. The problem that division introduced, however, was that the Christian tradition became contested as the Church’s sinful form failed to reflect the content of revelation. The epistemological problem was the result of this ontological fissure in reality (a theodical problem we outlined in chapter 2). The Liberal solution was to try to unclothe the Object of revelation of its traditional and biblical forms in order to see it without reference to the confusing context of a fallen creation. This strategy was meant to bypass the conflicts of a divided Christendom, but unfortunately it left the Church without revelation at all because the perception of a disembodied revelation is in fact impossible. Thornton writes:

The Liberal version of Christianity, however, was born into a disrupted Christendom. The revelation which it offered, in separation from any divinely given form, corresponded quite simply to the fact that Christendom in its disintegration had ceased to possess a single integral form. This was what I had in mind in making the suggestion that the course taken by Liberal theology was an inevitable reaction to an existing situation. In this sense the Liberal gospel bore unconscious witness to the fact that Christendom and the Christ are complementary, the one to the other, so that should the former suffer disintegration, the latter can appear, if at all, only in a ghost-like state, in that condition of disembodiment which St Paul compared to nakedness. Such indeed was the Christ who appeared to the Liberal theologians. Quite naturally, and with the best motives, they hastened to dress him up in any clothing that could be found to hand. Bereft of his proper body-garment, the indivisible seamless robe of the great high-priest, the Saviour was hastily arrayed in the mantle of a nineteenth century philosopher. It is not surprising that a garment made for quite another purpose proved to be both ill-fitting and unseemly.

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625 See chapter 2 of Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World.
626 Ibid., 62.
The irony here is that despite their intention to bridge the gulf between scientific and religious culture, the separation of revelation from creation was only widened by Liberal theological solutions. Shorn of their created forms, the fragments of truth dissected by Liberal hermeneutics paralleled the “atomism” of materialist physics, in that it isolated and attempted to exhaustively understand each bit of text without reference to its proportion within the whole Scripture.\textsuperscript{627} It also paralleled the centrifugal dispersion of Christian denominations. But a Church so divided could not be put together easily. And an atomized Scripture could not be interpreted figurally. Thornton’s solution to the problem of Christian reunion, therefore, was to call into question the modern dualism between form and content by systematically reconnecting the doctrine of Creation to the doctrines of Scripture and Church. This allowed him to re-engage the Bible figurally.\textsuperscript{628}

My second chapter demonstrates that, ironically, the skeptical reduction of Scripture continued on into Oxford Movement controversies. Not only Liberals but Tractarians used Reformation-era skeptical attacks to undermine the ontology of Scripture to reassert an episcopal continuity and a theory of development that could weather fallen history’s storms. Thornton inhabits this blinkered perspective while subverting it.

5) Scripture and Tradition

Having rejected the various contemporary doctrines of development, Thornton reclaimed a place for tradition. Doctrinal development was a fact, but Thornton rejected any concept of tradition in abstraction from biblical interpretation. He admitted that the process of passing on

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid., 66-67.
\textsuperscript{628} Shen, “The Christology of Lionel S. Thornton,” 81-82.
tradition was already evident in the New Testament — the Apostles were Old Testament exegetes, after all. As such, Scripture and tradition had the same source in the biblical writers.

Nevertheless, Scripture had ontological priority over tradition just as being had priority over becoming in metaphysics. Put differently, Thornton taught that the eternal mind of God contained the plan of creation, a plan unified in Christ and unfolded in time. The Incarnate Lord looked at how the temporal process of creation unfolded in a way that reflected and repeated aspects of Christ’s life. In his later works, Shen notes that Thornton identified this “eternal order” of Platonic forms (the mind of God) with Scripture and concluded that the history of theological interpretation was already contained within Scripture. For one, Scripture exhibited the pattern and “the unchanging law of the relation between religion and culture.” Scriptural culture had been fully submitted to Christ and was, therefore, an exemplar for any later cultural responses to revelation.

6) Organism, Synecdoche, and Hebrew Psychology

Thornton’s shorthand term for this normative cultural response to revelation within Scripture and the early tradition was “Hebrew psychology.” This mindset was shared by the Apostles and Fathers, particularly St Irenaeus. And it was characteristically holistic. The unity of Scripture was not demonstrably the result of this holistic mindset. Scripture’s unity was in

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629 Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, 60, 204 ff., 258-263.
630 Ibid., 265; Shen, “The Christology of Lionel S. Thornton,” 111.
631 Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, 9. Shen writes that for Thornton “[o]rthodoxy is the power for wholeness of response. It is the power of cohesion, the integrative element of tradition against the heretical dispersions from within and syncretistic incursions from without. Orthodoxy, in short, is the principle of unity in tradition as revelation is in the scriptures.” Shen, “The Christology of Lionel S. Thornton,” 93-94.
Christ, while “the Hebrew mind is a product of the response to revelation and depends on it for its unity.” But the two are inseparable.

Interpreters must learn to think like Hebrews, which means to think synecdochically, or in Thornton’s terms, “organically,” that is, seeing the whole reflected in each part. For example, Scripture was full of “corporate personalities” where kings and fathers represent those under them. Humans, as part of creation, microcosmically reflect the cosmos; progeny pre-exist as “seed” in their ancestors (Adam, Abraham, Israel, Levi); people can even be “extended” into the artifacts they possess. Pre-eminently, Christ’s life, like Adam’s before him, extended through the whole time process. The many persons and events spread out over biblical time were included in this One, in whom “time is altogether transcended.”

One might wonder how it is that Adam and Christ can include within themselves the whole of humanity. The answer of course is figural, and Thornton was convinced by the work of H. Wheeler Robinson and Aubrey R. Johnson that the Hebrews had a unique understanding of the relationship of the “one” to the “many.” For the “one” to be universal, it does not need to be a generalized form in Plato’s heaven. It can, in fact, be a concrete particular within the larger pattern, which characterizes the pattern as a whole. This conception of unity holds for both

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633 Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, 149-156.
634 Ibid., 152. Thornton returned again and again to the figure of Adam as an example of a particular creature who was present in every other human being. As I argued in the last chapter, Thornton gave no causal “how” answer to the theodicy problem. He never allowed contemporary science to force him to construe Adam’s universality at the expense of his particularity. This, of course, would undermine Jesus’ Adamic role. The reconciliation of creation depends on Jesus being a concrete universal.
635 This is a more “Stoic” anthropology, but then Thornton thinks the Stoics were influenced by the Semitic way of thinking. Ibid., 113, n. 1.
636 David S. Yeago, “Jesus of Nazareth and Cosmic Redemption: The Relevance of St. Maximus the Confessor,” Modern Theology 12, no. 2 (April 1, 1996). Yeago has more recently described the view in this way:
    Within such a configuration, the significance of a particular is not grasped in abstraction from its particularity, as a generality of which it is an instance. Rather, the significance of the particular will be found in its concrete placement in the pattern, in the singular network of contingent relations in which it stands to other particulars within the pattern. And a particular can be of “universal significance” within a
the relationship of Christ to his Body, the Church, and for the relationship of Scripture as a whole to its parts. Or, as Robinson says, “A Hebrew sentence is like the Hebrew idea of personality; its parts are vividly and picturesquely set before us, but they are co-ordinated, rather than subordinated to one central idea, and the nature of the co-ordination is often implicit rather than explicit.”

III. Christology Reconsidered

1) Recapitulation

Like the Hebrew sentence, the whole Bible exhibits an “organic” unity of words and images hierarchically ordered under Jesus. “The form of the servant” was at the top, being the most inclusive and flexible image. Insofar as “fallen” figures like Adam and Eve could be taken up into the inclusive figure of Christ and the Church, they were redeemed and the effects of the fall were reversed. Thornton’s typological exegesis of Scripture, therefore, was based on a doctrine of “recapitulation” that brought together two principles: a diachronic principle of “repitition” and a synchronic principle of “representation.” Recapitulation, in short, is the doctrine that representation and “‘repetition’ [are] the means through which the effects of Adam’s Fall are undone, and thus the order of creation is restored in Christ to its true harmony

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638 Indeed, “[t]he more meanings” and the more verbal links “a word could have, therefore, the more important and dominating it would seem to be.” Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, 157 n. 1.


640 Ibid., 127-128: “Typological exegesis thus presupposes a conception of a transcendent plan of God, on the one hand, and, on the other hand the idea that his immanent activity somehow has a consistent character, i.e., is typical in so far as it can be discerned, because it is grounded in his plan and determined by his purpose.” The plan is “Christocentric through and through. For Christ is the source and the goal of creation; he is also the sphere and matrix in which it takes place. There is a distinction of two stages of the created order, namely the old and the new. But the plan is one, and it unfolds itself in the history of redemption.”
once more.”641 Where Figgis claimed that forgiveness changed the past, Thornton described this change in terms of recapitulation.

2) Adam as Macrocosm

This entailed a high-priestly ministry in which Adam is understood as the macrocosm of creation and “head” of humanity, in whom all his descendants are included. Christ’s repetition of the creation events not only undid the failure of Adam, but his repetition became the final transformation that elevated creation to a new wholeness, fulfilling a process prefigured by God’s shaping of Adam in Gen 2. Indeed, because Adam includes the whole of humanity, his shaping represents the process of education of Israel and Church.642 Thus, when the Son of God becomes an infant, he shares in the same shaping “method” that God uses in relation to all mankind, except that unlike Adam he is perfectly submitted to the process.643 What Jesus achieves by this is a transfer of Adam and his members to himself. His humble perfection is the ontological difference that subordinates the other parts of humanity to him as their new head. But again, this process has no relation to the Liberal doctrine of progress. “The great gulf which Liberalism set between Jesus and his brethren was the nemesis of a progressivist Christology,” Thornton explained. “A Christ who climbs up the evolutionary ladder instead of coming down from heaven has not taken ‘the form of a servant’ in lowly self-humiliation. He has not made himself one with sinners and he cannot, therefore, save them.”644 Thornton’s view, by contrast, was a cosmic application of the patristic principle that “what is not assumed by the Incarnation is not redeemed.” This assumption included every trivial detail of his created context as enshrined in Scripture.

642 Ibid., 143.
643 Ibid., 147.
644 Ibid., 112.
3) A Eucharistic Sacrifice

The human body is central to this mediation since it is through the body that creation’s order is offered back to God. The body is not just a part of creation, but a microcosm of the whole. Firstly, both the body and the cosmos share the same kind of organic rather than inorganic order, an order characterized by a mutual dependence of parts. Adam’s body, however, is that “whole” within which other human bodies participate. It is more appropriate, then, to say that his body is a macrocosm. Moreover, because Adam stood between heaven and earth, he is also a mediator between the two. Secondly, in fulfilling Adam’s vacant macrocosmic role, Christ placed the cosmic elements in the correct proportion to each other. One might use Augustine’s language here of love properly ordering persons under God, and things under persons rather than vice versa. In so doing this, thirdly, Jesus offered all things back to the Father through his body as creation’s mediator and high priest. Due to the conditions of the fall, this offering was bloody. But in being so offered, created things as such became a medium of revelation. Jesus’ reordered, transfigured body is, therefore, rightly called the “New Man” in whom the cosmos of a New Creation has come to be.645

In order further to clarify Thornton’s Christology, we can compare it to a recent and related project, Hans Boersma’s attempt to articulate a “sacramental” ontology for Scripture. Thornton’s Christology, we can see, goes a step further than the proportions Boersma, following de Lubac, finds between Christ, Scripture, Creation, Church, and soul. Boersma notes how Origen taught three incarnations — one of the Virgin Mary, another in Scripture, and the third in the soul — but he writes, “[i]t seems to me that the ‘incarnations’ in Scripture and the soul can

645 Ibid., 183.
only be termed ‘incarnations’ in an analogical sense.” But Thornton, Origen, and his heirs (notably Maximus) think these spheres are more strongly related because Jesus’ Adamic role as high priest of creation is more than analogical. It is recapitulative, sacrificial, eucharistic, and cruciform. In Christ’s Cross, the whole of creation is offered back to the Father and seen from different angles in the organs of Scripture and Church. Thornton here is very much in line with St Maximus in how he conceived of this mediation as a revelatory act. By unveiling the “inner essence,” “logos,” or “name” of every creature in connection with himself, the Second Adam reconnected everything back to the Father. The Bible, then, was the place where these *logoi* were comprehensively collected. Indeed, just as Origen and Maximus taught that Christ was incarnate in Scripture and the individual soul *cum* corporate Church, so we have seen that

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647 It is worth, I think, linking this back to William Jones and the long tradition of speculation regarding Adam’s language, a “real” natural language in which there existed no gap between sign and thing signified. The early modern obsession with discovering this language has been charted by Peter Harrison, and his conclusions fit with Thornton’s argument. Divided Christians were troubled by the inability to communicate, which led them into more and less pessimistic projects (depending on their doctrine of original sin) to reconstruct Adam’s prelapsarian, pre-Babel language. The methods of modern science as we know it were developed in the process, as logic, linguistics, mathematics, and empirical investigation were all constructed for peace-keeping ends. But more broadly, Renaissance and early modern esoteric practices recapitulated the earlier search for the pre-Babel pedagogy, after which the “Abrahamic” religions of the classic Islamic period sought. The mixture of Greek philosophical, Hermetic magical and alchemical, Arab scientific and linguistic, Jewish mystical, and Abrahamic Apocalyptic forces was bequeathed from the Levant to the West through Moorish Spain and combined with fresh Byzantine texts during the Renaissance. Cusanus, Ficino, Pico, and Reuchlin represent one reforming trajectory that could be combined and recombined with original “barbarian” Christian theosophical constructions deriving from Paracelsus, Wiegel, Boehme, Pordage, Oetinger, Baader, and Romantic *Naturphilosophie* on the one hand, and on the other with early Rosicrucian strands from Andreae, Dee, and Fludd, all of whom represented religious attempts to interpret nature. Thornton is therefore wrong in primarily seeing the Renaissance as a secularization of creation. Scholarship in the area of Western esotericism had not yet been revolutionized by the work of Frances Yates. Thornton was right, however, in that “orthodox” Christian confessions found it difficult to permanently appropriate natural philosophical traditions such as these that look, in hindsight, so strange and predestined for New Age vulgarization. Much of what was lost to increasingly naturalistic and non-Christian spirituality was an analogical worldview shared by the Fathers who otherwise rejected esoteric sources of knowledge. This includes a broad notion of a great chain of being, various microcosmic-macrocosmic correspondences between different links in the chain, and a realist (or "sacramental") view of revealed language. One wonders to what degree the loss of this shared natural philosophical background contributed to modern thelogy’s bewilderment with patristic modes of thought. The Russian Sophiologists and Von Balthasar produced not entirely successful projects that exploited these shared links with Western esotericism. See all related articles in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2006).
Thornton taught that Scripture and Church were Christ’s body-garment. 648 I will explain below in my section on the controversy with Lampe that the relationship of Christ to the parts of Scripture and nature is synecdochical. 649 To be sure, there is an analogy of proportion between the two natures of Christ, the spirit and letter of Scripture and nature, the image of God in the human person, and the fullness of unity in the Church Triumphant vs the outward form of the Church Militant. 650 But this is because of the sacrificial condescension of the hypostatic union, by which Christ has become the Whole to which the parts of Scripture, nature, and Church stand in a synecdochical relationship.

IV: Revelation Reconsidered

1) The Three Organs of Revelation

In Christ, the order of his resurrected body becomes a template for the other “organs of revelation.” Of these, there are three: Creation, the Old and New Testament people of God, and the Bible. Creation, said Thornton, mediated between the other two organs. When Christendom broke down, however, this link was lost and creaturely forms were filleted off of the other organs. Where Protestants emphasized Scripture, Catholics emphasized Church, and Creation was taken over by Renaissance humanists and secularized. The result was inorganic, abstract conceptions of biblical and ecclesial unity. In truth, as the macrocosmic Christ is the New Creation, Church and Scripture are a New Creation in him.

2) The Church as Organ of Revelation: Atomism, Inscrutability, and the Image of God


649 At the very least synecdoche expresses a *pros hen* analogy, because various parts are related to a single whole. *Pros hen* analogy is the result of a formal cause (or “whole”) containing an effect within itself. Synecdoche depends upon the form being contained in its effects. Christ’s Servant-Form is not, however, a mere abstraction accounting for the similarity of various effects. It is the concrete shape of Christ’s incarnate, ecclesial, and scriptural body. This Form of forms is the result of his hypostasis assuming and becoming the center of creation through combat with the dispersive power of evil.

650 See Boersma’s charts on 116 and 119 of *Scripture as Real Presence*. 
Because the Church is the Body of Christ, it is also the New Creation. The kind of created order assumed and redeemed in Christ’s body becomes the kind of order found in the redeemed community of persons. They too are one with creation through physical identity with it, such that its order is taken up into the higher realm of personhood and Christian fellowship (koinonia). Here an analogy to the “Form of the Servant” is instanced on the one hand in the relationship of higher to lower in human anthropology, which is to say that the “person” elevates the body by submission to its limits. The body is then the condition for personhood’s manifestation, while personhood unifies and carries the body beyond itself. Having elevated created order, on the other hand, human persons carry that same order into the social organism of the Church. Here another analogy to the “Form of the Servant” is apparent in the way that each limited member of the Body receives itself by sacrificially losing itself on behalf of the whole. Each part of the body has its own unique limits, without which it would be useless to the whole. But insofar as it has a vocation in the whole, each member becomes unique.

This organic concept of unity has epistemological consequences. Thornton explains that an “educational discipline” is necessary among Christ’s members because knowledge of other persons demands that we rightly dispose ourselves toward them in order to see their relation to the Body. Much in the spirit of Butler, Thornton indicates that submission of will is the condition of any knowledge at all, for exhaustive knowledge of anything is impossible. But if practical decisions depended on such knowledge, then nothing would get done. In other words, love is the condition of truth.

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651 Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, 310-311.
652 Ibid., 31-32.
In regards to persons, we apprehend them as a simple whole (“by faith” as it were), but they have an inescapable element of inscrutability — otherwise known as the “Image of God” — that can only be seen to a limited degree as their character unfolds over time. By trying to comprehend individuals in abstraction from the whole, we risk “atomism.” On analogy to physics, which used to hold that atoms were exhaustively knowable in isolation from their relational frame, or to Liberal biblical science, which would collect “original facts” only to impose on them an external order supplied by the mind of the investigator, Thornton says that atomism occurs when persons are abstracted from the natural web of relations that give them depth.

This holism might seem to squash diversity, but Thornton draws a metaphysical illustration from Leibniz to show how unity is the basis for diversity in Christ. For Leibniz, creation is a unity not through any cross-connection of one part, or “monad,” to another, but in relation to God’s preordered harmony (the macrocosm). In themselves, monads are shut up like “houses with no windows,” yet they microcosmically (that is, synecdochically) “reflect” the whole ordered web of relations (“the pre-ordained harmony”) from their own unique position. Outside of this order they have no particularity. Further, each unit in this organic order only touches the others indirectly through God’s pre-ordained harmony. The analogy to our theological point is clear. Inasmuch as each member — and for Thornton this can refer to parts of Creation, Church, or Scripture — fulfills its function in the Whole Christ and maintains its given “measure” and “proportion,” it reflects him who is the preordained harmony, Jesus. Unity is not through cross-connections of human fellowship but directly to Christ, the

653 Ibid., 301ff., 323-325.
654 Ibid., II, vi.
655 Ibid., 299-300.
656 Ibid., 231-233.
“Whole.” Thus, for example in the Church, each member maintains an incommunicable aspect that is “inscrutable” to other parts, their soul being perfectly knowable to God alone. This inscrutability, though a result of their self-limitation and relational distance from every other member, is precisely what allows them to image both God’s inscrutability and his lowly self-communicating love, each in their own unique way. It is precisely in submitting to its function as a hand that a hand can serve the body. Leibniz has the further insight that representation does not only go on at every different structural “level” of an organism but at every “stage” of its development as well, which should put to rest the worry that organic order is static. All this can be put in terms of “response”: insofar as every (temporal or structural) member of the Body can fulfill its diverse kenotic function, that part can respond to God’s will. But note that the equal ability to respond rests on diversity, and that diversity depends on unity.

By ignoring the pre-ordained harmony, members not only turn into atoms without particularity, they become entirely knowable and controllable, which opens the door to coercion. The example Thornton uses is again drawn from early modern physics, which proceeded as if it could control nature by imposing an external order on it so that the spheres of knowledge could become more and more specialized in search of an illusory, anthropocentric power: “For if the smaller the sphere of knowledge the narrower the corresponding range of knowledge becomes, then the greater the mastery in such a compass the less significant that mastery might actually be, and yet the more delusive in its apparent perfection!” The greater the appearance of control over fully “scrutable” atoms, the more obscured nature’s own intrinsic order became because

657 Ibid., 270ff.
658 Ibid., 300ff., 325.
659 Ibid., 304ff.
660 Ibid., 304.
661 Ibid., 86. This is essentially Eric Voegelin’s point about the Gnostic’s illusory sense of control over nature; *Science, Politics and Gnosticism: Two Essays* (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Editions, 1997).
nature was reduced to the sum of its parts. This same epistemic drive for absolute explanations and total control is behind the harmonizing historicist hermeneutics of Liberal Bible critics.

3) The Bible as Organ of Revelation: A Scriptural Ontology

What, now, does it mean that the Bible is the New Creation? Here I will be a bit more constructive. We have already seen that the Scripture came to fill the role of the “eternal order” for Thornton. That is to say that the Platonic forms were radically historicized as scriptural particulars, or, put differently, the divine mind (or at least God’s “ideas”) was equated with the Bible. This is true both in a formal and in a final causal sense. For the Bible is both the plan of creation and the plan of creation realized. It is both the beginning and the end of creation. And this, as I have said, is by virtue of the macrocosmic function of Christ’s sacrificial response to the Father in place of Adam.

We are now in a position to clarify the kind of analogical relationship the two books of Scripture and nature have to each other. Inasmuch as Scripture is a hypostatic extension of Christ, who in co-operation with the Trinity is the efficient cause of the two acts of creation and new creation, nature is related to Scripture as an effect is formally within its cause. In the first act of creation there is no prior “matter” out of which creatures are moulded. Rather, “form” and “matter” are created simultaneously. In the second act of redemption, the “matter” is an unfinished, and indeed fallen, creation. As Thornton recognized, following Irenaeus, the first creation was incomplete. Even had Adam never fallen from grace, he would have needed to be “deified,” which is to say that he needed to follow God beyond his natural limits into the realm of the supernatural. The refashioning of Adam, the discipline of Israel in the wilderness, and the education of mankind in a new creation all obviously presupposed creation.662

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662 Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, chapters 5, 6; cf. The Dominion of Christ. The way in which the Servant’s Form is pressed upon humanity through the process of divine pedagogy corresponds in the quadriga’s
As such, the “material cause” of redemption presupposes creation, and humanity in particular. As Shen writes, the cultural forms of human response to revelation are material and not formal. 663 We are in a position further to state that, inasmuch as the People of God remains in a sinful state, the historical Church militant is also the “material cause” of redemption. Here is another reason why the kind of authority Scripture and the Church militant have are different and asymmetrically in favour of Scripture. On the other hand, the Church triumphant and perfected is identical with Scripture as the telos of creation. 664

V. Hermeneutical Consequences

It is worth noting a few of the hermeneutical consequences that come from this scriptural ontology. First, time and space will not limit the connection of creatures one to another. Second, biblical authors do not conventionally assign the signification of their tropes, but rather discover natural symbols whose semantic range extends beyond their own intentional grasp. Indeed, the authors themselves become figures. Third, the distinction between facts and symbols breaks down if the scriptural text is the most real thing in creation.

1) Time and Space

Although Thornton escaped the spiritualizing tendency of the “quasi-Platonism” to which a critic like Lampe objected, the so-called Hebrew view of time that Thornton described is still

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664 Another way to say it is that our names are figurally written in the book of life. The whole of Thornton’s Christ and the Church is about this “anagogical” step of interpretation, particularly chapters 2 and 3, where he looks at the way in which our names are spoken by Christ, reflected in the cosmos, and written in Scripture. Florensky equates names with figures: Pavel Florensky, At the Crossroads of Science & Mysticism: On the Cultural-Historical Place and Premises of the Christian World-Understanding, trans. Boris Jakim (Kettering, OH: Semantron Press, 2014), 97-99.
quite Platonic in its prioritizing of synchronic whole-part relations. If each moment in the time-series is immediately related to the whole, then history must be reconceptualized in a predominantly non-causal way. “The many” who are “included in the whole,” he wrote,

... are spread out through time; but the Hebrew mind does not envisage the time-process as a causal sequence, since it does not think, as we do, in terms of logical chains of causation. On the contrary, all the details are related to one another by their dependence upon the whole to which they belong.\(^{665}\)

The hermeneutical consequence is that each part signifies the whole. And the whole, to be sure, is Christ. Catholics customarily talk about the extension of the incarnation in the Church, which is the direction in which Thornton took this biblical ontology:

... the extension of the Christ will be thought of in terms of context rather than of causal succession. Christ is then seen to be that Whole which includes all the people of God in its context. As (in Wheeler Robinson’s analogy) the sentence is implicit in its parts, so Christ is implicitly present in the unfolding story of his people, as that Word in which all their several contributions find significance; with which, therefore, in a sense they are identified, whatever their temporal relation to his earthly life may be. When once the idea of causal succession has retreated into the background, making room for Hebrew presuppositions, then the Whole is no longer thought of primarily in terms of temporal order. Thus the redeemer, by penetrating into the orbit of the Adamic social group, has made his own human range co-terminous with that orbit. Conversely, by the same fact he has also gathered up the vast multitudes of humanity into the brief *compendium* of our salvation which he enacted in his earthly life.\(^{666}\)

Like figural readers before him, Thornton acknowledged that scriptural ambiguities and apparent discrepancies were the result of this peculiar ontology. Created things had a kind of spatial and temporal immediacy one to the other that gave rise to certain paradoxes characteristic of biblical Hebrew. Such paradoxes, though, were aids to understanding, not problems to smooth over. The Hebrew way of thinking was not logical but analogical. The Hebrew psychology

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\(^{665}\) Thornton, *Revelation and the Modern World*, 152-153. Put differently, God does not create under compulsion. Thus there is no logical necessity between God and world that could possibly be expressed in causal relationships. A logically consistent theist must, therefore, reject the diachronic view of time as normative. This is a simple point, but one lost on most modern theologians. Leibniz, however, is someone with a more “Hebrew” conception of time that Thornton discusses in chapter X.ii.

\(^{666}\) Ibid., 154-155.
“strives after totality,” and this resulted in a form of thinking and speaking in which the identities of things, figures, and events were not fixed. Rather, they dynamically interchanged their qualities and properties; they “fused” and recapitulated over the course of Scripture.

The ancient world to which scripture and Christian origins belonged lived much nearer to the vivid associations of the concrete whole where likeness and contingency easily melt into all-embracing unities. Accordingly the Hebrew mind did not move primarily along logical lines, at least in the sense in which we understand logic. The pillars upon which the biblical chain of thought rests are not abstract propositions but concrete images, one image suggesting another, sometimes through purely verbal associations …. In such a world of image-thinking it is a serious mistake to suppose that logical distinctions are consistently observed; for where logic might emphasize difference the imagination may emphasize likeness or close association.

Shen explains,

As a result the same image may be retained through changing contexts with a richness of details that may be logically incompatible with one another. But they exist together in multiple contrasts and varying likeness in the harmony of an all-embracing whole. The more an image can perform this, e.g., the “form of the servant,” the more valuable it is. The resultant whole, it can be seen, can hardly be logical, because it is a composite of different lines of analogy or contrast, whereas the essence of logical thinking is the pursuit of a single line at a given time and for a given purpose. Another way of stating this is that logical thinking keeps identities relatively distinct, clear and constant, whereas thinking in images is the opposite.

We can see here that Thornton essentially came to reject iron laws of time and space to which God had to submit. As with Figgis, Thornton believed that the past was in submission to God. On this point Figgis and Thornton were only part of a long tradition of Christian reflection about time from Augustine through Berkeley, for whom past, present, and future were different

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667 Ibid.,152. The Hebrew way of thinking is to hold together antinomies, or a “complex of opposites,” 63-65,197; indeed, this way of holding opposites in tension is how Thornton defines “orthodoxy” over against “heresy,” which resolves one side of a tension (115-121).
modes of the present, different modes of divine presence. If this could be said about time, then
the spatial dimensions of presence and absence would have to be rethought as well. Thus
Thornton talks about how parts of wholes are “compresent” to each other, “interpenetrate,” and
how the whole “coinheres” in each part. Of course if something like the real presence in the
eucharist and the doctrine of the communion of saints is true, then this view of space and time
was implicit in catholic doctrine. Thornton had the virtue of bringing out its relevance for
understanding figural hermeneutics.

2) Authorial Intent

What does this say about biblical authorship? As that created context into which the
Lord is incarnate, biblical “images” have an independence vis-à-vis Scripture’s authors. That is
to say that the elements of Scripture are logically prior to, and ontologically “pre-exist,” the
biblical writers by virtue of their transfiguration in Christ. Thornton was quite willing to accept
the equivalent Jewish conclusion from Proverbs 8 that God created the world through

torah.

This is a complementary interpretation to Wisdom as Christ himself. Nevertheless, this does not
denigrate the role of the Prophets and Apostles in the transmission of revelation, for the concept
of torah as “instruction” encompasses both the written content of revelation (Scripture) and also
the oral form in which it is passed on in history (tradition). In regards to the latter, one of the
most common uses of torah in the Old Testament has to do with parents passing on instruction to
their children. Thus the creaturely organ which revelation creates in order to extend itself in time

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671 For “coinherence,” “compresent,” and “interpenetration,” see Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World,
144-147, 152ff, 192n, 242, 249, 263ff, 309, 313, 318, 324.
672 Ibid., 205.
is, in addition to Scripture, the “genealogical continuity” of authorized teachers in the Church.673

Through such elders, familial and ecclesial, wisdom is recapitulated in time.

But again, if biblical words and images ontologically pre-exist Scripture’s authors, it naturally follows that they have a field of relations independent of the authors’ intentions. Later interpreters, therefore, could in many ways understand the significance of the prophets’ words better than the prophets. Speaking of the peculiarly symbolic character of events in John’s Gospel, and whether John was aware of this, Thornton wrote,

We must leave open the possibility that [John] was concerned only to produce a simple record of facts; always supposing that he would do so in accordance with the literary habits of his time and place, and of the Christian community to which he belonged, equipped, also, with the power of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and inspiration. The qualifying clause, however, is sufficiently wide to leave room for great varieties of interpretation — for any in fact which do not simply prejudge the historical issue. The effects, if not consciously intended by the evangelist, would issue from the given revelation of the Word, bearing its own testimony in and through the facts thus faithfully recorded by the inspired author.674

Thornton does not deny that context — “the literary habits of his time and place” — was relevant. But Philip Shen explains that “to question whether a certain meaning read out of the text is really there or not is to Thornton, in principle, a secondary question. ‘It may well have been in the author’s mind,’ is his attitude, but what does that really matter?”675 The objective connections were all latent in Scripture, waiting for later interpreters to discover, regardless of whether these objects were all in the mind of John.676

673 Ibid., 207.
674 Ibid., 182, n. 1.
676 Another objection can be raised against the intentions of Scripture’s authors: what if their sinful natures distorted the transmission of revelation? If we do not need to conceive of “inspiration” entirely in terms of dictation but in terms of figuration, this problem also withers. We need to understand, first, in what the difference between a biblical author and me consists. For, prior to their prophetic speaking, authors are already created figures. They may intend to speak and they may intend to act and this all might be inspired by God, but prior to all this they are prophetic
3) Ostensive Reference

But a more radical conclusion followed from Thornton’s ontology of Scripture regarding the historical Jesus: “We may speculate as to the exact form of the *ipsissima verba*; but what is given to us in the gospels is the revealed Word of God, whether verbally identical with Christ’s spoken word or not.”⁶⁷⁷ From the axiom that the Bible is the divine mind, we can conclude that there really was nothing “behind” the text to which its words point. Thornton believed that “[a] clear-cut distinction … between the factual and the symbolic, so important to the modern mind, is not drawn by the ancient authors.”⁶⁷⁸ We have seen in Chapter 2 that in order to make room for biblical criticism, Charles Gore admitted that certain Old Testament narratives were literary compositions that conventionally prefigured Christ precisely as literary constructs. This allowed him to avoid the problem of ostensive historical reference. This move was only possible because Gore shifted his understanding of figural reference from an ontology of God-given natural figures in their being, and that is a fact regardless of their own intentionality, good or bad. True, we are all types in this way. But instead of differentiating the kind of supernatural inspiration I might have as an interpreter over against the kind of inspiration the prophet might have as a writer, I would like to differentiate myself from a prophet based not on the different kinds of inspired intentional acts that we respectively have, but upon the different intentional uses to which God puts us. He simply uses a prophet differently than he uses me. The way he uses a prophet is as a figure for what happens in the world of shadows that I inhabit. The prophetic author is used as a formal and final cause for others like me who are still “matter” being molded. The author inhabits the end of time where sin is no more, while I am on my way. I offer this as a more elegant explanation of inspiration than the clumsy bottom-up approaches on offer in the twentieth century.


symbolism\textsuperscript{679} to a mostly conventional view of symbolism. To be sure, such humanly intended symbolism still rendered Jesus’ identity. But historical facts lay behind Scripture in a way they did not for Thornton, for whom it was just the reverse: Scripture was behind historical facts; Scripture was \textit{more real} than historical facts. Perhaps the most helpful ontological scheme that has captured this God-Scripture-creation relation is summed up by Scholem: the Torah is at once the unravelling of the divine Name and the blueprint of creation.\textsuperscript{680} Scripture and nature are expressions of the divine identity, and creation is modelled off of Scripture. This brings us full circle to William Jones and in a related way to Berkeley, for whom there was nothing behind creation’s particulars but a self-communicating God.

Even if this sounds like a radically controversial point, in the terms set out in our first chapter on Butler it is somewhat less. There I claimed that Butler (and now Thornton) took the unity of Scripture and nature by faith. But this did not prevent Butler from using historical and scientific “positive evidences” to supplement a cumulative case for Christianity. Similarly, Thornton drew heavily from historical-critical sources to describe Hebrew psychology and other things. It is just that neither man thought that faith in the unity of God’s work could be established by reason; unity was a corollary of theism. For both men, belief has less to do with epistemic certainties and more to do with volitional habits of trust, love, and hope. These habits can be cultivated by participating in the Church’s life, by “trying on” its belief-producing practices.

\textit{VI. Criticism of Thornton’s Hermeneutics}

\textsuperscript{679} To be sure, since even human compositions are creatures, and are therefore natural, they \textit{can} function as figures provided one does not limit God’s ability to figure things through human intentions alone. The apologists Pusey complained about in my second chapter were already moving in this direction.\textsuperscript{680} Gershom Scholem, “The Meaning of Torah in Jewish Mysticism” in \textit{On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism} (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).
Given this bundle of radical hermeneutical consequences of Christ’s recapitulating work, Thornton’s biblical ontology and figural method were not well received in his time. Here we look at two major issues before we move into a final section on the problem of theodicy. First, we will look at how Thornton’s use of figuration in the confirmation debate had the effect of discrediting his method as a whole. Second, we will look at how Thornton dealt with the problem of Scripture’s use of ancient cosmography, i.e. the problem of “accommodation.”

1) Confirmation and Figuration in the Thornton-Lampe Debate

Michael Ramsey, Steven Neill, Lesslie Newbigin, and especially Geoffrey Lampe (1912-1980), the distinguished Liberal evangelical editor of *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, were unsympathetic to Thornton’s figural approach to Scripture because of the way he employed it in sacramental controversy. What Lampe found troubling about Thornton’s exegesis was twofold. On the one hand, Thornton was using his “typological” exegesis to establish doctrines that Lampe found unbiblical — a catholic doctrine of episcopacy and a radical doctrine of confirmation. On the other hand, his typological method needed to include a criterion by

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681 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defence of the South India Scheme* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 42n1: “St Paul’s epistles are the writings of an evangelist and a pastor passionately concerned that his spiritual children should know the truth and be guarded against falsehood. They are written to be understood. It is not fitting that an expositor [Thornton] should use them as though they were a collection of detached clues in a crossword puzzle. There is an abundant literature on such subjects as the millennium and the Great Pyramid to remind us that with these methods anything may be proved from Scripture, but nothing will be learned.”


which Lampe and others could objectively judge between legitimate and illegitimate typological readings.  

a) Confused Typology

Firstly, Thornton’s conventional doctrine of apostolic succession made him an opponent of reunion schemes with non-episcopal churches at home and abroad. Less conventionally, his emphasis on the episcopate as the necessary basis for sacramental validity led him to doubt the efficacy of Free Church baptisms since they could not be completed by the episcopal seal at confirmation — a step further than even Roman theologians would allow. Though later qualified, his initial position was that the Holy Spirit only came through episcopal confirmations:  

“Unconfirmed Christians, it would seem, have not yet entered into the full mercies of the covenant; for they have not yet received that ‘first instalment’ of the indwelling Spirit which prepares us for the day of our final redemption.” Lampe understood precisely what was at stake. In response to the position taken up by Thornton and others like Gregory Dix, and earlier by A. J. Mason and F. W. Puller (Thornton’s uncle), Lampe wrote The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers. In his original introduction he states that if Thornton’s position were taken up, “… at a stroke the whole basis of the oecumenical movement for the unity of Christendom would be shattered. …

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685 Ibid., 21.
[O]n Thornton’s view no non-episcopal body, and no church whose bishops cannot claim to represent the ‘apostolic ministry,’ possesses the Holy Spirit…”

Lampe was correct in arguing that Thornton failed to establish his doctrine of confirmation from Scripture, but he nevertheless failed to demonstrate that Thornton’s figural method was the cause of his doctrinal problems. It is possible to draw incorrect figural conclusions without calling into question the whole hermeneutic, in the same way one might come to incorrect conclusions using biblical criticism without “throwing the baby out with the bathwater.” There are two reasons why Thornton was not able to establish his two-stage doctrine of initiation: he based it on an overly confident literal reading and on an inconsistent figural reading.

The weakness of Thornton’s literal argument included a contestable assignation of certain intentions to St Paul and Justin Martyr. Thornton thought he had found a figure of two-stage (baptism-confirmation) initiation in Joshua and Ezekiel, but his argument failed when he claimed that Paul and Justin had discovered the same figural links in those Old Testament books. Lampe did not think Thornton established this with a high enough degree of certainty. Without the certainty of apostolic use of the figure to justify a two-stage rite, the alleged typological distinction between baptism and confirmation in Joshua and Ezekiel could provide no basis for New Testament practice.

Thornton’s confused usage of typological method is harder to summarize. One very inconvenient fact for Thornton was that his Old Testament figures for confirmation — for

689 Ibid., xiii.
example, circumcision — were used for baptism by the Fathers.\textsuperscript{691} He therefore argued that the Fathers’ characteristically figural way of thinking allowed them to refer to one part of initiation under the name of the other — a sort of communication of idiom on analogy to the “interchange” between the divine and human in Christ, the Old and New Testaments, wholes and parts, and between nature and grace.\textsuperscript{692} No doubt these last three relations are proportional analogies, yet it is hard to understand how baptism and confirmation constitute an analogous pair.

The real problem is that the duality in initiation is not between two parts of a single rite, but between the form and content of initiation. Thornton admits that this distinction is real when he criticizes evangelicals for their separation of inner illumination by the Spirit from outward ritual form. When Lampe identifies the anointing of the Spirit in faith with the inner aspect of the outer form of baptism, however, Thornton inconsistently rejects the distinction. The “seal of the Spirit” must be another outward form. I believe the confusion in Thornton’s interpretation here comes from trying to find analogies of proportion in the wrong place. Furthermore, this would not have happened if Thornton more consistently used his figural method. Thornton has already articulated the \textit{pros hen} analogy: the metaphysical distinction between whole and parts. This kind of analogy explains how all of the parts of Christ’s life can singly signify the whole. Nativity, baptism, transfiguration, cross, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost all repeat the same pattern unified by Christ himself. These “body-parts” of Christ’s life are obviously more numerous than just two stages. Had Thornton just referred this to the phenomenon of recapitulation, he could have explained the “interchange of properties” between the various moments of Christ’s life. That is because there are \textit{two} kinds of interchange, as he was well aware. The first is between two different ontological levels: divinity-humanity, content-form,
New Testament–Old Testament, person-body, grace-nature, Scripture-nature. This is a proportional, analogical relationship. The second is better described as synecdochical relations between several parts on the same ontological level: the texts of Scripture, the members of the Church, the parts of an ecosystem. The second kind of interchange logically depends on the first.

To be fair, what seems to be the real issue for Thornton is the relationship of the beginning of the new creation in baptism to its eschatological fulfillment. Separated from the rites of initiation (baptism + confirmation), the issue for Thornton is this: Genesis 2 has a two-stage “moulding” and “breathing into” Adam, which for him signifies the beginning and end of the Christian life. Thornton’s question is whether beginning-end is a relation analogous to the two natures of Christ, nature-grace, and so on. I think not. The first “ex nihilo” creation must, of course, be the “dust” out of which Adam is made. I propose that the further distinction between redemption and deification can account for both the re-creative “moulding” action of God and the spiritual inbreathing. On the one hand, redemption means the forgiveness of sins that takes Adam from hell back to earth. On the other hand, deification takes Adam beyond the realm of organized matter into the heavenly realm of the supernatural. Thornton’s problem is that he still wants to map redemption and deification onto a timeline and assign rites to both.693 The confusion is that whereas creation and new creation are two divine acts, the new creation is one act that simultaneously achieves redemption and deification. If deification were not the ultimate goal of the incarnation, the dramatic action of life would be wholly shaped around humanity’s battle with sin and not with their adventure into the supernatural; the spiritual life would be shaped around a “no” to sin rather than a “yes” to the divine pedagogue.

693 The desire to postulate a rite behind biblical symbols is also an undefended assumption probably drawn from the Myth and Ritual school that influenced Thornton in the work of S. H. Hooke and Aubrey Johnson. But if one does not accept the assumption that every myth presupposes a ritual, then Thornton’s arguments for confirmation again fail.
There are other contestable readings in Thornton’s *Confirmation* book, but they are not problematic in ways different from the interpretations we have examined. Are these interpretations examples of “eisegesis”? If so, it is not due to Thornton’s hermeneutics but to his underlying conviction that the episcopate is *the* locus within which all the outer forms of the Church’s rites are held together, and through which all of the Church’s members are held together in unity. This is what motivates the highly contestable conclusions found in *Confirmation* (though it still contains some highly inspired figural readings of enduring worth). One question to which we will return in relation to the problem of theodicy is whether Thornton’s exegetical defence of the episcopate was also as poorly executed as his justification of two-stage initiation.

b) No Criterion of Interpretation

The second thing Lampe objected to in Thornton’s figural exegesis was that he allegedly lacked a criterion between good and bad typological readings. As a general rule, Lampe viewed diachronic readings as valid and synchronic readings of the Old Testament as invalid, yet he only wrote a few dozen pages on his own theory of typology, and he failed to comment on *Revelation and the Modern World* in a sustained way. I would argue that his inability to appreciate Thornton’s hermeneutics ran deeper than just sacramental politics. Thornton had articulated just what was wrong with Lampe’s own hermeneutics, and Lampe did not have an answer. As against the “fundamentalists,” with whom Thornton was sometimes lumped together, Liberal evangelicals of Lampe’s generation generally followed an “event”-based, “neo-

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orthodox” doctrine of Scripture. Here I will distinguish Thornton from both of these options while articulating his moral and Christological criteria for figural reading.

By the mid-1930s the tenor of Anglican theology began to change from the apologetic posture of most Modernist and “orthodox” projects to something much more focused on the unity of Scripture and the integrity of Christian witness. Illustrative of this transition was Edwyn Hoskyns’ chapter in *Essays Catholic and Critical* — probably the most influential contribution to the volume.696 His translation of Karl Barth’s commentary on Romans, and his brief teaching career at Cambridge before his untimely death in 1937, established him as the most revolutionary and inspiring voice in Anglican biblical studies in the interwar period.697 But as Packer suggests, there was not a consensus on the kind of biblical unity implied by his approach to reading the Bible “from within.”698 “Fundamentalism” with its claim to a pyramid of propositional biblical truths was not a widely accepted option, so a broadly “neo-orthodox” position developed that identified the word of God with God’s punctiliar actions in salvation history. “Events” became the content of revelation. The “neo” aspect of this orthodoxy, represented in a mature form by Reginald H. Fuller, was the careful way in which it denied that “the human words [of Scripture] came directly from God…”699 Only the second person of the Trinity was properly the Word, and all human speech was witness to His unique intervention in history.700 Biblical unity was not to be found in the words themselves. By contrast, Lampe stated that for pre-critical exegesis, “the

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698 J. I. Packer, *The Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer, Vol 4* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998), 325-327. Hoskyns’ approach was a step in the right direction. But for Packer, he and Barth could not be fully endorsed by evangelicals because they were not clear on verbal inspiration.
700 Ibid., 90-91.
unity of the Bible was the fundamental premise upon which all were agreed.”701 The development of biblical criticism problematized this when it placed a new emphasis on the diversity of the writings. Therefore, theologians had to find unity elsewhere.702

In order to justify a limited practice of typology, Lampe had to explain what biblical unity meant since what was at stake was the Church’s ability to receive the Old Testament as Scripture.703 Uncontroversially, he agreed with Thornton that there is a common Hebrew cultural inheritance in both Testaments and that certain ways of thinking — particularly the odd typological methods of interpretation utilized by the prophets and apostles — are not historically unintelligible.704 The most significant level of unity, however, is the thematic unity shared by the biblical books, which exhibit a common covenant-history theme or story arch. Put differently, God’s acts in history exhibit a certain pattern.705 In sum:

> If we admit the unity of Scripture in the sense that it is the literature of people whose thought was controlled by a single series of images, and that it is a body of writings whose explicit or implicit theme throughout is the people and the Covenant, and if, further, we hold that Christ is the unifying centre-point of Biblical history, deliberately fulfilling the various images presented by that literature and bringing together different threads within it to form a consistent pattern, then we can have no objection to a typology which seeks to discover and make explicit the real correspondences in historical events which have been brought about by the recurring rhythm of divine activity. We cannot object to this, unless, indeed, we are willing to “demythologize” very freely.706

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702 Ibid., 15, 17.
703 Ibid., 17.
704 Ibid., 18-19.
Such a view denied the verbal inspiration of the Bible and, therefore, rejected types that rely upon “verbal similarities” and “verbal associations” between books as “jugglery with words and etymologies.” Lampe, therefore, found fault with Thornton, the Fathers, and the Apostles themselves. Given the fact that human words only make sense in their “historical” context, it could only be pure chance when biblical writers separated by ages unknowingly echo each other. It was wrong to come to doctrinal conclusions based on correspondences that ought at best to be used for rhetorical effect in sermons.

But can we really believe that Lampe adequately described the method of the Apostles and Fathers with the facile explanation of subjective fancy? And why did he not comment on Thornton’s sophisticated hermeneutical writing? To be sure, Lampe admitted that “quasi-Platonist” metaphysics lay behind the synchronic figural correspondences he found so distasteful in Hebrews. He even admitted that this is not a Greek perversion, but a native Hebrew approach. But he failed to address the phenomenological justification for this way of thinking: the fact of

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707 Ibid., 36-8. To be sure Fuller, “Scripture,” redefined inspiration to exclude verbal inspiration and inerrancy, and this might be perfectly acceptable on his account of event-metaphysics. For all intents and purposes, it does create a canon-within-the-canonical despite his best intentions (91, 93-6). He would also have to wriggle out of the plain meaning of the Book of Common Prayer’s Article XX, which states that we may not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” Non-repugnance is conceptually easier to define on a straightforward doctrine of verbal inspiration. Perhaps Lampe, Fuller, and others could say that the “spirit” of the canonical witnesses, though factually wrong about a number of things, was the same. But if the canonical writers can be wrong about the facts of the “event” to which they witness, then we are on a slippery slope towards redefining the event existentially like Bultmann, a move that Lampe fears in the quote above. David Kelsey used G. Ernest Wright as a general type of a doctrine of Scripture like Fuller’s and Lampe’s in The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology. On the one hand, Kelsey was critical of the “event” construal of scriptural authority because it could naturally slide back towards the propositional approach of the evangelicalism it was meant to avoid. Biblical concepts will be inferred from the event-narrative, and those concepts are what are authoritative for current theological proposals (37). On the other hand, Kelsey noted that the “event” doctrine of Scripture, divorced from truthful propositions about historical details, could also slide towards Bultmannianism (36). That Lampe lumped Origen, and therefore Thornton, together with Bultmann can be seen in his discussion of allegorical subjectivity in “The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture: To Gregory the Great,” 165-164. It is ironic, then, that Lampe himself can be accused of an implicit Bultmannian trajectory. Liberals and evangelicals were right, I think, in seeing this type of biblical theology as inherently unstable. Moreover, and in line with Thornton’s theology, Kelsey finds another hole in the “event” doctrine: “No question whatever is raised about the validity of the implicit distinction between ‘content’ and ‘form’ in scripture” (38). This is Thornton’s criticism, and it is telling that Lampe, having read Thornton’s argument, gives no response to this problem.

sameness-in-difference. If one rejects the monist answer that sameness-in-difference is epiphenomenal, then one has taken the first step towards Platonism (and one does not even have to be Greek to make this move!). When Lampe claimed that there are “real correspondences” in the saving events of history, he made a metaphysical claim that he then failed to ground. His readers are left to ask: by virtue of what does the sameness consist? His answer could only be that saving events exhibit a similarity due to a common cause, God. And if Christ is God, then the typical theological objection to the “unearthly” character of Platonism is silenced, as the “forms” are radically historicized in the figure of the Incarnate Lord. It is characteristic of Platonism that the relationship of historical shadows to their forms is logical and not temporal and applies even in the Christian universe where the forms are Christologically construed. Thus Lampe, who admitted the difficulty of applying his criterion of legitimacy to the synchronic Christological “allegories” (his word for illegitimate figures) of Hebrews, but who nevertheless parsed them into tidy piles, was out of his element. He neither understood the logic and creational metaphysics of “allegory” (which can be the only reason he failed to comment on Thornton’s hermeneutics) nor discovered a criterion of legitimacy to prohibit it.

Furthermore, if “real correspondences” are the work of God, and God is the Creator, then divine correspondences will be found not only between historical events but between all creatures — things, qualities, attributes, persons, words. The correspondence between the scarlet cord of Rahab at Jericho and the blood of Christ, which Lampe rejected as “plainly unreal

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710 My hunch is that the artificial separation between typology and allegory made by Lampe and others in the twentieth century may have influenced Peter Harrison to anachronistically see this distinction already at work in the sixteenth-century Reformers. His thesis that the literal reading of Scripture affected the literal (i.e., mechanistic) reading of nature is probably overstated. Surely Protestants were not consistently illogical for the past five centuries in opposing divinely caused events to created things as texts meant for figural reading. And yet Thornton would agree with Harrison that mechanism was the consequence of the Reformation. It is just that Thornton places the emphasis on division as the cause of this hermeneutical devolution. Peter Harrison, The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
and artificial,”711 is obviously a possibility. Either such “correspondences” are “real” and quasi-
Platonism follows, or correspondences are epiphenomenal and monistic-atomistic metaphysics 
follow.712

Thornton’s belief in “verbal associations” was a corollary of his biblical ontology and 
theodicy. This belief in the equal inspiration of the whole Scripture led his critics to regularly 
label him as a “fundamentalist,”713 but an honest understanding of fundamentalism shows that it 
actually shares a common apologetic motive with Lampe. Fundamentalists just as often reject 
allegory because it cannot prove doctrine, for the Bible is a book of literal proof-texts.714 Types 
and symbols, in order to be polemically useful, must be shown to be intended by the biblical 
author, as Lampe would have agreed.715 On a more positive note, the innerrant perspicuity of 
Scripture is also meant to aid obedience. Here so-called fundamentalists actually find common 
cause with Thornton, whose patristic allegories were meant to kindle piety, though in Thornton’s 
case (and in contrast to the fundamentalist) the hiddenness of the figures is what inflames the 
heart.716 Lampe, however, explicitly rejected “edification” as a criterion of a good biblical

712 One might take this to the logical conclusion that even letters have independent ontological significance. Joseph 
Dan has said of the “Christian kabbalists” that they “were most impressed by the Jewish nonsemantic treatment of 
language, for which they had no Christian counterpart.” This is because “[t]he Hebrew concept of language as an 
expression of infinite divine wisdom contrasted with the intensely semantic Christian attitude towards scriptures, 
which was the result of their being translations...” Joseph Dan, Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction, 1st ed. (New 
York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 66. It is hard to deny the legitimacy of "nonsemantic" moves once a realist 
scriptural ontology is accepted as a necessary consequence of theism in general.
Reference to the Doctrines of Creation, Revelation and Incarnation,” 37. Smith calls him a “biblical literalist” 
because of his equal regard for every part of Scripture, an exceedingly odd label for the twentieth century’s most 
prolific biblical allegorist.
714 Lampe, “The Reasonableness of Typology,” 20. For a contemporary evangelical who holds this view, see Walter 
C. Kaiser Jr.’s contribution in Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds., Three Views on the New Testament Use of 
the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 45-89.
715 Ibid., 31; cf. my discussion of Pusey in chapter 2.
716 F. W. Dillistone was one of the few admirers of Thornton’s late work. Yet even he grew worried about 
Thornton’s allegories as the last two volumes of The Form of the Servant trilogy rolled out. Dillistone did not so 
much object to Thornton’s allegorical method as fail to see the relevance of the multiplication of figures for 
everyday living. Crisis theologies, he felt, were much more pertinent. Compare Dillistone’s last two (somewhat
Yet this was the most promising aspect of Thornton’s figural approach. It is no exaggeration to place Thornton within the Christian mainstream, which subordinates knowledge to the higher purpose of formation in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. This, for Thornton, was what the Bible was for.

The inability of Lampe, Ramsey, and others to grasp this logical, metaphysical, and moral point might indicate that these more “orthodox” critics of Thornton were implicated in his


718 In Ramsey’s remembrance of the life and work of Thornton, he almost obsessively returned to the “eccentricity” of Thornton’s hermeneutics. From the early forties, he writes,

Thornton gave to poring over the Bible, soaking himself in it, and seeing a thousand connections never seen before. He became deep in typology. He did not clarify the principles on which he used it: he simply used it, confidently and ubiquitously. I was one of those rarely convinced, ready to say that eccentricity had crept into the working of his mind, and suspecting that he was not always quite serious. Most startling was his habit of invoking typology in the discussion of some current ecclesiastical problem. Thus, when discussing the relation of Baptism to Confirmation with a synod of clergy, Thornton startled them by appealing to the description of the circumcision of the Israelites in Joshua 5, where the phrase in the LXX, “sharp petrine swords,” pre-figures the two stages of Christian initiation. In the Catholicity group, papers were invited from the members to open up the examination of the relation between Catholic and Protestant thought: Thornton’s paper began with the words, “The Rabbis had a tradition that Adam was of gigantic stature.” Ramsey, “Lionel Thornton: Theologian,” ix.

Although there are fair criticisms to be made of Thornton’s figural method, the few men who made any comments on Thornton’s exegesis failed to say anything very insightful. Even his most sympathetic critic, F. W. Dillistone, found Thornton’s contemplative approach to biblical “typology” not so much unjustified as superfluous. Dillistone, “The Dominion of Christ, Being the Second Part of a Treatise on The Form of the Servant.” This is not to say that Thornton’s critics were not representative of the widely held opinion that figuration must be tied to authorial intent. We have already seen this turn as early as Newman. But what seems apparent upon reading Ramsey’s and Dillistone’s comments is that, despite their early high praise for Thornton’s project, they failed to track his argument to its logical conclusion. Compare Dillistone’s first two reviews of Thornton with his last two, per the preceding note. Also note how Ramsey gives high praise to Thornton’s early work in An Era in Anglican Theology, while he criticizes his later work in his articles listed in the previous footnote. The logical outcome so distasteful to all theological parties was that every “jot and tittle” of the Bible is revelatory, which is the very basis for figural exegesis. “That” each bit is revelatory is the logical outcome of a theistic doctrine of creation and revelation. “How” each bit is revelatory is for the exegete to explore — knowing of course that the mystery is inexhaustible.

It is only Eric Mascall who, despite agreeing with the critics that Thornton’s typological justification for his doctrine of Confirmation was unconvincing, nevertheless was able to simply articulate Thornton’s thesis in Revelation and the Modern World. Mascall clearly understands that what logically follows from Thornton’s doctrine of the Incarnate Servant is a principle of exegesis his critics found so “fundamentalist”:

I would direct attention specifically to his assertion that “nothing in scripture is too trivial to be relevant,” for it may explain much in his later writing that many readers found fantastic and undisciplined. For, even
storyline of Christian division. That is, the logic of division had worked itself out in such a way that even they could not hold together Scripture’s divine and human aspects. Sanday, mentioned above in Chapter 2, is a good illustration of Thornton’s observation that theologians had begun to pull apart the divine and human elements of Scripture, and the “neo-orthodox” followed. Thornton’s novel explanation was that this dualism was due to the breakup of Christendom at the Reformation, and earlier with the Eastern Church. In short, once the creaturely “form” of the Western Church had failed to correspond to the divine “content” of its

less than that of Gabriel Hebert a decade earlier, did Lionel Thornton’s appearance in the guise of a Biblical scholar commend him to the established practitioners of the art. To them what mattered above all else was that Biblical study should be a coldly analytical study, conducted in accordance with canons as authoritative for the secularist as for the Christian believer. For Lionel, Holy Scripture was a gift from God to his Church, given “at divers times and in diverse manners,” here a little and there a little, and garnered into the Body of Christ, in whom alone it becomes really and fully intelligible. This, I believe, explains his joy in a typological method and technique which to many appeared outrageously arbitrary and indefensible, and also the disarming way, used especially in oral discussion, in which, when one had confessed one’s inability to see the typological coherence of two particular biblical texts, he would try to resolve the problem, not by more careful study and analysis of those but by introducing several new ones, which might well be even more obscure to the baffled disciple. In fact, as regards method, Lionel might seem to be an outstanding example of the type of teacher whose idea of simplifying a problem is to make it more complicated. This was emphatically not due to any love of obscurity for its own sake and equally surely not due to any desire to pose as a pundit — for he was modest to the point of naivety — but to the conviction that Scripture was an immense and wonderful vehicle of the divine revelation, built around and focused upon the figure of the Incarnate Lord, and it was a matter of comparative indifference if some of the arguments were speculative and others implausible as long as one was clear about the structure of the whole. For Lionel’s typology was meant to dazzle with a vision rather than to silence with an argument, though his vision had the detail of a mosaic rather than the atmospheric haze of a painting by Turner; and it was the failure to understand this that often misled other people and, I fear, sometimes even misled him. E. L. Mascall, Saraband: The Memoirs of E.L. Mascall (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1992).(173-4).

719 None of Thornton’s critics took very seriously the analogy of nature that he set forth. Alternate figural histories scattered through the work of Ramsey, Hebert, and Farrar have nothing to do with it. Each of the three later theologians used typology, but all took for granted a view of time as entirely linear. Ramsey was still preoccupied with whether prophecy could be proved, Hebert with how prophecy fit within a Wellhausean framework, and Farrar with explaining “how” inspiration might have happened and to what degree it subjectively felt like poetic inspiration. None used every “jot and tittle” of Scripture to synecdochically refer to the Form of Christ. A. G. Hebert, The Throne of David: A Study of the Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ and His Church (London: Faber and Faber, 1941); Michael Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ: A Study of the Event and Its Meaning for the Christian Faith (London: Fontana, 1961); Austin Farrer, Interpretation and Belief (London: SPCK, 1976). Indeed, Mascall, Saraband, relates that Thornton and Farrer were displeased with each other’s figural foundation: “Those of us who found typology difficult to practice in any case looked on with combined admiration and amusement at the obvious disfavor with which the two typological gold-medallists Thornton and Farrer regarded each other’s typological techniques” (175). See L. S. Thornton, “‘A Rebirth of Bible Study’: Review of A Rebirth of Images — The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse by Austin Farrer,” Laudate XXVII (1949): 27–34. Here Thornton does not let on that he has trouble with Farrer’s method.

720 The logic of division here is not just conceptual but moral. Thornton understood that the humiliated unity of content with creaturely form displays the Christological Form of the Servant, and the unity is the result of sacrifice.
life in Christ, the resulting mistrust of creation’s forms to adequately communicate divine
knowledge was bound to affect the way theologians regarded Scripture’s human form. It
follows that if Thornton’s reading of the history of division is plausible — and various early
modern approaches to Scripture have indeed been shown to be attempts to deal with dogmatic
disagreement and violence — then his critics’ suspicion of Thornton’s full-blooded analogical
and figural hermeneutic is symptomatic of divided Christendom’s disease. Indeed, Thornton was
positively sympathetic towards Liberalism, since their theological errors had less to do with bad
intentions and more to do with their captivity to the law of deterioration at work since the
division of Christendom. The same holds for his “orthodox” critics who fail to diagnose modern
Christianity’s disease in terms of a disordered relationship to creation. Thornton’s figural
therapy, though, was refused by them just as it was by the Liberals.

2) Modern Science and Biblical Accommodation

a) Biblical History and the Fall

John Baillie was another theologian who accused Thornton of fundamentalism. He used
the Bultmannian issue of obsolete Greek cosmography to drive a wedge between Scripture’s

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721 I must clarify here the potentially confusing use of the word “form.” A traditional Platonic-Aristotelian
terminology uses the word to indicate both the structural order and mental conception of a created thing. As such,
“form” is contrasted with “matter,” to which forms are joined in order to instantiate the world of different things.
By contrast, the more modern terminology of “form and content” basically identifies “form” with concrete material
things, and “content” with abstract mental principles and values. As with other theologians like Balthasar, Thornton
flips back and forth between these different traditional usages without clearly defining his terms. Thus “whole” is
synonymous for Thornton with Platonic-Aristotelian “forms,” which have an existence independent of matter either
in the ideal world or in the mind. The “Form of the Servant” also seems to evoke the Platonic Logos theology
sofar as it refers to the person of the eternal Word, while at the same time being inseparable from the lowly,
concrete, creaturely “forms” into which the Word enters. So Thornton’s use of the latter phrase seems to bridge
both terminologies.

722 Ephraim Radner, The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West (Grand Rapids, MI:
University Press, 2011); Peter Harrison, The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science, (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2009); The Territories of Science and Religion, (University of Chicago Press, 2017); Richard
form and content. Baillie complains that Thornton’s view of the equal revelatory capacity of every trivial feature of the Bible commits him to old science:

Surely, to take only one example but a very obvious one, there is that in the Bible to which we must hold fast in a way to which we cannot hold fast to its pre-Copernican, even pre-Ptolemaic, cosmography of an “up-and-down” and “three-storey” universe; yet to do so is precisely to disentangle the essential revelation from the contemporary thought-form in which alone it could at that time be received. We wish to know what Father Thornton understands by “the scientific scrutiny of the outward form” which “must be freely welcomed by the believer” if it does not involve such a disentanglement, and also how he would distinguish such scrutiny from what he so much deprecates — “that process of discrimination by which we attempt to decide to what extent and in what degrees its various utterances are inspired.”

The obvious answer to this question is that, since according to Thornton every detail of Scripture is revelatory, even “pre-Ptolemaic” cosmography is about Jesus within the context of Scripture. Baillie rejects this, however, on the theory that nothing is revelation unless it can be known to be revelation: “Nothing is the vehicle of revelation for me unless I hear God speaking to me through it. But there is no Christian who hears God speaking to him through every passage in the Bible, so that for each of us there are some passages that are not revelatory at all.”Continuing, he seems to concede that the traditional moral purpose of reading means that the epistemological gap is due to the reader: “Nevertheless it is always our duty to ask ourselves whether the defect may not be in ourselves rather than in the text, whether even here it is not we who are not willing to listen rather than that nothing significant is being said.” But Baillie quickly draws back from this moral solution without ever having taken it seriously, in order to

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724 Ibid., 119.
subordinate the Bible’s role as moral pedagogue to its role as a medium for an “essential message.”

Thornton’s doctrine, however, is defensible using the Butlerian argument against *a priori* presumptions regarding the form we think a revelation ought to have been delivered in (including what apparently “scientific” details it includes). What are expedient means to God’s ends? We cannot know in advance, but we can know on analogy to our experience of nature that God’s means would be just as unpredictable as in the book of creation. Additionally, there is Butler’s point that the economy of salvation is not primarily meant to relay an “essential message,” but to test our virtues by seeing what we do with the degree of information we have. The only answer to why the Bible contains apparently “pre-Ptolemaic” cosmography is, then, to test our faith, which means that a moral reading of these details is the divinely intended meaning.

And this is precisely the kind of reading Thornton gives of the figures “up and down” in *Christ and the Church*. In his reading of the “descending city” of the bride of Christ in Revelation 21, Thornton draws a moral analogy to the descent of the Son in the incarnation. And, by participating in the obedience of the Son, the obedient city of God receives within itself the sacrificial flame of the Lamb of God, whose light previously shone out in lowliness at the transfiguration. Thornton goes so far as to morally interpret the very stars in the sky. Having established that the city of God is the New Eve whose “adornment” (*kosmos*, a noun related to “cosmetics”) refers to the beautiful “order” of creation, Thornton notices that the Bible correlates stars with individual members of the Church. He then notices a parallel verbal structure between

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725 Ibid., 120.
726 When Baillie asks, “We wish to know what Father Thornton understands by ‘the scientific scrutiny of the outward form’?” (125), we can only respond that the infinity principle of science, for Thornton, is a negative theological method. It problematizes a simplistic reading of a text by placing it within the infinite web of relations in Scripture and nature.
Isaiah 40’s reference to God creating and naming the stars ("Lift up your eyes and see who created these, Who leadeth out their host by number; he calls to them by name") and John 10, in which the Christ-Shepherd “calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out.” The cosmos, therefore, figurally refers to Christ’s re-creative work, particularly in the heavens “up” above.\(^{727}\)

But this kind of interpretation should have been obvious given the organic, synecdochical view of space and time Thornton holds. If different times and places are “compresent” and “coinherent” within each other, this is by virtue of Christ’s hypostatic union, his macrocosmic function, and his sacrificial action on the Cross.

b) A Figural Theory of Accommodation

It would be instructive to turn to Berkeley again to state what is at stake here. I believe it is fair to say that the Bishop’s God was not simply meant to fill a gap in his theory that “to be is to be perceived,” for this dictum is the result of Berkeley’s belief that the Creator is a communicator. And if God is a communicator, he is a moral pedagogue. When Berkeley denied that impersonal matter was the cause of our perceptions but rather an intentional agent — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — he was at base stating what was at stake between Christianity and the atheism towards which materialist metaphysics tended. Moral imperatives are not the cumulative product of natural processes, they do not “emerge” any more than do souls. As such, moral values are not epiphenomenal in the way that naturalist metaphysics would require — as Hume essentially collapses moral values into facts about human desires or customs. Nor does Berkeley try to redefine “goodness” in terms of immanent human “use” like the utilitarians. Rather, Berkeley makes it clear that a perfectly consistent theism begins with a teleological creation, and that teleology is intentional communication from God.

\(^{727}\) L. S. Thornton, *Christ and the Church*, 53-60.
Now intentionality is inherently moral, for morality pertains to the use of things. God’s use of things is, then, a moral semiotic. As such, hermeneutics essentially overlaps with ethics, ethics with metaphysics, and metaphysics with natural philosophy. In a condensed form this is the most radical way to state what theism entails. Prior to everything, all reality is moral communication before it is anything else. Methodological theism or atheism is, then, what is at stake in the acceptance or rejection of figural hermeneutics. On this view any kind of amoral scientific knowledge does not attain the same level of truthfulness as moral knowledge of creation. Scripture’s moral figures are simply more real than scientific representations that abstract created things from their divine and human usage. The human usage of scientific theory is, in Augustine’s terms, to be ordered to the enjoyment of God, while the divine usage of ancient and modern scientific theories is meant, in Butler’s terms, to test whether we use knowledge to excuse our lack of faith. Because one does not know “how” to fit Copernican cosmology or evolutionary theory with pre-Ptolemaic cosmology and the biblical fact of Adam, will one discard one’s faith? If so, that person has failed the test. But the test is relative to the person and in no way will be found problematic for all persons. The mistaken assumption of both Liberal and fundamentalist is that these kinds of “natural philosophical” tests are universally problematic, or at least ought to be considered universally problematic, for all people at all times and places. But John Hannah more wisely recommended that,

[W]henever investigation has led us to believe that a phrase of Scripture was accommodated to a scientific creed which has now been abandoned, we simply translate that phrase into the deeper meaning, which no scientific theory can reach or alter. We

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728 Contra Harrison, who has contrasted pre-modern “symbolic” uses of creatures with early modern “practical” uses, the theory I am advocating encompasses both. Creatures can be used by the mind to find figures of Christ, the Trinity, the moral life, and the afterlife, but they can also be used to alleviate human suffering through medicine and technology. The latter is just as much a charitable offering to God as it is a service to humanity. Harrison, The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science.
refuse to lend the weight of Scripture authority to decisions on topics with which it was not dealing, and which did not lie within its proper sphere.\textsuperscript{729} The only qualification I would make, here, is that the most consistent figural theory of accommodation would not view Scripture and nature in terms of non-overlapping magisteria.\textsuperscript{730} Rather, Scripture contains nature as its final cause. The “sphere” of nature is encompassed by the larger “sphere” of Scripture. This is not to claim that, say, Moses already knew all of the scientific discoveries humanity would ever make.\textsuperscript{731} It is to say that there is no natural reality that exists independently of God’s scheme of moral probation — no secular “God’s eye” perspective on creation — let alone Scripture — that allows us to abstract ourselves from the test. On this side of eternity, there cannot be a non-moral, non-analogical consistency between the two books. Until then, “science” and “religion” must appear discontinuous in some way.

\textit{IV. Theodicy, Episcopacy, and the Recapitulation of Judas’ Betrayal}

Baillie, however, put his finger on a deeper discontinuity between nature and our expectations about a perfect revelation. Doesn’t the Bible, after all, record the sins of God’s people? How, then, could this history and these authors be inspired? Baillie agrees with Thornton that some kind of perfect unity of creator and creature happened in the hypostatic union, but he indicates that there is a theodicy problem in taking up the created context of the biblical world into the hypostatic union: “Christ’s was a perfect human nature, and its limitations were only

\textsuperscript{729} John Hannah, \textit{The Relation Between the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture: Eight Lectures Preached before the University of Oxford in the Year 1863 on the Foundation of the Late Rev. John Bampton} (London: J. Murray, 1863), 158.
those that attach to the human status as such, whereas the human nature of the Biblical witnesses was imperfect in its own kind.”

Let us assume that “imperfect in its own kind” refers to the fallenness of humanity. Thornton indicated that Jesus had dominion even over the sins of biblical figures whom he nevertheless used for his ends despite their sin. The best example here is Thornton’s reading of Judas. The additional benefit of tackling this figure is that we will also show how Thornton’s figural method provided a way forward in Church reunion disputes, at the centre of which was episcopacy.

The year before Thornton entered the confirmation debate, he wrote *The Judgment of Scripture* (1945), a tract strongly condemning the South India Scheme for its failure to provide a biblical justification for apostolic succession, which it treated as a mere pragmatic arrangement. Here Thornton clearly stated the standard catholic view that there is no sacrificial eucharist without a valid ministry. Christ’s connection with the Church was at stake. There does not appear to have been any criticism of Thornton’s figural exegesis in this tract, despite the fact that it and not “The Body of Christ in the New Testament” (1946) contains a figural defence of the particular catholic understanding of validity.

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In 1947 Thornton put out another tract that maintained his opposition towards the Scheme; and a later article showed that he held the same opinion about reunion at home. Nonetheless, his work in “The Body” provided a figural solution to the ecumenical problem. Although his evangelical opponents did not notice this, “The Body” actually provided a way to understand the phenomena of “bad bishops,” which has been an ecumenical issue for the Free Churches. Thornton may not have been aware of his own insight in this paper either, for it was a completely different tack from his work of a year earlier.

of Derby, the so-called Derby Report was produced by a committee stacked with critics of the South India Scheme, Thornton being one who thought the latest edition was unacceptable. To be sure, Sundkler relates that the majority thought the Scheme should go forward. But they wanted major amendments to the Constitution on points related to the episcopate and sacraments such as confirmation. Bengt Sundkler, Church of South India: The Movement Towards Union, 1900-1947. (London: Lutterworth, 1954), 335-336.

Thornton, “The Essentials of Revelation in Relation to the Problem of Reunion,” CR: Quarterly Review of the Community of the Resurrection, no. 179 (1947): 5–11. The issue raging in England just prior to the reunion of 1947 was whether the episcopally and non-episcopally ordained ministers of the united church would be regarded as equals in the interim period leading up to a completely episcopally ordained priesthood, or whether the two groups could be characterized as regular and irregular, as the Lambeth Conference 1930 and Archbishop Temple had implied. The Free Church ministers of course did not want to be characterized as irregular. In order for reunion to work, however, the Church of South India’s Basis of Union remained uncommitted to any particular interpretation of episcopacy; Sundkler, Church of South India, chapter 13. Thornton’s article argues that the 1930 Lambeth Conference similarly refused to accept a particular theory of the origin and character of episcopacy. Yet its articulation was more substantive and less minimalistic. For the Lambeth Report did not say whether the Lord, his Apostles, or both had in mind the historic episcopate. It did say, however, that the episcopate went “behind the perversions of history to the original conception of the Apostolic Ministry,” regardless of whose conception it was (5). In effect, the Anglican Communion was only saying that the doctrine of the episcopate, while essential, was not dogmatically defined like the doctrine of atonement or the inspiration of Scripture (6).

Thornton, “Church Relations in England,” Faith and Unity IV, no. 90 (1954): 3–9. One Roman Catholic observer mentioned that confirmation still played a role in Anglo-Catholic opposition to reunion schemes at home. Interestingly, he sided with Thornton’s interpretation over Lampe’s, despite the latter’s general proximity to the medieval Catholic position. See J. Crehan, “The Sealing at Confirmation,” Theological Studies 14 (January 1, 1953): 273–79. On the issue of episcopacy, however, Louis Bouyer sided with evangelical ecumenists such as Lesslie Newbigin. Condescendingly, Bouyer praises the CSI in order to take jabs at Anglo-Catholics. The CSI, although vague about episcopacy in the beginning, actually was closer to Catholic truth than the Anglicans, for they emphasize both the spatial and not just the temporal aspects of apostolic succession. Their Eucharistic liturgy was also better than the BCP and would actually result in valid sacraments if their ministers were validly ordained, which in any case they were not. Bouyer could not fault the evangelicals (and here he singled out Newbigin as remarkable) in the way one can fault the Reformers themselves for not having inherited the true Church. Yet Bouyer does fault them for remaining sympathetic to their history and for believing that the Church as a whole can sin. Its members can and do, but the Church as a whole is sinless. That means the Roman Church is the one true church, and all others only spiritually partake of saving grace despite the lack of objective grace in their sacraments. They should not, however, be satisfied with this, but should continue the journey to unity by becoming Catholic. Louis Bouyer, “A Roman Catholic View of the Church of South India,” Theology 59, no. 427 (January 1, 1956): 3–11.
In *The Judgment of Scripture*, Thornton made some connections with the Old Testament of real historical interest but ambiguous theological value for an understanding of bad bishops. The tract is occupied with showing how the Gospels and Epistles in their discussion of ministry echoed the visible theocratic ordinations by Moses of both the heads of the twelve tribes and of Joshua (though he does not tell how these two kinds of ordinations relate on the historical level). There are also allusions to David’s reestablishment of the theocracy and of the temple worship (again, Thornton does not synthesize these two kinds of ordination). His point about the existence of an Old Testament teaching succession, the rabbinic semikhah, indicates an important parallel; but insofar as Christ merely replaced the old succession with a new one, the new can only reflect the old as something superseded on the diachronic plane of history. If Thornton believed that the new succession could not be broken by sin, just as the Jewish succession had been broken by the apostles, he failed to explain why. Having read *Revelation*, one might ask what the doctrine of succession would look like on Thornton’s later non-linear view of time. Thankfully “The Body” provides a theological — indeed theodical — solution to how a broken succession can be taken up into Christ, and how such a situation can be synchronically recapitulated and transformed.

The redemption of broken succession is explained with reference to Judas. As with Thornton’s discussion of revelation and initiation, he was concerned to show the unity of form

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and content in the ministry. Revelation creates its own organs of reception and succession, one of which is the apostolic ministry. If the content of the eyewitness deposit handed over by the Apostles is the sacrificial Form of the Servant, then the apostolic succession must conform to that same pattern. When it does not, as with the tradition of the Jewish elders and with Judas, a break occurs between ecclesial form and Christological content. Thornton elaborated upon this when, beginning with Mark 7:3, he noted the irony of Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees’ tradition of the elders despite having established his own tradition through the Apostles. Traditions, he said, “are matters delivered or committed into one’s keeping.”\textsuperscript{739} The New Testament word is \textit{paradosis}, and it “always means the content of what is so delivered.” He further observed that there are two different senses of that word that are side by side in the New Testament. In the case of 1 Cor. 11:23 (“I received from the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus on the night on which he was being delivered up took bread”), Paul had been chastising the Corinthians for their factions and disregard of one another at the Eucharist in the immediately preceding verses (11:17-22). Thornton then related the tradition of the last supper that was enacted on the night when Jesus was “traditioned” by Judas into the hands of the chief priests. The Corinthian sin of “shaming” those who are left out of the meal makes the delivery of the apostolic teaching and eucharistic bread into a form of Judas’ delivering up of Christ. In doing this the Corinthians were “putting Christ to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6).\textsuperscript{740} Thornton explains:

The Last Supper took place while the treachery of Judas was actually in train. Thus the Corinthians are told that whilst re-enacting the supper in memory of the Lord’s death they were playing the traitor’s part. This is aimed at the local elders, one of whom must have presided at the eucharist. To them a trust was committed by the apostle who in turn received it “from the Lord.” As a faithful steward he had

delivered to them the Eucharistic mystery with all that it signified. In betraying this trust they had renewed the sin of Judas. But further, he who so presided was in loco Christi. He would repeat the words and acts of the Lord as treasured in the tradition handed over by the apostle. Yet in “not discerning the body” he was in fact more truly representative of Judas than of Christ.  

Here Thornton clearly admitted that the sin of Judas could be repeated even in the apostolic succession established by Jesus. But if the succession was not a bulwark against such betrayal, then the issue of theodicy opened up by Christian division is not just a Free Church problem, but a problem for catholics also. Had Thornton only explicitly admitted this, he would have been brought closer to the position of South India’s leading ecumenist, Lesslie Newbigin, who held that all ministries had “a defect of order and power” due to division.  

What then does God do with apostolic evil, since He is the one who established the apostolic succession? Thornton, like Barth a few years earlier, highlighted how paradosis is used to express the freedom with which the Father “hands over” Jesus to the Servant’s death, thereby encompassing the traitor’s paradosis within Christ’s own mission. Indeed, Thornton wove a figural argument that embedded this all in the Old Testament. There is little space to explore these connections, only to relate one important verb for Thornton, tithemi. Aside from its suggestive usage in the Prophets, Thornton observed that it is an active verb used both of Jesus’ “laying down” of his life for his friends (John 10:17-18), and of Jesus’ “appointment” of Apostles: “Ye did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you…” (John 15:16). Lampe thoroughly objected to the way in which Thornton went on to elaborate “[a]n … implausible

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742 Sundkler, Church of South India, 313. Newbigin’s position does not solve the problem of whether the episcopate is essential, but it can be read as an admission of certain epistemological defects caused by a division for which we simply do not have the “power” to formulate solutions.
745 Ibid., 102-103.
piece of almost incredibly involved typology, founded upon purely verbal echoes without any reference either to the context or to the sense of the texts which have been assembled at random from different parts of the Bible … “

he excitedly concluded that

[t]his sort of typology is very dangerous. It lends itself to the varied and unlimited exercise of private ingenuity, there is no means of control by which its speculations can be checked, it rests upon a view of Scripture which is unhistorical and pre-rather than post-critical …

One can fairly criticize Thornton for not following his reflections on theodicy and ministry with practical, ecumenical proposals. Due to the epistemological effects of sin, such proposals obviously do not allow simple answers: one denomination capitulating to the other. Though his theology was far from simple, there are still traces in Thornton of a Liberal Catholic self-understanding that he and his party possessed the best synthesis of old and new.

His theology of *paradosis* does, however, offer hope insofar as Christ’s voluntary self-delivery recapitulates and masters the traitorous delivery of his earthly ministers. This is farther than Lampe could achieve by his own logically inconsistent method of typology. It is a “dangerous” reading inasmuch as it casts biblical judgment over the divided churches and parties, including both Lampe’s and Thornton’s. Indeed, it is positively subversive of some of

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747 Ibid., 38.
748 In November 1945 Geoffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, invited Gregory Dix to convene a group of Anglo-Catholics to discuss four questions: (i) What is the underlying cause — philosophical or theological — of the contrast or conflict between the Catholic and Protestant traditions? (ii) What are the fundamental points of doctrine at which the contrast or conflict crystallizes? (iii) Is a synthesis at these points possible? (iv) If not, can they co-exist within one ecclesiastical body, and under what conditions? Among the many who participated were Austen Farrar, T. S. Eliot, A. G. Hebert, Michael Ramsey, and Lionel Thornton. What they set forth was a charitable and sophisticated analysis of the problems of ecumenical reunion from an Anglo-Catholic perspective. Thornton’s unpublished papers include a manuscript of a report on “The Primitive Wholeness” that was given to the group, a theme central to his 1950 work *Revelation and the Modern World*. And indeed the first chapter of the report is precisely on this theme. The Archbishop wrote a forward to the pamphlet characterizing the report as largely concerned to avoid wrong ecumenical methods rather than to elaborate a right one. This was its weakness. Although the Anglo-Catholics indeed claimed that no group in divided Christendom could fully manifest the Church’s primitive unity, they no doubt believed they represented the best available option. See Eric Symes Abbott, ed., *Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West* (Westminster: Dacre, 1947), 9-10.
Thornton’s own stances. Furthermore — and despite the fact that Lampe explicitly rejected “edification” as a criterion\(^\text{749}\) — it is far from “unchecked” since the Form of the Servant is the criterion by which all biblical associations are judged.

In answer to Baillie, I would suggest that the record of human sin in the Bible and the fallenness of the Bible’s authors do not prevent God from infallibly using every “jot and tittle” for his ends. Scripture (anagogically) is what history will look like at the end of time. As history’s guiding exemplar, Scripture (tropologically) includes all times that lead up to that end. The fact that Judas’ sin was used for our salvation offers us a paradigm for how God subverts other sins recorded in Scripture — indeed, in history as a whole. But Butler reminds us that we need not exhaustively know “how” this can be even while we know “that” it is true. And if this is true for Scripture, how much more for a fallen history that we can only partially decipher with the help of Scripture’s figures?

\textit{VII. Conclusion}

Despite his own party’s ecumenical limitations, Thornton’s evangelical catholicism is a compelling road not taken in modern theology that may yet bear fruit in dying. I believe that Thornton correctly claimed that creation is the missing link between the “organs” of Scripture and the Church, which Protestants and Catholics respectively laid claim to after the division of Christendom. Could it be that the logic of division led denominational polemists into the gnostic error of intellectualism where creation’s forms — natural, cultural, and institutional — have been separated from the content of the divine mind? We are accustomed to identifying this as a Protestant error, but by turning the episcopate and the papacy into another epistemic

\(^\text{749}\) Lampe, “Typological Exegesis,” 207.
criterion, Catholics have been just as guilty. Thornton’s doctrine of recapitulation, furthermore, shows us that any “repetition” must be “transformed” on a higher level by Jesus. This is just as true for Apostolic “succession” as it is for every other process in creation. And it is Scripture that shows us how Christ’s atonement brought the errant tradition of the People of God under his dominion. The two trajectories of Protestant scripturalism and Catholic ecclesiology need not be opposed.

This dissertation is about the divergent directions theodicy goes when Anglicans have accepted or rejected as axiomatic the unity of Scripture.750 Thornton has been especially important in shedding light on how this has framed twentieth-century disagreements. From his early, Figgis-inspired work, he opposed religious monism with a biblically derived incarnational theodicy. In Butlerian fashion, Figgis showed that this alternative was incommensurable with Liberal theodicy, which majored on moral boot-strapping and minored on forgiveness. Figgis’ return to the significance of forgiveness in Christ issued in a radical doctrine of time and of natural law: namely, that all temporal successions are subordinate to God’s reordering power. Thornton picked this up and expanded it through his use of St Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation. Here Christ became the centre of creation to which all creatures and ages were immediately related.

But this reordering work could be called into question by normal human experience. If Christ has mastered evil, why do we not see this? The question was pressing in the context of the World Wars, the conditions for which Thornton traced back to the divisions of Christendom and to the fall of Adam. He responded by returning to the question of Christ and culture,

750 Again, the unity of Scripture is logically presupposed in the process of coming to believe by way of analogy. That is to say that analogies presuppose a "given" whole with which the whole of one's experience is compared. Scripture's ontological unity is assumed both when one accepts the literal scriptural account of Christ's work of new creation and in the practice of drawing figural analogies between, say, Israel's history and contemporary situations.
rejecting as implicitly atheistic the notion that revelation’s content could be divorced from the cultural forms it elicits from its human recipients. This dualism only led to absolute skepticism. To be sure, the Christian culture of Christendom had quite obviously contradicted the content of its life together. The Church had failed to correspond to the self-sacrificial Form of the Servant. “Sign” and “referent” had pulled apart, Christian sin resulted in incomprehensible gibberish, and this drew a veil over the Bible’s language as well (2 Cor. 3). Just as early modern natural philosophers like William Jones initiated a search for Adam’s language by which Christendom’s warring factions could restore communication, so did Thornton. Yet Thornton did not locate the biblical Adam within an evolutionary framework — an impossibility in any case. The Adam he found inhabited the Gospels, and he had filled the royal high priestly role that our primordial ancestor had left vacant. In recapitulating this work, Jesus reunited every creature with its referent in him. The Bible thus became the lexicon of creation, an alphabet of nature. Not even the blasphemy of Judas could prevent this unification, for the crucifixion of the Word only made his voice stronger.

Scripture therefore depicts this work in its completed form (anagogically, as it were). Inseparably united to the Word, Scripture’s words became that which they signified. There could thus be nothing “behind” them — neither historical nor mythological nor metaphysical facts, only Christ. His intention for creation just is the Bible. This unification is a given truth. The way to that truth, to be sure, was also contained in the Bible (tropologically, as it were). The way to heaven was not paved with human intentions, ethical, authorial, or otherwise. It was paved with figures, with divine names. Learned by immersion in time’s waters, Jesus’ disciples may still speak in the tongues of angels. John Keble argued that the Church’s wounded form is
not what we would have presumed a Church of God to look like. Yet Scripture formally includes even this, for what kind of Saviour would have chosen as a disciple his betrayer?

Here we come back to another phenomenological fact (which I believe is too obvious to defend). Normal Christians in fact use the Bible as a repository of figures to directly speak hope into their circumstance. A Butlerian would be interested in this fact; indeed, he would notice the asymmetrical place figural readers give to Scripture vis-à-vis nature and would seek to show that this way of reading is not due to ignorance and stupidity but deeply accords with how Butler used analogies to describe normal Christian belief. Why academic theologians have been unable to see this with the clarity that almost everyone else does is a riddle. But then, so is contemporary theology’s strange lack of engagement with Butler, whose work outsold all other theological works combined for many generations.751 If this is the case with so prominent a writer, it is perhaps unsurprising that Thornton has been completely forgotten.

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Conclusion

This has been an essay on the modern controversy between the natural and the supernatural in terms of the classic issue of the two books of Scripture and nature. I have tried to show that science and religion is not the primary problem for relating Scripture and nature, but theodicy is. With the problem of evil, the temptation to collapse nature and supernature becomes acute, and this has much to do with whether Scripture's unity is received as axiomatic.

On the one hand, there are certain total explanations given in the realm of metaphysics and epistemology. Why does evil persist if Christ has allegedly conquered it? If God is not to be thrown out altogether, we can make one of a number of moves (or a combination of them). We can argue that God is bound by the fact of free will to allow the possibility of evil. We can go further to argue that God is perhaps not omnipotent after all — the panentheist route. Finally, we can make the progress of history and evolution into an immanent working out of God’s own life, of which Christ perhaps is a cipher. All of these perfectly explain the experience of suffering.

On the other hand, there is Butler’s analogical and apophatic approach. This approach prioritizes phenomenological “that’s” over metaphysical “how’s”. Our life of suffering is not wholly explicable with reference to the free will defence or monist metaphysics. This leaves room for a different, more mystical, take on suffering that opens onto St John of the Cross’ Dark Night of the Soul. Some suffering is purgative — it is the kind of suffering that Jesus took on in identification with us. Other suffering is illuminative — it is the kind of suffering that we undergo to identify with Jesus’ suffering. This latter suffering, having been taken on by God, transcends explanation. It has no “practical” use. With Job or Moses, our thoughts are silenced
by God as we come through the fire into the darkness of the divine presence, which is its own answer.752

Suffering, in any case, can more easily be harmonized and naturalized than sin, as Figgis argued. Forgiveness is something that also escapes explanation; it disrupts the “iron laws” of nature which we have theorized as “necessary” in order to keep God out. The upshot of Figgis’ take on forgiveness is that it also connects with the average person aware of their own guilt and the reality of evil. Here Figgis gave a Butlerian phenomenology of belief that “accounts for more facts” than the religious naturalism of the Modernists. My key point here is this: there is a thread running through the “orthodox” theologians I have looked at which demonstrates Thornton’s thesis that to the degree a system is created to explain everything, the fewer facts it is able to account for. The controversial Voegelian label for this kind of mentality as “Gnostic” is right insofar as unorthodox soteriologies are the result of techniques and not faith. My claim is that gnosticizing outlooks have a very difficult time taking account of the phenomenology of Christian belief in particular. But if fully one-third of humanity is Christian, then we ought to look for the simplest description of the formation of their beliefs. Atheist and gnostic polemicists sometimes tellingly share an overly complex, not to mention uncharitable, reading of the phenomena of belief as something due to ignorance of science, coercion, and conspiracy. Figgis’ Butlerian take is more straightforward: forgiveness is an almost universally felt need answered by the atonement, and it is a universally observed phenomenon that is analogous to the atonement.

This “accounting for more facts” also goes with realist metaphysics, which fit much better with orthodoxy, defined by Thornton as a “complex of opposites.” Refusing to fill in gaps and discontinuities with explanations, realists take contrary phenomena at face value. As the metaphysic that tries to do justice to both sameness and difference, wholes and parts, quasi-Platonism of the sort assumed by the “Hebrew psychology” of the prophets, Apostles, and Fathers is much more compatible with biblical ontology than emergentism, idealism, or anything else. I have assumed Berkeley and Augustine’s phenomenology of time as an expression of a radical realism most adequate to pure theism. Here neither the sensory experience of the present nor the immediacy of our memories in the present can be explained with reference to occult causes behind the phenomena; they are given by God. That means, contra popular views of time, we do not move through time as through a corridor. Time moves towards us as grace; the past as it is fully present to God is only known to us through a glass dimly.

This realist metaphysic and phenomenology is compatible with Butler’s version of fideism since gaps in knowledge are conducive to tests of faith. It is not compatible with total skepticism of the sort Berkeley combated. Total skepticism trades on the infinite regresses between our sensory representations and the thing itself. But there is no thing in itself; the phenomena are God’s immediate communication, moral communication, made up of primordial letters. Berkeley of course wanted to eliminate the possibility of skepticism entirely in theophanic immediacy. Butler balances this out by showing that doubt is an aspect of faith on this side of the fall. Doubt lives in the gap between sensible things and scriptural analogues and is only closed over time with patience, sobriety, gratitude, attentiveness, love, and so on. The difference between the orthodox and the Gnostic “type” lay, in the first place, here — what do we do with ignorance?
Critics of Voegelin argue that systems of total explanation are also constructed by orthodox Christians. This is fair. Thornton was quite hard on the intellectualizing of Puritans as a quasi-Gnostic substitute for faith. And I have also tried to show that the epistemological foundationalism that the Tractarians repeated against evangelicals in the nineteenth century was another version of this kind of quasi-Gnosticism. Babel-building is a common human endeavour from which God must save even the Church, as Thornton’s reading of Judas shows. The sin of the Church intensifies the problem of evil such that, if God cannot save the Church, he cannot save anyone at all.

Just as total metaphysical explanations of any sort must explain away inconvenient phenomena as epiphenomena, so total theological explanations erase the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. They bring God and creation under one explanatory principle. Butler demonstrated this in his arguments against deism, which proved that the facts of experience were more adequately accounted for by either Christianity or atheism. Deist method, as such, was inherently atheist without sharing its coherence. Thornton focused on the inherently atheistic metaphysic of religious and philosophical monism. His argument — confirmed by the history of deism, Unitarianism, and Liberalism’s slide into monism — was that if one wanted to maintain theism in its purity (characterized by the Creator-creation divide), the doctrine of the incarnation was the best bulwark. As time went on, it became even clearer to Thornton that the language of Scripture itself — from which the latter doctrine derives — was the best guarantee of theism. Here he echoed Mansel, and he took this insight further than any twentieth-century theologian by maintaining that every jot and tittle of the canonical language of Scripture was transfigured by the incarnate Lord’s Servant-Form. This necessarily led to the greatly feared practice of figural reading. Controlled only by the loving figure of Christ, every word of
Scripture had a moral purpose in God’s providential method of probation, to use Butler’s favoured term. Inasmuch as historical criticism is, in Hannah’s words, a method of “harmonization,” it once again subordinated faith to knowledge. This kind of exegete failed the divine test. There can be no secular standpoint outside the moral order. Butler and Maximus agree that our lot is moral deliberation, the upright outworking of which is not contingent on certainties. If this leaves us with certain moral “wagers” between heaven and hell, an Augustinian like Pascal would press us further even than the still somewhat optimistic way in which moral deliberation has been viewed by the Christian East, let alone the modern West.753 Leaving aside the vexed question of grace and predestination, the Christian tradition until recently has viewed life as a test of faith. Here Scripture is simply the map of this moral economy (justifying the third level of the quadriga, “tropology”) and a picture of our journey’s end (justifying the fourth level of “anagogy”).

The argument I want to underline in the end is that the doctrine of Scripture as the formal and final cause of creation safeguards the nature-supernature distinction by blocking the theodical strategy of trying to square fallen history with God’s existence in abstraction from Jesus’ high priestly ministry on behalf of creation, a ministry that restores the language of Adam to humanity in the letters of the Christian Bible. God is not merely immanent in evil. He has recapitulated it. And figural reading rests on this fact, the corollary of which is the ontology of Scripture taught by Thornton and assumed by Fathers like Irenaeus and Maximus.754 This was a

753 I find it hard to believe that Pascal is primarily trying to “prove” that the most rational decision is a wager for heaven, but, in confirmation of Augustine’s doctrine of concupiscence, he is commenting on the bizarre fact that humans, who are more rational than animals, nevertheless do not act rationally without the inexplicable working of grace.

754 Here again the mark of Gnosticism, as Irenaeus discerned it, was a “cut and paste” doctrine of Scripture. “By way of illustration, suppose someone would take the beautiful image of a king, carefully made out of precious stones by a skillful artist, and would destroy the features of the man on it and change around and rearrange the jewels, and make the form of a dog, or a fox, out of them, and that a rather bad piece of work.” Irenaeus, Against the Heresies, trans.
doctrine obscured by the polemical battles of a divided Christendom. But it is also a doctrine that teaches Scripture’s providence over even the forgetfulness of Christians. It is therefore a doctrine of grace.

The conclusion of this study is this. If God is a Creator, he is a designer. If God is one, his design will be one. If the transcript of that design is revealed, it is a unified Scripture. Given evil, the unity of that design will be dependent upon a theodicy: for Christians, the atoning work of the incarnate Lord. It follows that as the centre of creation, Christ will be the figural referent of Scripture down to the most trivial detail, without regard to strict historical succession. From this follow the other layers of “spiritual” interpretation, the tropological and anagogical. If, however, the transcript of that design is not revealed, and Scripture is a product of providence and not providence itself, then we are left with certain exemplary Anglican sectarian alternatives. These alternatives function as microcosms for broader trends among all the churches.

The two Anglican sectarian alternatives are (1) Modernism and (2) a Church divided between catholics and evangelicals. Modernism entails skepticism about time’s telos. A Pelagian urgency about our role in effecting that telos often moves in destructive reactionary or revolutionary directions, and acts upon very vaguely understood moral steps towards it. This is related to its situation-ethical “slacktivism” — the combination of a very high moral ideal with a utilitarianism that allows an endless number of exceptions to rules without which self-sacrifice is meaningless. Then there is the naturalization of evil so that it no longer resembles the ferocious reality we experience. History is therapeutic; it makes our souls; but little account is taken of

those whose souls have been destroyed by evil. For these people, Christ becomes a penultimate prophet, a “hero” to whom we can no longer relate despite the fact of his co-suffering life. This weakness is whitewashed by the distraction of “science vs religion” problems, for these are isolated from an overarching belief in the providential design of nature and history. As such, the furthest figural reading of Scripture may go is in the direction of psychologizing ciphers. Here I am reminded of MacIntyre’s comment regarding Robinson’s bourgeois use of Bonhoeffer’s “catacomb” spirituality. Finally, there is Modernism’s loss of a realist phenomenology and metaphysics that runs roughshod over the complexities and antinomies within the two books, a trajectory that ends with the collapse of the natural and supernatural. Having done away with the “givenness” of creation, it also does away with grace and forgiveness as theodically relevant or evangelistically pertinent.

The other alternative is that we are left with the other sectarian “orthodoxies” of a divided Christendom, catholic or evangelical. Scripture, the episcopate, the papacy, conscience, or mystical immediacy all become epistemic foundations. Each confessional polemicist fideistically holds a double standard when they use skeptical arguments against the others’ foundations while being blind to the fact that their own foundations are also implicated. The turn from


Bonhoeffer’s Christianity is, then, intelligible only in one sort of context. Outside that context it lacks precisely any specific differentia from the way of life of sensitive generous liberals. It does not issue in atheism as the conclusion of an argument (as Bultmann’s theology does), and it does not present atheism in theological language (as Tillich’s theology does), but it fails in the task for which it was designed [to produce Christian faith] and in our sort of society it becomes a form of practical atheism, for it clothes ordinary liberal forms of life with the romantic unreality of a catacomb vocabulary (222). Said differently, Bonhoeffer’s views on the end of religion and the failure of the Church made sense in Germany at the time; but within liberal democracies, the “end of religion” idea could be co-opted in a way that undermined the institutional role of the Church. Three years later Thomas J. J. Altizer published *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), in confirmation of MacIntyre’s prophecy.
contemplating revelation’s Servant-Form results in strained apologetic “proofs” from one's preferred authority. Thus, conceding to an atheistically amoral view of nature and history, sectarian apologists mine it as a field for intellectually convincing “proofs” — from prophecy to a development culminating in one’s preferred confession. More troublingly, the metaphysical difference between the “material cause” of historical existence and the “final cause” of Scripture’s figures is forgotten, which leads to a conflation of Scripture and tradition even amongst Protestants. Do Christians write new chapters in an “ongoing story” begun in Scripture? This leads in the end to an inability to read Scripture figurally and to understand nature morally. A case in point is creationists approaching evolution as a mere intellectual challenge and not an opportunity for figural reflection on Adam. Another consequence is the widespread loss by Christians of something like the Physiologus or William Jones’ scriptural interpretation of creatures. Might not a return to the thankful contemplation of nature in scriptural terms offset to a degree the problems of humanity’s technological domination of creation?

Finally, while the “orthodox” still accept creation ex nihilo, they nevertheless fail to systematically relate it to Christ, Scripture, and Church. Thornton sheds light on the fact that our ecclesiological problems have everything to do with creation, and therefore with creation’s exemplars in Scripture. Without a figural response to the problem of Christian evil and division, “orthodoxies” fail to convince outsiders for whom forgiveness would have been a natural point of contact. The inability of orthodoxies to even describe their situation to themselves in terms of

757 In the American evangelical milieu, despite the often insightful figuralism, Christ’s teleological connection to history can be obscured by a misunderstanding of final causation. Is the “intelligent design” of nature reducible to a first efficient cause? Is the eschaton the last link in a historical chain of efficient causes, or is it Christ himself? The often superfluous prophetic details discovered in Revelation, the proofs and “fulfillments” of predictions that are totally disconnected from the person of Christ (barcodes, tanks, helicopters) are only the natural outcome of the apologetic approach Pusey rejected in Chapter 2, but they also assume a modern view of linear time.

758 Michael J. Curley, trans., Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). This was one of the most popular books next to the Bible for well over a millennium. Anyone with only the most limited knowledge of indigenous culture, let alone classical paganism, will understand why.
scriptural analogies must in some way count against their fitness for survival in the same way Modernism’s inability to “account for more facts” meant it withered. But this is precisely the place where the figural reading of Scripture adds coherence to our lived experience. Where the use of biblical trivialities for this “tropological” purpose is prohibited, we must conclude that this is due to an inadequate theodicy and, in Butlerian terms, to methodological atheism.
Appendix 1: Some Patristic and Jewish Streams of "High"

Biblical Ontology in Relation to the Doctrine of Creation

1) The Body-Garment of Christ: Origen and St Maximus, not to mention Thornton, taught that the Logos was “incarnate” in Scripture as in a body.\(^{759}\) The hypostatic union then (as Eriugena monumentally illustrated it)\(^{760}\) in some sense entailed an enhypostasization of creation as such. That is to say, the incarnation is extended in creation. In St Irenaeus’ Pauline terms, it implied that Christ “recapitulated” creation in himself as its head.\(^{761}\)

2) Apophasis and Intellectual Probation: As Jones mentioned in his very Augustinian terminology,\(^{762}\) created “things” come to “signify” God, who is beyond nature and is only therefore analogically accessible through creatures. Mansel and Thornton expand on this to say that analogical language necessarily leads to antinomies. The whole Cappadocian and Dionysian tradition of apophatic theology\(^{763}\) fits rather nicely with Augustine assuming that the Eastern version of Christian Platonism is not taken in a skeptical direction (an endlessly deferred res) but is at the service of divine pedagogy — God being supereminently knowable to the pure and

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759 “Just as this spoken word cannot according to its own nature be touched or seen, but when written in a book and, so to speak, become bodily, then indeed is seen and touched, so too is it with the fleshless and bodiless Word of God; according to its divinity it is neither seen nor written, but when it becomes flesh, it is seen and written. Therefore, since it has become flesh, there is a book of its generation.” Origen, Matthew Commentary Fragment, in Hans Urs von Balthasar, ed., \textit{Origen: Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings}, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 87-88. Maximus the Confessor, “The Church’s Mystagogy” (6-7), “Chapters on Knowledge” (60) in \textit{Selected Writings} (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

760 John Scotus Eriugena, \textit{Periphyseon}, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams and Ludwig Bieler, vol. 1–4 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968). Eriugena can be interestingly compared to Luria below, in that Eriugena believed God was the material cause of creation. He also taught universalism.


faithful. Indeed, one might rightly compare the tradition of negative theology to Butler’s and Jones’ doctrines of “intellectual probation” and draw a line back to Origen’s and Paul’s distinction between spirit and letter.

3) Whole-Part Synecdoche: It is tempting to let a doctrine of analogical language take over here without noting that creaturely words are unified in Christ. As such, each word-thing is also synecdochically related to Christ as members to a head, as a person to his garment, or as logoi to Logos. Indeed, this latter doctrine of logoi spermatikoi / seminal reasons is widespread in Latin, Greek, and Syriac sources.\(^\text{764}\) The more explicit this becomes, the clearer it is that the whole-part relation is logically prior to temporal sequence.

4) The Primordial Cause as Scripture: As Lossky has summed up the Eastern tradition, these divine “words” or “ideas” are not, one the one hand, the divine essence. Creation does not pre-exist in God before it is reduplicated in the world.\(^\text{765}\) The logoi are creatures, “volitional thoughts,” or “thought-willings” that “determine the different modes [my emphasis] according to which created beings participate in the creative energies” of God.\(^\text{766}\) On the other hand, “the ideas or acts of will, which Dionysius calls ‘models’ (πἀραδείγματα) ‘predestinations’

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\(^\text{764}\) Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis” (V. 7-15, VI 17- 19), in On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004); Barhadbeshabba, “The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools,” in Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis, ed. Adam H. Becker (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008). Paul M. Blowers, “Exegesis of Scripture,” in The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). “Maximus posits that there is a comprehending principle, or logos … This universal logos is contained by the Logos himself, the source of knowledge of, and perspective on, sacred history and on the order of creation. Indeed, the Logos contains all the logoi and is also in the logoi and in some sense is the logoi (Amb. Io. 7, PG 91. 1081B-) since they embody his very ‘intentions’ for each and every creature” (258).


\(^\text{766}\) Ibid., 94, 95. Summing up one medieval tradition, Pavel Florensky has stated that “God thinks by things,” The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters, trans. Boris Jakim, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 237. I assume that this concept goes back to the Hebrew word DaBaR, which means “word,” “thing,” or “cause.” This was taken up by the converso Christian Kabbalist Martines de Pasqually; see “Martinism: First Period” in Hanegraaff, Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism, 776. Remember, however, that we find a conflation of “signs” and “things” in more mainstream sources like Augustine’s De Doctrina Christiana.
Nested within the Logos, the logoi are, according to St Maximus, creatures outside time. They are the formal and final cause of temporal creatures; they govern the unfolding sequence of time. Despite Lossky’s characteristic anti-Augustinianism, this is quite close to what the Western saint said.

For my purposes, I want to point out that Augustine even identified the timeless logoi with the Scripture read by the angels. I believe that Jones’ theology was fairly close to this, and Butler’s theology of nested divine and human intentionality in Scripture is congruent with it. I would also say that this accurately describes what is going on in Thornton’s biblical ontology.

5) The Alphabet of Nature: Particularly interesting is how the Syrians within the same Mesopotamian milieu as the Jewish Sepher Yetsirah shared the belief in creatures as not only “words” (lexical) but “letters” (phonetic and hieroglyphic “elements”) which the angels taught to Adam. This idea, Becker says, seems ultimately to derive from the ambiguous meaning of the Greek word, stoicheion, which can mean both “element” and “letter.” However, the word used in Syriac, ātwātā, does not mean “elements.” Rather, it is the plural form of ātūtā, which means “sign,

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768 Ibid., 102.
769 According to Augustine, formless earth received a type of form, the seminal reasons (logoi spermatikoi), that the angelic minds could timelessly grasp. These “causal formulae” (sometimes called “numbers”) are like “seeds” that are planted in the “roots of time” in order to develop in an orderly sequence in history. Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis” (V. 7-15, VI 17-19); cf. *The Confessions, Revised*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), particularly Book XI on how creatures experience time.
770 Augustine, *The Confessions, Revised*, Book XIII.15.16, where the firmament of heaven is the Scripture read by the angels. This must have been a widespread connection; cf. Barhadbeshabba, “The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools,” 117-120. This connection is similar to the widespread Jewish view that Moses’ Torah was carved from the sapphire throne-firmament. For the eternal Scripture idea also see John Wycliffe, *John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture* (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2001), I.vi, “The Five Levels of Scripture and the Four Senses.”
character, or letter of the alphabet,” but also can be the plural of ātā, a cognate word (with an equivalent in Hebrew), which means “sign or mark” and is the rendering of the Greek word, sēmeîon, such as we find in the Peshitta NT for the “signs” that Jesus performs (e.g., Jn 2:11-18). In other words, in the translation from the Greek, the immediate meaning of “elements” is lost, as stoicheia has been rendered ātwātā, which means “letters” or “signs” and never “elements.”

The idea, however, is still that creation is divine writing, or, more radically, that the Hebrew or Aramaic alphabet is, in different combinations, the building blocks of temporal creation. Butler is less explicitly tied into the Renaissance re-appropriation of the “alphabet of nature” than Jones (and Berkeley in his own way). Thornton’s practice of finding verbal links implied it, although he just as often preferred to think of such elements imagistically.

6) Creation through the Name: In its Jewish context, the Yetsirah’s alphabet of nature idea followed naturally from the Genesis Rabbah’s earlier claim that God created the world through Torah — a Jewish parallel to Athanasius’ incarnational riff on Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and 9. Indeed, if Alan Segal, Daniel Boyarin, Jarl Fossum, and Charles Geischen are to be believed, the rabbinic heresiological grouping that was supposed to apply to Christians — “two powers in heaven” (God + demiurge) — also had parallels in Philo’s Logos, the Aramaic Targums’ Memra,

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the Samaritan, and Hekhalot hypostatization of the Angel of the Lord / Divine Name / Metatron alongside Yahweh.\(^{779}\) And while the pre-existent Torah looks suspiciously like a rabbinic attempt to tame this heresy, it simply expresses a serious ontology of Scripture.\(^{780}\) Further, the figural overlap between Torah and the Divine Name leads to an incredibly helpful link between God and creation. As Scholem has shown, the relation between God and creation in amongst Kabbalists was mediated by the concept of Torah.\(^{781}\) The latter was, on the one hand, a configuration of the Divine Name, and on the other, the instrument of creation. Thus in a Berkeleyan way, there could be nothing “behind” Scripture.\(^{782}\) At the same time God himself became the unifying figure of creation. Here is a Jewish analogue to the Christological Body-Garment idea, but one centred on the Tetragrammaton. Indeed, Scholem relates that Kabbalistic tradition uses the same figure of God’s Body-Garment. As far as I know, this fruitful avenue of figural speculation surrounding the Divine Name and its connection to creation through Scripture has not been pursued amongst the Jewish-influenced Anglican figuralists I look at (except,

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\(^{780}\) Daniel Boyarin argues that the rabbis tried to tame certain “two powers” intertexts in terms of a modalistic unitarianism; see, *Border Lines*, 133-138. “I hope to show how crucial elements of rabbinic Judaism — its ‘Modalism’ (the doctrine that different persons are just different modes of appearance of the one divine person) for instance — were formed in the attempt to ‘other’ these *minim* [‘two powers’ heretics, including Christians]” (133).

\(^{781}\) Gershom Scholem, “The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism” in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970). “What is significant for our present purposes is the analogy between Creation and Revelation, which results from the parallel between the seftroth and the divine language. The process of Creation, which proceeds from stage to stage and is reflected in extra-divine worlds and of course in nature as well, is not necessarily different from the process that finds its expression in divine words and in the documents of Revelation, in which the divine language is thought to have been reflected” (36).

\(^{782}\) The risk with Berkeley as with the theologians Scholem discusses is, again, monism. Hastings Rashdall was one such Berkeleyan monist.
tangentially, for the fact that Jones and Thornton, along with the Christian tradition after Dionysius, equated creatures with names and creating with naming).\textsuperscript{783}

7) Biblical Theodicy: The God-Scripture-creation sequence in the form of Name-Torah-creation understandably risks monism. But with Lossky’s proviso that we understand the “words” of the heavenly Scripture as creatures within which the Logos was incarnate, history’s evils are neither necessary nor tied by fate to the outworking of the identity of God. At the same time by virtue of their recapitulation in Christ, scriptural words stand apart from creation as the perfect to the imperfect. When confronted with the troubling fact of Jewish rejection of Jesus and of the redemption of the Gentiles, St Paul turned to scriptural figures (Isaac, Pharaoh, Isaiah, Moses, Elijah) in order to see as through a glass darkly what would be impossible to see otherwise: that God was still in control, and that there was hope for his beloved brethren (Rom. 9-11).

\textsuperscript{783} Here I would refer to Barth’s interpretation of Anselm’s reflections on the Name in the \textit{Proslogion}. I find Karl Barth’s \textit{Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (Faith in Search of Understanding)} (New York: Meridian Books, 1962) a more agreeable basis for a doctrine of Scripture than his \textit{Church Dogmatics}, I.I. I would also point out that despite Barth’s dislike of Eastern theology and Pseudo-Dionysius in particular, recent studies have shown just how indebted the Dionysian theology of “names” is to Jewish Apocalyptic via the (obviously!) Syriac milieu: Basil Lourié and Andrei A. Orlov, eds., \textit{The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism} (St Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2007); Alexander Golitzin, \textit{Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita}, ed. Bogdan G. Bucur (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian, 2014).
Appendix 2: Monism, Vitalism, Palingenesis, and Esotericism as Modernism’s Context

I. Many Matter-Spirit Monisms

Key to a genealogy of religious monism is the father of Unitarianism, (and discoverer of "soda water") Joseph Priestley. Through his reading of David Hartley (1705-1757) and Roger Boscovich (1711-1787), Priestley came to a monistic view of mind and matter, and of God and world. He argued that determinism was compatible with a Pelagian theory of moral responsibility. Following from this he preached a kind of utopian millenarianism and thus supported the French Revolution. Despite Priestley’s scientific standing, his metaphysics prevented him from accepting Lavoisier’s (1743-1794) “chemical revolution” in favour of the older theory of phlogiston — one of the many “imponderable fluids” or "subtle matters" (magnetism, electricity, “odic force,” the unconscious, even Wilhelm Reich’s “orgone energy”) with which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientists attempted to fill gaps in the universe between coarser particles. The theory of imponderables drew authority from Newton’s aether and was exploited by occultists like Mesmer (whose main opponent, again, was Lavoisier) and Madam Blavatsky. Like the pantheists, Priestley admitted that “spirit” and “matter” were synonyms. Yet his preference for the label, “materialism,” (and his virtual agreement with the atheism of d’Holbach) made him less palatable to later Unitarians who were drawn to Martineau’s romanticism. But thanks to Priestley, Hartley’s monism and the imponderables would become “a base for late eighteenth and nineteenth-century theories of aesthetics, learning, education, government, economics, psychology, neurophysiology, and even psychiatry…”

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Through Priestley, Hartley's "theories influenced Erasmus Darwin, Coleridge, Wordsworth, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain, and Herbert Spencer," not to mention Herder and Reimarus. I see all of this as supporting evidence for my Butlerian-Jonesian-Thorntonian argument that the more rational and unregulated by biblical language theistic unitarianism becomes, the more it is tempted to bring Creator and creation under a single explanatory principle or common substance. To claim, as many indeed have, that such monism is atheistic is not a slur. Atheism has a certain commendable logical consistency that Butler's arguments assume.

Further support for this claim is evident in the fluid boundary between atheism and pantheism in the nineteenth century. Here lay the origin of our modern use of the term "monism." Even hardened materialist polemics of the failed revolutionary period (1848-9), like Ludwig Büchner (1824-99) and Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), eventually replaced "materialism" by the increasingly fashionable, non-committal term "Monism." The distinctions were often elusive and much might depend on tone and diction; an emotional tremor in the prose, a fit of unguarded exaltation, could turn a reductive materialism into a vitalist monism or even an enthusiastic pantheism, just as an incautious phrase, a spasm of metaphysical hubris, could turn a Positivist phenomenalist into a materialist ontology.

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788 I would claim that Clayton's non-physicalist monism is a bit too clever, given the "imponderable" materialism of emergentism's predecessors.
789 J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 57. An excellent contemporary example is the debate between "New Atheist" Sam Harris and Jordan B. Peterson, a Christian Jungian. The latter admits that the main difference between him and Harris is pessimism and belief in the irrational versus optimistic rationalism. But Harris has in fact begun to embrace Buddhist meditation as the New Atheist movement has lost momentum. The question that arises is that if Butler-Figgis-Thornton is right that religious monism is practically atheist, but pure optimistic atheism is unstable, is pessimistic monist Gnosticism at the bottom of the slippery slope? Maybe Harold Bloom is right, and Gnosticism really is a more culturally pervasive force than enlightenment atheism. See *The American Religion* (New York, NY: Chu Hartley, 2006). The Death of God theology would be the most self-aware of this fact. Thomas J. J. Altizer, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); Matthew Rose, "Death of God Fifty Years On," *First Things*, no. 265 (September 2016); Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. Creston Davis, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011).
Burrow argues that the initial rationalism of the 1850s and 60s was thus overturned by evolutionary theories that ironically became irrationalism. Schopenhauer’s and Hartmann’s (and Jung’s) theory of the unconscious, Lamarck’s (1744-1829) evolutionism (through which Darwin was consistently interpreted by philosophers and theologians), and William James’ and Nietzsche's pragmatism played into this.

II. Freedom and Fatalism: The Philosophers

Pope Pius IX rather accurately characterized monism as collapsing freedom and necessity. Priestley was upfront about the fact that freedom and necessity were compatible. Monist theologians afterwards were less willing to blatantly embrace fate, but they derived many of their ideas from philosophers who tried to solve this puzzle. A good example of one major influence was Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906). In The Philosophy of the Unconscious (1868), he set forth a universal teleology of the unconscious that fused freedom and fatalism. Mixing Darwin (i.e., Lamarck) and Schopenhauer, he argued that the unconscious was a world-pervading will. When the World-Unconsciousness confronted resistance from a not-self, it

790 For Carl Jung’s place in this genealogy see Richard Noll, The Jung Cult: The Origins of a Charismatic Movement, reprint edition (New York: Touchstone, 1997). Cf. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture. Hanegraaff relates that “Freud must have been particularly shocked by finding that Jung uncritically cited major volkisch figures, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, known for their racism and antisemitism. The evidence indeed leaves no doubt that Jung was essentially a volkisch intellectual. That he was therefore a fascist, as has been inferred, does not automatically follow. … he concludes (perhaps too leniently) that ‘the best that can be said is that the evidence is compelling that Jung’s work arose from the same Central European cauldron of neopagan, Nietzschean, mystical, hereditarian, volkisch utopianism out of which National Socialism arose’” (501-502). Hanegraaff continues with the point of his argument regarding Jung's pseudoscientific esotericism: “With respect to our more limited concerns, the conclusion seems evident: Jung attempted to obscure the fact that his collective unconscious is not a conclusion from empirical research but part of a religious belief system.” (507-508).

791 Pope Pius IX’s, “The Syllabus of Errors,” Papal Encyclicals (blog), June 9, 1862, http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9syll.htm. The syllabus was a fairly accurate summary of the pantheistic-naturalistic position as it developed during these centuries:

No supreme, all wise, and all provident divine God-head exists, distinct from the world of things, and God is the same as the nature of things and, therefore, liable to changes; and God comes into being in man and in the universe, and all things are God and they have the same substance of God; and God is one and the same as the world, and therefore, also, spirit is one and the same with matter, necessity with liberty, the true with the false, the good with the evil, and the just with the unjust.
suffered pain. But through pain it produced more consciousness. And the more consciousness, 
the more ability to renounce consciousness and identify with the unconscious cosmic process as 
a whole.\textsuperscript{792} The familiar paradox here was that Hartmann’s soul-making teleology contained 
moments of both self-creation and self-renunciation. Like Priestley’s system, he believed that 
freedom and necessity were one.

Burrow has explicated the similar convergence of freedom and necessity in John Stuart 
Mill, Henri Bergson, and Nietzsche. Mill, for instance, had a breakdown as a young man, 
connected with the fact that his father had groomed him to be the leader of the utilitarian 
movement. Yet this given destiny conflicted with his Romantic belief that inherited belief was 
prejudice. This left Mill in a bind, to which, according to Burrow, “[t]he only hope, it seems, lies 
in what one might call the liberal-as-hero, the strong man rising above the surroundings 
constituted by the multitude of narrow minds and timid souls, to the fearless exercise of 
independent reason and the equally fearless creation of his own — to use the classic Victorian 
term — character.”\textsuperscript{793} His approach was quite close to Nietzsche’s own heroic ethic\textsuperscript{794} (not to 
mention the Modernist descriptions of hero-Jesus). For Mill came around to freely accept his 
given vocation as the leader of utilitarianism, while Nietzsche came to believe that the greatest 
act of freedom was to embrace an eternally recurring fate. The monist coincidence of opposites 
in Mill is evident in the fact that he was the father of both Libertarianism and Utilitarianism, 
which respectively presuppose apparently irreconcilably opposite doctrines of the will — 
spontaneous vitalism and teleological rationalism. Bergson, too, was unhappy with the fact that 
consciousness was too determined by teleological ends. Wanting to be rid of this, he taught that

\textsuperscript{792} Burrow, \textit{The Crisis of Reason}, 64-6. 
\textsuperscript{793} Burrow, 154. 
the conscious mind could embrace the creative flow of the universe by connecting with the unconscious, humanity’s wellspring of spontaneous creativity. For all of these thinkers, freedom and fate were conflated; the teleology of an impersonal universe and the teleology of the human intentions mystically converged. Significantly, if humans could in some way create their own destiny, if they could merge with the process of evolution, instinct, and spontaneity by tapping the depths of the subconscious, there was no need for transcendent help.

III. Freedom and Fatalism: The Theologians

Apparently non-teleological forms of panentheism developed in part with the intention to avoid determinism. Episcopalian theologian Norman Pittenger (1905-1997) was criticized by his colleague, David Ray Griffin, for introducing Teilhardian teleology into his system for this reason. What logically follows when one is unhappy with vague notions of progress is that human freedom and love itself must be the end of the process, but an end that can be realized at any stage within the process and not merely in an eschatological future.

Strictly speaking, the version of panentheist metaphysics that focuses on human freedom over progress *per se* is more consistent with Darwinism’s random mutations. Yet panentheists have also pushed back against this randomness by trying to assimilate it to freedom. Bowler has argued that Charles Raven essentially denied the mechanistic, non-teleological implications of Darwinism and interpreted evolution in Lamarckian terms. Indeed, his late *Experience and Interpretation* stated that God was neither outside nature nor in its gaps, but was the source and

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agent of all that is. He then downplays the randomness of selection and, despite his intentions, tried to fit freedom into the statistic gaps: “…we must realize that mechanism always involves purpose and design and that Vitalism does not imply an external control intruded into the evolutionary process.” This was not a theistic design argument, but a vitalistic design argument. Without a theory of intentionality, however, Raven failed to articulate the difference. The consequence is that freedom only sounds like a romantic metaphor for chance, and chance, like fate, is an irrational motion.

IV. Palingenesis

I have implied that Modernist soul-making theory was palingenetic. The palingenetetic doctrine of spiritual evolution was not originally understood in historical terms but became so prior to its subsequent influence on Lamarck’s and Wallace’s physical theory of evolution. Indeed, the prior spiritual doctrine of evolution was the lens through which most philosophers and religious thinkers interpreted Darwin. The doctrine developed among eighteenth-century illuminists, Swedenborg (1688-1772), Charles Bonnet (1720-1793), Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776-1847), and Lessing (1729-1781). The earliest such doctrine was still a kind of vertical “ascendant metempsychosis” through different levels of heaven. The more linear version was evident in Bonnet, who comes up again and again in the literature: quoted on the title page of Priestley’s Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit, named by Harrison as an early evolutionist, and identified by contemporary panentheists as a distinguished precursor.

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Bonnet's version of the doctrine of "palingenesis" was the idea that a mechanism existed by which germinal souls died and regenerated through several stages that extended into the afterlife. Following Leibniz’s theodicy, Bonnet taught that all suffering was part of an unfolding happiness and that ours was the best of all possible worlds. Notable, however, was the fact that this physico-theological theory of resurrection reduced the supernatural to naturalistic explanation. Hanegraaff clearly charts the Western roots of this soul-making theodicy, for it developed within a theistic context. Lessing’s doctrine of reincarnation, for instance, was optimistic and not pessimistic in the Eastern sense. Indeed, despite being a pantheist, Madam Blavatsky’s later “law of reincarnation” stood in this Western tradition, thinly veiled by Eastern notions of “karma.” In apocalyptic expectation of WWI, Jenkins writes, “Theosophy and its offshoots told the story of a planet vastly older than orthodox historians would ever accept, a world in which successive races had risen and fallen, usually through the purest Darwinian means of conflict and combat, cycles of racial vigour and degeneracy. For true believers, the idea that civilizations collapsed in bloody cataclysm was something like a law of history.” But this palingenetic view of the War was widely shared by Christians, and it stood behind their transposition of the notion of “sacrifice” from Christ to soldiers.

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Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 478.  
Ibid., 479-482.  
Philip Jenkins’ *The Great And Holy War* nicely ties together a number of the strange religious themes of World War I. Not least was the way in which all participants agreed that the War was useful for gaining virtue — indeed, was a great act of sacrifice. Writes Jenkins,  
Over the past century, the term “sacrifice” has become a standard part of media vocabulary in reporting on warfare, so that every fallen soldier has “made the supreme sacrifice” for his country. In the Great War context, though, Western publics were far more closely attuned to Christian usage, and the explicitly religious use of sacrificial terminology was standard: it was much more than a mere euphemism. Pastor and secular Harold Bell Wright declared that “a man may give his life for humanity in a bloody trench as truly as upon a bloody cross. The world may be saved somewhere in France as truly as in Palestine.” Soldiers could be Christ, and so could whole nations (101-102).
Several thinkers have tried to typologize these soul-making theories and tie them to twentieth-century totalitarianism. Eric Voegelin labelled them as “Gnostic.” Versluis takes issue with this label and lays the blame at the feet of the Catholic Church. The key transmitter of inquisitorial totalitarianism to our time was allegedly de Maistre (1753-1821), a conservative Catholic esotericist of the Martinist variety (which is actually rather Gnostic). Voegelin, however, was typologizing, and Versluis also ends with a typology of totalitarianism – both agree it had religious overtones. Roger Griffin, on the other hand, has tried to provide a general definition of fascism as a non-religious “palingenetic myth.” Griffin may indeed be correct when he questions the power of, say, Joachim of Fiore’s millenarian scheme over Nazis and Fascists — a connection Voegelin makes. It is more dubious, however, when he attempts to disconnect the concept of palingenesis from its Western religious, philosophical, and scientific history by turning it into a kind of Jungian archetype:

Again we must stress that an important premise to the way generic fascism is being approached in this book is that secular palingenetic myth is not derived from religious myth but is simply the expression of an archetype of the human mythopoetic faculty in secular form. In any case it is absurd to assume that the symbolism of death and renewal is peculiar to Christianity or even the “West.” It is a central motif of religious, mythical and magical thought encountered literally the world over. Different aspects of its prevalence in cosmological thinking, mystical imagery and ritualistic practice have been extensively documented by Eliade (for example 1964, 1971), Jung (for example 1958), Frazer (1957), Schnapper (1965) and Campbell (1968, 1990).

Progressive Christians on both sides of the War (most notably of course Adolf von Harnack) argued for war’s necessity. Jenkins notes that “those who extolled human potential to build up a better world free of social injustice” were very prone to preach of war’s redeeming effects (94).

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808 “Martinism” and “Joseph de Maistre” in Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*.
On the contrary, the concept of a “human mythopoeic faculty” is also of Western provenance. Jung and his circle (Eliade and Campbell), and Frazer and the anthropologists of “animism,” can neither be abstracted from developing esoteric traditions of “imponderable fluids,” “the unconscious,” and “the world soul,” nor from anti-Christian neo-paganism. Hanegraaff again is helpful because he reminds us that evolutionist concepts like palingenesis and Jungian psychology are both modern transformations of Western esotericism in (non)scientific garb.

I have already indicated that Rashdall held a bellicose, racist version of palingenesis, but we should note that Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) also believed in “breaking some eggs.” Though he was censored by the Vatican in 1925 for denying the reality of Adam and Eve, his writings were published after his death in 1955 and popularized by Raven. From Cold War Germany, Ernst Benz wrote a sympathetic yet critical book on Teilhard whose “futuristic distance” kept him from “the pressing problems of our time…” Benz continues, “Teilhard sometimes shows an amazing lack of feeling and even inhumanity which can only be explained by the supreme, intellectual abstractness of his thinking. It is the coldness of feeling of a world-revolution commissar. A good illustration is his attitude to war and the atom bomb.”

Teilhard’s letters during WWI show him trying to convert his deeply shaken friends to a view of war as, in Benz’s words, “an honorable contribution toward natural evolution.” For instance, after the atomic tests at Bikini, Teilhard could enthusiastically state that “[t]hey announce the coming of the spirit of the earth.” His futurism, furthermore, caused him to turn a blind eye to the anti-Christian and anti-ecclesial policies of the Eastern bloc, interpreting Marxism rather as

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810 Rashdall came to preach the War enthusiastically. Dorrien, Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit, 404.
811 Ernst Benz, Evolution and Christian Hope: Man’s Concept of the Future from the Early Fathers to Teilhard De Chardin (Doubleday, 1966), 230.
812 Ibid., 231.
813 Ibid., 232.
deeply congruent with his evolutionism. Faced with the advance of Mao, Teilhard wrote from Peking:

A total and possibly final split of humanity, not on the level of wealth but on the basis of their faith in progress — this is the great phenomenon which we are experiencing now ... If we look at it in this manner, the old Marxist contrast between worker and exploiter becomes obsolete, or at least, we recognize it as a poorly drawn boundary line. In the final analysis, it is not a social class, but a spirit — the spirit of movement — which aims to split humanity into two camps. On this side are those, who consider the world that has to be built as a comfortable place to live in. On the other side, there are the others who can only visualize the world as a machine of progress or, better yet, as an organism in a state of progress. Here, in essence, the “spirit of the bourgeoisie,” and there, the true “workers of the earth.” Of the latter, you can easily predict that they will be the humanity of tomorrow. This will come about without violence or hatred, but just by the effect of the biological dominant. Here the refuse — in French, le déchet which means dregs, refuse, trash — there the generating forces and elements of planetization.

According to Teilhard, Marxism and Christianity were in fact one through their deep faith in evolution. Whether this was inexcusable naiveté or worse, Benz rightly observed that “[a] borderline in Teilhard’s interpretation of Christian love has been crossed...” Whether one wants to typologize this as “Gnostic,” “inquisitorial,” or “palingenetic,” Teilhard stands in a long line of often revolutionary monist soul-making theorists.

**V. Panentheistic Genealogy and Anglican Esotericism**

Michael Murphy, the well known founder of the Human Potential Movement, offers one genealogy of religious monism from predictable sources like Joachim of Fiore, Boehme, the idealists, Henry James Sr. and William James, Charles Sanders Pierce, and the better known vitalists, emergentists, and existentialists such as Bergson, Teilhard, Tillich, Whitehead,

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814 Ibid., 233-235.  
815 Ibid., 236-237.  
816 Ibid., 239.  
Hartshorne, and Sri Aurobindo. More tellingly, he includes less well-known figures like Frederic Myers of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). In fact, we have seen that a more thorough genealogy would have to include more British thinkers, beginning with Priestley, and not only the members of the SPR, but their subject of research, the Spiritualist movement that included popular Anglican mediums. This genealogy should also include more mainstream Anglican personalities. A fuller study would look at the intellectual esotericism of Arthur Machen, Charles Williams, Evelyn Underhill, and the father of twentieth-century British esotericism, A. E. Waite, who would have introduced these thinkers to the panentheistic esotericism of St. Martin and Rosicrucianism. Popular esotericism also had Anglican connections, for example, in Murphy’s Esalen Institute, which in fact had links to panentheistic Anglicanism through Bishop John Robinson and Alan Watts. These men stood in the same stream as Rashdall and Raven, who taught that the evidence of clairvoyance and clairaudience show we are all connected at the subconscious level. Bishop James Pike’s spiritualism also confirms that Liberal panentheism shared assumptions with occult sciences. Finally, Catherine

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818 Murphy, “The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism.” Murphy’s panentheism is notable “because it can be embraced without superstitions, dogmas, or metaphysical abstractions” (186) and yet can accommodate all of the “supernormal” phenomena researched by Myers while including an ecumenical range of Eastern and Indigenous phenomena including “physical elasticities,” “incorruptibility,” “radiant eyes and skin,” and bodily “shapeshifting” (195). All of this is buttressed by pseudoscientific references to the brain’s neuroplasticity, etc. Vitalistic monism and pseudoscience have had an intimate history.


Jefferts Schori’s peculiar reading of the demon-possessed girl of Acts 16 as “gifted” perhaps betrays this. I have not even explored the intersection of feminist theology and esotericism.

I am not attributing guilt by association with pseudo-science. Liberalism maintains a commendable interest in creation that conservatives do not always share, and that derives from earlier mainstream esoteric sources, the tracks of which are often covered by obfuscating secularizing discourses about scientific progress. On the other hand, the burgeoning field of Western esotericism has not yet charted these earlier influences into contemporary Christian institutions like the Protestant Mainline. They mainly focus on the New Age and related movements. Similarly, few theologians have explored these avenues except Benz.

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