Seek and You Shall Find: Understanding the Divide Between Faith and Reason in
American Evangelicalism

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ABSTRACT

Seek and You Shall Find:
Understanding the Divide Between Faith and Reason in American Evangelicalism

Melissa Beaudin-Vandolder

The division between Christian faith and secular reason is one that can often seem rather obvious, particularly in certain American Protestant areas; however, history shows that such a separation is a relatively new, and relatively American, development in the faith-reason relationship. Christian Patriarchs used pagan Greek philosophy in their work, Reformers advocated for public schooling, and the Enlightenment itself had roots in Christianity, with several of the most prominent thinkers of the time being devout believers. It is only in America where this tense, but amicable relationship truly broke down due to the events of the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, which resulted in the public mockery of a group self-identified as fundamentalists. This group came to view secularity in all forms as an enemy, and built itself an identity rooted in anti-intellectualism, thus reinforcing the idea that secular reason and true faith could never mix. This belief grew so central and prominent within the group that it has since expanded beyond the walls of their churches and into their public life, influencing politics and policy in America to favor them while taking down any they view as an enemy. This division is ultimately disastrous for the continuation of the Land of the Free the United States Founding Fathers had dreamed of, so the gap must be closed. It will be a long process, but with proper communication and a willingness to listen, it is fully possible.

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If I were to try and thank every single person who helped me get to where I am today, I would need another fifty pages to fit them all. However, for the purposes of this thesis I will limit myself only to those who most directly assisted me in finding the path that led me to Theology. Of course, I must thank the Concordia Department of Theological Studies, which has been a home away from home and became such during a very difficult time in my life. Special thanks to my Advisor Dr. André Gagné who is half the reason I even did a Masters' thesis, and to the Department Head Dr. Marie-France Dion who is the other half of the reason. Both these professors have advocated for me and offered me so much support during my academic career with the department. I know I could not have done this without them, and I will be forever indebted. I also wish to extend thanks to Professor Brian McDonough, without whom I would never have fallen in love with the department in the first place. His patience and kindness will stay with me for the rest of my life, and I hope I can be half as inspiring and uplifting for my future students as he was for me.

I also of course must thank my family for their continued support. First to Danielle, my sister and best friend, who always reminded me to let loose and have fun sometimes, reminders I definitely needed, or I would have burned myself out ten times over. My father, who helped edit my paper and allowed me to bounce ideas off him despite his own busy schedule, which was utterly invaluable to my ability to complete this thesis in a timely manner. Finally, my mother, who although she is not as interested in my subject as myself or my father, has been steadfast in her support and is always available to talk me through blocks and remind me to eat something. I am incredibly lucky to have all these wonderful people around me, as without them this thesis may never have come to be.

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Introduction

Statement of the Question

When I was seventeen years old, I took an Advanced Placement Biology course for my (optional) twelfth grade science credit. During our unit on DNA, the girl next to me made a comment that rather confused me at the time. She stated that the complexity of evolution and human DNA was the reason she believed there must be a higher power helping to guide the world. I was honestly taken aback by this unprompted observation, and I did not respond; however, the comment stayed with me. At the time, I honestly was unaware it was possible to believe in both God and evolution, and had chosen to side with science.[1] While this comment alone did not fully change my views on faith and reason, it was the first time in my life I was confronted with the possibility the two might not be mutually exclusive.

It took a few more years and a bit more life experience before I finally fully realized that science and religion were not incompatible, and in fact can work together quite well in some cases. Upon accepting this, a new question inevitably arose: why was it that I was so sure that faith and reason were repellent when the reality seemed instead that they were simply different? Perhaps more tellingly, why did it take nearly twenty years for me to realize this was not the case? Looking at the current state of American religion and politics, the answer to these questions becomes unfortunately clear. Certain groups of American Protestants have embraced what is known as anti-intellectualism, and they use it to fuel their war against modern science. A war I ended up unknowingly caught in the center of while growing up in the USA's Bible Belt, fueling my own belief in the incompatibility of faith and reason.[2]

What is Anti-Intellectualism?

On its surface, the term 'anti-intellectualism' seems to be self-explanatory. However, a mere scratch at that surface reveals how complex a concept it actually is. Despite this term being at least a few decades old, a concrete, fully agreed upon definition of the word is yet to be established. As explained by Richard Hofstadter in his influential book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, "[anti-intellectualism] has slipped unobtrusively into our usage without much definition and is commonly used to describe a variety of unwelcome phenomena."[3] Hofstadter himself does not claim to offer a concrete definition despite his four hundred and thirty-two page book being dedicated to the topic, instead settling for the general formulation: "a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life."[4]

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[1] I will clarify here that to this day I tend towards viewing the world through a more scientific lens, so while throughout this thesis I have done my best to consider both sides equally and not cast judgment, it is possible if not likely that my personal preferences have influenced aspects of my conclusions.

[2] I attended several different churches growing up, but none left a particularly positive impression, nor did they promote the idea of God and evolution being compatible, if they spoke of it at all.

[3] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1991), 6.

[4] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 7.

This generalized definition seems to be the preferred one used in scholastic research on the subject, as in his 2020 psychological study on the anti-intellectual phenomenon, Eric Merkley uses the definition: "*a generalized suspicion and mistrust of intellectuals and experts of whatever kind.*"[5] In his experiment, Merkley examined if anti-intellectual predispositions are related to resistance to expert consensus, working under the hypothesis that there would be a significant relation between anti-intellectualism and a mistrust of experts. What he found not only supported his initial hypothesis, but also suggested that anti-intellectual predispositions actually made people *less* likely to believe something if it was supported by experts. Anti-intellectualism, he concludes, therefore also seems to be related to anti-professionalism and anti-elitism.

Though not explicitly stated in his formulation, throughout his book Hofstadter makes clear there is one additional element to those people who are anti-intellectuals as he defines them: they are, more often than not, Evangelical Christians. It is in this unspoken aspect where my thesis is focused. The idea of anti-intellectualism being prevalent within American Evangelical Protestantism is almost ubiquitous in some areas of the United States, but due to the nebulous definition and wide range of so-called Evangelical Protestant denominations this idea is far more complicated than most ever notice. Hofstadter does make excellent points in his discussion of the development and impact of anti-intellectualism within American culture; however, his blind spot in addressing the religious aspect is best illuminated by Mark Noll in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, in which he directly addresses Hofstadter's discussion. Noll adds an important caveat to Hofstadter's findings: "the question for American evangelicals is not just the presence of an anti-intellectual bias but the sometimes vigorous prosecution of the wrong sort of intellectual life."[6]

Faith, Reason, and Fundamentalism

It is important to note that Evangelical Christians prone to anti-intellectualism tend to come out of a very specific type of Protestant faith. After all, when looking at Christianity as a whole it is clear that faith and reason are, generally speaking, not seen as inherently antithetical the way they often are within these groups. As stated by Pope John Paul II in his letter *Fides et Ratio*, "The Church remains profoundly convinced that faith and reason mutually support each other; each influences the other, as they offer to each other a purifying critique and a stimulus to pursue the search for deeper understanding."[7] This open-mindedness is, generally, the norm in Catholicism, and can be found across many other religions and denominations.[8] Although some scientific findings may initially appear to contradict religious teachings, a majority of religious people do not resort to anti-intellectualism as a defense but instead seek compromise.

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[5] Eric Merkley, "Anti-intellectualism, Populism, and Motivated Resistance to Expert Consensus." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2020): 25; emphasis original.
[6] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 12.
[7] John Paul, "Encyclical Letter, Fides et Ratio, of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II: to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship Between Faith and Reason," (1998), 56.
[8] Expounded on more completely in Greg M. Epstein, *Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe*, (New York, NY: Harper, 2010).

The groups of Christians generally prone to anti-intellectual impulses are known in academic writings as fundamentalists. "Fundamentalists see themselves as defenders of Christianity's fundamental doctrines, defending the faith from liberal Christianity, modernism, Darwinian evolution, and biblical criticism."[9] These groups consider themselves to be at war with anything that they perceive as a challenge to their interpretation of the Bible, and modern science often seems to be the foremost perceived threat. A study by Paul W. Lewis emphasizes this derision for the life of the mind within American fundamentalist denominations.[10] Collecting personal anecdotes from several Pentecostal scholars, Lewis found a few key elements repeated by a majority of his respondents as to why they had left their denominations, one of which he labels as "anti-intellectualism." Respondents were often made to feel embarrassed or ashamed of themselves after attending graduate courses, as "the assumption [in their churches was] that those in academia do not have what it takes to do 'real' ministry."[11] In fact, many noted that their congregations believed that by going to university, the respondent had forfeited his ability to truly "walk with God." Because of these hostile environments, many educated preachers end up leaving their fundamentalist congregations to join other, often non-denominational groups that are less anti-intellectually inclined.

Thesis Goals

In this thesis, I have two primary foci. First, I plan to determine why these American Protestant groups gravitate towards anti-intellectualism by examining the history of the faith-reason relationship in Christianity, starting from the Patriarchs and extending to the modern United States. Second, I will use that information, as well as an analysis of the uniquely American form of Protestant fundamentalism, to try and determine if there is a way to reconcile these anti-intellectual denominations with intellectualism. Historically, the union of faith and reason produces far more thoughtful results than either individually, and the modern divide between the two, particularly in America, is not only unfortunate but could very well be dangerous. Looking exclusively at the political ramifications of unchecked religious anti-intellectualism in America alone is concerning, but the impact extends far beyond the political stage. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to understand these groups and propose a strategy through which communication can be restored and healing can begin.

Chapters and Methodology

Within this thesis I have three distinct sections through which I will be accomplishing my two goals. The longest of these sections covers the first two chapters of the thesis. Chapter One will explore the history of the faith-reason relationship from

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[9] Gabriel Desjardins, "Crossing the Presuppositional Divide: A Problematization and Comparative Analysis of the Inerrancy Debate in Evangelicalism," Theological Studies Department, Concordia University. Montreal. January 19, 2021, 4.

[10] Paul W. Lewis, "Why Have Scholars Left Classical Pentecostal Denominations?" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 11 no. 1 (2008): 69–86.

[11] Lewis, "Why Have Scholars Left Classical Pentecostal Denominations?" 73.

the time of the Patriarchs until the Enlightenment, while Chapter Two will focus on American Protestantism from the time of the Enlightenment into the modern day. I will be using a historical analysis of the relevant primary sources for this segment in order to extract the faith-reason relationship from within these sources.[12] Once I have accomplished this, I can then use a method similar to the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) approach in order to start identifying the biases within each source.
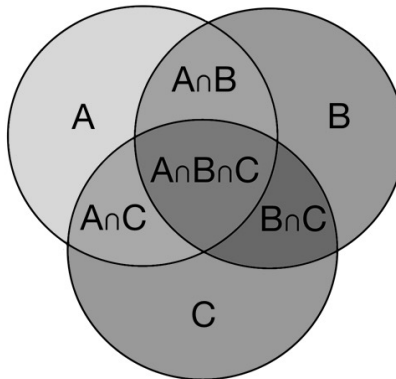

Figure 1 – A Visual Representation of the QCA Approach

The QCA approach will allow me to compare each of these sources in order to find similarities and differences in each, ultimately allowing for the development of the timeline by using the similarities and other such overlaps in each source to remove more glaring individual biases in each record. In essence, my modified use of this method will allow me to identify where sources agree with each other, and where they may diverge on interpretation, thus highlighting the biases in each as well as point towards those aspects that may be more objectively accurate. I will not be fully removing the bias, as it is a central element of any faith-reason conversation, but the QCA will allow me to recognize where it is and thus be able to more effectively address it as it relates to this thesis.

In my second section, contained entirely within Chapter Three, I will be focusing on the use of my modified QCA in order to compare the secondary and primary accounts of American culture and develop a working hypothesis on why it is that this nation above any other was the birthplace of modern religious anti-intellectualism.[13] This will involve considering the evidence and analysis given in my secondary sources against the backdrop of our known modern situation in order to develop an explanation for why the outcome occurred as it did: in essence, I will need to analyze my sources to understand how the data within them may be combined in order to further my second goal.

Chapter Four, encompassed within the third section, is rather different from the first two sections as it focuses on healing rather than historical developments; I will need to use a different approach due to the increased use of individual accounts. Despite the

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[12] Few sources from the past directly discuss the relationship as it is only in recent decades that the two have been seen as entirely distinct entities, requiring me to parse from the historical context what could be classified as faith and what as reason in these early writings.
[13] The QCA's ability to identify biases will be of particular importance here.

ongoing nature of the divide there is not currently much literature in the way of healing the division,[14] so I will have to rely more heavily on the stories of individual persons who overcame the tension in order to build up my own proposal for a larger-scale compromise that both sides may be able to approach with an open mind. Due to this altered focus, I will be employing a cross-case analysis, in which I will directly compare and analyze these individual cases in order to hopefully find an underlying connection between each story that can then be expanded into a larger solution.[15] Because these connections are not always evident, I will need to extract likely compromises using a conclusive methodology.[16] From here I will be able to provide a tentative proposal for future compromise and interaction between the two sides of the anti-intellectual divide.

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[14] And what is present is often biased towards one side of the divide.

[15] Cross-Case Analysis is quite similar to the QCA, though it is more effective when working with a smaller number of sources, hence why I switch to this method for my final section rather than continuing with the QCA.

[16] This methodology focuses on generating practical applications with provided material – in this case it is concerned with using past compromises to try and generate a new compromise for our modern situation.

Chapter 1

An Ancient Tension

The following chapter will provide a broad narrative historical excursus of the relationship between faith and reason, starting from the patriarchs and ending with the enlightenment. This is not intended to explore every detail of this relationship, but rather to highlight key points in its historical development in contrast to the later devolvement of this relationship in modern day America. As such, I will focus on only the prominent interactions between the two sides in question. These will include the use of both Plato and Aristotle by the Christian Patriarchs, the rise of cathedral schools and universities, the Reformation, and the development of Enlightenment thinking. I will center on points of contact that were in some way contentious in order to emphasize both the tension and the cooperation which has characterized the faith-reason relationship throughout history.

The Patriarchs

The first interaction between Christianity and science goes back to the very foundation of the religion with the Patriarchs.[17] Living in ancient Rome meant that these early, educated Christians were exposed to the philosophic ideas of Greek thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato. These philosophies were the sciences of the day – humanity's first attempt to understand the world around them in ways beyond ascribing all things to gods. The most prominent Fathers knew these Aristotelian and Platonic ideals. In his work *Against Heresies*, St. Irenaeus of Lyons directly uses some Aristotelian ideas in his defense of proto-Orthodox Christianity against the alternate interpretations of the Gospel by the Christian Gnostics.[18]

It is easy to interpret many of Irenaeus' comments in *Against Heresies* as being against using philosophical debate as a foundation for Christianity – indeed, in the first line of his preface for the very first book he states, "Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith."[19] Irenaeus' opening statement could be interpreted as discouraging the life of the mind, similar to other remarks such as, "it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church."[20] However, later in the first book of *Against Heresies* Irenaeus alludes to the great works of Homer and Aesop and in the second book of *Against*

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[17] The term 'Patriarchs' is a term used by many historical scholars to refer to a group of Christian men who wrote during the first three centuries CE. These writings were often quite influential in determining how Christianity was practiced in its early days, and many of the men themselves were foremost voices in religion-defining councils such as Nicea.

[18] Irenaeus and John J. Dillon, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies* (New Jersey: The Newman Press, 1992); Brian P. Burns, "The Use of Patristics to Combat Anti-Intellectualism in the Evangelical Tradition." *Criswell Theological Review* 16, no. 2 (Spring 2019).

[19] Irenaeus and Dillon, *Against Heresies*, 1.

[20] Irenaeus and Dillon, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.

Heresies refers to several artistic aspects of Roman culture as things "considered good by all."[21]

Why, then, does Irenaeus seem to be so forceful against asking questions? The simple answer is that he is *not* against questioning; rather, he takes issue with the Gnostic groups of his day, who claimed to have special knowledge greater than human knowing. Irenaeus attacked such arrogance in *Against Heresies*. Scientific or philosophical knowledge was not a problem; it was instead with certain *Christian* approaches to knowing which Irenaeus, as well as many of his contemporaries, took issue. In fact, many other prominent fathers also used Aristotelian and Platonic philosophies when engaging in theological study. In his work *De Opificio Hominis*, Gregory of Nyssa "tries to make Paul speak the language of Plato."[22] Not only does this indicate a broader use of philosophy in the Patriarchs, it suggests that they viewed such philosophies as highly valuable to the study of theology. In short, "the Christian tradition, from the very beginning, valued the life of the mind."[23]

Of course, that does not mean that the Patriarchs considered the philosophers to have equal or greater minds than their own, and while they were often more than willing to use Platonic and Aristotelian ideas,[24] which were widely accepted in their own culture, they were not always so eager to engage with the pagan philosophers of their own time. An example of the reluctance to interact with the non-believing intellectual community can be found in the dialogue between St. Anselm of Canterbury and the monk Gaunilo concerning Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God.[25]

At its simplest, Anselm's ontological argument states that God must exist because God is greater than anything which can be conceived of existing, and should God not exist, then anything that does exist would be greater than Him, creating a paradox. Thus, God must exist. There are of course more nuances to the argument itself, but this core concept roughly summarizes the key point. This argument was very well accepted in the Christian community of the time, though one monk ended up drawing Anselm's irritation when he decided to approach the argument from the perspective of a nonbeliever, and found the points made to be lacking in persuasive power.[26]

This monk, Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, wrote a response to Anselm's argument in which he endeavored to reveal Anselm's faith-based biases and how a rational individual

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[21] Irenaeus and Dillon, *Against Heresies*. 2.32; It is possible that Irenaeus *directly* references these works, but scholars are divided on whether this is truly the case or if Irenaeus was merely alluding to them.

[22] Lucian Turcescu, "Gregory Of Nyssa's Biblical Hermeneutics In De Opificio Hominis." In *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 518.

[23] Burns, "The Use of Patristics to Combat Anti-Intellectualism in the Evangelical Tradition," 105.

[24] Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 2.

[25] All further conversation on this dialogue from Thomas Williams, *Proslogion: With the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2001), unless otherwise noted.

[26] What is important to note here is that Anselm originally created the ontological argument in response to some of his followers requesting he present a proof of God that could be persuasive to non-believers – thus, Guanilo was simply considering the argument from the perspective of one of the people it was crafted to convert.

with a non-Christian perspective might view Anselm's claims.[27] To do this, Gaunilo replaced the 'God' in Anselm's argument with a great island – indeed, the greatest island one can conceive of existing. In this way he used Anselm's exact language to make an obviously ridiculous claim – that this magical island *must* exist, because if it did not then a greater island could obviously exist. To someone without a pre-existing conviction of God's existence, these two arguments would certainly sound the same, which was Gaunilo's point. It is important to note, however, that as a monk Gaunilo himself fully believed in God's existence and quite liked Anselm's ideas. He merely wished to open a discussion on the views of those outside the community, and how Anselm might be able to reach out to them in order to reveal the greatness of God to non-believers.

Anselm, however, quickly shut down this dialogue in his response to Gaunilo. The future saint made it abundantly clear that he did not have an interest in convincing anyone who did not already believe in God. He argued that Gaunilo had fundamentally misinterpreted his argument, as unlike God, an island is not a necessary being. This approach inevitably presupposes God's existence and importance. Anselm's response does somewhat acknowledge Gaunilo's intention of communicating what a rational non-believer might think, but Anselm clearly states that his argument is an appeal to *faith*, rather than reason. In this way he not only circumvents Gaunilo's primary point in his discussion, but he also dismisses it entirely as something not worth pursuing in his future work.

It is this final notion that is perhaps the most important in our discussion of the Patriarchs. While there were certainly notable Christians who used pagan philosophic ideas in their influential writings, Anselm's distinct lack of interest in conversing with non-Christian intellectuals as equal pursuants of truth was a common attitude of the time – the rationality of pagan arguments were adopted and adjusted to allow for prior faith convictions to be treated as ultimate truths, but few truly wished to engage directly with those who did not hold their same Christian convictions. This can even be seen in Irenaeus' outright dismissal of all forms of knowledge proposed by the Gnostics, as he did not truly consider their arguments as plausible, decrying them as utter nonsense if not blasphemy. It is this attitude that will continue through Christian history and ultimately allow for the basis of our modern disconnect between certain aspects of the scientific and faith communities.

The Middle Ages

Between the time of the Patriarchs and the Middle Ages, during the torturously slow fall of the Roman Empire and the increasing invasions across Europe by Vikings and other so-called barbarian tribes, was what some call the "Dark Age," a time when there was a "divorce between religion and learning, between religion and morality."[28]

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[27] It is of utmost importance to note Gaunilo's use of "rational" here – he is very specifically considering the intellectual community outside of Christianity when conducting his arguments, which is of course one of the two groups we are interested in considering in this thesis.

[28] Reginald Lane Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning.* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1920), 69; The term "Dark Age" is problematic and contested in modern scholarship,

While many claim this time was marked by a backslide into paganism, it was not pagan knowledge or reason which characterized the Church's failings, but rather an embrace of the superstitious and religious aspects of ancient worship practices.[29] It was in this time of corruption that the wandering scholar arose, and through them both faith and reason came back stronger than ever in the Middle Ages.[30] Indeed, there was "a new, self-conscious emphasis on reason"[31] during the eleventh century and this emphasis laid the foundation for a particularly strong rise of rationality within medieval culture.

While scholars are not exactly sure why medieval European society suddenly developed this apparent obsession with reason and rationality, there are some hypotheses as to the timing of this intellectual revival.[32] For one thing, the standard of living improved drastically due to revolutions in agriculture such as increasing the amount of land being farmed, as well as changing oxen for horses after the invention of the heavy plough and its revised harness, which no longer strangled the animal attached. Because of this, food became more abundant, and the first cities began to flourish in Western Europe. Additionally, this was the time when the Spanish were reconquering the Muslim territories of Spain and the Mediterranean, which meant the translations and commentaries on the ancient philosophers produced during the Islamic Golden Age were now accessible to Christian scholars for the first time since the age of the Patriarchs.

The Middle Ages ultimately laid the foundation for what would become the Age of Reason – the Enlightenment. It was during this time that cathedral schools, first created by both political and Church leaders in bids to exert power over one another, began turning into universities. It was in these universities where the rudimentary form of the scholastic method would become normalized in studies, developed in large part from the writings passed down from Aristotle and other great pagan minds previously lost to history. And it was through these universities that disputation and rationality became valued skills within society. Prior to this time, the tendency was to simply defer to authority rather than try and work through problems and questions individually.

Our focus, however, is not with what triggered this rise in reason, but the tensions this caused within the Church. This sudden interest in learning from the pagan philosophers naturally resulted in explosive clashes. Three conflicts are of particular interest in this brief overview: the trials of Peter Abelard and Gilbert de la Porrée, as well as Thomas Aquinas' later defense of Aristotle in the University of Paris. The former two occurred prior to the rise of the university, while Aquinas appeared a century later when universities had become fixtures of European culture. The evolution of problems occurred over the broad period of the Middle Ages and the solutions to those conflicts changed alongside society.

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something Poole himself notes and agrees with in his book; however, as it is still the most commonly known designation of this time period, I felt it to be the best designator to use here for clarity's sake.

[29] Poole, *Illustrations*, Chapter III, "The Dark Age."

[30] Poole, *Illustrations*.

[31] Grant, *God and Reason*, 2.

[32] The following brief overview of the situation during the Middle Ages summarized from Grant, using both *God and Reason* as well as *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Institutional and Intellectual Contexts.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The earliest point of contention involves one Peter Abelard in 1140. Abelard was a wandering scholar in the earlier days of the Middle Ages, when the foundations of cathedral schools were just getting settled and the Church was still struggling with the lords of the land for power over the peasantry.[33] Abelard was a highly regarded scholar, though his personality and torrid love affair with the young and wealthy Heloïse, the latter of which resulted in her having a child out of wedlock, made him rather less popular with some of his peers, who saw him as a danger to the authority and respectability of the Church. Abelard himself did not seem to care for what his colleagues thought of him, and he became one of the first prominent theologians who "thought it appropriate, and even necessary, to apply logic and reason to the mysteries of the faith."[34] This application of logic, though quite popular with the students who travelled across the continent to hear him lecture, ended up becoming the very thing that his enemies used to have him put on trial for heresy.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was a defender of the old ways of the Church, and he was quite vocal in his opposition to the rising suspicion of authority occurring amongst the laypeople during his time.[35] As such, he was quick to accuse any sort of questioning of authority as heretical, and Peter Abelard had made his name by advocating asking questions, as seen most notably in his work *Sic et Non* in which he actively encourages his readers to look for contradictions in past writings, including theological treatises by the Patriarchs.[36] Saint Bernard was quick to take note of this. He also emphasized the dangers of Abelard's regular insistence that all humans, even those considered authorities, are capable of making mistakes, even in theological interpretations. Thus, Abelard was brought before the Council of Soissons to be tried for heresy.

Abelard quite quickly realized that the trial arranged was nothing more than a farce, and he walked out with the intention of petitioning the Pope to have all charges dropped. However, Saint Bernard managed to submit a petition first, and all nineteen condemnations of Abelard's work, made against him *in absentia* by the Council, were upheld. Abelard complied with the order to change his works and remove the so-called heresies, a rather light sentence considering the seriousness of the charges. Unfortunately his health rapidly declined following this debacle, and he ultimately passed away at the age of sixty-three, worn down by decades of fighting against his reason-phobic contemporaries and their "hardly masked fear of novelty."[37]

A few years after Abelard's condemnation, Saint Bernard brought another accused heretic before the Council. This was Gilbert de la Porrée, a scholar of the school of Chartres, one of the foremost cathedral schools of the time and one well known for promoting reason and rationality amongst its students. Although this still predated much of the recovery of Aristotle's work, the school of Chartres used what pieces of the

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[33] Abelard's background is taken from a combination of Grant's *God and Reason* as well as more substantially from Poole, *Illustrations*. The trial itself is taken exclusively from Poole, which incorporates translated quotations from the transcript of the event.

[34] Grant, *God and Reason*, 51.

[35] Highlighted in Grant, *God and Reason* and especially in Poole, *Illustrations*.

[36] Pierre Abélard, *Sic et non*. Sumtibus et Typis Librairie Academ. Elwertianae, 1851.

[37] Poole, *Illustrations*, 155.

philosophers had been preserved by the Patriarchs to begin the process of systematizing reason and studies in a way previously unseen in the cathedral schools. De la Porrée was a foremost figure of this school, and in 1148 Saint Bernard condemned him for supposedly denying the Trinity in his work. Thus, another trial was called to debate the relationship between what was seen as uncompromising faith and a newly developing reason.[38]

It is quite likely that Saint Bernard entered this Council with some amount of confidence, as he had successfully condemned Abelard only a few years prior on similar charges. This trial, however, would not go as Saint Bernard hoped. Whether this was due to how rapidly reason was being accepted in society, the Church successfully reaching an equal-but-separate agreement with the political leaders of their time, or simply because De la Porrée was reportedly a much less irritating person on a personal level than Abelard is unclear. Most likely all three points played at least some small role in the Church's willingness to hear De la Porrée out. He defended himself eloquently, with his foremost argument relying on human fallacy and the ability to interpret works incorrectly, or in ways the author never intended.

> It was impossible, [De la Porrée] declared, to write anything that should not be open to misunderstanding. Is the Bible heretical because Arius and Sabellius read their heresies in it? Was Gilbert to supply his readers with brains?[39]

Although De la Porrée did have to add a foreword to his work clarifying he did not believe the heresies for which he had been accused, his reputation and work went on normally after the trial, and none of his work was burned or heavily altered as it had been for Abelard. In just a few years, the attitude towards reason seemed to be shifting.

Before we move on to our final clash between Thomas Aquinas and his superiors at the University at Paris, it is interesting to take note of the fact that despite history ultimately vindicating both De la Porrée and Abelard – the former was never condemned and the latter came to be revered by post-modern scholarship for his work – it was the people speaking out against them whom the Church ultimately named as saints. Not only was Bernard of Clairvaux given this title, but so too was his contemporary Saint Peter Damian, "who rejected the liberal arts as useless and objected to the application of logic to any aspect of the faith."[40] Thus, even as the general populace quickly came to view the growing use of reason in the theological fields with high approval, the Church took a while longer, revering those who clung to the old orthodoxy even as their cathedral schools developed into massive independent universities. Indeed, "ecclesiastical authorities often complained – even as late as the sixteenth century – that theologians were far too engrossed in these secular subjects for their own good and the good of theology."[41]

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[38] Details from this trial exclusively drawn from Poole, *Illustrations*. Background on the social situation of the time from both works by Grant used in this thesis.

[39] Poole, *Illustrations*, 169.

[40] Grant, *God and Reason*, 53.

[41] Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science*, 48.

This continued wariness could be seen in the University at Paris, which disallowed the teaching of Aristotle in its classrooms in its early years. One of its most prominent staff members, both at the time and into the modern day, was Saint Thomas Aquinas, who vehemently disagreed with the prohibition on Aristotle in the classroom. As such, he wrote an entire treatise – the *Summa Contra Gentiles* – defending not only Aristotle, but also more generally the use of pagan logic and reason within the study of theology itself in an attempt to have Aristotle's work admitted as an acceptable resource in his University.[42] Aquinas' arguments were many, and the *Summa* was a massive work, but his key points can be boiled down to two ideas: divine truth must be compatible with scientific truth, and humans are capable of errors in logic. In this way, Aquinas essentially argues that if a scientific truth is incompatible with a Biblical creed, then the logic used to explain the truth in question must be faulty.

It is in this final notion that we find some of the more negative takeaways from an age when science, reason, and logic were truly finding their roots and setting themselves up for the revolution of the Enlightenment. Aquinas "appears to assume […] that the mistake will be in the reasonings of the nontheological science"[43] rather than the theological one, and this attitude – that while humans can fail, divine wisdom cannot be misunderstood – is one that can still certainly be seen in the modern clashes between faith and reason. Even though Saint Thomas Aquinas managed to further the relationship between faith and reason in a cooperative direction, the rigid, orthodox influence of fellow saints Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Damian also persisted into the following decades.

The Reformation

Before the Enlightenment arrived, there was one additional point of interaction between faith and reason that we should consider: the Reformation. According to Mihai Androne, "the Protestant Reformation may be considered as the most important event in the history of 16th century Europe" due to its impact and lasting influence on religion, culture, and society as a whole, particularly in the West.[44] While Androne's claims may be somewhat exaggerated, it cannot be denied that the Reformation did have major lasting consequences on the shape of Western society. Our concern involves one particular impact that often gets less attention than some of the other more immediately evident ones: the Reformation's role in the creation of public education.

Before we discuss the Reformers and their impact on education, it is extremely important to remember that in this context, every person discussed considers education to be primarily *religious* education. Although some of the mentioned Reformers do advocate the teaching of at least elements of philosophy as well, likely at least partially influenced by their upbringing in the humanist Renaissance period,[45] the primary focus of

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[42] Kenneth J Konyndyk, "Aquinas on Faith and Science." *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1995).

[43] Konyndyk, "Aquinas on Faith and Science," 16.

[44] Mihai Androne, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on Education." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 137 (2014), 81.

[45] Androne, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on Education."

every Protestant Reformer was to improve the spiritual morality and obedience of the populace. They viewed education as not only the primary tool to accomplish this, but indeed the only truly effective one.

Martin Luther, one of the most impactful reformers, had some very strong opinions on the state of education in his native Germany. In his *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, he used quite colorful language to attack people who did not allow their children a proper education, claiming they not only "despise [God's] office" but they "are so horribly ungrateful as to let it be destroyed."[46] Luther felt strongly on the need for all children to have an education – and it is interesting to note that while Luther spoke of work as only designated to sons, he included children as a whole when discussing education. He also was one of the first advocates of the government paying for the school tuition of children from impoverished families as well as orphans.[47] In essence, Luther was one of the first to promote the idea of what would become public education.

Luther was not alone in his enthusiasm for educating the populace – a majority of his fellow Reformers were just as vocal in their displeasure with education during their time. John Calvin developed an entire educational system in Geneva, and Ulrich Zwingli personally oversaw the reformation of schools in Zurich. Both men focused on increasing religious instruction, as well as added studies of Hebrew and Greek in order to read the Scripture in its original languages. One of Luther's students, Melanchthon, was convinced of the need for "the implementation of a high quality education system."[48] Like his teacher, Melanchthon stressed that without proper education, governments cannot be fairly run and God's Kingdom cannot be properly preached. Without these things, he warns, human society will crumble until humanity is no better than the wild animals, doomed to Satan's will for eternity.

While the above Reformers certainly did their best to improve the education in their respective countries, perhaps the place that works best to show a true case study of the Protestant education system is across the English Channel, in the United Kingdom. Due to the Reformation also being intertwined with changes in the monarchy, the Church of England was able to directly and effectively alter education across the entire island rather than focusing only on single cities, as most of the other reformers had. In his book *Mediaeval Education and the Reformation*, John Lawson explores how the reform movement started by Henry VIII changed the British education system. Prior to the Reformation reaching its shores, England's education was quite similar to the rest of Europe, with cathedral schools dominating the landscape, and even housing two of the great, old universities: Oxford and Cambridge. With the power of the monarch on their side, British reformers were able to very rapidly alter the face of English education to fit

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[46] Martin Luther, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School." *Luther's Works* 46 (1963).
[47] Discussed by Androne; Referenced in Luther's "Sermon."
[48] Androne, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on Education," 84.

the vision of Protestant education promoted by the likes of Luther and Calvin. The results, however, were perhaps not quite as expected.[49]

After the British Reformation and the rise of Anglicanism, education was one of the top priorities for the new protestant rulers of the island. Indeed, perhaps more so than any of the other Reform movements, "English Protestantism was largely an academic movement."[50] With this strong drive for educational reform, the crown spent many early years seizing Catholic land, along with many of the monastic and cathedral schools conducted on that land. Rather than entirely removing the schools, however, each was made to swear an oath to the crown and pass a religious test before being given a fiscal grant by the crown to continue working. In this way, schools were not destroyed, but were instead preserved and changed to suit the new Protestant drive. During the reign of Elizabeth I, more schools appeared than had ever been seen before on the island country – it was truly a time of educational flourishing, in no small part because the Reformation ideas had stoked a desire in the regular populace to become better educated.[51] This was, of course, viewed as a victory for Protestant thought in England, as the schools were filled with moldable minds, and those schools in turn taught only what the crown allowed. This was Luther's vision of a moral society, learning the true nature of God. Unfortunately for Luther, within a mere forty years students began using this access to higher education for things *beyond* roles in the Church and government, which was what Luther had initially imagined education would provide.[52]

> Until *c* 1540 the student had been a tonsured clerk, destined for the service of Church or state in some capacity; by *c* 1580 he was as often as not a well-to-do young man without clerical or scholastic ambitions, interested chiefly in personal cultivation and gentlemanly accomplishments.[53]

Thus, Protestantism did indeed encourage greater education among the populace, but what this achieved ultimately was not purely increased devotion but also increased curiosity and questioning, building the foundations of the coming intellectual revolution: the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment

Up to this point I have been highlighting key points of tension between faith and reason throughout history. For the casual historian, the Enlightenment would seem to be the ultimate point of contention, one that eventually resulted in the gaping divide between the two in certain modern denominations. While from a certain perspective this is correct, the Enlightenment itself had very little in the way of direct contention between faith and reason. Rather, the main antagonizing forces were entirely within the Church itself.

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[49] The following discussion of Anglican educational reform from John Lawson, *Mediaeval Education and the Reformation*. (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2013).
[50] Lawson, *Mediaeval Education*, 95.
[51] Lawson, *Mediaeval Education*, 77–78.
[52] Luther, "A Sermon."
[53] Lawson, *Mediaeval Education*, 104.

Though some of the writers of the time were radically secular, just as many of the great intellectual minds, such as Sir Isaac Newton, were convinced Christians whose faith never shuddered under the weight of their discoveries. As such, this section will be less concerned with the tension between faith and reason and instead focus on how the two helped each other move towards creating the intellectual revolution we now know characterizes this period.

For many years, historians characterized the Enlightenment period as a time when the elite, educated classes of Europe began laying the foundations for our modern society through the development of modern scientific ideas and approaches, as well as through the push towards more secular governance via religious tolerance and monarchic limitations. In more recent decades, however, this conception of the Enlightenment has been brought into question. Although figures like Voltaire, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau were certainly some of the most *prolific* writers of the time, and thus the main focus of early studies on this period, they did not represent the entire age, nor were they even the ones to spearhead much of what modern scholars would consider to be the hallmarks of this time. Indeed, for a period so long considered one of "reason against religion," many of the key aspects grew not out of the secular elite, but instead the believing public.[54]

One of the foremost reasons this time period was for so long seen as a clash of secularism against orthodoxy was the idea of a deist threat. As explained by Stephen J. Barnett in his book *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity*, the deist movement believed that, while there is a creator God, after creation He stopped interfering in human affairs. While this is certainly a simplified version, it is suitable for our purposes here, most notably because, as Barnett demonstrates, there was no deist threat to the Church.[55] Indeed, deism as a belief was held by very few people at the time, and many of the writers who historians, and even contemporaries, tend to classify as deists were by no stretch actually deists. Rather, the main threat to the Church came from a group Barnett calls the "Dissenters" – who were themselves convinced believers of an active Christian God – who sought reform within their clergy. This group contained not only prominent members of the church communities of Europe, but was also supported by most of the peasantry. It is important to note that the Enlightenment period arose after decades of religious wars across Europe, and people were sick and tired of the bloodshed.[56] The time was ripe for religious tolerance, and it was the lower class that began practicing it long before the elite were preaching it.[57] The result of this was that, with energy no longer being focused entirely onto oppression and war against people with slightly different conceptions of the Christian God, people now had the time to rediscover the wonders of the natural world and how it worked.

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[54] Stephen J Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 2.

[55] Barnett's entire first chapter is dedicated to deconstructing the myth of Enlightenment Deism.

[56] While the veracity of calling these conflicts 'religious wars' is contested by some, I specifically use this terminology here because the people at the time saw these conflicts as being at least partly based in religion, as there was often a divide along Catholic-Protestant lines. If nothing else, people were tired of religion being the rallying cry around which many of these conflicts were staged.

[57] Elaborated in Barnett, primarily in chapters 3 and 4 but also discussed in chapter 2.

Looking back to the Middle Ages, the concept of studying the natural world was certainly nothing new. Natural Philosophy was a major area of study in the great Medieval Universities, as theologians believed that by studying God's work in order to better understand it, humans could more effectively care for the world as they had been instructed.[58] It was also seen as a way to further the glory of God, by admiring the greatness of his Creation. By the time of the Enlightenment, the rules of the universe were being discovered by enterprising natural philosophers, and these rules led to some of the great breakthroughs of modern science such as the quantification of gravity and the first suggestion of the Big Bang Theory. In many ways, it was directly because of the deeply Christian nature of Europe at the time, as well as the increasing exhaustion of the public with religious wars, that the Enlightenment was able to occur at all.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Enlightenment, for the purposes of our discussion here, is the branch known as the Scottish Enlightenment. As Barnett explains,

> The Scottish Enlightenment has for some been seen as an exception to the general European trend, in so far as much of its intellectual thrust emanated from clerical and established milieux. But there is ample evidence to suggest that the Scottish Enlightenment was far less exceptional than has been considered.[59]

This form of the Enlightenment was not as loudly promoted by the elite writers of the Enlightenment, hence why it may have been overlooked for so long as a foremost reaction to the time. Its impact is undeniable, however, particularly within the American Protestant tradition, which is of course the very tradition we will be exploring in the rest of this thesis. The exact application of this Enlightenment within the newfound country will be explored in the following chapter, so here I will only take time to elaborate on a few key points of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Unlike the more secular Enlightenments which are so often seen as the primary forces of this age, the Scottish Enlightenment was rooted in the idea of common sense – the concept that every person, regardless of class or education level, is capable of recognizing the laws of nature which are 'sensible.'[60] It is this mindset which allows for continued belief in God, while also accepting concepts like Newton's gravity and the Big Bang Theory, one of which could be observed easily in life and the other which could be understood through the revelation of God creating everything. This was a very positive outlook on the human condition, lessening the focus on human sinfulness to consider the great gifts and unique abilities given to us by God. In this Enlightenment, one did not need the Church or the elite to explain the world, as people could understand it themselves. This idea, however, as simple and harmless as it may seem, ended up becoming one of the biggest contributors to the split between faith and reason in the following decades.

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[58] Elaborated in Grant, *The Foundations*.
[59] Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion*, 121–2.
[60] This rough overview of the Scottish Enlightenment taken from Noll, *The Scandal*, Chapter 4.

Chapter 2

Make Mine Monkeys

The following chapter will continue the historical discussion of the faith-reason relationship from the previous chapter; however, I will be moving my focus from Europe to America. Here I intend to examine how the relationship changed from the Enlightenment to our modern day. More specifically, I will be attempting to pinpoint key moments in American history that likely contributed to certain American Protestant Movements rejecting reason in favor of exclusively relying on faith. As with my last chapter, this is not intended to be a thorough exploration of every interaction between faith and reason, but instead focuses on points of contact that were combative in nature. In doing this, I will be able to create a rough timeline following the souring of the faith-reason relationship, which will be important to understand for my next chapter.

The American Enlightenment and Darwin

As mentioned in the last chapter, the form of the Enlightenment most relevant to our discussion here is that of the Scottish Enlightenment, which was heavily adopted by American Protestants during this period. Evangelicals at this time were a powerful cultural force in the fledgling United States, with their pastors and clergy often running not only the churches but also the newly erected universities along the east coast of the United States.[61] Unlike what one might expect when looking at modern Evangelical reactions to the secularized institutions now known as the Ivy League, at the time these "learned" Evangelicals embraced the non-elitist elements of the European Enlightenment, even using "the same Enlightenment categories to express their theology" as they did their science and philosophy.[62] Their adopted Scottish Enlightenment ideals eventually developed into Baconian Science.[63]

The Enlightenment in America settled itself on a few key ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment, most notably the concept that "all humans possessed, by nature, a common set of capacities […] through which they could grasp the basic realities of nature and morality."[64] In this way, human investigation into and discoveries about the natural world were not only in line with Divine reality, but also an intended part of humanity's creation. This idea in turn developed into the Baconian Method of observing the natural world and coming to logical conclusions about those observations. This, of course, is certainly a part of even modern scientific study, but the Baconian Method had one major problem – one that ultimately led Evangelicals to begin losing their grasp on the intellectual attentions of the nation.

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[61] In Noll, *The Scandal*, 85. For a more complete discussion, see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press) 1996; The exact power religion had in the universities will be more thoroughly covered in the third chapter of this thesis.

[62] Noll, *The Scandal*, 83; The "elitist" Enlightenment here refers to those ideas of characters like Voltaire and Rousseau (Noll, *The Scandal*, 84).

[63] Baconian science is here defined as it is in Noll, *The Scandal*.

[64] Noll, *The Scandal*, 84–5.

Before we can look at this downfall, though, we must first properly explain the shape of the Evangelical Enlightenment that overtook the United States in the nineteenth century. As mentioned above, the Scottish Enlightenment ideals turned into a didactic Baconianism, which encouraged the idea that all humans had been created with an innate morality and reason that allowed them to intuitively understand the truths of the world. As discussed last chapter, this form of Enlightenment was likely the most common one in Europe, even if the old continent was in a position of religious exhaustion due to decades of war. America, on the other hand, was primarily Protestant and thus had not suffered the same disasters which encouraged religious tolerance in Europe. Perhaps due to this, religion ended up much more integrated with the American Enlightenment than it did with the European one, as there was only one religion considered to be "true" at this point in American history.[65] Because of this easy interaction between the Enlightenment and religion in America, "it was increasingly easy for evangelicals to treat the Scriptures as a 'scientific' text whose pieces were to be arranged by induction to yield the truth on any issue."[66]

This integration of secular reason and faith at such a fundamental level in the United States had a heavy impact on the intellectual life of the Protestant faith.[67] As science continued to develop and new discoveries were made, certain Protestants continued to cling to the Baconian ways of the nineteenth century. These groups would come to collectively be known as the fundamentalists. The ideas of innate knowing promoted during the early American Enlightenment had led certain groups to dismiss the need for theological training, going so far as to propose that researching past theological ideas would only taint the true interpretation of Scripture, which, according to Baconian scientific ideas, was obvious to anyone who simply read the Bible and was open to receiving the Divine truth within it. The basic idea was "because the world spiritual was analogous to the world natural, observable cause and effect must work in religion as well as in physics."[68] For a few decades, this approach worked well and Protestant intellectualism flourished. Then, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new idea began to gain traction within the academic world, and the tenuous optimism of the Enlightenment Protestants began to crack.

This idea is, of course, Darwinism. Throughout the nineteenth century, Evangelicals had touted the Scriptures as having the answer to all of life's problems, should one simply read them correctly, following the path of Baconian optimism. "The prominence of Bible-onlyism, at the expense of well-articulated theology, meant that when new conditions arose […] there was little ground from which to reason."[69] The intellectual habits of the nineteenth century were unable to stand up to the growing influence of evolution, though some groups who would come to be known as liberal

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[65] Much of this is speculation on my part, using information from Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion* as well as Noll, *The Scandal*.

[66] Noll, *The Scandal*, 98.

[67] This is more completely covered by Noll in chapters four and five of *The Scandal*, but I will do my best to summarize the key points here. Consequently, the majority of this paragraph and the next, unless otherwise noted, are from the indicated chapters.

[68] Noll, *The Scandal*, 96.

[69] Noll, *The Scandal*, 107.

Protestants certainly did their best to bridge the gap.[70] However, an equally if not more prominent group pushed back, looking to defend the "fundamentals" of the faith from encroaching secular ideas. It did not help the fundamentalist cause that universities during the early twentieth century were very rapidly becoming secularized, thus pushing them further away from the academic discourse.[71] However, even as these institutions expanded beyond their religious roots, the fundamentalist movement grew as well, both in size and in resentment towards the academic institutions they once ran. Lines were drawn, and evolution became a battleground topic: for many people on both sides of the debate one could either believe Darwin or Scripture, but not both. Darwin himself became agnostic, as he could not accept a Creator God in such a random and cruel world.[72]

Thus came the anti-evolution movement, which itself was perhaps less influenced by the controversial theory itself and more by the public push – mostly by the academic world – of the idea that science and religion were incompatible. While Evangelical thought certainly did not fit well with Darwinian ideas, there were some liberal Evangelicals who attempted to create harmony between science and religion. Secular historians and scientists, however, promoted the idea of a so-called war between science and religion, and with the rising voice of the fundamentalists and their anti-evolution movement, this initially exaggerated clash quickly grew into a genuine battle for the soul of America.[73]

In addition to a decreased religious presence within the education system in the twentieth century, there came an increase in the number of students attending higher education, with high school enrollment increasing by over 12% between 1890 and 1920.[74] Because of this growth, it is unsurprising how quickly the anti-evolution movement targeted high school science classes and began pushing for state governments to criminalize the teaching of Darwin to impressionable young people, fearing they would turn away from God. One of the leaders of this charge was William Jennings Bryan, a prominent and popular Democratic politician who openly advocated for the fundamentalist agenda to "protect the moral soul of America." Working against Bryan were figures from the newly established American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who believed that *any* restrictions on education was an infringement of personal freedom. Thus, the stage was set for a direct clash between faith and reason to determine once and for all which would control the United States. All they needed was a battlefield to stage it on.

Enter, Dayton Tennessee.

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[70] Details on this found in Noll, *The Scandal*, Chapter 5. As these details are not particularly relevant at this point, I will not expound upon them here and instead focus only on the historical backlash caused by the increased belief in Darwinian evolution.

[71] This will be further explored in the next chapter.

[72] Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 17.

[73] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 21.

[74] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 24; Note that the rest of the information in this paragraph is also taken from Larson and will be expanded on in the next section.

The Scopes 'Monkey' Trial

History would come to see the case of the State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes as one of the defining clashes between faith and reason in the modern day. However, when the prosecution's George W. Rappleyea, a New York native who had only recently settled in Dayton, first filed the accusations against young Mr. Scopes, neither he nor the ACLU defense intended the trial to become the battle against fundamentalism into which it ultimately devolved.[75] When the State of Tennessee first enacted the statute banning the teaching of evolution in classrooms, the ACLU saw it not as a matter of the Church interfering with the state; but rather, with the majority imposing itself on the minority, an issue near and dear to the founders of the ACLU who had developed their identity and methods during the oppressive measures against pacifists in World War I, as well as the Red Scare which followed it.[76] As such, the organization took on a decidedly anti-majoritarian tilt, and the Tennessee statute was precisely the sort of abuse of power with which they took issue. Thus, the ACLU put out a call: they would not only defend anyone willing to defy the statute, but they would do it free of charge, *and* pay for the prosecution as well. In doing so, they hoped to ultimately challenge the constitutionality of the statute as an infringement on personal freedoms.

This offer piqued the interest of the aforementioned Rappleyea in Dayton, Tennessee. Dayton was a dying town, with the population dwindling from "3,000 during the Gay Nineties to fewer than 1,800 by the time of the Scopes trial."[77] Though many of the people in Dayton were fundamentalist in their faith, the town was hurting for attention and funding, and the ACLU's proposal seemed a perfect opportunity to young Rappleyea to put the nation's spotlight onto Dayton. He brought his idea to the leaders of the town, and even those who supported the statute approved of the suggestion, such as the School Superintendent who "loved publicity for [his] town even more" than the statute.[78] Thus the plot was hatched – Dayton would take the ACLU's offer. All they needed was a defendant, and Sue K. Hicks of the prosecution had just the man for the job.

Hicks was friends with Dayton's high school football coach, a young man by the name of John Thomas Scopes. Scopes had substituted for the usual biology teacher during a review session during the last school year, and he had been teaching *Civic Biology* by George Hunter, a textbook that covered human evolution. More importantly, Scopes was absolutely perfect for the job. "Single, easy-going, and without any fixed intention of staying in Dayton, he had little to lose from a summertime caper."[79]After sitting down with the conspirators, Scopes agreed to lend his name for the trial, and Dayton was ready to begin preparations for what they planned to be the biggest event they had ever hosted. However, part of this meant getting a few big names involved with

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[75] A majority of the following discussion of the trial, its participants, and its media coverage will be taken from Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, unless otherwise indicated.
[76] Detailed in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, Chapter 3.
[77] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 88.
[78] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 89.
[79] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 90.

the trial, and once again Hicks had an idea. He sent a letter off to the most prominent anti-evolutionist of the time: one William Jennings Bryan.

Bryan, a three-time Democratic presidential contender and retired statesman, had been at the helm of the anti-evolution crusade for some years when Hicks' letter arrived. However, it is quite important to note that Bryan, though vehement in his belief that the teaching of human evolution in the classroom was detrimental to the morality of young people, was not a true picture of what one might conceive of as an anti-evolutionist in our modern times.

> He accepted the "day-age" creation theory, which meant he believed that when the Bible outlines what was created on each day, those days could have actually lasted millions of years each. Evolution might not be all bunk, either, Bryan thought. It might apply to other living things, just not humans. He had no problem with the subject being taught as "a theory," meaning he considered evolution to be just a guess or unsupported idea. But he did have a big problem with its being taught as a factual explanation for human origins.[80]

As it was human evolution at the heart of the Scopes case, however, Bryan was immediately onboard, writing back to Hicks as soon as he received the invitation with a resounding agreement. Unfortunately for the ACLU, with Bryan's arrival came a new focus: modernists versus fundamentalists.

Prior to Hicks bringing Bryan onto the prosecution, the ACLU had kept their focus narrow: "the majority, acting through the legislature, cannot define the tenets of science or religion for individual public school teachers or students."[81] In essence, they were keeping to their emphasis on individual freedom – evolution itself was not intended to be a part of the argument at all. With Bryan on the opposing counsel, however, any hope the ACLU had of keeping the debate controlled all but disappeared, and by the time the trial itself began, the group had only one person left on the defense team. This was due in large part to the addition of Clarence Darrow to the defense, a man who would culturally come to be viewed as the hero of the Scopes trial, but at the time almost no one involved with the project wanted Darrow anywhere near it.[82] Once Bryan was involved, however, no one could stop Darrow from waiving his fees and joining the defense.

Clarence Darrow was a rather divisive figure, to put things kindly. He had "spent a lifetime ridiculing traditional Christian beliefs. He called himself an agnostic, but in the fact he was effectively an atheist."[83] Once Bryan had brought evolution to the table in Dayton, nothing could stop Darrow from taking up the opportunity to "grab the limelight and debunk Christianity."[84] Once these two giants of personality and charisma were on

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[80] Brandon Haught,. *Going Ape: Florida's Battles Over Evolution in the Classroom*. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014), 5.
[81] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 95.
[82] Cited many times throughout Larson's account, but most clearly on page 100: "As the ACLU later assured its many liberal religious supporters it did not want Darrow anywhere near Dayton."
[83] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 71.
[84] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 75.

the field, the tone of the Scopes trial was determined, and it was not what either side had intended when the proceedings were first formulated. During the trial itself, Arthur Garfield Hays, the one remaining ACLU representative on the defense, as well as Thomas Stewart, the Tennessee Attorney General and head of the prosecution, both tried to keep things focused on the academic freedom *versus* the majority rule angle initially intended. Unfortunately, with Bryan and Darrow present, the trial was never going to be anything but a clash between fundamentalist faith and the reason of the day.

Fortunately for Dayton, the fact evolution ended up entangled with their case meant the nation's spotlight was truly on them, as they had hoped. "These events unfolded at the height of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, when intradenominational battles between liberal and conservative Christians made front-page headlines in newspapers across the country."[85] Interest in evolution and creationism alike stirred the masses, and so Dayton claimed its fifteen minutes of fame with ease once Bryan and Darrow entered the picture. Unfortunately for Dayton, the attention was anything but positive. The rest of the state, still recovering from the Civil War, had already worried about the trial reinforcing "stereotypes about intellectual backwardness" in the South.[86] These concerns were ultimately well founded, as H.L. Mencken of the Baltimore Sun came into town and wrote prominent articles mocking the people of Dayton and praising Darrow and his form of agnostic attack.[87] While Mencken was certainly the most vitriolic of the reports, a majority of the headlines saw Dayton as rather backwards, and Darrow as the ultimate victor of the trial, despite Scopes' conviction.[88]

This press coverage would prove key in creating the mythology that ultimately came to surround this case in the decades to follow. While the trial itself certainly had its moments of contention – Darrow was, perhaps unsurprisingly, cited in contempt of court, and a massive debate over opening each day with a prayer was ongoing through much of the early days – in the end, both parties walked away feeling "like victors."[89] The ACLU would ultimately overturn Scopes' conviction and the statute at the center of the trial would be struck down two years later in 1927, and Bryan died in his sleep from complications with diabetes less than a week after the events at Dayton. On the national stage, evolution proponents would be touted as the winners, but in truth, the war was only just beginning – and the Scopes trial, and more importantly its coverage, was the match that set it ablaze.

Two Scientific Theories?

Although in the years following the trial many would see evolution as the uncontested victor of the fundamentalist-modernist clash, time would prove the fundamentalists wounded but far from beaten. Bryan himself remained enthusiastic and

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[85] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 116.

[86] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 94.

[87] See Mencken, "Homo Neanderthalensis," "Mencken Finds Daytonians Full of Sickening Doubts About Value of Publicity," and "Impossibility of Obtaining Fair Jury Insures Scopes' Conviction, Says Mencken."

[88] Most clearly shown in the coverage of the final cross-examination by Darrow of Bryan, covered in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 190.

[89] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 192.

optimistic in the five days he had left after the trial, planning further offensive moves against evolution and feeling quite confident in the success of his crusade.[90] Due to his sudden death most of these plans inevitably fell through, but his influence did not die with him. Even before the Scopes trial was making headlines, textbook publishers were feeling uneasy – "Gruenberg's publisher saw the coming conflict and asked Bryan directly what would make a biology textbook acceptable and inoffensive" a few years prior to Scopes, and after that clash of giants, textbook publishers were officially spooked.[91] As a result, textbooks for the next few decades glossed over the topic of evolution, if it was brought up at all, and the rabid passions that had arisen on both sides of the argument in Dayton died down for a time.

It was only after World War II that the concern over evolution in the classroom once again became a major focus of Christian fundamentalists. Although some local attempts were made in earlier years to outlaw the teaching of evolution entirely, these never gained much traction and faded just as quickly as they sparked up.[92] With the start of the space race against Russia, however, America developed a new passion for science, pouring millions of dollars into developing national science curriculums in order to keep up with their Cold War competitors.[93] Naturally, part of this curricular rejuvenation involved updating biology textbooks with the most recent scientific consensuses – including, of course, the widely accepted Theory of Evolution. This new emphasis on teaching evolution stirred up the fundamentalists, who almost immediately began lobbying to have their own views taught in classrooms as well.

The first tactic attempted by anti-evolutionists was to argue for religious freedom. More precisely, they argued that teaching evolution in the schools was an example of one religion being promoted, while others, specifically Christianity, were being belittled. However, this argument was quickly thrown out – evolution was based in science, whereas Christianity was based in faith, thus separation of Church and State meant the Bible could not be taught as fact within a public school system.[94] Although this idea of "preaching humanism" did continue to work as a facet of the anti-evolutionist crusade, it quickly became clear the proponents of the movement would need a less religious foundation to stand on if they wished to circumvent the Constitutional separation of Church and State, and promote their interpretation of the Genesis account into the science classroom.[95]

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[90] Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 197.

[91] Haught, *Going Ape*, 11.

[92] Haught, *Going Ape*, 22–23; It is possible that this general disinterest in the movement was an outcome of the mockery fundamentalists received during and after the Scopes trial, resulting in the average person not wanting to engage with anyone or anything associated with the movement (as discussed in the last three chapters of *Summer for the Gods*).

[93] Haught, *Going Ape*, 25; Noll, *The Scandal*, 193.

[94] Haught, *Going Ape*, 33, 55, and 107–109 ; Noll*, The Scandal*, 186; Interestingly, Noll seems to agree that scientific theories require a certain amount of faith to believe, suggesting a general American propensity to falsely conflate Scientific Theories with the less grounded Scientific Hypothesis.

[95] They, of course, did not see things this way, but legally this is, in fact, what they were doing.

Fundamentalists found their champion in George McCready Price, an "armchair geologist with little formal training and almost no field experience," who was the first person to propose what would come to be called scientific creationism.[96] Price's work, *The New Geology*, was first published in 1923, but it was only in 1961 that the ideas offered in *The New Geology* took off with fundamentalist groups. This was thanks in large part to a collaboration between John C. Whitcomb Jr. – a trained theologian – and the hydraulic engineer Henry M. Morris, who used Price's work as the basis for their own publication *The Genesis Flood*.[97] This book was an instant success, and anti-evolution groups latched onto it, as it described the Genesis creation event using scientific language. For them, this book was proof that Creationism was not a religion, but was, in fact, defendable, secular science. Now they just needed to get it into the schools.

Creationist movements arose on a local level across the country as school boards attempted to implement Creationist curriculums in their public schools.[98] However, although there was some success in developing new curriculum, the movement ultimately still faced the same Constitutional hurdles – they may have changed the language, but the core of creationism was the same as before. Creation implies a Creator, after all, and teaching about a Creator is inevitably religious, at least according to a majority of the educators and lawyers involved with the development of creationist curriculum. Protestant pastor Jim Morry perhaps puts it best: "'The question of science is verifiability,' he said. 'That same word cannot be used with creation science. The word is a misnomer. Creationism is not science.'"[99]

Despite the seemingly immovable wall that is the Constitutional separation of Church and State, creationists were determined to see their cause through and continued push after push, never staying down long after each defeat. As Noll notes, "since 1960 creationism has done more than any other issue except abortion to inflame the cultural warfare in American public life."[100] Christians cited a concern for their children's moral character, and tried to make the argument that evolution was just as much a matter of religious faith as Christianity, and thus prioritizing one over the other in public schools was, in and of itself, breaking the Constitutional separation. None of these arguments worked, and creationism remains off the syllabus across the USA – though that has not stopped creationists from continuing to argue their case up into the present day.

Cultural Warfare and the Moral Majority

Though the primary focus of this thesis is on the relationship between faith and science, it would be neglectful to not briefly address the political aspect of the Evangelical groups in question, as this element does affect the modern faith-reason relationship in these denominations. From its earliest days, evangelical identity in

[96] Noll, *The Scandal*, 189.
[97] The following discussion of these two texts from Noll, *The Scandal*, 189–191.
[98] The following discussion on the struggle to implement Creationism into the public classroom, both in this paragraph and the next, taken from Haught, *Going Ape*.
[99] Haught, *Going Ape*, 133; quote from School Board of St. Lucie County, Florida, Minutes of Regular Meeting, January 24, 1995, 6.
[100] Noll, *The Scandal*, 192.

America was deeply intertwined with a sense of patriotism and love of country that persisted throughout the growth of fundamentalism.[101] This deep-seated belief in a Christian America was one that served as a primary motivator to get Evangelicals involved in politics, and one of the first political figures to utilize this voting bloc was none other than William Jennings Bryan.[102] Bryan, of course, was a Democrat and a pacifist, and his platform would not be fully supported by any of the Evangelical Christian political movements in America today, but he nonetheless laid the groundwork for how future Evangelical leaders would get involved in politics.

Bryan's approach can be explained through "four key elements: moral activism, populism, intuition, and biblicism."[103] These fundamentals, as it were, are key to understanding how the modern American Religious Right was formed, and how it impacts believers today. In fact, we have already seen all four of these elements in action throughout this chapter. The creationist concern about children's moral character is directly linked to *moral activism*, the sense of favoritism by the government for the "religion of secularity" is rooted in *populism*, and of course the Protestant Enlightenment conviction of a person's innate ability to understand the plain sense of Biblical texts and apply them to everyday life directly leads to *intuition* and *biblicism*. However, the prior examples are, by and large, disconnected and general. Thus, before we begin to unpack the emotional and theological roots of the problem at hand, let us consider a concrete example of all four political elements in action: Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority.[104]

Although Falwell's political group could ultimately be considered minimally effective during its time, modern political trends show that his methods ultimately seem to have paid off and created a loyal Republican voting bloc amongst white Evangelicals across denominational lines.[105] How he did this was applying Bryan's four elements. The most obvious is in the Moral Majority's name itself: moral activism. Falwell believed that the nation was succumbing to Satan, citing increasing acceptance of homosexuality, the progress of the women's and civil rights movements, and the passing of *Roe v. Wade* as proof of these claims.[106] He called for Christians to vote out any politicians who supported these causes and issued so-called "moral report cards" which supposedly allowed voters to quickly determine which candidates were the most Christian. These report cards did not, however, seem to care about immorality outside these issues: "one Florida congressman, Richard Kelley, received a 100 percent rating even though he had been involved in the ABSCAM bribery scandal."[107] Falwell never faltered in the face of

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[101] Noll, *The Scandal*, 99.

[102] Noll, *The Scandal*, 151.

[103] Noll, *The Scandal*, 160.

[104] The Moral Majority was a Christian political lobbying group founded by Pastor Jerry Falwell in 1979 in part as a way to encourage evangelical Christians to vote as well as to hold elected officials to certain 'moral standards' as defined by Falwell's particular interpretation of Scripture. The ultimate goal of the group was to bring America back under the auspice of God by strategically placing approved politicians in positions of power.

[105] The following discussion of Falwell and the Moral Majority taken from Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks) 2018.

[106] Interestingly, Falwell did not object to *Roe* when it was first passed, only starting to pay attention nearly 5 years later in 1978 (FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 300).

[107] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 311.

this apparent hypocrisy, however, as he continued to promote the idea that "the decline of American economic and military might owed to the growing moral decay and godlessness of American society," an idea which itself contributed to populism and "had the effect of empowering his audience."[108] If the problem with society was not rooted in global catastrophe or complex political maneuvering, then the people themselves could do something to better the country and their position in it. Thus the lines were drawn: if you did not side with the Moral Majority, then you were part of the problems which were tearing apart their vision of a Christian America.

Of course, historically, America was never intended to be a Christian nation, nor was it ever truly the Christian nation envisioned by the Moral Majority, who dreamed of a cohesive Protestant denomination controlling everything. The reality was that America was composed of a wide variety of denominations, including non-Christian ones, from the time of its inception.[109] However, this historical revisionism perfectly showcases how Falwell and his group employed intuition in their movement. Falwell and other Christian Right leaders would speak of historical events, but would remove them from their historical context in order to apply their lessons to the modern day.[110] This tactic in essence takes the concept of intuition and applies it not only to the Bible, but also to society and history as a whole, sitting on the assumption that one need not consider context, as individuals have an innate common sense that allows them to understand and interpret all situations correctly. Naturally this was also applied to the Moral Majority's use of the Bible, which was held up as their moral foundation and the guidebook to fixing America to save it from the coming tribulations that so many Evangelicals believed would soon befall the world.[111]

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[108] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 308.

[109] This will be expanded on in the next chapter.

[110] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 300.

[111] Again, this will be expanded on in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Star-Spangled Salvation: Why America is the Center of the Problem

In this chapter we will be moving on from the historical overview of the faith-reason relationship to consider the finer details that drove much of the antipathy on which the conflict rests. These will include a look at the Puritan influences, the rise and fall of the Christian university, and a consideration of the political role in encouraging the divide. It will also consider whether there is an emotional or psychological drive to anti-intellectualism, which could be missed by a purely historical approach. The primary question, however, is why America seems to be the center of the anti-intellectual movement. What is it about the American system that fosters anti-intellectualism?

Puritans, Politics, and a Christian Nation

In 1984, Ronald Reagan gave a speech on the eve of his landslide election, in which he referred to America as a "shining city on a hill." Reagan borrowed this imagery from John Winthrop, one of the first settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Area as well as a highly devout Puritan. Reagan regularly used religious references in his speeches, often portraying himself as an almost prophetic figure and invoking themes of sin and redemption in order to convince the American people to support his policies.[112] In doing this, Reagan was tapping into "a powerful narrative in American Culture."[113] This narrative was rooted in New England Puritanism as well as the cultural ideal of the American Dream. As Hofstadter explains:

> The American mind was shaped in the mold of early modern Protestantism. Religion was the first arena for American intellectual life, and thus the first arena for an anti-intellectual impulse. Anything that seriously diminished the role of rationality and learning in early American religion would later diminish its role in secular culture. The feeling that ideas should above all be made to work, the disdain for doctrine and for refinements in ideas, the subordination of men of ideas to men of emotional power or manipulative skill are hardly innovations of the twentieth century; they are inheritances from American Protestantism.[114]

Looking at Hofstadter's analysis of American culture in 1964, it would seem that Falwell and the Religious Right are correct in saying that America started as a Christian nation, but the question remains: was it *intended* to be one?

When looking only to New England, the answer would again seem to be yes. The earliest British colonies in the New World were largely settled by devout Puritans like

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[112] As expounded on in Richard L. Johannesen, "Ronald Reagan's Economic Jeremiad," *Communication Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986), 79-89.

[113] Johannesen, "Ronald Reagan's Economic Jeremiad," 87.

[114] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 55.

Winthrop.[115] Even other settlements acknowledged how deeply Puritan New England was in writings from the time period. However, that unified Puritanism, which is often touted by the Religious Right as the truest form of America, existed *only* in New England. In Virginia, for example, the reigning religious belief was Anglicanism, and Puritans were often driven out due to their aggressive evangelizing.[116] Even areas known for religious tolerance – specifically tolerance for the coexistence of multiple Christian denominations – quickly grew tired of the Puritans and their militant intolerance for ideas beyond their own.[117] In fact, it was this conflict that drove much of the Puritan persecution in Virginia. Prior to the Puritans' attempts to convert the entire region, the colonial authority were mostly content to allow people to worship in whatever way suited them best. It was only after mass conversion efforts that the governor cracked down on Puritanism and sent most of the Puritans running back to New England.[118]

The conclusion to be drawn here is that while Puritanism was inarguably a part of the early American landscape, it was far from the only, or even necessarily the dominant, form of the Christian religion present in the colonies. Because of this, we can conclusively say that early America was not the harmonious Puritan settlement Religious Right leaders often purport. However, perhaps the religious make up of colonial America is irrelevant to those who speak of America as a Christian Nation – after all, the colonies are not yet the United States.[119] This then leads us to a new consideration – did the Founding Fathers want a Christian Nation? The leaders of the Religious Right of course say 'yes,' but once again history does not seem to support their claims.

Looking back to colonial Virginia, the Founding Father James Madison was involved in drafting its first state Constitution in 1776, over a decade before he helped write the US Constitution. From the first draft Madison was already arguing for a separation of Church and State; "he proposed an amendment stating all men are entitled to free exercise of religion."[120] Madison strongly believed that no one belief should be upheld over any other – in essence, his proposed freedom of religion was also a freedom *from* religion. When his first amendment was rejected, he offered a new one, which stated, "The civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner, or in any pretext, infringed."[121] Though this amendment

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[115] David D. Hall, "Toward a History of Popular Religion in Early New England." *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture* (1984): 50. Important to note here is that Hall's analysis focuses primarily on a single community in New England, but several other sources support the idea that New England was known to be primarily Puritan.

[116] Kevin Butterfield, "Puritans and Religious Strife in the Early Chesapeake." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (2001), 5-36.

[117] Butterfield, "Puritans and Religious Strife," 33–34.

[118] Butterfield, "Puritans and Religious Strife," 6–9.

[119] Perhaps more importantly, the Religious Right often engage in historical revisionism so that their narratives seem more concrete (FitzGerald, 300), so it is likely that they are taking one part of the colonial reality and applying it more broadly than they should in order to justify their points.

[120] Jolene R. Whitten, *Four Founding Fathers on Religion, Its Place in Public Life and the First Amendment Today* (California State University: Dominguez Hills, 2005), 12.

[121] Whitten, *Four Founding Fathers*, 15–16.

was also ultimately excluded, the words would return in the First Amendment to the US Constitution, and this time they would pass into law.

Madison was not alone in his passion for religious freedom amongst the Founding Fathers. John Adams was a part of the minority Unitarian sect of Christianity and felt quite strongly that "both government and religion were best when they each remained free from interference by the other."[122] Thomas Jefferson went even farther, writing, "it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty Gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg [...] Reason and free inquiry are the only effective agents against terror."[123] Reading through the correspondences and public speeches given by many of the other Founding Fathers, it becomes clear rather quickly that the Religious Right ideas of a Christian Nation were far from the Fathers' intentions – in fact, it seems they intended the exact opposite. None of the Founding Fathers were even Puritan, the Christian group most often looked to by Religious Right leaders as the specific form of Christianity intended for the new nation. Why, then, would Reagan use Puritan imagery in his 1984 speech? More specifically, why was – and is – such language so effective in modern America when this religious group was, historically, little more than a persistent annoyance in the early days of the New World?

Interestingly, the answer to this question may tie back to the impact of the American Enlightenment on American nationalism.[124] As Noll explains, "the process that witnessed Protestant alignment with the Enlightenment witnessed also Protestant alignment with the United States."[125] The intertwining of religious identity and national pride during this time period left an easy opening for early Puritan ideas to infiltrate Evangelical thinking, and Reagan reflects the impact of this permeation decades later. As can be guessed by Winthrop's "shining city on a hill" imagery, the Puritans believed strongly in America as a new Promised Land, and Americans as the new chosen people. These beliefs were eagerly taken on by religious intellectuals of the American Enlightenment, and this new religious nationalism opened the door for many other Puritan beliefs and practices to enter the common American Protestant consciousness. This religious nationalism would go on to propel beliefs such as Manifest Destiny,[126] and over the decades Puritanism slowly transformed into the "civil religion of the American Dream."[127]

Once Puritanism became associated with American pride, it became rather simple for Americans to begin adopting other aspects of the tradition – most notably its preaching style and rhetoric. This can be seen clearly in how Reagan addresses his nation. "Reagan's speeches often reflect him in the role of a prophet" and he uses Christian

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[122] Whitten, *Four Founding Fathers*, 11.

[123] Whitten, *Four Founding Fathers*, 21.

[124] The following discussion combines information found in Johannesen, "Ronald Reagan's Economic Jeremiad" as well as Noll, *The Scandal*. This combination comes from my individual analysis of the information presented in the two sources, but is not laid out explicitly in either.

[125] Noll, *The Scandal*, 99.

[126] This was the American belief that they had a God-ordained right to conquer the entire North American continent, and that heading West to 'civilize' the native populations was their moral obligation.

[127] Johannesen, "Ronald Reagan's Economic Jeremiad," 80.

apocalyptic imagery to connect with listeners and invoke fear of the 'evils' of the day.[128] In the Puritan rhetoric that Reagan inherits, every struggle is a battle of good against evil, right against wrong – a battle for the very soul of America. The "echoes of Puritan ethic" found in Reagan's speeches include both moral and material beliefs that are also key to the American Dream: hard work, individualism, and love of God. To listen to Reagan's speeches is to hear a call for America to free itself from sin and turn back to God. These echoes are also found in the Religious Right, as many of the leaders believe that by turning the nation back to Christianity, America can be granted relief from the coming tribulations.[129] Thus, although Puritanism in the early days of America had little impact on the creation of the nation, it ultimately infiltrated American Protestantism *via* national pride, evolving into "the fundamentalist sense of perpetual crisis, and of war between the forces of good and evil."[130]

Of course, to have a war one needs an enemy, and Puritanism provided the foundations for that as well. Even before crossing the Atlantic to establish the New England colonies, Puritans were engaged in what came to be known as the Antinomian controversy,[131] also called the "Free Grace Controversy." Literally, "antinomian" means "against the law," and in the context of this controversy, it became tied to anti-intellectualism. During the time of the Puritans, anti-intellectualism was intertwined with anti-professionalism and social justice for the uneducated lower classes of England, who rather resented their place in the social hierarchy of England.[132] This resentment developed into a consistent "attack upon the clergy, the university professors, and the lawyers."[133] Puritans involved in this controversy believed that these people were born with a "corrupt and inward evil nature" that innately turned them away from religion and towards secular learning.[134] Ignorance, in essence, allowed for the Holy Spirit to more easily act upon a person and open their eyes – learning would only clutter their minds and block them from exercising their faith properly. These ideas of secular learning are extremely common among certain American Protestant groups today, and it is not a stretch to argue that these leanings tie back to this Antinomian controversy. The irony of the controversy is that "most of the chaplains who condemned university education were themselves educated in universities. [One] even helped to found Harvard College."[135] However, despite this apparent contradiction, it was perhaps this involvement with the universities – particularly in America – that helped sow the seeds of anti-intellectualism within American Protestantism.

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[128] Johannesen, "Ronald Reagan's Economic Jeremiad," 79.

[129] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 309.

[130] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 318.

[131] Information for this paragraph taken from Leo F. Solt, "Anti-Intellectualism in the Puritan Revolution." *Church history* 25, no. 4 (1956).

[132] It is important to note here that this class imbalance may not have been intentional on the part of the Puritans, but rather it was naturally the lower class, who had little to no access to affordable education, who were most drawn to the Antinomian ideas of the Puritan denomination (Solt, 308).

[133] Solt, "Anti-Intellectualism," 309.

[134] Solt, "Anti-Intellectualism," 310.

[135] Solt, "Anti-Intellectualism," 311.

Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion? The Evolution of American Education[136]

The anti-intellectual tilt of Puritanism was not immediately obvious in the early days of the new Republic. In fact, even before the Revolution that turned America from English colonies into its own nation colleges were being established in order to properly train the next generation. Puritans themselves established Harvard, one of the first higher institutes of learning to be founded in the colonies, in order to promote their particular cultural values within the men of the incoming generations. In the decades that followed, most modern Ivy League schools would be founded,[137] each by different Protestant groups and each with the same purpose as Harvard: to serve "the interests of confessionalism and of the corresponding political principle that an orderly realm should tolerate one religion, the true religion."[138] After the revolution, these so-called 'sectarian' colleges – colleges that promoted specific Protestant denominations – continued to appear across the new nation, and despite the Founding Fathers' beliefs and the legally mandated Separation of Church and State, no real concern over the Christian character of these schools came up until much later.

Of course, this did not mean the early colleges faced no scrutiny for their religious leanings, but rather than concern over the intolerance for Jews or Muslims, the apprehension focused more on the sectarianism of the colleges; Southern Baptists would not hire or teach Unitarians, Puritans avoided admitting anyone but their own, and Catholics were forced to create their own schools from scratch as they were viewed nearly as poorly as Jewish peoples by the early colleges and thus had no hope of enrolling in a Protestant school.[139] One intentional exception to this sectarian exclusivity came from Thomas Jefferson and his planned Unitarian college of Virginia, which was developed with the explicit intention of being the first non-sectarian school in the colonies. Though Jefferson ultimately failed to see his dream realized, in the following century, the idea of non-sectarianism became more and more fashionable. Colleges transitioned into universities and began to achieve Jefferson's non-sectarian ideals by hiring a larger variety of professors, as well as admitting more students of different Christian leanings.[140] This new wave of non-sectarian enthusiasm stemmed from the idea that excluding any persons based on religious practice was ultimately un-democratic, and thus un-American.

It is important to note that through all of this, the default assumption was, excluding Jefferson's failed university, that institutes of higher education would be, at

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[136] Many details in this section are summarized from Marsden's *The Soul of the American University*. Any information taken from other sources will be clearly marked as such.

[137] Or the schools that would ultimately become them were founded.

[138] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 40.

[139] Jewish people's education is not touched on at all in Marsden, suggesting these groups – unsurprisingly considering the rampant anti-Semitism of the time – kept to themselves in the early years of America's educational journey.

[140] In a few notable cases, even Catholics and Jews were hired/admitted, though it wasn't until the late 1800s that such things became widely acceptable, and most of these early attempts ultimately resulted in catastrophe for the school via loss of reputation.

their core, Protestant. This was due to the prevalent idea that schools did not only teach academic subjects, but also imbued pupils with proper morals, and, at the time, it was an unquestioned belief that without God there was no morality. This is a view that is still prominent today, but as influence from the European scientific community gained authority in the American system, the idea of universities as centers for moral instruction began to decline. This was a very slow process, and for decades, religious university presidents and professors attempted to balance their faith alongside the changing scientific understanding of the world around them. As they attempted this precarious balancing act, many university professors began unintentionally leading their colleges "on the path to secularization in the name of Christianity."[141]

The primary driving force of this secularization was not, as might be expected, exclusively from external scientific forces, though these of course did play a notable role as well.[142] Just as important, however, was the ongoing Enlightenment entwinement of Christianity with American democracy. With nationalism and faith often considered to be synonymous in the earliest years of the country, the ideas of morality also began to drift from being exclusive to Christianity, to also being a large part of a proper democracy. At the root of this Proper Christian Democracy was the nebulous concept of freedom, and it was this concept that ultimately played the largest role in secularizing higher education. Professors believed that in order to truly understand God's world, researchers and scientists needed to be fully freed from all dogmatic assumptions in order to complete their tasks. They of course believed that their findings would ultimately reveal the truth of the Bible, independent of past theological interpretations, and this confidence alongside the push for general freedoms and the increasing wariness of sectarianism ultimately led the universities to develop into what we see today.[143]

With their newfound, democratically given freedom, the universities began to develop an elitist tilt – many of the teachers and attendees saw themselves as greater than others due to their use of modern techniques rather than old dogmatisms to understand the world.[144] This arrogance naturally alienated the very groups who once gave rise to these faculties, and the old Puritan anti-intellectual, anti-professionalism once again rose within the American public. Frustration with higher education led people to reconsider what true freedom of education meant, and indeed, what could even be learned. Democracy was reassessed to mean that education, rather than allowing for freedom of thought, should instead be used to teach students practical knowledge rather than encourage critical thinking. The idea that "there are no general mental qualities to be

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[141] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 286.

[142] Natural science was interpreted at the time in the rather Thomistic manner of 'studying God's laws through His creation' and thus freedom of scientific research was upheld as vital. This eventually led to science being seen as worthwhile on its own merits, resulting in the slow phasing out of religion, alongside the other reasons discussed in this paragraph (Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 274).

[143] Once again this is a highly compressed summary of Marsden, who spends hundreds of pages detailing the very slow and inconsistent process of secularization of the universities. I try here to highlight the key elements that are relevant to my discussion of anti-intellectualism but have to cut out quite a bit of additional information which is ultimately irrelevant to this thesis.

[144] From this point forward I will be using Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, as my primary source.

developed; there are only specific things to be known"[145] grew in popularity in the wake of university secularization, and thus 'intellectual' pursuits became culturally undesirable. The secondary public school system switched from an elite university preparatory curriculum to one that promoted Christian morality and taught practical skills like cooking, woodworking, and sewing.[146] Of course, as we have already seen, schools eventually drifted into a middle ground as science became more self-evident and religious tolerance expanded beyond Christianity, but the anti-intellectual tendencies are far from fully removed from the educational system even today.[147]

God's Politics

Anti-intellectualism did not only arise in the educational sphere of American life – it also appears quite frequently in politics. This intermingling is a natural outgrowth of the religious nationalism fostered during the Enlightenment Age, but was aggravated into its modern form during the First World War.[148] In the aftermath of the war, communism became a major perceived threat to American democracy, and religious groups who before the war had generally cared little for differing political ideologies became intensely focused on this new political menace.[149] Fears of communism and Russia's role in the "end times" only increased after the Second World War, and became intertwined with the anti-evolution crusade as fundamentalists "began to stress the connection between socialism and evolutionism as atheistic threats to 'Christian America'."[150] The threat to America was, in essence, seen as a direct threat to Christianity, and the general sense of cultural crisis invited by the postwar era increased militancy and hardened resistance to change among the already defensive fundamentalist groups.[151]

It was into this atmosphere that the Moral Majority rose to power, taking advantage of the political fears of certain Christian groups in order to develop a political base. Although, as mentioned, Falwell was perhaps not quite as successful with the Moral Majority as he had hoped, he nonetheless successfully normalized the politicization of the pulpit, and in the decades following the Moral Majority's closure, politics became more and more important for fundamentalist groups.[152] This process was, of course, greatly assisted by the preexisting connection between fundamental Christianity and nationalism, as any political leanings which could be construed as communist or socialist were already

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[145] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism*, 346.

[146] An important note here is that America was one of the first countries to try and put together a nationwide, mandatory public school system for pre-university children, thus they did not have any other system to base their own on, leaving them to try and work out the best method through the scientific trial and error of the time.

[147] As seen in the continued push against the teaching of evolution.

[148] As discussed in George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[149] As Marsden puts it in *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, "Although many fundamentalists supported the anti-evolution crusade, they [did] not seem to have been very united on other political questions […] It was not until 1923 or 1924 that these fears […] began commonly to appear to fundamentalist literature." (Marsden, 208–9)

[150] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 209.

[151] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 201.

[152] This is explored in detail in FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*.

seen as threats to the Christian democratic faith, creating a pathway for other political concerns to become Christian ones as well. Naturally, one of the foremost political concerns became that of evolution *versus* creationism, and the anti-intellectual progression of the Religious Right grew naturally from there.

A British Alternative?

Looking at the slow but steady progression of anti-intellectualism into American culture, it can seem that the idea that religion and science are incompatible is an inevitable outcome of modernized scholarship in a religious nation. However, one need only look to Britain to realize that the American outcome is far from the only one in the clash between faith and reason. Indeed, "in England and Scotland the same range of responses was present as in the United States" to the rise of modern scholarship in the 1800s.[153] The outcome, though, was notably different. Though there is a small anti-intellectual movement in England to the modern day, it is not nearly as widespread or culturally impactful as its sister movement in the United States.

So, what caused these two similarly religious countries to develop down such different paths? In his book *Between Faith and Criticism*, Mark Noll suggests three possible differences between American and British culture and circumstance that might have contributed to the divergence. Firstly, he notes the "church-state establishments in England and Scotland"[154] which allowed more conservative voices to retain their position in academia far longer than in America, which did its best to enforce the idea of a Separation of Church and State. This meant that as conservative positions were increasingly questioned by scholarship in America, they began to be pushed entirely out of the academic sphere, whereas British conservatives were able to retain their positions. This may have directly connected to another of Noll's key points: "practitioners of modern scholarship were never as rationalistic or anti-supernaturalistic as the best-known critics in Germany and the United States."[155] Because of the less antagonistic relationship between modern and fundamental scholarship, it was perhaps easier to reach compromises, or at the very least learn to live and let live. In America, fundamental leaders developed surprisingly robust – if still generally incorrect – scholarship defending their positions from the elitist modernists taking over higher education, resulting in sharper clashes and each side digging in more stubbornly to their positions.

The final, and perhaps most sobering point in Noll's work, relates to the timing of the so-called fundamentalist-modernist controversy. As America was building steam towards the clash of reason against faith so ubiquitous in some parts of the culture today, Britain was reeling from the destruction of World War I. In a country still stunned by the worst conflict ever enacted in human history up to that point and the massive loss of human lives in the trenches in western Europe, worries about the Bible being interpreted literally or figuratively and whether or not science contradicted belief were far from the

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[153] Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishers, 2004), 62.
[154] Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 86.
[155] Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 86.

top of the priority list. The country was not only physically a mess after the war, but emotionally and mentally the people were entering a state of cynicism and mild defeatism, and the British elites – both religious and academic – banded together to revitalize the country's national pride and sense of community.[156] Differences in religious interpretation were not the uncrossable lines they were quickly becoming in America – for England, the war forced people of every stripe together as a community of people, and this ultimately meant divisions were much harder to instill.

Marsden also makes an interesting note on the difference between British and American reactions to the modernization of education:

> In British church life and especially in English constitutional history there was a deeply rooted awareness of the gradual development of traditions. By contrast, the newness of America seemed to demand written and rational definitions, new departures, and a break with the past. This suggests that American intellectual life was distinguished from that of most western European countries by a distinctly anti-modern view of history.[157]

In essence, America's revolutionary newness as compared to Europe made it far more open to new ideas, but also meant there was an ongoing struggle to define this new culture, as well as a general distaste for anything seen as too ancient. Even in its Protestant leaning, America was clearly defined by new ideas over old dogmatisms. This also, of course, contributed to the rapid acceptance – if not idolization – of new scientific theories to the detriment of older religious explanations.

When the Melting Pot Won't Mix: The Trouble with American Multiculturalism

In reflecting on Noll's discussion of the differences between England and America during the rise of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, one of his arguments resonates beyond him and is echoed by nearly every other writer on this point: namely, his consideration of the greater antagonism between early scholarship and religious authority within the United States as compared to Europe. This rivalry led to a clear divide – people were either with the church, or with the scholars. In the early days of the nation, as seen in the rise of the universities, Protestantism had a firm hold on the public. As Hofstadter notes, "most early evangelists were far too realistic to imagine that a learned and intellectually self-conscious skepticism was a real menace to the simple public they were trying to reach."[158] It was only when education became more commonplace, and Darwinism more generally accepted, that modernity truly became a menace that drove fundamentalists into their war against intellectualism.

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[156] This is more thoroughly explored in José Antonio Álvarez-Amorós, "Some Remarks on Nationalism and the Management of Literature in WW1 Britain." *Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English Speaking World (III)* (2014): 23–40; Here I will only be briefly touching on the topic as it relates to my thesis.

[157] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 226.

[158] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 120.

With the universities coming to reject orthodox teachings and remove mandatory religion entirely from campuses, evangelical fundamentalists began to worry. For decades they had been the foremost power both morally and intellectually, but with the rapid secularization of higher education, and the cultural secularization that followed it, they felt they were being driven out of society altogether. The unquestioned authority they had once wielded was now rapidly slipping from their hold, and with this loss of power came a sense of alienation from their country.[159] As their religion was tightly intertwined with their nationalism, this shift was particularly disorienting for fundamentalists, who were not only losing their power but felt abandoned by the country they believed they had built upon their Christian values. With society seeming to turn its back on both them and their God, fundamentalists fought back, but as seen with the anti-evolution movement, they had minimal success, only fueling their frustration – and their anti-intellectualism.

This isolation and resentment fostered an ideal environment for certain leaders to take advantage of the fundamentalist groups. While much research has focused on the Religious Right and fundamentalists as ideologies, the truth is that fundamentalists "were less concerned with creating creeds than with constructing community, and less interested in developing a doctrine or ideology than in establishing a sense of identity for themselves."[160] Fundamentalism slowly moved from a particular religious interpretation to a community of self-styled warriors of the faith, and due to where the conflict had truly begun, so-called 'intellectuals' were the first and largest enemy to defeat.[161] The early warriors of the faith reflected this primary goal – after all, "it was in the crusade against the teaching of evolution that the fundamentalist movement reached its climax and in the Scopes trial that it made its most determined stand."[162] William Jennings Bryan was one of the first public leaders of the movement, and though in time the poor media coverage turned him into an embarrassment for the fundamentalists, his attitudes and approaches remained prominent in the fundamentalist movement as it recovered from the impact of the Scopes Trial.

The feeling that all of secular society was against them not only pushed the fundamentalists into a cohesive community, but also caused them to develop a "national paranoia and a chain reaction of crusades against various cultural enemies."[163] The mindset cultivated within fundamentalist circles was an ever-increasing sense of 'us against them,' to use the colloquialism. Orthodox groups wanted a return of the power that they felt the intellectual elite had stolen from them. So great was their wariness of these perceived enemies, that a common echo was that the elites were not merely oppressing true Christianity but were in fact trying to kill it entirely.[164] This belief in turn

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[159] This observation is made by Marsden – in both *Anti-Intellectualism* and *The Soul of the American University* – as well as Hofstadter and Noll.

[160] Michael Lienesch, *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 10.

[161] The use of militant language became common in fundamentalist circles starting around the end of the First World War (as noted by Hofstadter, Noll, and Marsden). This point is clearly made by Lienesch in the first chapter of his book.

[162] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 125.

[163] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 202.

[164] As noted in Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 123–124.

made them all the more suspicious of secular reason, which itself was not doing much to try and mend the divide.[165]

Thus, the gap only widened with time, and as the 'secular elite' continued shaping the country through the lens of both the Constitution and an ever-changing scientific understanding of the world, fundamentalists developed their anti-intellectualism and continued laying the groundwork for their war – a war for the very soul of the country they held so dear.[166] Ben Howe, a self-identified evangelical preacher who himself bought into the fundamentalist worldview for some time, does an excellent job reflecting on his past situation as well as why people are so devout in their following of what appears to be, to modern reason, an utterly illogical if not dangerous belief system. Howe sums it up best when he states, "For a great many evangelicals, the word *power* was exactly what they wanted to hear. The idea of having it, and wielding it, was more than intoxicating. It was a lifeline."[167] For the group that had once run the country, power was indeed what they were seeking to reclaim from the liberal and intellectual elite who had mocked and oppressed them for so long.[168] After so many years of being belittled and ignored, fundamentalists were angry – and as Howe correctly points out, "when you're angry, punching things feels good."[169] Fundamentalists are indeed punching – straight into the intellectual foundations that they themselves, perhaps ironically enough, helped set when their country was new.

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[165] This is excellently detailed by Marsden in *The Soul of the American University* and acknowledged by Hofstadter in less explicit terms. Marsden also notes the ongoing role of media ridicule, which only furthered fundamentalist resentment of what they saw as attacks by secular culture (Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 202).

[166] The information in this paragraph is mostly taken from Ben Howe, *The Immoral Majority: Why Evangelicals Chose Political Power over Christian Values* (New York, NY: Broadside Books, 2019).

[167] Howe, *The Immoral Majority*, 26; emphasis original.

[168] While the sense of oppression felt by fundamentalist groups today can seem, and often is, highly exaggerated and hypocritical, it is important to note that the groups themselves truly have been the subject of ridicule by certain members of the intellectual community and even the general public. While the reaction to their treatment is extreme and ultimately unhelpful, Howe makes a fair point when he says it certainly did not come out of nowhere.

[169] Howe, *The Immoral Majority*, 141.

Chapter 4

Restoring Open Communication

In this final chapter, I will be considering how anti-intellectual tendencies have been integrated into the fundamentalist mindset and reflecting on what that means for the general evangelical followers. I will also be briefly explaining several proposals made to address the divide between faith and reason in American Protestantism to determine what steps have been made so far, making sure to consider suggestions from both sides of the division. I will also consider how viable the proposed solutions truly are in light of the root problems considered earlier in this thesis.

Anti-Intellectualism at Work in Fundamentalist Groups

Despite the apparent tension between secularism and Christianity in America, a large majority of Christian groups within the country do not actually incorporate anti-intellectualism into their beliefs as deeply as modern fundamentalist groups. In fact, there are many religious groups who side openly with accepted scientific theories such as the age of the Earth and, perhaps most vitally, human evolution.[170] Why then are fundamentalist groups so prevalent despite being alone in their anti-intellectual leanings? Aside from the sense of alienation discussed last chapter, the key element is found in their teachings and the kind of people who tend to be attracted to these groups.

I will begin by considering the people most attracted to the anti-intellectual branch of fundamentalist Protestantism.[171] Generally speaking, and perhaps unsurprisingly considering the history of the fundamentalists and education, it is most often uneducated or poorly educated people drawn to the movement. Fundamentalists continue to use the Baconian principles of Common Sense as applied to the Bible, rather than referring to science, or even trained theologians, in their approach to both religion and their daily lives. Indeed, it is not uncommon for believers to view formal theological training as inappropriate.[172] Fundamentalists are guided by the Holy Spirit and the common sense imbued in them through it, thus rendering formal education not only useless, but also dangerous. These groups often see "knowledge [...] as endangering the individual's faith and corrupting the church."[173] In this way, education and intellectuals are effectively 'othered' by congregations, attracting those who likewise feel victimized by the secular system and creating a self-feeding cycle of recruits.

A brilliant analysis of the anti-intellectual teachings of fundamentalist churches can be found in Mark Ward Sr.'s article, ""Knowledge Puffs Up": The Evangelical

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[170] The Catholic Church has even released an official statement accepting the Theory of Evolution. (Epstein, *Good Without God*, 8).

[171] For this section I will primarily be using Marius Nel, "Rather Spirit-filled Than Learned! Pentecostalism's Tradition of Anti-intellectualism and Pentecostal Theological Scholarship." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 1 (2016): 1-9.

[172] Nel, "Rather Spirit-filled Than Learned!" 2.

[173] Nel, "Rather Spirit-filled Than Learned!" 2.

Culture of Anti-Intellectualism as a Local Strategy."[174] Ward attended and analyzed the preaching of an evangelical pastor, whom he refers to as Lonnie, when said pastor was hired by Ward's usual church after their previous pastor retired. After viewing over two hundred sermons, taking careful notes on each and re-listening to the recordings, Ward found that Lonnie's anti-intellectualism was almost always integrated into his preaching, regardless of the topic on which he was orating. In addition to the familiar ideas of common sense and the Bible being self-authenticating, thus not requiring any training to understand it, Lonnie also upheld a theme of "heart knowledge" versus "head knowledge." Lonnie routinely "construct[ed] a binary opposition, where none exists in the passage, between faith and knowledge."[175] Ward summarizes these binaries near the end of his article, but I will condense them even further: according to Pastor Lonnie, those who are educated are selfish and cruel, while those with faith who reject secular knowledge are kind and morally upright. In this way, fundamentalist groups reinforce their own alienation by upholding the intellectual as an 'other' to be feared and destroyed. Anti-intellectualism is not merely an element of fundamental resentment – it has become a key aspect of their identity as a group.[176]

Can the Divide be Crossed?

Thus, the major question arises – if anti-intellectualism is a key aspect of fundamentalist identity, can secular education and fundamentalist Christianity ever truly see eye-to-eye? As things currently stand, the two sides seem thoroughly incompatible, with each actively continuing to attack the other, only widening the gap in the process. However, although the most devout on each side of the divide seem uninterested in healing, that does not mean suggestions have not been made. Indeed, actors on both sides have proposed possible actions or steps to take in order to begin easing the anti-intellectual anger and promote a healthier interaction. The question, then, is how effective these measures are, and whether or not they can successfully address the core issues as discussed throughout this thesis.

Over the course of my research, I found three primary suggestions reoccurring in slightly differing forms across several different sources. I will refer to them here as Education, True Faith, and Selective Rejection, though most of the people making the suggestions do not utilize any specific terminology to identify their thoughts. I chose these three approaches not only because they were often recurring, but also because one is more commonly proposed by dedicated believers, another is brought in by those with a more secular, scientific bias, and the third tends to be equally suggested by both sides, though with slightly different foci. Through analyzing each, I hope to highlight what works, what does not, and how things could be altered to create a long-term solution towards which everyone can work.

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[174] Mark Ward Sr, ""Knowledge Puffs Up": The Evangelical Culture of Anti-Intellectualism as a Local Strategy." *Sermon Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 1-21.
[175] Ward, ""Knowledge Puffs Up"," 13.
[176] Ward, ""Knowledge Puffs Up"," 18.

Perhaps the most self-explanatory of the three is Education, and while elements of this approach do appear in both secular and religious works, it is most prominent within the former; therefore, I am classifying it as the representative secular solution. Education is the suggestion that the divide will naturally be healed provided new generations are given proper education. As Greg Epstein points out rather succinctly in his book *Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People* Do *Believe*, "a large part of the problem is ignorance […] a large part of the solution must be education."[177] It is important to note that when Epstein – and Hofstadter, who also promotes this solution – speaks of the solution of education, he is speaking of improved *scientific* education. Even more religion-focused sources advocate proper learning of scientific approaches as part of an educational solution, such as in Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God*, or Alvin Plantinga in *When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible*.[178] This scientific focus reveals the two key failings of this solution as singularly effective: first is the assumption that students already understand theology without the need for improved education in that field, and secondly it fails to consider that scientific education is one of the key elements currently *causing* the divide, in the form of the ongoing Creationism struggle. As such, while education should certainly be a *part* of the solution, as currently presented it is severely lacking in healing potential on its own.

The next proposal is the religious one: True Faith. Put forward most bluntly by Howe, True Faith is the idea that "God would have accomplished (and will accomplish) His ends regardless" of the actions of believers.[179] It is therefore not up to believers to try and twist the world to fit what *they* believe is God's Plan, but rather act as good Christians and trust that He has things under control.[180] Mark Noll also echoes this observation in the concluding chapter of *The Scandal* when he discusses the Baconian problem of intuitionism, wherein Evangelicals assume their so-called Common Sense theological interpretations and presuppositions must be the only correct interpretations. This approach fully removes the secular half of the divide from the equation, and while a change of attitude is certainly needed within fundamentalist groups, neither of these sources provides a clear line on *how* this attitude alteration can be made. With fundamentalist identity tied so closely to their action in the world, changing their attitudes – even, if not especially, about God – is a Herculean task. Combined with the lack of acknowledgement of how rigid the secular half of the equation can be, this solution is lacking in clear applicability.

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[177] Epstein, *Good Without God*, 7.

[178] Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006); Alvin Plantinga, *When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible* (Hamilton, ON: Redeemer College, 1991).

[179] Howe, *The Immoral Majority*, 208.

[180] Howe further elaborates on this point with a rather amusing modern parable of a man in a shipwreck waiting for God to send a miracle to save him. The man ignores three rescue boats and a helicopter before succumbing to hypothermia, as he is waiting for a 'miracle' – a flock of birds or a sea animal that will appear and carry him back to land. When confronting God, asking why his faith in such a miracle was not rewarded with rescue, God simply points out He had sent rescue four times and the man had refused. As Howe summarizes, "Christians often don't listen to God, because they've decided for Him what He must do and how He must do it." (Howe, 215).

The final suggestion, Selective Rejection, appears in both religious and secular sources. Plantinga provides perhaps the best explanation for the basis of this approach: "The scientists among us don't ordinarily have a sufficient grasp of the relevant philosophy and theology; the philosophers and theologians don't know enough science; consequently, hardly anyone is qualified to speak here with real authority."[181] This idea that neither side can ever fully reject the other due to a lack of full comprehension of both sides is the heart of Selective Rejection. Rather than fully throwing out either science or faith, a person can only make judgments based on what they *do* understand. While in principle this seems a solid compromise, in practice it is unfortunately flawed. Plantinga himself demonstrates the core problem of this model when he attempts to redefine science as he understands it – in doing so, he utilizes some variation of "I think" or "I believe" five times over the course of three sentences. Due to his own deep theological convictions, Plantinga attempts to define science as faith-based rather than a fact-based process – in essence, he takes his own presuppositions and worldview and applies it to things which he, earlier in the book, admits he is not well-versed in. This theologizing of science is also found in Duncan Pritchard's article "Faith and Reason," in which he attempts a sort of Selective Rejection when he proposes that science is based on as many presuppositions as faith. While not a bad approach in theory, Pritchard's "science" is actually philosophy, thus his argument ends up falling flat.[182] The opposite side of this issue is found in *The Language of God*, when esteemed biologist Francis S. Collins attempts to treat belief in the Christian God as another form of science – specifically, a moral science, which carries with it the highly problematic idea that one cannot be a morally good person without a belief in the Christian God.

Selective Rejection also highlights another common problem that arises when trying to mend the faith-reason gap in American culture – compromise. Plantinga, in his final proposal, suggests ignoring scientific discoveries that do not live up to theological ideals. Collins suggests that inerrancy and certain dogmatic beliefs should be thrown out in favor of modern scientific discoveries, limiting faith only to the realm of morality and ethics. Each side expects the other to make the larger compromise, while themselves conceding very little ground. This issue of compromise is rooted in the strong sense of identity found in fundamentalist circles – after all, they are not merely compromising on a set of malleable beliefs, but on their entire worldview and their understanding of their place in it. Because of this, some experts suggest abandoning any attempt to mend the gap, and merely allow the experts to do what they do, without trying to force them to explain to the masses.[183] This is obviously a terrible idea, as leaving these groups ignored is what allowed them to fester into the suspicious, tight-knit unit they are today.

While it is hopefully clear that none of these approaches could be successful on its own, I do believe there is a fourth approach that combines the best elements of each which could provide a starting point. I call this approach True Pluralism, and the core can be found in the conclusion of Gabriel Desjardins' thesis, "Crossing the Presuppositional

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[181] Plantinga, *When Faith and Reason Clash*, 114.

[182] Duncan Pritchard, "Faith and Reason." *Philosophy* 81 (2017): 101-118.

[183] As suggested, surprisingly bluntly, by John R Fry, "Anti-Intellectualism in the Church Today." *The Christian Scholar* (1962): 22-27.

Divide: A Problematization and Comparative Analysis of the Inerrancy Debate in Evangelicalism." In this thesis, Desjardins shares a part of his own journey away from fundamentalism, and he undergoes all three of the above proposals: education, a change of perspective, and the selective rejection of past presuppositions. In explaining his move away from the extreme mindset of fundamentalism, Desjardins states, "when I reflect on my own experience and what enabled me to lower my defensiveness, it was not the *content* of my studies that affected me *per se*; it was the *way* my professors conveyed their material."[184] This *way*, as explained by Desjardins, is very simple: he felt listened to. This is the foundation of True Pluralism.

In the first three approaches, the problem of communal identity was not properly addressed – in True Pluralism it becomes the central focus. Fundamentalist Christians often feel isolated and belittled, which is why they turn to each other and resultantly build an echo chamber to protect them from perceived attacks.[185] By simply listening to them and speaking to them as equals, space can be opened for the change called for by the True Faith approach. Education plays a key role at this point, though it should not be focused only on teaching scientific truth. Rather, education should most prominently emphasize curiosity and critical thinking, instead of simply regurgitating information.[186] The facts, while certainly important, will be better accepted and understood if the student has first been taught how to open their mind to *all* possibilities, instead of only being given one. This of course leads naturally into Selective Rejection – with a more critically minded group of people, selective rejections no longer become based almost exclusively in bias and presupposition, but instead can be fully thought through and discussed with people of all beliefs, rather than just with those who already believe the same way. This is, of course, far from a quick process, but by following the steps of True Pluralism, we can hope to begin building a world that embraces its differences – those based in faith *and* reason.

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[184] Desjardins, "Crossing the Presuppositional Divide: A Problematization and Comparative Analysis of the Inerrancy Debate in Evangelicalism," 89; emphasis original.
[185] As many can testify from personal experience, these echo chambers often appear on and are even built by social media, which itself is a fascinating area of study that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.
[186] Hofstadter considers this in the conclusion of *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, but he never fully expounds on the idea.

Conclusion

As shown in this thesis, the relationship between faith and reason is a rather complex one, and always has been. From the Patriarchs' willingness to use pagan philosophy but reluctance to truly engage with the pagan intellectual community to the Middle Age obsession with rationality causing clashes with the Church itself, the very foundations of the relationship are tense. Indeed, during the Dark Ages the two were, for some decades, entirely divorced from one another.[187] However, historically, faith and reason have proven time and again to be strong allies when they do work together – from the promotion of public schooling by the Reformers to the Enlightenment itself, some of the greatest steps forward in secular reason have their own roots in religion. Although in the ancient cities of Europe the relationship between faith and reason has mostly managed to retain its historical tense cooperation, this has not at all been the case in the relatively young United States of America, where the relationship quickly soured.

The Enlightenment in the USA was distinct from the European version in one key way – it was more blatantly religious, tying American Protestantism to the ideals of democracy itself. This early connection gave quite a bit of power to Protestants in the early years of the fledgling country, but when the universities became more secular, that power was quickly stripped away, though not without a fight. Fundamentalist Protestants pushed back against modern scientific discoveries in a struggle to regain control of America, culminating most famously in the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, where the clash between Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan resulted in media coverage that turned the fundamentalist movement into a national joke. However, the group did not give up – if anything, the mockery only caused them to retreat further into themselves, building communities and echo chambers in which they continued fighting against evolution and the other perceived evils of modernity. The World Wars ultimately helped the fundamentalist agenda by bringing a new enemy to the forefront of American concern – communism. By equating communism with atheism and evolution, the fundamentalists continued spreading their influence into politics and American culture as a whole, widening the divide and eventually turning it into common sense in some areas of the USA. Fundamentalism was no longer just a faith – it was an identity.

Because of how deeply rooted fundamentalist communities have become in America, healing the divide between faith and reason caused by the tension between this group and secular intellectuals is far from a simple task. While several suggestions have been made on where to begin, many of the most common solutions only address part of this highly complex issue. My own offered solution of True Pluralism is itself less of a concrete plan and more of a first step in what will inevitably be a very long process. The division between faith and reason in certain American Protestant groups has, as we have seen, been a very long and winding process, and it will take at least as much time to unwind it as it did to create it.

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[187] As mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis, the terminology "Dark Ages" is contested in modern scholarship, but I use it here for continuity.

As most of my more recent sources agree, the first step is opening a line of communication between the two groups – one that is not rife with argument and mockery on both sides.[188] Looking back at my own experience, it is clear that it may only take one person reaching out to help another begin to see the faith-reason relationship differently. The core clash of faith and reason is not, as is often assumed, based exclusively or even primarily in a system of belief, but instead is rooted within communities that feel ostracized by secular intellectuals. Once again, Desjardins sums this up best: "we must first listen to the other side, showing them that we understand their position and can argue from within it."[189] The heart of the problem is that anti-intellectuals feel ignored – something easily corrected by simply speaking to them as people instead of enemies, as well as, vitally, listening to them and making them feel *heard*. In doing so, they may feel less threatened and can begin seeing the 'other' as simply another person instead of an obstacle to be taken down by any means necessary.

Of course, dialogue like this is simple in theory but can oftentimes be far more complicated in practice. Communities are, after all, composed of individuals, and there is no one solution that will work for every single person. However, as slow and difficult as it may be, healing is desperately needed – after all, scholars on both sides agree that the faith-reason divide in America is unhealthy and unhelpful for everyone involved. Looking to the past we can see that faith and reason have always had struggles, but societies have always managed to overcome the worst of the clashes. While perhaps none are quite as culturally ingrained as what has occurred in the United States, history shows that cooperation is fully possible, so long as people on both sides work towards it.

I end this thesis looking towards the future – the work done here is only the beginning of a long road, and more research into the best methods of communication is still needed.[190] However, even with only the brief overview I gave in this thesis it is clear that such work is already, slowly, being accomplished. As deep as the divide appears, people like Howe and Epstein are already erecting bridges on both sides, and as the damage of the divide continues to be felt more and more individuals have begun looking for compromise. Just like the Dark Ages, faith and reason have come apart, but the Dark Ages ended and from them came one of the greatest ages of cooperation between faith and reason. They say that history rhymes, and if this is the case then we have a bright future ahead, so long as we are willing to listen to each other and work together to make it happen.

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[188] These sources include Howe, Epstein, and Desjardins.

[189] Desjardins, "Crossing the Presuppositional Divide," 89.

[190] As well as how to break down social media echo chambers, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 4.

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