

Averroism, Nominalism, and Mechanization: Hahn and Wiker’s Unmasking of Historical Criticism’s Political Agenda by Laying Bare its Philosophical Roots

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“The dismemberment of the Bible has led to a new variety of allegorism: One no longer reads the text but the supposed experience of supposed communities. The result is often highly fanciful allegorical interpretation.”

—Joseph Ratzinger,
*The Nature and Mission of Theology*¹

SCOTT HAHN AND BENJAMIN WIKER’S *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture 1300–1700* is the single most important work to date in the history of modern biblical scholarship. As their subtitle, “Secularization of Scripture,” indicates, these authors particularly have in mind the ways in which the interpretation and the study of Scripture have been secularized over the course of centuries. Far too rarely in brief surveys of biblical scholarship has the role of politics and philosophy been addressed, let alone addressed adequately. In this more than 600–page book, Hahn and Wiker demonstrate how various political concerns and

¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of Present Controversy*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 65.

undergirding philosophies shaped and guided the long process that led to the historical critical method of biblical interpretation. They situate this process within the broader historical, political, philosophical, and theological contexts in which historical criticism was formed. Moreover, they also situate the contributions of the major figures involved in this process within the context of their biographies, which proves so necessary for understanding this history. Hahn and Wiker consider an expansive and often neglected period within the history of modern biblical criticism.²

Although the authors do not divide the book into sections, I would divide it roughly into two parts (excluding the introductory first chapter and the concluding thirteenth chapter): the first part (chs. 2–7), lays the groundwork for the advent of historical criticism. The second part (chs. 8–12), shows key examples of the development of historical criticism as it evolved throughout the seventeenth century, laying the essential groundwork for the Enlightenment biblical criticism of the eighteenth century and what would follow that in the nineteenth century. First, Hahn and Wiker show how Marsilius of Padua's and William of Ockham's arguments justify the subordination of church to state, due to Marsilius's Averroist philosophical underpinnings and Ockham's nominalism. Following these two, such Averroist and nominalist philosophies would continue to undergird much of the future of historical critical exegesis.

After this, Hahn and Wiker show how Wycliffe's attack upon nominalism inadvertently supported the same sort of exegesis and subordination of church to state as had Marsilius and Ockham. Thus, for theological reasons (and philosophical reasons directly

² Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture 1300–1700* (New York: Crossroad, 2013); all parenthetical citations of page numbers without identification of source in the main text of the present article refer to this volume). For brief article-length overviews likewise emphasizing the political history moving from the medieval period into the nineteenth century, overlapping with some of the figures they study (Marsilius, Ockham, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Simon), see Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Cut Off from Its Wellspring: The Politics Behind the Divorce of Scripture from Catholic Moral Theology," *Heythrop Journal* 56 (2015): 547–58; Morrow, "Secularization, Objectivity, and Enlightenment Scholarship: The Theological and Political Origins of Modern Biblical Studies," *Logos* 18 (2015): 14–32; Morrow, "The Modernist Crisis and the Shifting of Catholic Views on Biblical Inspiration," *Letter & Spirit* 6 (2010): 265–80, especially 267–73; and Morrow, "The Politics of Biblical Interpretation: A 'Criticism of Criticism,'" *New Blackfriars* 91 (2010): 528–45, especially 530–43.

opposed to Ockham), Wycliffe brought to English and, through his followers, to German soil the subordination of the church to the state for which Marsilius and Ockham had argued. Thus, the ground was set for the German and English Reformations that would soon follow. Next, Hahn and Wiker turn to Machiavelli, showing how he created a hermeneutic of suspicion in which, much like Averroës, he saw religion as a veil for more crafty political machinations of hypocritical rulers.

From Machiavelli, Hahn and Wiker turn to Luther and the Protestant Reformation, where they indicate that Luther and his co-Reformers were inspired in part by the widespread corruption among clerical leaders within the Catholic hierarchy. Luther was a nominalist and self-identified follower of Ockham. Luther built on the groundwork laid by Marsilius and Wycliffe and inadvertently aided in the transformation of the public, civic realm into a secular realm in which state controlled church. After Luther, Hahn and Wiker examine the English Reformation of King Henry VIII, showing how his reforming policy built on all the influential figures previously discussed: Marsilius (directly through Henry's advisors); Ockham (implied, through the German Protestant influence);³ Wycliffe (through the influence of the English Lollardy that had so shaped English nationalist aspirations and prepared the groundwork in Germany for the Reformation); Machiavelli (directly, through Henry's advisors); and Luther (through the Protestant reforming agenda in England). They next turn to Descartes, expositing his role in effecting a great cosmological shift in which nature becomes mathematized and geometry emerges as the primary form of rationality, setting the stage for a secular cosmos devoid of God and the supernatural and, thus, preparing the ground for a fully secular biblical hermeneutic.

³ Hahn and Wiker scarcely make mention of the influence of Ockham in the chapter on Henry VIII, but in light of their chapter on Luther (and Ockham's clear and unambiguous influence on Luther), as well as Luther's influence on Henry's regime (and on the influence of Tyndale, which they mention), and in light of how influential Ockham (having taught at Oxford) was on English soil, they should probably have explored this indirect influence. The most they write is that "Tyndale repeated the complaints of Ockham and Luther about the use of allegory in scriptural exegesis" (*Politicizing the Bible*, 228), and buried in a footnote, "appeal to councils over the pope was found both in Ockham and in Marsilius" (ibid., 240n71). See also their comment that "Tyndale would seem to affirm an almost Pelagian understanding of the ability to fulfill the law (which looks quite similar to the quasi-Pelagian notion among nominalists that so enraged Luther)" (ibid., 230).

Hahn and Wiker's chapter on Thomas Hobbes begins what I suggest is the second part of their book. Hobbes's contribution matters inasmuch as he provides a secularized exegesis that makes sense for an atomist-mechanist worldview. He was clearly influenced by Descartes and Machiavelli, and his exegesis supports the kind of state Henry VIII created. Moreover, his political exegesis helps lead to the next figure in Hahn and Wiker's history, namely Spinoza. Hahn and Wiker not only trace the many influences on Spinoza's thought (including Averroës, Machiavelli, Descartes, and Hobbes) but also situate him within his early radical Enlightenment context, showing how his work played an important role in the later Enlightenment. Spinoza tried to construct a scientific biblical exegesis that, like Hobbes's hermeneutic and Descartes's philosophy, attempted to bring peace to a Europe torn asunder by a violence they all identified as fundamentally religious in motivation.

Hahn and Wiker move from Spinoza to a seventeenth-century critic of Spinoza, Fr. Richard Simon, who took Spinoza's method as a starting point in order to critique Spinoza, challenge Protestant notions of *sola Scriptura*, and buttress Catholic tradition. Ironically, Simon in fact extended Spinoza's hermeneutic and ensured its survival among biblical scholars in the future. After Simon, Hahn and Wiker examine the work of John Locke, illustrating how he built upon the methods of exegesis of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Simon, in order to support the politics in which he very actively played a part. After Locke, they finish their history with a look at the work of John Toland and the beginning of English Deist biblical exegesis, showing not only how Toland built upon the work of those that came before (e.g., Machiavelli, Spinoza, and Simon) but also how his conclusions demonstrate that the most radical effects of historical criticism in the nineteenth century were already in place, intrinsic in the methods themselves, at the end of the seventeenth century. Finally, Hahn and Wiker conclude by identifying some of the ways the history they have recounted plays out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, primarily through the receptions of Spinoza and Simon, but also of Toland and, at least to some extent, Machiavelli.

Their overarching argument "is that the development of the historical-critical method in biblical studies is only fully intelligible as part of the more comprehensive project of secularization that occurred in the West over the last seven hundred years, and that the politicizing of the Bible was, in one way or another, essential to this

project” (8).⁴ In roughly the first half of their volume, Hahn and Wiker show how the stage is set for the drama of historical criticism’s evolution. In the second half, they illustrate how specific exegetes operated within the intellectual and political world created by the figures discussed in the first half.

Hahn and Wiker write with a clarity often missing in scholarly works, and this is doubly impressive because of the complexity of the issues discussed. By necessity, their large tome spans a host of seemingly unrelated topics, each thread of which ultimately fits together into the tapestry they are weaving: medieval theological debates about poverty and evangelical perfection; papal and clerical reform and corruption; the investiture controversy; the Latin Averroist reception of Aristotle; Machiavelli’s new politics of princely rule; the renaissance retrieval of classical literature; the selling of indulgences; attempts by state rulers to curb the flow of money leaving their realms; the dissolution of monasteries; the justification debate; theological controversies over the sacraments; the so-called “wars of religion” of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Europe; Cartesian geometry; the creation of epistemology; the early modern revival of ancient Epicurean mechanistic atomism; Dutch Jewish heterodox intellectuals; the reception of Descartes in the Dutch Republic; the English civil wars; among many other topics. The narrative Hahn and Wiker create makes this book not only informative, insightful, and persuasive, but also a real pleasure to read.

The scholar looking for a reference work spanning the history of biblical interpretation from biblical times through the twentieth century should turn to Henning Graf Reventlow’s four-volume work *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*.⁵ The scholar seeking a reference work that

⁴ They explain that, “By politicization, we mean the *intentional exegetical reinterpretation of Scripture so as to make it serve a merely political, this worldly (hence secular) goal*” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 9).

⁵ Henning Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 1, *Von Alten Testament bis Origenes* (Munich: Beck, 1990); Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 2, *Von der Spätantike bis zum ausgehenden Mittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1994); Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 3, *Renaissance, Reformation, Humanismus* (Munich: Beck, 1997); Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, vol. 4, *Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 2001). Each of these volumes exist in English translation: Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1, *From the Old Testament to Origen*, trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, *From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. James O. Duke (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 3, *Renaissance, Reformation, Humanism*, trans. James O. Duke

focuses on the history of Old Testament interpretation from biblical times through the twentieth century, for the most exhaustive treatment to date, ought to find Magne Sæbø's edited multi-volume *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*.⁶ The scholar who wants more than a reference book, however, will profit greatly from Hahn and Wiker's volume. In what follows below, I will comment in greater detail as I provide a more thorough overview of each chapter.

The Pathos of Historical Criticism: Politically Interested Biblical Interpretation

Chapter 1, "Getting to the Roots of the Historical-Critical Method" (1–16), serves as an introduction to the entire work. Hahn and Wiker begin by calling into question the objective neutrality of the historical-critical method, asserting that it has never been disinterested and neutral and that it has not always been articulated as such. From this preliminary discussion, they proceed to discuss the values and merits, as well as limitations, of a number of significant works that detail the history of modern biblical criticism.⁷ They use this helpful survey of

(Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); and Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 4, *From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

⁶ Magne Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, pt. 1, *Antiquity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, pt. 2, *The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 3, *From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*, pt. 1, *The Nineteenth Century—A Century of Modernism and Historicism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 3, *From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*, pt. 2, *The Twentieth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).

⁷ For a comparable survey of primarily fourteen significant works (including six of the volumes surveyed by Hahn and Wiker) in the history of historical-criticism, see Jeffrey L. Morrow, "The Enlightenment University and the Creation of the Academic Bible: Michael Legaspi's *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 11 (2013): 899–909 (particularly 899–900n6, 900n7, 900–01n9, 903n13, 904–05n18, 906–07n22, and 908n23) for a more thorough list of sources spanning the years 1933–2013 within the history of biblical scholarship.

nine of the most significant works in the field to help situate their present project, which they distinguish from everything that has come before.⁸

After this roughly five-page survey (2–7), they underscore one of the distinctive marks of their work, namely, that their study ends in the seventeenth century, where most other such studies begin. Although it is commonplace in textbook accounts of historical criticism to see the method as a product of the nineteenth century, scholars increasingly identify its roots in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. In *Politicizing the Bible*, Hahn and Wiker suggest deeper roots, extending the historical-critical genealogical tree into the fourteenth century, at the end of the medieval period. As they explain, “The late-eighteenth-century Enlightenment is not the beginning of the conflict, but the culmination of several centuries of a slowly building new . . . secular worldview” (7).⁹

Hahn and Wiker emphasize how the roots of historical criticism and modern politics are linked, for example, in figures such as Marsilius of Padua, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke. In addition, they underscore how the secular political agenda works through the historical-critical method through the nineteenth century and beyond, using the example of Ernst Troeltsch’s programmatic discussion of such a method in which the supernatural is systematically excluded (10–11).¹⁰ They make explicit an implied point that, “In

⁸ The nine main books Hahn and Wiker discuss in this portion are: Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1972); William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, vol. 1, *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992); Rudolph Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli: Old Testament Scholarship in Three Centuries*, trans. M. Kohl (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985); Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, 4 vols.; John Sandys-Wunsch, *What Have They Done to the Bible? A History of Modern Biblical Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005); Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, vol. 2; Pierre Gibert, *L’invention critique de la Bible: XVe–XVIIIe* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010); and Roy Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁹ They include here a parenthetical explanation bringing attention to the role of the comma in this sentence: “it’s not a new secular as opposed to the old secular.”

¹⁰ They refer to Ernst Troeltsch, “On Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology,” in *Religion in History*, trans. J. Adams and W. Bense (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 11–32.

doing so, it removes Christianity as a political force, making of it at best a bearer of nondogmatic moral teachings that undergird the political order” (11). What is significant here is that the guiding presuppositions of this method predetermine how modern biblical interpreters use history. Hahn and Wiker make clear that what is unique to modern historical biblical criticism is not the various scholarly tools of textual criticism, philology, archaeology, and so on that it employs. Rather, “This union of tools with secularizing presuppositions constitutes what is almost invariably meant by the historical-critical method” (12). They conclude this first chapter with a four-page summary of the rest of the book (12–16).

The Poverty Dispute and the Subordination of the Church to the State: The Contributions of the Latin Averroist Marsilius of Padua (ca. 1275–1342) and the Nominalist William of Ockham (1288–1347)

Hahn and Wiker’s second chapter, “The First Cracks of Secularism: Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham” (17–59), lays the groundwork for what will come later, both in the volume and in the history of modern biblical criticism. They begin their chapter with a brief yet necessary history of the Avignon Papacy (18–22), which is an essential part of the historical and political background to Marsilius’s and Ockham’s discussions of Scripture. The main context here is the Franciscan poverty debate—the debate over ownership and use among clergy, like the Franciscans, who took a vow of poverty but needed to use books and, thus, libraries, etc., for various aspects of their religious life, including study for preaching (21–22).

Pope John XXII entered the theological fray by denying the distinction between use and ownership. Under his predecessors Gregory IX, Nicholas III, and Clement V, such a distinction was permitted, and under Nicholas, the idea was that the papacy owned the material possessions that Franciscans merely used. The conflict raged within the Franciscans between the Conventuals and the Spirituals. The Conventuals prudentially attempted to apply Franciscan norms to their current obligations, whereas the Spirituals were bent on reforming their order in the face of what they took to be abuses of *de facto* wealth and luxury among their brother Franciscans who had taken vows of poverty. John XXII demurred against the idea that the papacy owned these possessions, declaring that the Franciscans owned what they used. Moreover, upset with what he took to be the

Spirituals' abuses against their vows of obedience he called them to obey (21–22).

At the same time, John XXII was at odds with Ludwig of Bavaria. Different factions supported different candidates for rule over the Germanic regions. Some factions believed that Ludwig was the rightful German emperor, whereas others understood Frederick I to be the lawful German emperor and lent their support to him. In light of this irreconcilable dispute, John XXII requested that both Ludwig and Frederick abdicate rule, and he, John XXII, as pope, would take over temporal rule over the Germanic realms in the meantime. When John XXII reopened the poverty debate that his predecessor Nicholas had closed, Ludwig quickly condemned John as a heretic, using the Franciscan conflict with the pope as a political means of attacking the papacy.¹¹ Another aspect to this conflict, not lost on Hahn or Wiker, is the actual wealth and luxury of the papal court in Avignon, which likely accentuated the sting of the Spiritual Franciscan critique. Although the Conventuals in general, and Michael of Cesena in particular, the Franciscan's Minister General, would have likely applauded Pope John's call to obedience for the Spirituals, they were outraged by his reopening what they thought had been a closed debate, resolved in their favor under John's predecessor (18–22).

Marsilius of Padua (23–39) and William of Ockham (39–57) found themselves right in the middle of these controversies, as they both came to reside under Ludwig's protection from John XXII. It was with Marsilius that medieval Muslim Averroist philosophy became important and eventually exerted a significant influence on later biblical criticism. The Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd or Averroës was an important and influential commentator on the work of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Averroës noticed, as had others, that the teachings of the Qur'an were not always consistent with Aristotle's thought. Thus, Averroës reasoned that truth is known differently depending on the different abilities of the one knowing the truth. Philosophers stand at the pinnacle of his hierarchy. What this Averroist notion entailed was the "superiority of the truths of natural reason to those of revelation" (23), and this led to what has

¹¹ For further background to this debate over Franciscan poverty in the context of debates about papal authority and infallibility, see James Heft, *John XXII and Papal Teaching Authority* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986), and Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), neither of which Hahn and Wiker use.

been called the “double truth” approach of the “Latin Averroist” tradition. This Latin Averroism found an important home at the University of Padua, from whence it spread throughout Europe. Marsilius imbibed this philosophy while studying there, and later as rector at the University of Paris, which was another major Averroist center in the west (23–25).

Hahn and Wiker examine Marsilius’s incredibly influential political treatise *Defensor Pacis*, an anti-papal work completed in 1324. They point out that Marsilius’s treatise was “revolutionary, a landmark philosophical document in the secularization of the West” (25). The politics of Marsilius’s work were grounded in reason apart from faith. His primary concern was to secure civil peace, which indeed became the main goal, the highest good, for Marsilius. Hahn and Wiker explain that, “Although Marsilius is evidently concerned with undermining papal authority in the political realm, his ultimate concern is the radical reordering of secular and sacred authority, so that the priesthood is firmly subordinated to political power” (26). Marsilius was relying on Aristotle to make this claim, but Aristotle as filtered through Averroës, and what is more, a very “truncated view” of Aristotle’s thicker description of politics (28). Marsilius’s use of the Bible in *Defensor Pacis* “serves the secularizing aim of Marsilius’s politics” (29). That is, Marsilius used Scripture whenever he was able to twist its interpretation to serve merely secular ends. In the end, the secular state Marsilius envisioned was to be in control of biblical interpretation (24–34).

Moreover, for Marsilius, the state should have control of church offices so that the state can control ecclesiastical decisions (33–34). He additionally asserted a sort of early conception of *sola Scriptura* where the Bible supplanted church authority and tradition, but it was a Bible authoritatively interpreted, not by the individual, but the state ruler and state-appointed exegetes (32–34). In his view, the Old Testament no longer plays a role for Christians, nor should recourse be made to a spiritual sense of Scripture, only to a literal sense. These latter rejections are based on Marsilius’s understanding of how pro-papal exegetes used the Old Testament and allegorical interpretation to support the authority of the papacy (34–36). Marsilius never intended for the *Defensor Pacis* to remain a merely theoretical work, but rather it contained a practical means of subordinating the papacy to the state. Thus, Marsilius jumped on the contemporary Franciscan anti-John XXII bandwagon and, “Arguing on behalf of the absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles through appeal to the New Testa-

ment, Marsilius sought to strip the papacy of temporal power so that a secular ruler could establish a purely secular rule" (37).

William of Ockham would eventually join Marsilius, both literally under Ludwig's protection, and ideologically, but with a different and more spiritual purpose. Ockham got into trouble with John XXII and fled Avignon, along with Michael of Cesena, to the protection of Ludwig, from where he attacked the papacy of John XXII and succeeding popes. Hahn and Wiker importantly observe, "Unlike Marsilius, Ockham does not subordinate the ecclesiastical powers to the political powers; rather, he attempts to reinstate, against later papal pretensions, the generally accepted medieval view that the sacred and the secular are two distinct powers" (40). Because Ockham saw an extraordinary need for church reform, he argued for the ability and necessity of secular rulers ruling over sinful prelates. Tied to this concept was Ockham's emphasis on the role of biblical *periti* (experts) or specialists who should be in charge of biblical interpretation. This would play itself out later in the history of biblical criticism, especially in and after the Enlightenment. For Ockham, the specialist or expert is over a council, over the pope, and even over Catholic tradition, when it comes to biblical interpretation (44–47). Hahn and Wiker examine Ockham's *The Work of Ninety Days*, *A Dialogue*, and *Breviloquium*.

From here, they begin their discussion of Ockham's nominalism (47–56), which will be important for later discussions, particularly in the Reformation. To their credit, Hahn and Wiker engage in the ongoing scholarly debate about whether or not Ockham was a true nominalist. They show, however, that the traditional use of nominalism to deny the existence of universals fits Ockham fairly well (47–56, 47–48n119, 49–50n123, and 53n130). In contrast with the Latin Averroists, Ockham describes God's will operating in a way that appears arbitrary; there are no means of limiting God's will and thus violating God's absolute sovereignty (50–53). Through this discussion, Hahn and Wiker show how Ockham began to mathematize rationality, paving the way for later philosophers like Descartes who "would substitute mathematical forms as the new universals" (52): the vacuum created by Ockham and his nominalist philosophy would eventually be filled by mathematics, materialism, and so on (53). Like Marsilius, Ockham would place emphasis on the literal sense, but their literal sense differed from more traditional notions (as, e.g., found in St. Thomas Aquinas): for Marsilius and Ockham, the literal sense was a reading of Scripture wherein the words of Scripture

signified particular realities, as the authors intended, in the way any other human work signified realities.¹² Hahn and Wiker conclude this chapter by noting the rapidity with which Ockham's thought would spread from the University of Paris throughout Europe.

Disendowing the Church: John Wycliffe's (ca. 1330–1384) Inadvertent Secularization of Exegesis

Chapter 3, "John Wycliffe" (61–115), is another foundational chapter laying the groundwork for later Reformation exegesis. Hahn and Wiker show how Wycliffe's metaphysical realism grounded his entire theo-political and exegetical project. Wycliffe was upset about the popularity of nominalist philosophy, but also with ecclesiastical corruption. Although Wycliffe never learned Greek or Hebrew, he thought such study was methodologically extremely important for proper biblical interpretation. In a very Marsilian and Ockhamite fashion, he passionately argued that the state had an obligation to control the civil realm and should thus take control of the Church's temporal goods. As Hahn and Wiker explain, for Wycliffe, "reform of the sacred could only be achieved if the Church's riches and temporal power were taken away by the civil secular sword" (66). It should not come as a surprise that his "works received a ready hearing among those in the royal court, for the king had every desire to control and divert payments flowing from England toward Avignon" (*ibid.*).¹³

¹² Importantly, Hahn and Wiker contrast this with the example of Aquinas, for whom the doctrine of analogy emphasized the relationship between created realities in light of the Creator. They write, "Both human beings and God can signify according to the historical or literal sense, but only God, properly speaking, can signify in the spiritual sense for only He can create real things that signify other things. . . . God wrote allegories into creation itself" (*Politicizing the Bible*, 55). On St. Thomas Aquinas's biblical interpretation, and especially his understanding of the literal sense, see, e.g.: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter, *ST*) I, q. 1, a. 10; Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 4, a. 1; Aquinas, *In Psalmos Davidis expositio*, prooem.; John F. Boyle, "Authorial Intention and the *Divisio Textus*," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 3–8; and Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre*, 2nd ed. (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, 2002), 41–45 and 84–85.

¹³ Although, Hahn and Wiker note that, "The English king did not want papal subsidies and tithes to cease, since in practice they were collected by royal officials who skimmed off half to three-quarters for the royal treasury" (*Politicizing the Bible*, 66n17).

Hahn and Wiker consider a number of Wycliffe's works, particularly *De Dominio Divino*, *De Civili Dominio*, and *De Officio Regis*, wherein Wycliffe argues for the Church's disendowment by the state. For Wycliffe, God granted dominion "on condition that the one exercising dominion is righteous" (ibid.). As with Luther's later teaching on two kingdoms, Wycliffe made a distinction between two types of dominion, "civil" and "evangelical." Based on his discussion in these works, he argued forcefully that, "the king can and should take away possessions of ecclesiastics if they are misusing them, or if the possessions themselves are inordinate, on the grounds that the unrighteous have no right of dominion—and further because disendowing the clergy returns them to their proper condition of Christ-like poverty" (67).

They turn next to a very important discussion of the development of a sort of English messianic nationalism that provides an essential context for understanding Wycliffe and, of course, what would later come in the English Reformation (68–71 and 74–75). Wycliffe must be situated within this broader context of rising English nationalism that moves the earlier Marsilian focus from imperial political power to Wycliffe's concern for English national rule.

When it comes to Wycliffe's biblical exegesis, Hahn and Wiker examine his *De veritate sacrae scripturae*. For Wycliffe, Jesus is the true Word of God, and the scriptural texts are not, but merely are informed by Christ the Word (75–81). Wycliffe made it abundantly clear that he saw his metaphysical realism, his philosophy, as a necessary prerequisite for proper exegesis (81–86). It is from his philosophical position, informed by his socio-political context, that Wycliffe buttresses his arguments for the state's forceful disendowment of the Church with passages from Scripture (86–88). Within this context, Wycliffe savagely critiqued religious orders, and particularly monasteries, that tied up so much land and represented, for Wycliffe, the Church's corruption (89–91). "Court theologians," such as Wycliffe were necessary, so he argued, to aid the state in its job of putting Church authorities in their proper place. Hahn and Wiker describe Wycliffe's position thus: "The unsheathed sword of the temporal power is not merely for punishing thieves, murderers, etc., but also (among other things) to keep the clergy from grasping at the temporal sword or inordinate temporal holdings" (93).

Hahn and Wiker conclude their chapter by clearing up some confusions concerning the so-called Wycliffite Bible and by showing how his views spread and thus paved the way for the Reformation

and what would come in later biblical scholarship (95–115). Contrary to the popular opinion that the Wycliffite Bible was revolutionary as an attempt to bring the Bible into the vernacular, Hahn and Wiker show how the translation of Scripture into the vernacular (of which the Wycliffite Bible was not the first) was not so revolutionary, but was rather part of a much broader transformation of England's culture involving the transition from French to English more broadly. Wycliffe almost certainly did not, in fact, translate the Wycliffite Bible; it was completed by scholars sharing Wycliffe's views (95–102). In the end, Wycliffe's ideas survived, particularly in Bohemia among those Bohemians who came to England during the Bohemian Queen Ann's marriage to England's King Richard II (105 and 107). In Bohemia, Wycliffite theology and exegesis exerted a tremendous influence on John Hus and his Hussite followers (107–10). Both movements, the English Lollards (followers of Wycliffe) and Bohemian Hussites, sparked violent revolution and were thus put down as threats to their respective states. Nominalists, whose philosophy was directly opposed to that espoused by Wycliffe and Hus, were instrumental in attacking Hussites. Hahn and Wiker conclude their chapter by making the important observation that, "although Wycliffe was a declared enemy of Ockham, insofar as he set forth an almost Marsilian argument he had the unintended effect (as did Ockham) of reinforcing the secularizing, politicizing thrust of Marsilius's thought" (113).

The Prince as Religious Dissembler: Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and First Signs of a Hermeneutic of Suspicion

Chapter 4 is entitled simply "Machiavelli" (117–46). Hahn and Wiker acknowledge that a chapter on Machiavelli appears, at first blush, to be entirely out of place in a volume devoted to the history of historical biblical criticism (117). Indeed, they note that, of the volumes they survey at the outset of their tome, there is only one text where Machiavelli is discussed, and that only in "a single paragraph" (13).¹⁴ Machia-

¹⁴ That paragraph can be found in Trond Berg Eriksen, "Some Sociopolitical and Cultural Aspects of the Renaissance," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament II*, ed. Sæbø, 102. Hahn and Wiker are being generous (albeit accurate) in stating that Machiavelli is herein discussed in "but a single paragraph." In fact, that paragraph mentions only the following about Machiavelli: "Only with Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540) and Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) do we encounter a more modern form of historiography that concerns itself with how causes work together to produce historical events. . . . In Machiavelli the study of history was motivated by an interest in the natural regularities that

velli's social and historical context in Florence of the latter half of the fifteenth century is essential to understanding his oeuvre and, thus, his contribution to the later development of historical criticism. The universally recognized instances of the corruption of the papacy and of some members of the clergy constitute the necessary background to this social and historical context.¹⁵ Hahn and Wiker confess that, "in view of the notorious doings of the papacy and Church hierarchy during this period, religious hypocrisy had gone from being a scandal to an art. The damage done to the faith of the Church by the popes during Machiavelli's lifetime is incalculable" (118), and they include a quotation that describes the papacy during this time as "a folly of perversity" (119).¹⁶

They lucidly show how Machiavelli universalized the hypocritical lives of his contemporary Renaissance popes to all religious leaders and how he read such religious hypocrisy back into the lives of biblical figures like Moses (122–23 and 131–46). That is, Machiavelli "assumes that all religion of any type is a façade for power" (122). Unlike what was to come later with figures like Spinoza, Machiavelli did not think such hypocrisy was always bad. In fact, he encouraged it. Machiavelli presents the reader with Pope Alexander VI as a paradigmatic prince (121–22). It was after being tortured during his imprisonment that Machiavelli would pen his *The Prince* (124–25). Significantly, he already had a wealth of personal political experience: he served as a secretary in Florence; as a formal representative of Florence, he had numerous dealings with Cesare Borgia, Alexander VI's "ambitious and ruthless son" (124); he sought to create an effective army for Florence; he travelled to the German Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I on behalf of Florence (124–25); and, perhaps most importantly, as a Florentine diplomat, he got to travel with Pope Julius II in battle.

steer social and political processes. If factual accounts did not accord with a basic standard of accuracy, then one could not learn anything from history. Writers did not use history to exemplify wisdom they already possessed, but to find still hidden causal connections."

¹⁵ On this, see, not only Hahn and Wiker's discussion (*Politicizing the Bible*, 118–23), but also Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 3d ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 177–215; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 250–58; and more recently, Mike Aquilina, *Good Pope, Bad Pope* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2013), 100–10.

¹⁶ The quotation is from Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 52.

Hahn and Wiker provide a very helpful analysis of *The Prince* (127–37) and Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* (137–42) as they relate to the future of biblical studies. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli seeks to effect a transformation of politics from its ancient otherworldly orientation (as in Plato's *Republic*) to a wholly this-worldly focus in which the "goal is the preservation of power" (128). In Hahn and Wiker's words, "Machiavelli's *Prince* is . . . the manual by which one unlearns Plato's *Republic*" (130), but they proceed to show how it is much broader than that. Machiavelli seeks to secularize all politics for the very Marsilian goal of terrestrial peace. In order to do this, Machiavelli effects "a fundamental shift in the treatment of Scripture" (131). Biblical Moses is placed in the context of pagan political leaders, effectively secularizing his role within Scripture. Moses is no longer a leader called by God to mediate God's covenant with the Israelites, but is transformed in Machiavelli's exegesis into "a merely political leader" (131). Hahn and Wiker note that, because he was so inspired by Plutarch, Machiavelli was convinced that the biblical account needed a "corrective." For Machiavelli, as Hahn and Wiker explain, the biblical account of Moses, in stark contrast to Plutarch's histories, "does not appear to be the result of a careful sifting of multiple views of the same events, but presents itself simply as reporting what happened to Moses and the Israelites in their escape from Egypt and long trek to the Promised Land. Thus, the way is opened for exegetes to treat the Bible according to the mode of Plutarch. The sacred history must submit to a purification by reason, set critically against other historical sources. But in so doing, one can no longer treat it as sacred" (134–35).

With his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli consciously tries to create a modern critical history, where his "great labor is the recovery of history (or better, the pagan wisdom about history) shorn of the Christian overlay and interpretation" (138). Within this account, he shifts the question from religious veracity to its political utility (140). In Averroist fashion, Machiavelli sees religion as politically useful to keep order and control of a population, even though it is false. Whereas Averroës had a hierarchy of knowers (with philosophers at the top of the pyramid), Machiavelli focused on the political use of religion by princely rulers who use religious concepts to keep people in check. Thus, Hahn and Wiker consider Machiavelli to be "one of the earliest, and certainly the most influential, sources of the hermeneutics of suspicion" (144). They explain the way this will play out over time:

The biblical text contains a largely hidden message that only the wise can see. . . . But once we are enlightened then we too can interpret the text correctly. . . . To reason about Moses with Machiavelli means to offer an account of what really happened, appearances or reports in the text to the contrary. . . . The pattern set is one in which the philosophy, no matter how far removed it is from the assumptions of the biblical text, becomes the secret knowledge that allows the exegete to wield the exegetical threshing tool. . . . The task of the enlightened exegete, then, is to ferret out all the “real” passages—the ones that fit the philosophy—and reinterpret the rest, giving some *other* explanation for their appearance in the text. (145)

Two Kingdoms Emerge: Martin Luther (1483–1546) & the New Exegesis of the Protestant Reformation

Hahn and Wiker’s fifth chapter is “Luther and the Reformation” (147–219), and at over seventy pages, it is their largest chapter and could very well serve as a slender book on its own addressing the social, political, and historical context wherein the exegesis of the Protestant Reformation aided the movement toward modern historical biblical criticism. In this densely packed chapter, they deal with far more than simply Luther, including important discussions of the more radical Reformation represented by those like the Zwickau prophets (189–95, 200, and 209–12), Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (189, 192–96, and 199–200), and Thomas Müntzer (190, 203, and 206–16).

Hahn and Wiker begin this chapter by situating Luther in his broader nominalist context (147–50). They quote Luther’s confession of Ockham as both “the greatest dialectician” and his own “master,” among whose followers Luther numbers himself and whose teachings he claims to “have absorbed completely” (148). Such nominalism aided in Luther’s severing of faith and reason, which would lead to modern biblical scholars de-Hellenizing Scripture. Hahn and Wiker point out that, “ironically, in setting reason free in its own domain, nominalism contributed to its secularization, therefore duplicating the quasi-Averroist framework found in Marsilius of Padua” (149). They then discuss Luther’s life and early lectures on Aristotle, the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians (150–54).

They next proceed to provide a very important historical discussion of the Reformation’s political context (154–57) that provides the essential lens for understanding the rest of the chapter, the Reformation, and all of the various political contexts of the theological and

exegetical moves they see Luther and others making (154–219).¹⁷ At the outset, they approvingly quote the Reformation historians R. W. Scribner and C. Scott Dixon that, “from the very beginning, the question of religious reform was so inextricably linked to political issues that it could never give rise to an unpolitical Reformation” (154–55).¹⁸ The primary political context was an extension of the conflict between throne and altar already depicted in their chapter on Marsilius and Ockham. The Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I had machinations of ruling the region that would become Italy, including the Papal States, but was also in conflict with the German electors, including Frederick III, Elector of Saxony and shortly protector of Luther. Frederick was also frustrated by the papal taxes and other financial revenue that was redirected to Rome and was likewise in conflict with his local bishops, most of whom were from the German nobility (155–57).

Hahn and Wiker situate Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* and call to reform within the history of the call to reform already recounted, beginning with the poverty debate (158). They show how well the *Theses* fit within the guideposts of Catholic orthodoxy and assert that, “if Martin Luther’s criticisms of the Church had remained as they appeared in his ninety-five theses . . . there would likely have been no Protestant Reformation (or at least not one associated with Luther)” (158).¹⁹ The complicating economic and political factor was

¹⁷ One of the few studies dealing with early modern contributions to historical biblical criticism that understands the role of politics and the Reformation is Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), especially 23–42, which Hahn and Wiker cite throughout (*Politicizing the Bible*, 217n323, 340n7, 342n11, 345n29, 348n42, 350n51, and 574).

¹⁸ The quotation is from R. W. Scribner and C. Scott Dixon, *The German Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 35. And further, in the attendant footnote wherein they provide this quotation’s citation (*Politicizing the Bible*, 155n39), they include another significant quotation from Reformation historian Martin Brecht: “From the very beginning in Wittenberg the monk Martin Luther was in a powerful political arena, even though at first he knew nothing about it. That he himself become a factor in this arena had religious and theological reasons. From the very moment when Luther appeared, speaking and acting independently, his involvement in a concrete political and social context also became inevitable”; in *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521*, trans. J. Schaaf (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 113.

¹⁹ They are able to say that because, as they point out, “Luther’s concern was originally with the abuse of indulgences” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 159), not with the doing away with indulgences or other Catholic teachings (*ibid.*, 159,

that moneys for indulgences bled out of German regions and flowed to the papacy. Thus, Luther's challenges to reform on the matter of indulgences fit conveniently into German national aspirations and into anger against Rome that had been fomenting for quite some time. Hahn and Wiker observe that, "unlike France and England, Germany had so far been unable to establish a kind of national church in which the monetary benefits remained largely within the realm" (160).²⁰ They elaborate near the end of their chapter: "Without the desire for a national church, without national resentment between Italy and Germany, without German envy of the 'national' church of the French and the justified feeling that many Catholics were self-interested Romanists, without the protection of Romantic-messianic nationalists like [Ulrich von] Hutten, without the shield of the German princes, it is difficult to see how Lutheranism could have taken hold" (218).

especially n55; here they quote several places within the *Ninety-Five Theses* where Luther writes favorably about indulgences—e.g., "Let him be anathema and accursed who denies the apostolic character of the indulgences," found in thesis 71). On this, see also Gary A. Anderson, "Redeem Your Sins by the Giving of Alms: Sin, Debt, and the 'Treasury of Merit' in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition," *Letter & Spirit* 3 (2007): 66–69n71. Regarding the *Ninety-Five Theses*, Anderson comments, "What emerges from this discussion is the significance of traditional acts of charity as opposed to the act of buying indulgences to assist in the refurbishing of St. Peter's. Luther's critique is not Church-dividing; he is at this point of his career a reformer within the bounds of Catholic thought" (ibid., 69n71). See also Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 185.

²⁰ See also William T. Cavanaugh, "'A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House': The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11 (1995): 397–420, especially 400–03. Cavanaugh writes, "There is a direct relationship between the success of efforts to restrict supra-national Church authority and the failure of the Reformation within those realms. In other words, wherever concordats between the Papal See and temporal rulers had already limited the jurisdiction of the Church within national boundaries, there the princes saw no need to throw off the yoke of Catholicism, precisely because Catholicism had already been reduced, to a greater extent, to a suasive body under the heel of the secular power" (ibid., 400–01). See also Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially ch. 3, "The Creation Myth of the Wars of Religion," 123–80, where he revisits the thesis of his 1995 "Fire Strong Enough," expanding it significantly (see particularly 166–70 regarding the discussion here). Although Hahn and Wiker do not cite these two works by Cavanaugh in this immediate context, they do cite both elsewhere throughout their volume (*Politicizing the Bible*, 12n45, 260n9, 338n226, and 570).

It was with Luther's turn to Scripture as sole authority (the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*) that the search for a method to replace Catholic Tradition became earnest (161–62). It was in the wake of theological divisions, each faction defending itself through Scripture, that Luther handed over the body to the state. Luther turned to the state, much like Wycliffe before him, to control the public secular realm (168). But it was with Luther's understanding of the "priesthood of all believers" and grounding in no authority aside from Scripture that the peasants who rebelled saw Luther as their inspiration (169). Hahn and Wiker explain the upshot of Luther's arguments, hinting at their trajectory: "Luther wanted to keep the papacy from claiming sole power to determine the meaning of Scripture as justification for its worldly use of power. But in conferring the power to interpret Scripture on all the laity, he inadvertently gave to secular sovereigns the kind of power over Scripture advocated by Marsilius and German nationalist humanists like Hutten, and also empowered multiple theological revolutions from below without a *traditio* to constrain them" (170).

Hahn and Wiker likewise show how the declaration *sola fide* (justification by faith alone) became Luther's hermeneutical key for unlocking Scripture's meaning and, thus, how his idea of "promise" replaced the traditional role of typology (172–83). Upset with justifications of papal authority from spiritual exegesis, against which Ockham had earlier written as well, Luther severed Scripture's intimate bond with the liturgy and erected sharp dichotomies between the "letter" and the "spirit," the "law" and the "gospel," and, importantly, the "Old" and "New" Testaments (174–77).²¹ Although Luther explicitly placed an exegetical emphasis on the literal sense, Hahn and Wiker caution, "it is misleading . . . to assume that the importance of Luther as an exegete is his focus on the literal account of Scripture; rather, his importance consists in substituting the dialectical mode of exegesis for the traditional fourfold meaning of Scripture" (177).

Luther began to support state involvement in enforcing his version of orthodoxy. He found this necessary in the wake of the multiple radically diverse interpretations and positions that were emerging, at least ostensibly inspired by him (192–97). He began to realize, in

²¹ Hahn and Wiker point out that, "in this dialectical hermeneutic, the Old Testament serves a largely negative function as law, rather than serving as the priestly, sacrificial foundation to be fulfilled in the New Testament" (*Politicizing the Bible*, 175). This will play out in significant ways in later historical criticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Hahn and Wiker's words, that "the Bible in the hands of the masses is a dangerous thing" (194). Luther thus began to affirm a form of Erastianism wherein the state controlled the church, at least in the appointment of ecclesiastical officials (196). This is the origin of Luther's doctrine on "two kingdoms," church and state (201–06). Luther separated the realm of the secular from the realm of the sacred, as had Marsilius and Ockham before him, and thereby "contributed to the creation of an entirely secular political order" (203). Hahn and Wiker explain the upshot of Luther's notion of two kingdoms: "Since Luther viewed political power as an ordained external force to keep sinners under control (rather than, as with Aristotle and St. Thomas [Aquinas], a positive order that helps perfect natural potentialities), his tendency (with Thomas Hobbes after him) was to view political order, no matter how harsh, as vindicated solely because any political order was better than the complete anarchy (the chaos of Satan) that would inevitably break loose without it" (204).

Given this, it should come as no surprise that many German princes welcomed Luther's teachings. After all, in the wake of the Peasant's Revolt (which claimed to be inspired by Luther), Luther advised the civil rulers to demolish rebels without clemency. Specifically, he urged everyone to "smash, strangle, and stab, secretly or openly," the peasants involved in the rebellion, "as a matter of Christian duty" (210).²² Again, as Hahn and Wiker make clear, "Luther's doctrines did provide a way for German princes to break from Rome, and remain entirely in charge of the religion within their own peaceful realm, equally protected from the dangers of the likes of Karlstadt, Müntzers, and the Zwickau prophets" (210). To their credit, Hahn and Wiker concede that these princes may have had sincere doctrinal motives, but we cannot certainly know this, since such interior motives are private. Hahn and Wiker quote (213) from Scribner and Dixon on Luther's reception and the sociology of the Reformation in Germany, a quote that includes an interesting political insight:

After a brief period of mass enthusiasm, it [support for the Reformation] retreated to being a minority phenomenon. At a crude estimate, during the first generation of the Reformation, up to mid-century, and perhaps even during the second, probably no more than 10 per cent of the German population

²² Hahn and Wiker take the first Luther quotation from Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 431. The second quotation is their own phrasing.

ever showed an active and lasting enthusiasm for reformed ideas. Where massive numbers were “won” after 1526, to what became the new church, it occurred involuntarily, through a prince deciding that his territory should adopt the new faith. When we speak of the extensive hold “Protestantism” had on Germany by the second half of the sixteenth century . . . this was because there were large numbers of “involuntary Protestants” created by the princes’ confessional choices.²³

Luther also adopted a notion that would develop over time within later biblical criticism, the idea of a “canon within the canon.” He explicitly exalted the Gospel of John, St. Paul’s epistles (particularly Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians), and 1 Peter, above all other portions of Scripture (197–201). After the Reformation, later within the history of modern historical biblical criticism, exegetes would move from Luther’s sifting through the canon to distinguish authentic books from less authentic (or even inauthentic) books, to sifting through individual biblical books themselves for the authentic “kernels.” Although Hahn and Wiker make no mention of Peter Abelard here, Luther’s task was doubtless already made possible by earlier works like Abelard’s *Sic et non* relating to the authenticity of sayings from Scripture and the Church fathers.²⁴ They conclude, however, that, “despite Luther’s intentions, playing the authority of the princes against the papacy meant inadvertently giving the authority over interpretation to the secular powers” (217). This would prove to have a rather ironic result, as Hahn and Wiker point out: “Interpretive differences created a kind of industry of textual scholarship, producing more and more questions that only scholars had any hope of resolving. This had the interesting but entirely unintended effect of removing biblical interpretation from the hands of the common man to whom it had just been given, and handing it to academic experts, thereby creating an exegetical elite that duplicated the function of the Catholic *traditio* in defining interpretation authoritatively” (218).

²³ Scribner and Dixon, *German Reformation*, 34. Something similar can be said for the English Reformation, which Hahn and Wiker discuss in the following chapter. See, e.g., Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

²⁴ For a critical edition, see Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non: A Critical Edition*, ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). See also the comments in Régine Pernoud, *Héloïse et Abélard* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1970).

Disemboweling the Church: Henry VIII (1491–1547) and the Politicization of Exegesis in the English Reformation

Chapter 6, “England and Henry VIII” (221–55), is an insightful look into the English Reformation, especially its intellectual roots and the ways in which this prepared the seedbed for what would germinate with historical criticism. It is often forgotten that historical criticism was born in the world of English Deism prior to entering the German academy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the English Reformation (inspired in part by the German Reformation and the earlier Wycliffite trends of the Lollards in late medieval England) emerged the Deist biblical criticism that would later transplant itself into the academic culture of Germany in the Enlightenment and nineteenth century. As Hahn and Wiker maintain, “England becomes the filter through which earlier developments are handed on to the Enlightenment” (221–22).

In this chapter, they succeed at situating King Henry VIII within his immediate context, especially the issue of the king’s “Great Matter,” his desire to marry Anne Boleyn (223–26, 230–36, and 245–51). Importantly, they point out that “the infamous divorce from Henry’s first wife was not the cause but the occasion for the creation of the official Church of England” (223). The king’s “Great Matter” has several ironies, not least of which is that Henry VIII had previously argued against divorce. The Christian ban on divorce was one of the chief marks, according to Henry, that set Christian marriage apart from non-Christian marriage (224). Henry entered into this early debate on account of Luther. Luther and other Protestant Reformers (including Philip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer) had been considering divorce and even polygamy (or at least bigamy) as permissible under certain circumstances (180–83). The infamous case the authors discussed earlier in their chapter on Luther involved Philip of Hesse’s desire to marry a second wife. The Reformers were able to make arguments in favor of divorce and bigamy precisely by de-sacramentalizing marriage. Henry VIII wrote a robust defense of marriage as a sacrament (224–25). Henry of course had numerous mistresses, and his “Great Matter” became so great when Anne Boleyn refused to be his mistress, settling for nothing less than the crown as his bride (225).

In this chapter, Hahn and Wiker include a significant discussion of the early English translation of the Bible and the work of William Tyndale and how this fit within the context of the English Reforma-

tion (225–31). Influenced by Luther and Melanchthon, with whom he spent time in Wittenberg, Tyndale propagated Protestantism from abroad. His English translation of Scripture became hugely influential but was suspect within Catholic circles because of the theological bent of his translation. As “Defender of the [Catholic] Faith,” Henry VIII opposed Tyndale’s translation. Because of the influence of Anne Boleyn, upon whom Henry had already cast his eyes, however, Henry VIII read (at least portions of) Tyndale’s 1528 *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, which argued that a Christian had an obligation, laid upon them by none other than God, to obey his temporal sovereign, even over and against the papacy (226–28). Unsurprisingly, King Henry was most pleased with this treatise.

A significant turning point in this history was when King Henry became convinced that he had biblical backing for annulling his marriage to Queen Catherine and taking Anne Boleyn as wife, namely Leviticus 18:16’s prohibition of taking a brother’s wife (since Catherine had been the wife of his late brother), with the added punishment that the couple in such a sinful state shall remain childless (Lev 20:21). Thus, Henry blamed his lack of a male heir through Catherine as due to God’s punishment for his having taken his brother’s wife, even though his brother was dead.²⁵ This “Great Matter” unleashed a torrent of exegesis, both in England and on the continent, over what course Henry could and should take (231–36). Due to Anne’s becoming pregnant with Henry’s child, the king married her out of the public’s eye, and later, through the aid of Thomas Cranmer, then Henry’s appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, the English state annulled Henry’s marriage to Catherine (235–36). Hahn and Wiker point out the dramatic shift that took place with this action: “The state (rather than papal) annulment of Henry’s marriage marks the turning point at which the Church *in* England becomes the Church *of* England” (236).

It is at this point that Hahn and Wiker examine the evidence that suggests the strong influence of both Machiavelli and Marsilius on Henry’s English Reformation (236–45 and 251–55). They underscore how some of the apologists of the Henrician reform policies utilized Machiavelli’s and Marsilius’s works, such as Richard Mori-

²⁵ Hahn and Wiker note that, “in his exegesis, Henry apparently did not consider as an important counterargument Deuteronomy 25:5–10, where it is taken as mandatory that if a brother *dies*, a remaining brother ‘shall take her [the widow] as his wife’” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 231).

son, who “would freely use Machiavelli in helping to form and justify Henry’s policies,” and Thomas Starkey, who “would use Marsilius’s *Defensor Pacis* as the political template for Henrician reform” (237). Furthermore, many of these future apologists congregated around Reginald Pole in Averroist Padua, where they were immersed in such political philosophical discussions (237–38). Thomas Cromwell, one of the key members of Henry’s inner circle, was likely influenced by Machiavelli as well.²⁶ Marsilius’s “influence was even more direct and pervasive” (240). Cromwell himself was responsible for getting Marsilius’s *Defensor Pacis* published in English (241). The Marsilian program of subordinating church to state found complete expression in Henry’s state church.

Thus we see how Marsilius’s, Machiavelli’s, and Wycliffe’s combined influences set the stage in England for Henry’s reform, which would in turn lay the seedbed for Hobbes and the future Deist exegesis that would follow in the wake of Locke and Toland. Hahn and Wiker conclude with the observation that “we have then, in Henry, both in theory and fact, a Marsilian ruler, not an emperor but a national king, a man in both person and policy that brought the pages of the *Defensor Pacis* to life in England. . . . Henry provided an example of Machiavellianism as vivid as Pope Alexander VI” (254).

Cosmopolis and the Twilight of the Scriptural World: René Descartes (1596–1650) and the Mathematization of Nature

Chapter 7, “Descartes and the Secular Cosmos” (257–84), like the previous chapter, is more significant for laying the intellectual groundwork for the hermeneutics and exegesis that would develop in its wake than for Descartes’s particular use of Scripture, especially since, as Hahn and Wiker note, Descartes laid the Bible aside in his philosophical program. They point to the “great cosmological shift that occurs in the seventeenth century” (257) and place Descartes firmly within this context. In addition to the “modern cosmological shift” that Descartes helped to effect, this “father of *modern* philosophy” is also significant for them because he is a key figure in the new “focus on method” that will produce a “‘mania’ for *method*” (258). The upshot, in light of preceding

²⁶ Hahn and Wiker recognize that, although it is plausible, and perhaps likely, that Cromwell was exposed to Machiavelli directly (through reading), the Machiavellian Morison became a close collaborator with Cromwell, serving as his secretary, and also, like Cromwell, of Henry’s Privy Chamber (*Politicizing the Bible*, 237–40).

chapters, is that “the new, secular political focus set forth by Marsilius and Machiavelli in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries would finally have received a cosmological foundation in the seventeenth century. . . . Their politicizing of Scripture could now receive support from a new science of nature” (258).

Hahn and Wiker set forth Descartes’s biography over several initial pages of their chapter (259–63), and one of its most significant factors, of which they take due note, is the immediate context of the “wars of religion.” When they turn to examine his *Discourse on Method* (263–80), they demonstrate how such strife, so often attributed to violent and intolerant religious factions, is the ultimate context for his method. In order to lay the proper groundwork for what is to come, especially with Hobbes and Spinoza, Hahn and Wiker are compelled to delve a little into Descartes’s philosophy. They show how his account of nature is “entirely mechanistic” (264).

Hahn and Wiker note that there is no evidence of any sort of direct Averroist or Marsilian influence on Descartes, but they include a very useful discussion of what they term “illuminating similarities” between Descartes and both Averroës and Marsilius (265–66). They then proceed to examine Descartes’s method in order to highlight the ways in which it shaped modernity and thus effected the new cosmological understanding of the world in which seventeenth-century (and beyond) historical criticism would develop and operate. As they point out, Descartes’s method in his *Discourse* is nothing other than a strategy for achieving his goal of setting “both philosophy and humanity on a firm foundation” (266–67) unspoiled by violent conflicts like that through which he lived. Hahn and Wiker identify three key ways in which he effects modernity: “the *mathematization*, the *mechanization*, and the *mastery* of nature” (267). They argue that he effects this by creating a completely new approach to understanding the nature of mathematics:

Descartes presents a way to unite algebra and geometry so that...geometric shapes and relationships can be translated into algebraic formulae, and then an even larger, more comprehensive class of algebraic formulae can be translated back into a *symbolic* geometry capable of representing all relationships of magnitudes...as ratios and proportions of lines, thereby creating a *mathesis universalis*....Descartes’s brilliance consists in *imposing the theoretical conception upon nature*....Descartes self-consciously

fashioned a mathematical ontology, stripping everything from nature but homogenous extension, so that there could be a simple identity between his *mathesis universalis* and nature.... Descartes's revolution consisted in the substitution of mathematical forms for Aristotelian forms as the universals governing particulars....forms were not done away with; there was merely a substitution of mathematical forms for common-sense forms. (267–68)²⁷

In Descartes's mechanistic universe, the miraculous began to seem impossible (274). So, even though Descartes did not apply his methodic doubt, his Cartesian skepticism, to the Bible, he cleared the way so that others could do this, and, as we will perceive especially in Spinoza, those who followed Descartes did do this. Hahn and Wiker unmask his methodic doubt, moreover, as a key to his strategy. He situates his methodic doubt in such a way that it appears naturally to follow his version of philosophy. In fact, however, his philosophy, his notion of mathematics, determines the necessity of methodic doubt (274–75). As they make clear, “the posture of doubt is inseparable from the method *because* it serves to remove the obstacles to Descartes's unique union of mathematization, mechanization, and mastery” (275). This played out in nefarious ways in modern biblical criticism. Hahn and Wiker bring attention to the regrettable but undeniable fact that “the habitual posture of doubt ingrained by following Descartes's method will become the unquestioned beginning point of many of the most prominent scriptural scholars toward the biblical texts” (275).²⁸

²⁷ They further explain how Ockham prepared the way for Descartes here: “In championing nominalism, Ockham removed the reality of universals that inhered in similar-looking substances, so that nouns like sheep, cow, dog, pig, and so on do not have real referents in nature. There is no common form or species that all sheep as sheep share. . . . Ockham thereby created an intellectual vacuum, removing species-name universals but not supplying anything in their place” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 268).

²⁸ They immediately add here, “But the skeptical stance toward the Bible is one side of a two-sided coin, the other being mathematically defined rationality, a mechanical view of nature, and the new goal of the technical mastery of nature that provides a secular substitute for the kingdom of God.”

Scripture's Secular Exile: Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and His Leviathan

Chapter 8 is on Thomas Hobbes (285–338).²⁹ At the outset of this chapter, Hahn and Wiker underscore how Hobbes represents a synthesis of what they have been discussing thus far in their volume. Hobbes “unified the purely secular aim of Marsilian and Machiavellian political thought with a secular cosmology needed to support it, and did so through an explicitly nominalist (mathematical-mechanistic) philosophy that focuses on the complete mastery of nature, especially human nature—all of which he put forth in the context of the particularities of the English political scene” (285). As with Descartes, the context for Hobbes was one of strife, both that of the bloody Thirty Years’ War, the last and bloodiest of the so-called European “wars of religion,” and that of the English Civil Wars, and thus his goal, as with Marsilius and Descartes before him, was terrestrial peace (285–86, 292, and 300).

Hahn and Wiker include an important section dealing with the Epicurean background to Hobbes’s thought (296–99). Although this background is often overlooked in the literature, they are not completely alone in their assessment here. Notably, Arrigo Pacchi and Patricia Springborg’s work on the Epicurean background to Hobbes helpfully brought attention to some of these points. Hahn and Wiker do not cite Springborg or Pacchi, but had they, it would only have strengthened their analysis.³⁰ As Hahn and Wiker point out, Hobbes was an intimate friend of the famous early modern Epicurean Fr. Pierre Gassendi (296 and 298). Hobbes thus became an important player in the revival of the “ancient materialist atomism” of earlier

²⁹ On Hobbes’s contribution to modern historical criticism, in addition to the sources Hahn and Wiker utilize, see also Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Leviathan and the Swallowing of Scripture: The Politics behind Thomas Hobbes’s Early Modern Biblical Criticism,” *Christianity & Literature* 61 (2011): 33–54, and relevant sources in the bibliography; Morrow, “The Bible in Captivity: Hobbes, Spinoza and the Politics of Defining Religion,” *Pro Ecclesia* 19 (2010): 285–99, especially 293–96, and sources in the footnotes therein; and Jean Bernier, *La critique du Pentateuque de Hobbes à Calmet* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010), especially 27–32, 46–48, 118–20, 126–33, and 144–49.

³⁰ E.g., Patricia Springborg, “Hobbes and Epicurean Religion,” in *Der Garten und die Moderne: Epikureische Moral und Politik vom Humanismus bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. G. Paganini and E. Tortarolo (Stuttgart: Rommann-holzboog Verlag, 2004), 161–214; Springborg, “Hobbes’s Theory of Civil Religion,” in *Pluralismo e Religione Civile*, ed. G. Paganini and E. Tortarolo (Milan, IT: Bruno Mondatori, 2003), 61–98; and Arrigo Pacchi, “Hobbes e l’epicureismo,” *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 33 (1975): 54–71.

figures like Epicurus and Lucretius, for whom terrestrial existence was our only form of life; there is no afterlife on this assumption (297).

Hahn and Wiker proceed to examine Hobbes's famous theo-political work *Leviathan* in great detail (299–336). They show how it was structured on Marsilius's Averroist pattern, as Marsilius had constructed *Defensor Pacis*—and for a shared goal, earthly peace via a common means, obedience to the temporal ruler—universal emperor for Marsilius, local state sovereign for Hobbes (299–300). The work is divided roughly into two major parts, the first of which “is devoted to a thoroughgoing reductionist account of political life based upon Hobbes's entirely self-contained mechanistic-materialist physics” (299), and the second of which is a biblical exegetical project used to bolster the conclusions set forth in the first part.

Hobbes's Epicureanism and nominalism reduced all of reality to atomic motion and left little room, if any, to spirits, and even if there was room left for spirits, said spirits are material (300–305 and 324–33). For Hobbes, “true science must be a nominalism modeled on Euclidean geometry” (304). As with Machiavelli before him, however, Hobbes understood the necessity of religion in order to maintain political power, thus he did not eliminate religion, but rather only the fear of consequences beyond physical life and death (such fear in which religion is rooted for Hobbes), beyond what a state sovereign can grant, and thus granting the sovereign full control over religion within the realm (306–309).

In the second half of *Leviathan*, we find Hobbes's exegetical project wherein he interprets the Bible to support his politics and philosophy and, thus, to place all temporal and spiritual power in the hands of the civil sovereign, declawing the Church of any real authority apart from the state (312–36). One key move Hobbes makes is placing all virtual interpretive and exegetical authority explicitly in the hands of the sovereign (315–17 and 319–22). This is significant, as Hahn and Wiker explain, when we turn, for example, to Hobbes's questioning of the Mosaic authorship of the majority of the Pentateuch. For, as they rightly emphasize, “Hobbes's real goal was not to undermine completely the authority of Scripture and traditional authorship, but to shift the question of authority from the *text and authorship* to the *authority* of interpretation (and hence to the authority of the interpreter, the political sovereign)” (322).

One key to understanding Hobbes's project, a key that is completely absent from Hobbes scholarship but that Hahn and

Wiker have correctly identified, is the way in which Hobbes presents “the inversion of typology” (334–35). Hahn and Wiker explain that, “The flow of typology, properly understood, is *forward* in the Divine economy, *toward* the culmination in Christ. . . . Hobbes’s typology inverted the order, flowing not toward culmination and spiritual transformation, but backward, toward the reduction to some earthly, original meaning” (334). In this inverted typological exegesis, Hobbes hones Machiavelli’s method of selectively using pagan sources to understand Scripture and reduces biblical rituals and traditions to “pagan contamination” (335). His exegetical method would be further honed and built upon by others to come.

Constructing a Scientific Exegesis as Modernity’s Battle Axe: Spinoza (1632–1677) within His Enlightenment Circle

Their ninth chapter, “Spinoza and the Beginning of the Radical Enlightenment” (339–93), is a particularly important contribution, not only because of Spinoza’s central role in laying out a precise historical and philological biblical method, the outline of which would become foundational to historical criticism, but also because Hahn and Wiker emphasize how significant the intellectual context of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was for Spinoza.³¹ Too many scholars relegate Spinoza to an early inconsequential position within the radical Enlightenment. Happily, following Jonathan Israel, Hahn and Wiker recognize the full importance of Spinoza for the future Enlightenment and modernity.³²

Hahn and Wiker begin with a brief overview of Spinoza’s biography (341–42). A few points are still open matters of debate within Spinoza scholarship, the most significant of which surrounds the reasons for Spinoza’s excommunication. Richard Popkin’s 2004 comments on this matter remain valid today, over a decade later:

³¹ On Spinoza’s contribution to modern historical criticism, in addition to the sources Hahn and Wiker utilizes, see also Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Spinoza’s Use of the Psalms in the Context of His Political Project,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 11 (2015): 1–18; Morrow, “Historical Criticism as Secular Allegorism: The Case of Spinoza,” *Letter & Spirit* 8 (2013): 189–221, and sources in the footnotes therein; Morrow, “The Early Modern Political Context to Spinoza’s Bible Criticism,” *Revista de Filosofia* 66 (2010): 7–24; and Morrow, “Bible in Captivity,” 285–99, especially 296–99.

³² They rely especially on Israel’s *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006) and his *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).

“To this day we are not sure why he was excommunicated and what this actually entailed at the time.”³³ To their credit, in contrast to so many Spinoza scholars who seem certain of the particular heresy for which Spinoza was excommunicated from the Sephardic Dutch Jewish community (denial of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, denial of Scripture’s divine inspiration, atheism, pantheism, denial of the immortality of the soul, etc.), Hahn and Wiker simply state that it was general (as the statement of excommunication itself was vague on this point). They nevertheless follow the majority of Spinoza scholars and affirm that “it appears certain that Baruch began to have doubts about his Judaism rather early and that he embraced the radical philosophy that would lead to his expulsion from the synagogue even while his father was still alive, but out of deference to him, kept it to himself” (342). This is not patently clear by the evidence, even though it may be correct. Regretfully, Hahn and Wiker do not take into account the work of Odette Vlessing, who has made a very strong case that Spinoza’s excommunication could be explained quite apart from philosophical or theological positions.³⁴ This is a minor quibble point and does not detract from their overall work.

They then devote several pages to the various likely influences on Spinoza (342–60), beginning by showing Spinoza’s indebtedness to Descartes (342–44), Machiavelli (342–43), Maimonides, Averroës, and other Arabic authors (343).³⁵ Spinoza’s Latin teacher, Franciscus

³³ Richard H. Popkin, *Spinoza* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2004), 27. Popkin’s chapter devoted to Spinoza’s excommunication (27–38) is very good for getting a handle on the various scholarly positions.

³⁴ E.g., Odette Vlessing, “The Excommunication of Baruch Spinoza: A Conflict Between Jewish and Dutch Law,” *Studia Spinozana* 13 (1997): 15–47; Vlessing, “The Jewish Community in Transition: From Acceptance to Emancipation,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 30 (1996): 195–211; and Vlessing, “New Light on the Earliest History of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jews,” in *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 3, ed. J. Michman (Assen, NL: Van Gorcum, 1993), 43–75. See also the comments in Yosef Kaplan, “The Social Functions of the *Herem* in the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 1 ed. J. Michman and T. Levie (Jerusalem: Tel-Aviv University, 1984), 111–55. This is the position I take in “Early Modern Political Context,” 12–15 and 14–15n17, and is also the position of Travis Frampton (who follows Vlessing) in his *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism*, whose work Hahn and Wiker utilize.

³⁵ Much more work still needs to be done on the Arabic (and particularly Muslim) philosophical influences on Spinoza. Hahn and Wiker cite the foundational study on this by Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (New York: Meridian Books, 1934), as well as two other works (one from Shlomo Pines

van den Enden, may have been the figure who introduced the works of both Descartes and Machiavelli to Spinoza, although Spinoza may have encountered Descartes even earlier. The first book he published was on Descartes's philosophy (342–43). Hahn and Wiker turn next to three other radical thinkers who were contemporaries that may have influenced Spinoza: Uriel da Costa (344–45); Juan de Prado (345); and Isaac La Peyrère (345–49).³⁶

Da Costa was in the same Jewish community as Spinoza in Amsterdam. After his very public humiliation, he committed suicide. De Prado was also in Spinoza's Jewish community, was one of Spinoza's acquaintances, and was investigated by the leaders of that Jewish community the very same year that Spinoza was excommunicated, although de Prado repented shortly (within a matter of days) after Spinoza's excommunication. Hahn and Wiker spend more time on La Peyrère than on these other two figures, even though La Peyrère was from France, because Spinoza owned La Peyrère's infamous *Prae-Adamitae*, wherein La Peyrère put forward several exegetical and hermeneutical arguments (including the denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch) that would sound very much like what Spinoza attempted in his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. Moreover,

in 1968 and one from Warren Harvey in 1981), but an engagement with more recent literature on this would only have strengthened their claims: e.g., Carlos Fraenkel, "Reconsidering the Case of Elijah Delmedigo's Averroism and its Impact on Spinoza," in *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Akasoy and G. Guiglion (Dordrecht, NL: Springer, 2012), 213–36; Fraenkel, "Spinoza on Philosophy and Religion: The Averroistic Sources," in *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. C. Fraenkel, D. Perinetti, and J. Smith (Dordrecht, NL: Springer, 2010), 58–81; Youcef Djedi, "Spinoza et l'islam: un état des lieux," *Philosophiques* 37 (2010): 275–98; and Rafael Ramón Guerrero, "Filósofos hispano-musulmanes y Spinoza: Avempace y Abentofail," in *Spinoza y España: Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre «Relaciones entre Spinoza y España» (Almagro, 5–7 Noviembre 1992)*, ed. A. Domínguez (Almagro, ES: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994), 125–32.

³⁶ On La Peyrère's contribution to modern historical criticism, in addition to the sources Hahn and Wiker utilize, see Andreas Nikolaus Pietsch, *Isaac La Peyrère: Bibelkritik, Philosemitismus und Patronage in der Gelehrtenrepublik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); Jeffrey L. Morrow, "French Apocalyptic Messianism: Isaac La Peyrère and Political Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 27 (2011): 203–13; and Morrow, "Pre-Adamites, Politics and Criticism: Isaac La Peyrère's Contribution to Modern Biblical Studies," *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies* 4 (2011): 1–23, and sources in the footnotes therein.

Hahn and Wiker agree with Popkin on the likelihood of Spinoza and La Peyrère meeting together in Amsterdam.³⁷

Hahn and Wiker also discuss Spinoza within the context of the Dutch Collegiant radicals, in whose circle Spinoza emerged as the intellectual ringleader of sorts (350–56). They especially focus on Spinoza's friends Adriaan Koerbagh (350–53) and Lodewijk Meyer (353–56). The most important point of this brief subsection is that it demonstrates how Spinoza's work belongs to a much broader intellectual current, inspired in part by Cartesian philosophy, within the Dutch republic. Regarding Meyer's work in relation to Spinoza's, Hahn and Wiker observe that "Meyer's *Philosophia* [*S. Scripturae Interpretis*] and Spinoza's *Tractatus* often traveled together in one book, a marriage that made perfect sense. Meyer provided the framework as a prolegomenon, and Spinoza. . . . spelled out the full consequences, consequences all the more radical precisely because of Spinoza's radicalizing of Descartes" (355). I think this is basically correct, but Hahn and Wiker do not sufficiently take into account the ways in which Spinoza disagreed with Meyer's work. James Samuel Preus, some of whose other works Hahn and Wiker use in this volume, has made a strong case that Meyer is one of the intended targets of Spinoza's *Tractatus*, particularly where Spinoza opposes the exegesis of the medieval Jewish sage, Maimonides.³⁸ Although Spinoza certainly applies his own radicalized brand of Cartesian skepticism to Scripture, the primary corrosive acid he employs, in sharp contrast to Meyer, is history. For this, Spinoza is more directly indebted to Francis Bacon than to Descartes.³⁹

³⁷ See Richard H. Popkin, "Spinoza and La Peyrère," in *Spinoza: New Perspectives*, ed. R. Shahan and J. I. Biro (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 177–95.

³⁸ See J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially 34–202, and Preus, "A Hidden Opponent in Spinoza's *Tractatus*," *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): 361–88, neither of which do Hahn and Wiker utilize in their text.

³⁹ Although Hahn and Wiker do discuss the influence Francis Bacon exerted on figures throughout their volume (including Descartes and Hobbes, the latter of whom served as Bacon's secretary), they do not discuss Bacon's important background for understanding Spinoza at all in their otherwise very fine chapter treating Spinoza. Unfortunately, there is very little treatment in the scholarly literature of Bacon's role in Spinoza's method, despite the fact that Spinoza read Bacon and included in his overall method a historical method that clearly attempted to bring Bacon's history of nature to bear on a history of Scripture (even to the point of using linguistic parallels to Bacon's work). Much more

Hahn and Wiker situate Spinoza's pantheism, his collapsing of God with nature, within the context of his philosophy grounded in Euclidean geometry (357–60). Moreover, as did Averroës, Spinoza maintained a hierarchy of knowers and of knowledge. He divided knowledge into three types or levels. First, there was experiential knowledge, which he labeled “opinion” or “imagination.” The second level of knowledge is “reason,” which is mathematical, patterned on geometry. Finally, Spinoza labeled the third type of knowledge “intuition,” which is the highest form of knowledge. Much like Averroës, Spinoza thought that most people were only able to attain the first level of knowledge, “opinion” or “imagination” (360–62). This is important to keep in mind when we turn to Spinoza's biblical hermeneutic in his *Tractatus*, as Hahn and Wiker explain: “By identifying God with nature and assuming that the order of nature was identical to the clearest, most certain science of mathematics, Spinoza completely and purposely eliminated supernatural revelation as a possibility. God's essence is *entirely* revealed in nature; He *is* nature; therefore the highest science, the one that truly grasps God's essence, is mathematical-mechanical natural science” (362).

As with Hobbes and Descartes before him (and, we might add, Meyer too), the “wars of religion,” and particularly the Thirty Years' War, provide the main backdrop for his work. Spinoza desired to create a scientific biblical hermeneutic in his *Tractatus* that would serve the earthly political goal of securing peace between warring religious-political factions (362–64). As Hahn and Wiker spell out, “the historical-critical method as originally designed by Spinoza is neither neutral nor scientific, but is rather the form of biblical studies

scholarship needs to be devoted to this neglected influence. For the role of Bacon on Spinoza, see, e.g., Morrow, “Historical Criticism,” 202–03; Juan Francisco Manrique Charry, “La herencia de Bacon en la doctrina spinocista del lenguaje,” *Universitas Philosophica* 54 (2010): 121–30; Preus, *Spinoza*, 7n19, 24n73, 26n80, 38, 158n9, 159, 159n12, 161–68, 163n20–21, 181, and 195; Alan Gabbey, “Spinoza's Natural Science and Methodology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. D. Garrett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 170–72; Edwin Curley, “Kissinger, Spinoza, and Genghis Khan,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, 341n35 (Hahn and Wiker do utilize the version of Curley's article from the 2001 reprinted edition of the companion in their chapter on Spinoza, at *Politicizing the Bible*, 342n13, 343n14, and 381n202); Alan Donagan, “Spinoza's Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, 343; Donagan, *Spinoza* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 16–17; and Sylvain Zac, *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 29–37.

that purposely transforms the Bible to act as a political support to keep order in a secular state” (364).

When Hahn and Wiker turn to their analysis of Spinoza’s *Tractatus* (362–88), they clarify an important hermeneutical key for correctly reading Spinoza here, a key that is so often overlooked by Spinoza scholars. That key is Spinoza’s *Ethics*, which he began writing prior to his *Tractatus*. In fact, he interrupted working on his *Ethics*, which was never published within his lifetime but only posthumously, in order to pen his infamous *Tractatus*, which, as the provocative title of Steven Nadler’s recent work on it indicates, Spinoza’s contemporaries considered to be “a book forged in hell.”⁴⁰ Hahn and Wiker emphasize how Spinoza’s philosophy as expressed in his then unpublished *Ethics* makes explicit what was only implied and ambiguous in his *Tractatus* (364–66). Once it becomes clear, as in the *Ethics*, that God is nature, then it becomes clear that miracles are impossible (364–65).⁴¹ Importantly, Hahn and Wiker explain how, for Spinoza, “since miracles are impossible, therefore the scientific exegete must look for another explanation of their common occurrence in Scripture” (365). This is precisely what Machiavelli did before Spinoza, as Hahn and Wiker explain in their treatment of Machiavelli earlier in their volume (e.g., 139–40 and 144–45). In light of this clear connection, in light of the fact that, as Graham Hammill notes, Spinoza was “one of Machiavelli’s most perceptive readers,” and in light of the fact that Hahn and Wiker shortly make a connection between Spinoza and Machiavelli regarding religion and the hermeneutic of suspicion (367), it is surprising that they do not make the parallel explicit between the two thinkers.⁴²

Spinoza constructs his method in order to make “the highest revelation of Scripture moral,” and he then defines “morality in purely secular terms,” thus rendering “revelation superfluous, at least for the ‘enlightened’” (369). Within this overall project, one of the key shifts Spinoza effects, which will continue in later historical-critical exegesis that follows in his trail, is to move from any notion of “truth”

⁴⁰ Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza’s Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁴¹ Hahn and Wiker point out that, “To those who have not read Spinoza’s *Ethics* (the very situation of the first readers of the *Tractatus*), the actual and only possible foundation of the assertion that miracles are impossible—that God is nature—was obviously not apparent” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 365).

⁴² Graham Hammill, *The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 22.

within the text to a focus on “meaning” (373–75). Spinoza then brings up “a seemingly endless list of historical questions that must be answered before the exegete can discover the meaning of the text” (375). He thus hopes to stop theology from entering into the political realm, by rendering such theology virtually impossible, or at most private. Hahn and Wiker summarize the import of Spinoza’s project:

Democracy eliminates persecution by eliminating the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, wisdom and foolishness. Those who are highest on the Averroistic hierarchy, the philosophers, are protected from those who are lowest, the vulgar, by the public pretence that both philosophy and theology have been democratized. Yet, ironically, Spinoza takes away with one hand what he offers with the other, by making the analysis of Scripture possible only to the highly educated, the elite exegetes who are well versed in the original languages, history, literary forms, etc. To keep the elite from turning against the philosophers, Spinoza fashions an exegetical method that produces the conclusions that reduce Scripture to a merely moral prop for civil order, one that allows the greatest freedom for philosophy. In fact, since Spinoza’s philosophy ultimately defines the method, then the applied method serves to reaffirm Spinoza’s philosophy even without the exegete’s own knowledge or consent. (387–88)

Critical History and the Dissolving of Scripture: Richard Simon (1638–1712) and Historical Criticism as an Apologia for Tradition?

Hahn and Wiker tellingly entitle their tenth chapter “The Ambiguous Richard Simon” (395–423) precisely because Simon’s motives and his work appear so ambiguous.⁴³ On the one hand, he appeared to be

⁴³ On Simon’s contribution to modern historical criticism, in addition to the sources Hahn and Wiker utilize, see Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Faith, Reason, and History in Early Modern Catholic Biblical Interpretation: Fr. Richard Simon and St. Thomas More,” *New Blackfriars* 96 (2015): 658–73; Dominique Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project: English Translation of the Introductions to Volumes 1, 2, and 3 Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), especially 58–81; Bernier, *La critique du Pentateuque*, especially 33–41, 44–47, 49–69, 71–114, 117–26, 162–67, 186–208, 210–12, 214–16, 222–24, 277–79, and 281–84; Sascha Müller, *Richard Simon (1638–1712): Exeget, Theologe, Philosoph und Historiker* (Bamberg: Echter, 2006); Müller, *Kritik und Theologie*:

defending Catholic tradition against the more skeptical Spinoza and others, but on the other, he clearly took their work further, which had a long-lasting and corrosive effect both on biblical interpretation and on the tradition he was so adamantly trying to defend. Simon clearly built on Spinoza's exegetical project, as Hahn and Wiker are well aware (395–99, 406–07, 411–12, and 421–23).⁴⁴ The irony is that Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* was an attempt, at least ostensibly, to combat Spinoza's exegetical method (396).

Simon hoped to defend Catholic tradition and, at the same time, demolish the Protestant assumption of *sola Scriptura* (396–400). In order to do so, however, Simon took Spinoza's arguments even further, multiplying problems with the biblical text (396–400 and 404–23). In many places, Simon followed the lead of La Peyrère, who, as Hahn and Wiker note, was a close friend of Simon's ever since La Peyrère joined the Oratorians, for whom *Fr. Richard Simon* was a priest (397). Hahn and Wiker emphasize the novelty (within the Catholic tradition) of Simon's approach:

As it developed, the Catholic position in regard to Scripture's seeming imperfections was that what seemed disunited and imperfect, proved upon humble, faithful, and prayerful reading—guided by the Holy Spirit and Tradition—to be whole and harmonious, containing hidden perfections under seeming imperfections. Various ways arose to explain apparent imperfections: exegetes had recourse to a complex account of divine accommodations, to literal and spiritual senses, and even to the notion of purposely-placed divine stumbling blocks in the text to trip up the prideful and draw the humble to closer examination. Against this, Simon accepted the surface incongruities at

Christliche Glaubens und Schriftthermeneutik nach Richard Simon (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2004); Guy G. Stroumsa, "Richard Simon: From Philology to Comparatism," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3 (2001): 89–107; William McKane, *Selected Christian Hebraists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 111–50; and Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la Conscience Européenne, 1680–1715* (Paris: Boivin et Cie, 1935), 125–36.

⁴⁴ See also the comments in secondary literature that Hahn and Wiker do not include: Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 60–62; F. Saverio Mirri, *Richard Simon e il Metodo Storico-critico di B. Spinoza: Storia di un Libro e di una Polemica sulla Sfondo delle Lotte Politico-religiose della Francia di Luigi XIV* (Florence, IT: Felice Le Monnier, 1972), 29–84; and Paul Auvray, "Richard Simon et Spinoza," in *Religion, Érudition et Critique à la Fin du XVIIe Siècle et au Début du XVIIIe*, ed. B. de Gaiffier et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968), 201–14.

face value—even rejoiced in them—so that the need for *traditio* became absolute. (398)

One problem, as they emphasize, is that Simon’s use of tradition appeared arbitrary (399, 405, 410–12, 416–18, and 422).

Hahn and Wiker include a very enlightening discussion of Simon’s reception (400–04) in England (among John Locke et al.) and in Germany (among Leibniz, Johann David Michaelis, Johann Salamo Semler, et al.). I think this subsection would fit better at the end of the chapter rather than where they have it positioned, but its inclusion is important because they show in it how influential Simon’s historical-critical work became in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which ensured its survival into the nineteenth century and beyond.

Hahn and Wiker follow their subsections on Simon’s later reception with a helpful examination of Simon’s *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* (404–12) and of his *Histoire Critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* (412–22). In these works, and very much in line with Spinoza, “Simon shifted the focus of biblical studies from the substance of the text to the history of the text” (404). One significant move Simon makes, which will develop more completely in the later history of historical-criticism (and particularly form criticism), is to posit “a layered editorial history” for Scripture (405–06). Thus emerges the necessity of a skilled scholarly exegete in order to make sense of the tattered threads of Scripture. Indeed, Simon seems to imply that “only a scholar could plumb the depths of the text” (413).

War, Espionage & Epistemology: John Locke (1632–1704) and the Politicization of the Bible

Chapter 11, “The English Civil Wars, Moderate Radicals, and John Locke” (425–86), is the most dramatic and engaging chapter in the entire volume. Locke’s context is the English Civil Wars. Thus, Hahn and Wiker clarify many of the important historical, cultural, and religious factors necessary to understand this English context to Locke’s work. Parliament’s rebellion against the king, as they point out, “was neither simply an economic rebellion, nor a political rebellion, nor a religious rebellion, for all three were inextricably bound together, as inseparable in the minds and hearts of all parties as it was in their lives” (427). Locke’s family was found on the side represented by Parliament, which was basically “the new propertied class” (426–27). He was about ten years old when this First Civil War erupted (426–27). The Second Civil War found Locke at Westminster School, age fifteen (427–28).

Locke was studying at Oxford during the tumultuous transition from the Third Civil War and the chaos that ensued after Oliver Cromwell's military rule (428).

This context of violent strife and the "nearly anarchic radicalism" that was rampant throughout England profoundly shaped Locke, who proved himself "deeply influenced" by Hobbes's *Leviathan* (426–33). Locke also was influenced by Robert Boyle (a prominent member of the Royal Society) who was another mechanist like Hobbes, popularizing Epicurean atomism in England (433–38). Locke's political machinations forced him into exile as he was trailed by royal spies on the continent (440–41). Initially, he served as secretary for the Elector of Brandenburg on a diplomatic mission to the European continent (438), and he later became intimately acquainted with Anthony Ashley Cooper, who became the Earl of Shaftesbury. Locke even served as his personal physician (438). As a Whig, Locke was constantly involved in political plots and intrigue, including a plan for violent rebellion. Hahn and Wiker follow the work of Richard Ashcraft in identifying Locke as personally involved in the Rye House Plot, a plan to kidnap and then murder King Charles II (whom Locke earlier supported) and the king's brother (440–41).⁴⁵

In self-imposed exile, Locke remained in the Dutch Republic, within six years of Spinoza's death (441–45). In the Dutch Republic, Locke was exposed to radical intellectual traditions, including Jean Le Clerc, the critic of Richard Simon who would become a good friend of Locke's (441–44, 454, and 476–77). Locke likewise assiduously studied Spinoza and Richard Simon (444, 446, 454, and 476). It was also at this time that he created a private intellectual meeting group that involved figures in Benjamin Furly's circle of intellectuals, a circle that "was even more . . . [radical] than the circle that had gathered around Spinoza" (444).

It is in this radical intellectual context that Hahn and Wiker examine several of Locke's works that are important for understanding his biblical hermeneutic: *Epistola de Tolerantia* (445–49); *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (449–55); *First Treatise of Government* (455–61); *Second Treatise of Government* (461–65); *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (467–75); and *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (476–83).⁴⁶ They point out that the first of these documents,

⁴⁵ Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics & Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

⁴⁶ Locke's *Paraphrase* covers Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians.

the *Epistola* is “not an abstract treatise, but a plea for toleration to an as-yet-unstable government in England” (445). Writing further they contend that the *Epistola* duplicates the sort of “political Averroism” of Marsilius’s *Defensor Pacis* through Locke’s particular call for toleration (445). As with Spinoza before him, for Locke, a core morality becomes Scripture’s central message for Locke, a morality that has been obscured by so much attention to doctrine (446). As Hahn and Wiker explain, for Locke, “rather than Scripture taking believers into the heart of profound mystery, where the actual *events* of sacred history reveal, as types, eternal and supernatural truths, the Bible became a kind of morality manual that, at its best, illustrated merely rational moral truths” (447). Locke’s vision of toleration required a secular governing authority and the complete privatization of religion (448).

When Hahn and Wiker turn to Locke’s *Essay*, they emphasize the place into which this work fits within Locke’s overarching political plan: “the *Epistola*, the *Essay*, and the *Two Treatises* as well, are all part of Locke’s unified project. The goal of the *Essay* . . . was (at least in significant part) to maximize the realm of reason and minimize the realm of faith” (450).⁴⁷ Locke is privatizing faith while uniting Cartesian rationalism with the empiricism of science.⁴⁸ In the *Essay*, Locke devotes significant time to discussing the nature of reason. What he seeks to do is limit reason’s abilities and then expand the power and capability of this new anemic reason. For Locke, reason has to do with “our clear and distinct ideas,” and thus it is capable of judging revelation. If something cannot be clearly “sensed,” if it “is beyond sense,” then it is nothing but utter “nonsense” (451). Hahn and Wiker claim that, with Locke, “the principle of *sola scriptura* was therefore transformed into the principle *sola ratio*” (452). It is in his discussion of judging the authenticity of manuscripts (and his discussion here makes it clear he has the Bible in mind), that Locke is most indebted to Simon’s prior work with its multiple editorial layers (454–55). Hahn and Wiker point out:

. . . a direct connection between Locke’s epistemology and his Averroistic plan for political tolerance. Reducing the status of

⁴⁷ They clarify, “ [the goal was] not [to] undermine [faith], but [to] minimize, since as Locke has already made clear, political order demands religious beliefs, albeit tamed and firmly circumscribed” (*Politicizing the Bible*, 450).

⁴⁸ In the authors’ words, “Locke tried to effect a union of the rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Boyle, based on the atomist materialism of both (as shared by Galileo, Hobbes, and Newton as well)” (*ibid.*).

revelation to the lowest kind of probability could become a scholarly project (much akin to Spinoza's strategy of placing endless obstacles before the exegete), one that used the scholarship of those like Richard Simon to undermine the credibility of the text, thereby affirming the need for political tolerance. Yet, at the same time, these exegetical endeavors could provide at least a thin theism, largely constrained to affirming morality, so as not to remove the necessary help that religion gave to maintaining order in society. (455)

In Locke's *First Treatise*, we find the radical "assertion of natural individualism" that "displaced familial authority" and thus became "the governing metaphor of modernity" (460). Hahn and Wiker underscore how "this displacement signaled the historical shift that Locke himself was trying to effect, from political rule by family (monarch, nobility, father), to political rule by property; more particularly, from the kind of rule that defined pre-Civil War England, to the rule by the propertied class in Parliament that came (after a significant struggle) to define post-Civil War England" (460). His *Second Treatise* finished the job of the first, rooting all rights in what he took to be the fundamental right, namely private property (462). Hahn and Wiker suggest that Locke's argument might be viewed "justly" as "a concise scriptural vindication of Bacon's project to conquer nature for the sake of this-worldly comfort, and a crib of Boyle's aims for the Royal Society" (463).

Before turning to his works primarily on the Bible, Hahn and Wiker recount Locke's role in the so-called "Glorious Revolution" (465–67). After the Rye House Plot failed, the English crown, on many occasions, attempted to capture Locke and bring him back to England for trial and punishment (465). Meanwhile, Locke was busy plotting a coup that would bring down King James II and place William of Orange in his stead (466). After the success, the "Glorious Revolution," Locke was able to return to England a hero (466–67).

Locke's scriptural work was intended to minimize faith commitments to the barest minimum possible in order to further his political goals. Indeed, his *Reasonableness of Christianity* basically boils down to an apologetic for the notion that the only really important thing for which Scripture demands the adherence of faith is that Jesus was in fact the Messiah (468). With such a doctrinal reduction, there would no longer be any reason for violent religious controversies. The important thing for Locke was "civic morality" (471). Hahn

and Wiker sum up his entire interpretive goal: “Jesus was reduced to being the Messiah so He could be a lawmaker-king, a miracle worker who confirmed the authority of morality for those incapable of philosophical demonstration. . . . His [Locke’s] main interest seems to be the utility of the Bible for keeping political order” (472).

When Hahn and Wiker examine Locke’s work on the Pauline epistles, they show how he focuses at the outset on demonstrating how incredibly “obscure” Paul appears to be at first glance. Locke provided a solution to penetrating Paul’s apparent obscurity: he urged the readers to discard commentaries and just read the epistles themselves. He moreover cautioned against any attempt at a unified, we might say canonical, biblical interpretation. Rather, each text must be taken on its own, apart from the others (478–79). In his own commentary, which would prove incredibly influential, Locke prepared “the way for the later exegetical emphasis . . . on understanding the New Testament primarily as a witness to an early split between Judaizing and non-Judaizing factions” (480). His Pauline commentary was influential and paved the way for future Pauline scholarship. The great eighteenth-century German biblical scholar Johann David Michaelis penned the preface for the German edition of Locke’s *Paraphrase* (477).

Exegesis as an Attack on Priestcraft: John Toland (1670–1722) and the Future of Historical Criticism

Chapter 12, “Revolution, Radicals, Republicans, and John Toland” (487–541), shows conclusively how so many of the skeptical conclusions of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historical critics were already firmly in place in the seventeenth century in the work of John Toland. Moreover, Hahn and Wiker maintain that “the radical conclusions of the historical-critical method were built into the method itself” (487). In this final major chapter, they examine a number of Toland’s works, including: *Letters to Serena* (488–89); *Pantheisticon* (489–91); *Clidophorus, or Of the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy* (491–95); *The Life of John Milton* (501–02); *Christianity not Mysterious* (528–34); and *Nazarenus* (535–38). When they examine his 1704 *Letters to Serena*, they point out how Toland establishes a “method of equivocation” in his notion of “two doctrines,” the idea that the enlightened philosopher must hide some things from the more ignorant masses, which hearkens back to (possibly Locke), Spinoza, Hobbes, Descartes, Machiavelli, Marsilius, and, we might add, the Latin Averroist tradition more broadly (488–89). Toland continued his “method of equivoca-

tion” in his 1720 *Pantheisticon*, which attempted to explain Toland’s pantheism. In it, he clearly called for the enlightened philosopher to separate from the masses (489). Such an enlightened philosopher could “talk” with the people in the crowds but must “think” only with other enlightened philosophers (490).

Toland’s 1720 *Clidophorus* continued his hermeneutical discussion of the role of his “double philosophy,” this time because of the threat of potential persecution (492). Toland was a careful reader of Machiavelli, and here Toland lashes out against priestcraft and religious hypocrisy, which Machiavelli had so praised as the dissembling necessary for a good ruler. For Toland, “priests prey upon the ignorance of the vulgar, spinning the people’s superstition into gold to put in their own pockets, and concealing their ruses by declaring them ‘Mysteries’” (493). Toland apparently hoped to construct a “civil theology” based on the “rewriting of the myths” and reducing supernatural to the natural (494–95).

As did Locke, Toland spent time among “the most radical of intellectual circles” in the Dutch Republic (498). And as did Locke, Toland inserted himself into the active politics of his day. In particular, he became an apologist for the Hanoverian succession (503–505). As Hahn and Wiker highlight, Toland “desired to affect the political order” and also had, at the same time, become financially desperate (504). In this context, he “took it upon himself personally to educate the House of Hanover in his most radical ideas, as a kind of Platonic philosopher educating a future king or queen in the new civil theology . . . and . . . [he] began his intimate (if short-lived) relationship with Sophia [of Hanover] and her daughter, Sophie, the queen of Prussia” (504). Although he failed, Toland had “conceived the Hanoverian succession as the political means by which a new civic religion could be instantiated in England, one rerooted in pantheism but wearing the public face of a radically reformed Christianity” (522).

Hahn and Wiker include a significant discussion of the clandestine skeptical literature then circulating in the Dutch Republic in radical intellectual circles; Toland was intricately involved as an important carrier of such clandestine literature (505–22). He mastered the art of “reconstructing an existing text to make it a bearer of revolutionary ideas” (508), including, for instance, an English translation of Giordano Bruno’s pantheistic *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (514–17). Bruno’s text “condemns all revealed religions in the name of reason, but does so under the guise of condemning pagan religion” (515).

As did Spinoza and Machiavelli before him, Toland put forward natural explanations to explain away any apparent miracle in Scripture. Any explanation would do, so long as it was natural and not mysterious or supernatural (526). For Toland, reason alone was sufficient to understand Scripture, which must be studied as any other book. Moreover, since there was no supernatural, no miracles, nothing mysterious, there was no need for priesthood or priestly mediation. His assumptions here would govern the rest of modern historical criticism, with its transformation of the Bible into a book like any other, its refusal to allow for the supernatural, seeking out a natural (any natural) explanation in its place, and its view of priesthood as a devolution or corruption of what came before (532–33). Toland, as did later historical critical exegetes, would “reformulate history in terms of degeneration from rational religion to priestly superstition” (533). Hahn and Wiker argue that “Toland was himself not merely another moderate English divine continually blurring Christianity’s sharp doctrinal edges with Latitudinarianism until it shaded into the gentleman’s religion of deism—but rather part of a larger, radical international intellectual movement that had rejected Christianity” (505).

Back to the Future: Historical Criticism from 1700–1900 and Beyond

The book’s conclusion (543–66) clarifies a few points already brought up in the volume, but it also charts new territory as it hints at the ways in which the historical-critical method developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries grounded on the foundation discussed in the previous 540 or so pages. Hahn and Wiker do not shy away from linking the secularization of Scripture study from the “hypocrisy” and “corruption” on the part of “the Church” (543). They summarize the chapter contents rapidly (543–46). Then, they hint at ways in which the history they told plays out in the later centuries (547–66), starting with Gotthold Lessing (547), whose famous Wolfenbüttel Fragments, written by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (547–48), are popularly associated with the advent of historical Jesus research. Most scholars remain unaware of the influence the figures they already covered exerted on Reimarus, even though there is almost unanimous acknowledgment of Reimarus’s foundational role as a historical critic. Reimarus’s doctoral dissertation was actually on Machiavelli, and it was on the basis of this dissertation that he became a professor philosophy. Moreover, he was a close reader of Toland, setting “down his true thoughts only

in private,” as Toland had recommended (547). He further supported the Locke-influenced Christian Wolff. What Lessing published of Reimarus, however, were his more radical private views.

Hahn and Wiker proceed to show how Reimarus was not alone in his radical views by walking through the influence exerted by Spinoza’s thought in Germany from the end of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century (548–52 and 555–62). This was not only through more obscure (to historians of biblical scholarship) figures like Johann Georg Wachter (548–49), Matthew Knutzen (549), and Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch (549–50), but also through more significant figures within the standard histories of biblical scholarship like Johann Lorenz Schmidt (550–552) and Johann Salomo Semler (555–59), and thus Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (559–62). Schmidt, responsible for the Werthheim Bible, was the first to publish a German translation of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Hahn and Wiker mention the almost completely ignored fact that Lessing, responsible for publishing Reimarus’s private comments on the New Testament and, thus, birthing the modern critical historical Jesus studies, completely assimilated Spinoza via Schmidt’s German text of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. As they explain: “Lessing took the Averroistic vertical hierarchy stretching from the vulgar to the philosophic, which Spinoza took to be ineradicable, and set it horizontally, so that the hierarchy was stretched through history, the vulgar gradually becoming enlightened as they moved from needing wondrous events and imaginative metaphors (i.e., biblical stories) in order to grasp philosophical truths indirectly, to the more advanced stage of embracing truths of reason directly” (552). Historical Jesus scholarship was to take another bound, again grounded in Reimarus, the Machiavelli specialist, through the work of David Friedrich Strauss (553–55).

Hahn and Wiker then turn to Semler. Semler was a devotee of Richard Simon, whose work he brought into German translation, which the authors mention in their chapter on Simon (404), but which they regretfully neglect to mention when they actually spend time discussing Semler’s importance in their concluding chapter. Semler also published an edition of Meyer’s *Philosophia* in Latin (404 and 555), but Hahn and Wiker again neglect to mention here (555) the very relevant fact that they mentioned earlier (both 355–56 and 404) in their chapters on Spinoza and Simon, namely, that bound together with Meyer’s work, Semler placed Spinoza’s *Tractatus* in Latin. This is important, as the authors earlier noted, because it emphasizes the way in which Semler (and the others who juxtaposed

these two texts in the same published bound volume) intended to see Meyer's work as a prolegomenon to Spinoza's (355). Hahn and Wiker also fail to mention here two significant facts they brought up in passing earlier, where they were less relevant (356), namely that Semler was incredibly influential on Lessing, and even more so on his student Johann Jakob Griesbach, who would set the Synoptic problem and the historical study of the Gospels on a whole new track with his version of the two-source hypothesis.

Hahn and Wiker do mention here, however, one other significant influence Semler exerted that would have as great an effect on the historical-critical study of the Old Testament as Griesbach would have on that of the New Testament: Semler's disciple (and student of Johann David Michaelis), Johann Gottfried Eichhorn. Eichhorn would set the early stage of the historical-critical study of the Pentateuch on a path that would lead ultimately to Julius Wellhausen's formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis of Pentateuchal origins. Eichhorn was able to do this in part by his study of the Greek and Roman classics under Christian Gottlob Heyne.

The other major "breakthrough" Eichhorn had, although Hahn and Wiker fail to mention it, is Eichhorn's introduction to the work of Jean Astruc via Eichhorn's teacher Michaelis. Astruc attempted to defend the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch against the skeptics of the previous century (La Peyrère, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Simon). Astruc did this by positing hypothetical sources, based on stylistic differences, behind Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, which he maintained Moses used in composing those texts. Michaelis, who also adhered to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, feared that Astruc had gone too far in dividing up sources based on such criteria. It was through Michaelis's critique of Astruc that Eichhorn was able to redeploy Astruc to create further distance between the text of the Pentateuch, in its earliest stages, and Moses.

Hahn and Wiker do mention other influences on Eichhorn, showing how close he was to Spinoza and Toland. They spell out how, for him, "prophecy becomes the vehicle for replacing revelation with entirely secular philosophy" (560). Eichhorn would have a considerable effect on shaping the future of the University of Göttingen, where he himself studied and where Wellhausen would later study and teach (561).

Hahn and Wiker conclude this chapter, bringing their volume to a close, with an all-too-brief discussion of the role of the socio-political climate of Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth century (562–

65), situating the biblical work of Wellhausen (561–63) and Wilhelm M. L. de Wette (562–64) within this context. Wellhausen, a staunch Bismarck supporter, completed an exegetical project that fit well within the political climate of the time. Hahn and Wiker comment:

A common feature running from Marsilius through Hobbes, Spinoza, and Toland was the denigration of the priesthood because the primacy of the priesthood implied a primacy of the sacred over the secular, the priest over the king. Whatever Wellhausen's intentions, dividing the Old Testament up into four sources, JEDP, and casting the Priestly as a later, artificial constriction and deformation of an earlier, better form of worship, accomplished the very result, exegetically, aimed at by the most adamantly secular thinkers we have covered. In so doing, it would appear that Wellhausen functioned like Ockham and Luther, unintentionally aiding a purely secular reconstruction of religion. (562)

Hahn and Wiker proceed to show how de Wette (an incredibly influential source for Wellhausen) had made similar moves much earlier in his work on the Old Testament, also pushing the institution of the Old Testament priesthood late, after the Babylonian exile. This section would probably be better placed prior to their discussion of Wellhausen. They include some reflections on the political function of Markan priority. These trends in biblical criticism in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century provide “exegetical support for a repudiation of Catholicism and an affirmation of Protestantism,” especially when it is understood how often the Old Testament priesthood was a stand-in for contemporary Catholicism (564).

Concluding Reflections

Politicizing the Bible stands in a class all of its own. To date there exist no volumes quite like this one. No one else has yet produced a book that accomplishes all of the following: traces the history of modern biblical scholarship prior to the eighteenth century (let alone into the fourteenth); examines the philosophical roots (Epicurean-atomist, Averroist, nominalist, Machiavellian, Baconian-scientific, Cartesian, Spinozan-pantheistic, etc.) of modern historical-criticism; traces the medieval influences in the context of the Franciscan poverty disputes; walks through the history of pre-Reformation and Reformation England to show how the seedbed was sown for later Deistic exegesis

that would transplant to Germany; shows the role of the Protestant Reformation (beyond simply the new focus on *sola Scriptura*) on modern biblical hermeneutics; shows how each figure built upon the edifice constructed by earlier figures discussed; explain the role of the great cosmological shift in the seventeenth century (involving figures like Galileo, Descartes, and Newton) in creating a new context for biblical interpretation that would allow for historical-criticism; and, in addition to all of this, all the while tracing the political history in order to show how politics shaped the entire project so that the emerging secular study of the Bible was so often forged and used as an offensive weapon by various states in their battles with the Church over the bodies and souls within their realms. Some prior books have accomplished some of these tasks, but apart from *Politicizing the Bible*, none of them have accomplished all of them in a single volume. This is the first broad survey of the history of modern biblical scholarship that devotes entire chapters to figures such as Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, Machiavelli, Henry VIII, Descartes, and John Locke; most historians of biblical scholarship give these figures only a few passing comments, if they are mentioned at all.

Hahn and Wiker have written a scholarly masterpiece that belongs on the bookshelves of any scholar interested in the Bible, the history of biblical interpretation, the history of modern biblical scholarship, historical-critical exegesis, theological biblical interpretation, the Enlightenment, the roots of Enlightenment philosophy, the intellectual roots of modernity, the German and English Reformations and their roots, historical church and state relations, or are interested in any of the figures Hahn and Wiker discuss in their massive tome. My only hope is that Hahn and Wiker write a sequel, at least from 1700–1900, if not through the twentieth century.⁴⁹ N-V

⁴⁹ I owe thanks to Brant Pitre and Michael Barber for thinking through with me some of the issues raised here, and to Maria Morrow for critiquing a draft of this review essay. Portions of this review were already published (and are here reused with permission) in my much briefer review essay of Hahn and Wiker's book in *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 8.1 (2014): 145–55.