

Christianity at the Crossroads: E. Y. Mullins, J. Gresham Machen, and the Challenge of Modernism

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Introduction

By the end of the First World War, religious conflict loomed on the horizon in the United States. Theological liberals cooperated with denominational loyalists to gain control of northern Baptist and northern Presbyterian denominational machinery.¹ As the liberals consolidated their gains and insulated themselves from criticism from the left, they also found themselves trying to protect their position from the theological right. Theological conservatives, stirred awake by large-scale church union plans of the Interchurch World Movement and the American Council on Church Union, began to examine in earnest the naturalistic presuppositions of the liberals. For some conservatives, the examination of liberal naturalism extended to the creation of the world and the consummation of the age. These conservatives, taking the moniker “fundamentalist,” pledged to do “battle royal for the fundamentals.” Rallying around forceful propagandists such as J. Frank Norris and William Bell Riley, fundamentalists organized under the banner of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association. Generally focusing on evolution, Riley and Norris coordinated the attack on naturalism within the Northern and Southern Baptist denominations. Others, such as William Jennings Bryan, led the fundamentalist crusade against evolution in the northern Presbyterian Church.²

The attack on theological liberalism, or

modernism, did not come solely from fundamentalists.³ Other evangelicals of a more scholarly bent were troubled equally by the challenge of naturalistic modernism. E. Y. Mullins, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and J. Gresham Machen, professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, sought to answer the challenge of theological liberalism for their respective constituencies. That Machen contended for traditional forms of orthodoxy is well known to historians of American religion. His *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) is still an important window on the issues that troubled American Protestantism in the 1920s. Less well known is Mullins’s own adamant defense of supernatural Christianity. Typically praised as the “Baptist exponent of theological restatement,” Mullins issued numerous responses to modernism in the 1920s that rivaled Machen’s better-known writings in intensity and thoughtfulness.⁴

Mullins and Machen did not merely focus on their theological opponents. In fact, at the height of the controversy, Mullins and Machen exchanged criticisms of each other’s positions. Though Mullins did not respond directly to Machen’s *Christianity and Liberalism*, Mullins did issue his own critique of modernism in *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (1924), a critique that bore a striking resemblance to Machen’s own forceful statement. The following year, Machen extended his argu-

ments from *Christianity and Liberalism* with the publication of *What Is Faith?* (1925). Machen then turned his attention to Mullins early in 1926, using many of his arguments from his own recent book to critique the Southern Baptist in the pages of the *Princeton Theological Review*. Later that year, Mullins responded to Machen's criticisms by reviewing the Princeton professor's *What Is Faith?* in Southern Seminary's *Review and Expositor*.

The exchange between E. Y. Mullins and J. Gresham Machen demonstrates significant differences in the way evangelical theologians met the challenge of modernism in the 1920s. Whereas Mullins believed that religious experience provided an unanswerable apologetic for Christianity, Machen argued that those who used religious experience as the sole apologetic for the Christian faith were traveling down a road that was anti-intellectual. In contrast, Machen argued that doctrine must provide a basis for religious experience; one can only believe in someone known. Mullins disagreed, charging Machen with bare intellectualism and at points ignoring Machen's carefully nuanced approach. There were numerous reasons for this difference between Mullins and Machen—different epistemic starting points, theological emphases, and conceptions of the theological task. In the end, Machen was correct to view Mullins's approach to apologetics involving significant concessions to modernism, concessions that were not worked out by Mullins himself, but were fleshed out by later Southern Baptist theologians.

Machen Confronts Modernism

Machen's confrontation with modernism arose from his protests against Pres-

byterian efforts at ecumenism. After the 1920 General Assembly, Machen burst upon the denominational consciousness through three articles written against the Plan of Union, developed by the leaders of the Conference on Organic Union and sponsored by his own Presbyterian Church. The so-called "Philadelphia Plan" proposed the organic union of all main-line churches into one entity that would be called "The United Churches of Christ in America." This united church would build on the already established Federal Council of Churches, offering more than a "federal" unity in uniting all communions around an abbreviated creed. What particularly drew Machen's ire was that the president of Princeton Seminary, J. Ross Stevenson, presented the plan to the 1920 General Assembly.⁵

Machen's articles in *The Presbyterian* charted the argument that he would make in greater detail against modernism in *Christianity and Liberalism*. In the first article, "The Proposed Plan of Union," Machen deconstructed the preamble of the "Plan," demonstrating that the "shared belief" of the cooperating denominations omitted "all of the great essentials of the Christian faith." He argued also that the Plan relegated the creeds of the churches to "purely denominational affairs." The Westminster Confession was not "a purely denominational affair" especially for those like Machen who believed it was true. Machen extended his critique in "For Christ or Against Him," arguing that "the new union is committed to a denial of the Christian faith. For the Preamble is thoroughly anti-Christian." Machen dissected the views of one of the chief advocates of the Plan, George Richards, the chairman of the Committee on Deputations for the American Council of Organic Union, in

order to support his contention. In the final article, "The Second Declaration of the Council on Organic Union," Machen sharpened his critique of the preamble to its final form, arguing that the Plan of Union "is anti-Christian to the core." It was anti-Christian because "it is simply a manifesto of that naturalistic liberalism which is the chief enemy of Christianity in the modern world." For supporters of the plan, doctrine was merely the statement of the given age and changeable; likewise, the only doctrines admitted into the preamble were ones that could be accepted by "modern naturalism." This plan relegated the full body of the Reformed faith, as represented by the Westminster Confession, to the background in the hope that "the importance of divisive names and creeds and methods will pass more and more into the dim background of the past." Machen invited those who desired a broad church to unite in their own church on naturalistic principles. Naturalism should not be forced upon confessional Presbyterians in "a unity of organization which covers radical diversity of aim." Institutional unity should be gained through confessional unity; instead, liberals were setting confessional unity aside in favor of a unity of experience and the vague tenets of naturalized religion. The challenge of modernism was becoming clear to Machen. Theological modernists sought the control of Machen's beloved Presbyterian Church. The challenge of modernism was very real and very personal.⁶

Machen extended his critique of modernism and the modern church union movement in *Christianity and Liberalism*.⁷ The key issue of the day was "the relation between Christianity and modern culture." Modernists believed that the way

Christianity may be maintained in the face of "new science," both physical and historical science, was either to adapt Christianity to the naturalism of modern science or to isolate Christianity from scientific investigation. Those who chose the latter course and blithely claimed that "religion is so entirely separate from science, that the two, rightly defined, cannot possibly come into conflict" actually espoused skepticism toward any sort of knowledge. The former solution involved religion making a series of concessions to naturalism and resulted in "a religion which is so different from Christianity as to belong in a distinct category."⁸

Machen argued that these modernist solutions to the relationship between Christianity and culture—either concession or separation—were anti-Christian and unscientific. In order to demonstrate the charge that modernism was anti-Christian, Machen arraigned theological liberalism against the standard of Christian orthodoxy as set forth by the Westminster Standards. As D. G. Hart rightly notes, *Christianity and Liberalism* reads more like a primer in Christian theology, less like a piece of theological polemic.⁹ Before Machen expounded specific doctrines, he noted a key difference between theological modernism and historic Christianity—historic Christianity asserted the priority of doctrine over experience. Machen carefully clarified the relationship between doctrine and experience—for example, Machen argued that doctrine came logically prior to experience, though perhaps not temporally prior to experience, and that right doctrine produced holy experience. Even with these clarifications, Machen argued strongly for the priority of doctrine. Christianity was a testimony based on a factual narrative.

This historical narrative was not merely a listing of brute facts, but it also contained the meaning of these facts. This meaning was doctrine; thus, doctrine was at the very heart of the Christian religion. If the liberals successfully did away with doctrine, they were not merely attacking “Calvin or Turrentin or the Westminster divines,” but they attacked “the very heart of the New Testament.” Machen argued that “ultimately, the attack [against doctrine] is not against the seventeenth century, but against the Bible and against Jesus himself.” Thus, one basic difference between Christianity and liberalism was that “liberalism is altogether in the imperative mood, while Christianity begins with a triumphant indicative; liberalism appeals to man’s will, while Christianity announces first, a gracious act of God.” Liberalism promoted life, Christianity proclaimed a message; liberalism held forth experience, Christianity taught doctrine.¹⁰

Having defended the priority of doctrine in the Christian life, Machen examined theological liberals’ views on major doctrines—God, humankind, the Bible, Christ, and salvation. According to Machen, modernism presented a God who was one with the world process, a God who was solely immanent; Christianity worshipped “God transcendent.” Modernism offered a “supreme confidence in human goodness”; Christianity proclaimed the reality of sinful human nature. Modernism affirmed Christian experience as its sole authority; Christianity defended the authority of the inerrant Scriptures. Modernism esteemed Jesus as an example of a man’s faith in God; Christianity worshipped Jesus, the God-man, the object of faith. Modernism presented the atonement as a hortatory example of self-sacrifice; Christian held forth the atonement as a

one-time substitutionary sacrifice for sin and the only way of salvation.¹¹

As result of the vast difference between naturalistic modernism and supernatural Christianity, Machen argued that it is inconceivable that the two religions should abide in the same institution. “A separation between the two parties in the Church,” Machen proclaimed, “is the crying need of the hour.” If modernism and Christianity should not coexist within the same denomination, they certainly should not coexist in an united church like that proposed by the Plan on Church Union. Those who advocated church union on a minimalist creed were not only setting aside doctrines that conservative evangelicals held to be true, but they were also promoting a dishonest program. It was dishonest because churches like the Presbyterian Church established confessions as part of their constitutions. To occupy teaching or ministerial positions within a confessional church while warring against that church’s established, constitutional positions was a dishonest use of the funds provided by well-meaning laypeople. As a result, theological liberals in every denomination should abandon their churches and form their own liberal denominations.¹²

Christianity and Liberalism was released by Macmillan in February, 1923. In the few short months after its publication, the book raised a firestorm of protest. For example, Gerald Birney Smith of the University of Chicago claimed that Machen’s work was “futile,” not only because Machen failed to inquire “why Christian men in such numbers are growing ‘liberal,’” but also because Machen sought Christianity through “an authority which we are not at liberty to criticize.” Focusing claims of authority in an iner-

rant Bible was futile, Smith claimed, because decades of intensive study of the Bible have demonstrated that the Bible “is not the kind of book which Professor Machen assumes, and that it cannot be used as he proposes to use it for the settlement of doctrinal questions.” Likewise, W. O. Carver, longtime professor of missions at Southern Seminary, railed against *Christianity and Liberalism*. Carver claimed that “the whole book has in it no note of attraction.” Carver believed that Machen set up straw men and did not engage real modernists at all. In addition, Machen failed to reckon with the work of the Holy Spirit and was very pessimistic about the modern age. Even more to Carver’s point, he charged Machen with stressing exclusion of modernists instead of inclusion of all “true believers” and with failing to draw modern science and the social life of humankind within his authorial vision.¹³

Machen pressed on with his attack on theological liberalism in *What is Faith?*, published in 1925. Whereas *Christianity and Liberalism* sought to argue that modernism was anti-Christian, Machen claimed in *What is Faith?* that modernism was unscientific. In making the charge that modernism was unscientific, Machen meant that, by relying on ineffable religious experiences, theological modernism was fundamentally anti-intellectual and hence, unscientific. Part of this anti-intellectual tendency in theological liberalism was due to the spirit of the age. Machen wrote, “The depreciation of the intellect, with the exaltation in the place of it of the feelings or of the will, is, we think, a basic fact in modern life, which is rapidly leading to a condition in which men neither know anything nor care anything about the doctrinal content of the Christian religion, and in which there is in general a

lamentable intellectual decline.” The elevation of the emotions or volition and denigration of the intellect led, in Machen’s view, to a concomitant exaltation of experience and denigration of doctrine.¹⁴

The modernist code word for religious experience was “faith.” Modernists believed that faith was an ineffable experience devoid of doctrinal content and that it was possible to separate faith from knowledge. Machen argued against this conception of faith by expounding Reformed doctrine once again. Before discussing the doctrinal knowledge that was prerequisite for having faith in God, Machen defined the ways the intellect “has been dethroned” in the modern religious situation. Machen’s first example was the modernist’s “distinction between religion and theology.” Theology, modernists argued, was the “changing expression of a unitary experience.” As a result, theology “can never be permanent, but is simply the clothing of religious experience in the forms of thought suitable to any particular generation.” Hence, the twenties saw numerous creeds that attempted to replace the historic creeds of the churches. The main difference, Machen argued, between modern-day creeds and the historic creeds was that “the historic creeds, unlike the modern creeds, were intended by their authors or compilers to be true.” Modern creeds, on the other hand, were merely meant to be the latest expression of religious experience that may change if religious experience changed and that may contradict other creeds written by other generations. This necessarily led to a devaluing of religious knowledge in favor of religious experience. However, faith that minimized or subtracted doctrinal knowledge “is not faith at all. As a matter of fact, all true faith

involves an intellectual element; all faith involves knowledge and issues in knowledge." Faith must have doctrinal content to be true faith.¹⁵

For this reason Machen set forth various doctrines in order to demonstrate how necessary they were for faith. Against the prevailing pantheism of modern liberalism, Machen argued that God is a "free Person who can act," who has acted in creating the world, in governing all things, and in revealing himself to humankind. Machen described this God as holy and transcendent, distinct and independent from his creation. "It is because we know certain things about Him, it is because we know that He is mighty and holy and loving," Machen argued, "that our communion with Him obtains its peculiar quality. The devout man cannot be indifferent to doctrine, in the sense in which many modern preachers would have us be indifferent. Our faith in God, despite all that is said, is indissolubly connected with what we *think* of Him." Against modernists who saw Christ as an example of faith, Machen argued that Jesus Christ is the object of faith. As the object of faith, there were many things that people needed to know about Jesus—particularly, his atonement and resurrection. Against those who argued that humankind's great need was to have faith in the divine within, Machen argued that faith can only be born from a realization of an individual's great need as a sinner. Against modernist theologians who argued that the Cross was an example of self-sacrifice, Machen claimed that at the Cross, Jesus satisfied the wrath of God and provided salvation for his people. Machen believed that saving faith in Jesus' finished work at the Cross brings God's justification to the individual. The justified individual will then produce good

works to the glory of God. However, this was the Gospel order—faith in Christ produced works for his glory.¹⁶

As a result, the division theological liberals made between doctrine and experience was anti-intellectual and unscientific. What was needed, Machen argued, was a recovery of the Christian Gospel, which has at its heart doctrinal content. A recovery of the Gospel would bring a "great revival of the Christian religion; and with it there will come, we believe, a revival of true learning: the new Reformation for which we long a pray may well be accompanied by a new Renaissance." Learning and faith, doctrine and experience, went hand in hand; Machen believed that both were necessary in order to answer the challenge of modernism.¹⁷

Mullins Confronts Modernism

Throughout his early career as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, E. Y. Mullins supported ecumenical endeavor. Mullins cooperated with northern Baptists and maintained friendly relationships with key leaders such as A. H. Strong, Shailer Matthews, and William R. Harper. Mullins's association with these notable Baptist educators led him to join the Baptist Theological Faculties' Union. Mullins also led in Baptist ecumenism, serving as president of the Baptist Young People's Union of America and the Baptist World Alliance. He lent cautious support to the Federal Council of Churches. While it does appear that Mullins later distanced himself from his more progressive counterparts in the North, he shared their concern for witnessing to the unity of the church, or at least, to the unity of Baptists. Thus, Mullins did not share Machen's concerns about modernism's spread through the

church union movement in the 1920s.¹⁸ Mullins, rather, became concerned about the heterodox direction that many of his progressive colleagues were taking during the second decade of the twentieth century. Though Mullins often adapted progressive views to state his evangelical opinions, Mullins's basic evangelicalism and unwillingness to consider the logical outcome of his positions kept him from moving to heterodox conclusions. As one writer notes, "Mullins's theology stood still in this decade [the 1910s], while the liberals moved toward scientific modernism." It was this movement by his progressive friends, such as Shirley Jackson Case and Shailer Matthews, to radical positions that caused Mullins to protest against "modernism."¹⁹

When readers picked up the second issue of *Southern Seminary's Review and Expositor* for 1923, the lead article was Mullins's diagnosis of "The Present Situation in Theology." Reprinted from the pages of the northern Baptist newspaper, the *Watchman-Examiner*, Mullins assailed modernism in terms reminiscent of Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*. Mullins opened by wondering if historic Christianity would survive the attacks of modern liberalism. Mullins believed that the "new orthodoxy" was a radical form of naturalism that understood everything in terms of "the law of continuity." As a result, "the supernatural is banished" as an explanatory factor and rational naturalism was the controlling presupposition. For the new theologians, Jesus' birth was viewed as natural; his person as divine "only as are other men;" his mission as a religious sage or prophet; his role as an example of "the highest degree of trust in God;" his work as non-miraculous; and his resurrection and ascension as non-

historical. However, the "new orthodoxy" was profoundly dishonest in that "it is much given to the use of the old terms, but with new meanings." As a result, "its denials are even more clear and explicit than its affirmations" and New Testament religion was "completely recast."²⁰

In order to combat the "new orthodoxy," Mullins argued that the dogmatic use of "the law of continuity" was provincial, subjective and not scientific at all. Modernism was unscientific because it was disloyal to the facts, particularly "the supreme fact of all history, Jesus Christ." By displaying this extreme disloyalty to the "fact" Jesus Christ, modernists were disloyal to "the fact of Christ in the New Testament records, to the fact of Christ in history, and to the fact of Christ in the Christian experience of redemption." According to Mullins, modernism's disloyalty to the fact of Jesus Christ transformed Christianity "into something else entirely different" than the religion "of the New Testament." Modernism's challenge demanded that "it is time for the issue to be made clear. There are those who will not care to remain neutral when they see clearly the present situation. We are bound to witness of the truth if truth is to prevail. If a man has convictions and refuses to express them in protest against opposing views it is practically the same as if he had no convictions." Thus, in strains strikingly similar to Machen's own, Mullins demanded that modernism be confronted.²¹

Mullins himself confronted modernism directly in *Christianity at the Cross Roads*. The modern spirit was characterized by "the principle of continuity." Science adapted itself to the modern spirit by emphasizing natural development in all its disciplines. As a result, the reigning autocracy was "scientific absolutism."

Science “has mounted the throne by trampling other rights under its feet,” Mullins claimed. “It is ruthless in its radicalism, and unlawful in its intellectual processes and methods. Its influence has extended to many departments of research besides the physical.” Science has not been content invading other spheres and disciplines; science particularly focused on religion, remaking the Christian religion in its own naturalistic image. The only way that science could do this was by applying the criteria and methodology of science to religion. As a result of this invasion of religion’s sphere by science, “conflict and confusion abound.” If science, philosophy, and religion simply would not overstep their bounds, then each could work with the other in harmony. Each discipline was autonomous, pursued truth in its own way and insisted upon “its own rights with its own sphere.”²²

Mullins delineated the “rights” each discipline had. He believed that science had “rights” in the area of nature. Mullins argued that science “works with the principle of causality,” explaining events in nature through the principle of continuity or development. Philosophy’s rights consisted in seeking “a single principle which will explain the universe.” Philosophy took the data supplied by science and attempted to see “the unity of all things” Its principle was “rationality.” Religion, in contrast, was “a personal relation” whose “chief quest is for God and salvation from sin.” It sought immortality, deliverance from guilt, and a relationship with the divine. Religion operated on the principle of “personality.” If science and philosophy remained in their own spheres and operated according to their own principles, there would be no conflict with religion.²³

Certainly there was overlap between these three spheres. Religion welcomed investigation in the arena of facts, but it refuted science and philosophy’s tendency to force their interpretive principles upon it. “Religion as fact may be the object of investigation by science and philosophy,” Mullins wrote, “But religion as a form of human experience cannot be made to conform to the criteria and methods of science and philosophy.” The Christian religion insisted on the basic facts of revelation and experience. This did not mean, however, that Mullins himself insisted upon specific doctrines. Rather doctrines arose from the facts of the biblical story and were distinct from those facts. Mullins stated, “By the Christian religion, I mean that religion of which Jesus Christ is the center and of which the New Testament is the record. I do not mean any doctrinal system which has arisen since the New Testament was written.” Mullins went on to write that “while I have the profoundest appreciation of the need and value of correct doctrines, never the less the argument of this book is concerned primarily with facts rather than formal systems of doctrine.” Facts were distinct from doctrine; doctrine derived from facts. An honest restatement of the facts of Christianity and a reaffirmation of the distinct spheres of science, philosophy, and religion were necessary to win the day against modernism.²⁴

In order to reaffirm the distinct spheres of science, philosophy, and religion, Mullins demonstrated how science and philosophy encroached upon religion and reduced it from a supernatural religion to a naturalistic form of moralism. Modern science forced its doctrine of materialistic causation and development upon all facts and left no room for supernatural inter-

vention of any sort, especially the supernatural intervention of the incarnation. Modern philosophy, with its repeated plea for a “sound metaphysic,” closed itself off from the facts of Christian world-view by insisting upon a naturalistic and rationalistic world-view. The result was that the supernatural was ruled out of bounds by rationalistic philosophy, which presided as the final judge upon all knowledge. Historical criticism rejected any supernatural accounts in the New Testament, particularly “the miraculous, the Messianic, the apocalyptic teachings” of the New Testament. The new field of comparative religion claimed that the religion of the New Testament was drawn from Greek and pagan mystery religions. Lacking a supernatural origin, the religion of the New Testament had neither divine authority nor any claim upon the lives of humankind. All of these—modern science, philosophy, historical criticism, and comparative religion—reduced historic Christianity from a supernatural to a natural religion. However, they did so according to principles and methods that were foreign to religion. Science and philosophy have a right to their own spheres in order to seek their own goals; however, when science and philosophy trespassed on the rights of religion, they were illegitimate.

Alongside this reaffirmation of the distinct spheres of science, philosophy and religion, Mullins argued for the primacy of the irreducible fact of Jesus Christ in Christian experience and in history. Modern liberalism had no way to meet “the stubborn fact of the sin, guilt, weakness, bondage of man.” Modernism simply exhorted men with empty phrases. In contrast, evangelical Christianity proclaimed good news. Those who experienced the reality of God in Jesus Christ were deliv-

ered from the power and guilt of sin. This fact of experience was the most powerful apologetic for the truth of Christianity. Mullins wrote that the reason Christians can experience Jesus Christ rested on the true facts of the New Testament. Mullins concluded his argument by arguing that when individuals exercised faith in Jesus Christ, they knew the fact of Jesus Christ. This was a fact that cannot be explained away by theological liberalism, by “scientific absolutism,” or by rationalistic philosophy.²⁵

Mullins continued this line of argument in his Fall 1925 Convocation Address at Southern Seminary, entitled, “Christianity in the Modern World.” He described for his auditors “the supreme conflict of the ages” that Christianity faced. Restating the argument of *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, he argued that the scientific principle of continuity was not “opposed to the ideas of God or religion, or Christ or the soul or immortality or to Biblical teaching” *per se*. When scientific principles were applied in the realm of science, such principles proved helpful in explicating mysteries of nature. However, when this principle of continuity was applied to religion “it has gradually tended towards the elimination of all the great spiritual facts and values” of the Christian religion. As a result, ideas such as personality, God, and immortality, in addition to all traces of supernaturalism in the New Testament, were done away with by virtue of the consistent and radical application of materialistic development to the Christian religion.²⁶

In response to this attack, Mullins argued that Christians defended their faith by insisting, first, “that our faith rests upon facts.” Pleading for a Baconian approach to the New Testament, Mullins

insisted, "Facts must precede world views. World-views are built upon facts, not facts on world-views. World-views, therefore, must take their shape from facts as these are established." By using the inductive method, avoiding the positing of naturalistic presuppositions, human beings would come to a measure of the truth. By insisting upon the facts of the New Testament, evangelicals should not follow the advice of "a recent liberal writer" who claimed that one must "distinguish between changing categories and abiding experiences." Such advice was "based upon fallacious reasoning." Mullins argued that Christianity was rooted in historical narrative and its subsequent history depended on the truth and reality of its beginnings. To rationalize away the resurrection as a category no longer operative for the modern mind was to do away with the heart of the Christian religion. Mullins declared, "The resurrection of Christ is not a changing category of thought. It is a historical fact. You cannot reproduce the historical fact but you cannot escape the necessity of it."²⁷

A second line of defense for Christians in the modern situation was that religion represented, at bottom, "a redemptive experience of God's saving grace through Christ." Though theological liberalism and historicism challenged biblical Christianity, Mullins argued that "religious certainty is religiously conditioned. In the redeeming experience through Christ we find God, and true knowledge. We then return to the Scriptures with new confidence and assurance." Science and philosophy could not grant certainty; only the redeeming experience of Jesus Christ could. Indeed, this pragmatic test was one that Christianity would always pass—the Christian religion alone could "remake men."²⁸

Thus, E. Y. Mullins responded to the relativizing forces of the new historical consciousness, which he termed "continuity" or "development," by arguing that Christians were truly scientific because they displayed "loyalty to facts." Christians alone were loyal to the ultimate fact—the fact of Jesus Christ as experienced by the individual. This "fact" could not be challenged by science or philosophy when these disciplines invaded the sphere of religion. Though science and philosophy reduced Christianity to a naturalistic religion, and though modern theological liberalism cooperated with "scientific absolutism" by adapting religion to historicism, Christians could not cower or hide because they knew God by experience. As Mullins puts it, "If men believe they can sweep this ocean out of its bed, or remove this Matterhorn from its base, or turn back the current of this Gulf Stream in the ocean of man's religious life, let them try. But at the same time let them remember that they are primarily fighting not a system of doctrine, or any particular form of doctrinal propaganda. They are fighting life itself, at its deepest and most significant level; the life that is in Jesus Christ, whom men know as Redeemer and Lord, as the completion and realization of the religious ideal, who is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."²⁹

Machen and Mullins's Exchange

Machen judged Mullins's response to modernism to be insufficient. When the first issue of the *Princeton Theological Review* was published for 1926, it contained a lengthy review essay entitled "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," in which Machen reviewed Mullins's *Christianity at the Cross Roads*.

Machen opened his review by noting the areas of agreement between Mullins and himself. Both saw the issue as “between Christianity on the one hand and something that is radically opposed to Christianity on the other.” Both insisted on “genuine theism” against the pantheism that was prevalent in modernism. Both insisted on the prevailing supernaturalism of the Bible. Both insisted on “grounding Christianity in historical facts.” Yet with all this agreement, Machen saw significant differences between his apologetic approach and Mullins’s. First, Machen disagreed with Mullins’s separation of fact and doctrine. Machen believed that it was not true “to say that the New Testament presents merely the facts and leaves it to later generations to set forth the meaning of the facts. On the contrary the New Testament sets forth the meaning of the facts, as well as the facts themselves; and it sets forth the meaning of the facts as a result of supernatural revelation.” Machen declared, “From the beginning, the apostles said not merely, ‘Christ died’—that would have been a bare fact—but they said, ‘Christ died for our sins,’ and that was doctrine.” The Bible gave Christians doctrine as well as “facts.” Modernist theologians argued that “they accept the facts about Christ and merely present a new interpretation of the facts.” By divorcing fact and doctrine in the same way as the modernist, Machen believed that Mullins unwittingly played into the modernists’ hands.³⁰

A second, and more central, area of disagreement between Machen and Mullins was Mullins’s “sharp separation between the spheres of science and philosophy and religion.” Machen believed that this separation leads “logically into an abyss of skepticism.” By dividing these spheres,

Mullins could be misconstrued as sympathizing with those who argued that the conflict between science and religion might be solved if religion dealt with the “realm of ideals” and science dealt with the “realm of facts.” In contrast, Machen argued that there was no real conflict between science and religion, “not because the Bible does not teach things with which science has a right to deal, but because what the Bible says about those things is true.” One example of this was the resurrection. Not only was the resurrection a religious question, but it was also a question that must be answered by “historical science.” For Machen, historical “science can establish, and if it be truly scientific will actually establish, the resurrection of our Lord. Yet the resurrection of our Lord is vitally important for religion. The Bible then, in recording the resurrection, most emphatically does teach science; and the separation between science and religion breaks down.” The distinctiveness of the various spheres of religion, science and philosophy, which Mullins praised, Machen reprobated: “For our part we hold that the notion of the distinctiveness of the spheres of science and religion, far from being a great recent gain, is one of the chief forms that have been assumed by modern unbelief, and that its increasing prevalence is one of the most disastrous features of our time.” This distinction between science and religion appeared similar to the modernist’s separation of doctrine and experience and will lead ultimately to the same “anti-intellectualism which is now attacking the Christian religion at its roots.”³¹

Machen also disagreed with the way Mullins separated the sphere of religion from philosophy. Mullins’s argument that philosophy dealt with “rationality” while

religion dealt with “personality” seemed obtuse to Machen. “How can religion possibly work with the principle of personality without also working with the principle of rationality, which personality certainly involves?” Machen asked. In addition, it appeared that Mullins’s arguments were incoherent. Machen demonstrated the incoherence of Mullins’s position by using the example of the existence of a personal God. Historically, the existence of a personal God was established by use of the “theistic proofs.” These proofs belonged to the realm of philosophy even though the question was a fundamentally religious one. Yet Mullins placed little importance on the classic proofs for God’s existence, arguing for God’s existence on the basis of an individual’s self-authenticating experience of Christ. But by doing away with the classic intellectual proofs for the existence of God and by locating certainty of God’s existence to the vagaries of one’s own heart, Mullins minimized “what the Bible (especially Jesus Himself) says about the revelation of God in nature.” Though sin obscured that knowledge of God in general revelation, this did not mean that human beings could not know something about God. If they did not know God through general revelation, “the fault does not lie in philosophy but only in philosophers,” Machen wrote. “The evidence for the existence of a personal God was spread out before us all the time, but we failed to discern it because of the intellectual effects of sin.” Those who knew the Spirit’s regeneration had the effects of sin removed. This, however, did not remove the necessity of the theistic proofs or philosophy in general. Machen wrote, “The experience of regeneration does not absolve us from being philosophers, but

it makes us better philosophers.”³²

Machen continued his argument against the autonomy of the “spheres” by focusing on Mullins’s claims for religion’s autonomy. In particular, Machen saw in Mullins’s separation of doctrine from experience and concomitant exaltation of experience the same tendency of “present-day anti-intellectualism.” In particular, Machen believed that “it is dangerous to adopt the shibboleths of modern anti-intellectualism in the course of an intellectual defense of the Christian faith.” Certainly, Machen agreed with Mullins that Christianity was not merely intellectual; but even though the intellect was insufficient, it was not rendered unnecessary. There was doctrinal content that must be known in order to believe in Jesus Christ. In addition to this doctrinal knowledge, there must be the illumination of the Spirit that takes away the veil from the eyes of men or women so that they could believe. Doctrine must be coupled together with experience. Machen proclaimed, “We are pleading, in other words, for a truly comprehensive apologetic—an apologetic which does not neglect the theistic proofs or the historical evidence of the New Testament account of Jesus, but which also does not neglect the facts of the inner life of man.” According to Machen, Mullins neglected the intellect and started down an “anti-intellectual path.”³³

Mullins responded to Machen’s criticism by reviewing the latter’s *What is Faith?* in the second issue of *Review and Expositor* for 1926. Mullins focused in his brief review upon Machen’s objection to Mullins’s distinction between the spheres of religion, science, and philosophy. Mullins objected first to Machen’s emphasis upon “intellectualism as the founda-

tion of faith." Mullins believed that Machen overreacted to the anti-intellectualism of the day and posited human beings "as bare intellect." Such bare intellectualism did not offer hope to individuals because "it lacks the necessary experience of God's grace through Christ." Not only this, but also intellectualism "leads to agnosticism when the instability of its results appears." Intellectualism could not provide the sort of knowledge of God that the New Testament offers to believers. Mullins asserted that the New Testament offered the "knowledge of God [that] comes through the experience of God in Christ."³⁴

In addition to this, Machen failed to distinguish adequately between broad and narrow uses of the word "science." Machen conflated a broad understanding of science (defined as "the acquisition and orderly arrangement of a body of truth") with a narrow understanding of science (a scientific discipline such as chemistry or biology). This led to confusion in his discussion of the relationship of science and religion. In particular, Machen's discussion confused exactly what "science can and cannot do. Chemistry is put on a parity with theology, and theology is stripped of its power to explain because it is classified as a science." Science proclaimed "truth discovered by careful research for physical causes." Only religion offered truth that explained the first cause of all things by producing theology and doctrines that serve as explanations of the biblical facts. This theology, when observed in its own sphere, gave individuals certain knowledge.³⁵

Assessment

The exchange between E. Y. Mullins and J. Gresham Machen demonstrated

significant differences in the way evangelical theologians met the challenge of modernism in the twenties. In particular, Mullins and Machen differed in two areas. First, the two theologians differed on the relationship between doctrine and experience in biblical Christianity. Mullins met the challenge of modernism by arguing that Christians had an experience that science could not understand nor analyze. This experience of Christ preceded any real understanding of facts and even could transcend understanding. "Christianity does not say renounce reason but only waive your speculative difficulties in the interest of your moral welfare," Mullins wrote. In order to demonstrate the truth of various doctrines, one did not need intellectual proof; rather, one simply pointed to the reality of Christ in the soul. Doctrines such as the deity of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures were settled by Christian experience. For Mullins, experience of Jesus Christ preceded doctrinal understanding.³⁶

Machen argued in opposition that Christian experience did not precede the intellectual grasp of certain doctrines. The intellect apprehended certain doctrinal facts about God, sin, Jesus Christ, and salvation; this intellectual apprehension logically provided the basis for experiencing Christ. Even for children, who exercised "child-like faith" in Jesus and who may not understand the intricacies of Christian theology, Machen argued that "at no point is faith independent of the knowledge upon which it is logically based; even at the very beginning faith contains an intellectual element." For Machen, "it is impossible to have faith in a person without having knowledge of the person; far from being contrasted with knowledge, faith is founded upon knowledge." Chris-

tianity was not anti-intellectual; rather, it was based upon intellectual content. One did not apprehend Christ experientially without a doctrinal foundation. Thus, the relation of reason and experience was a key difference in the way Machen and Mullins responded to the challenge of modernism.³⁷

Second, Mullins and Machen differed on the relationship between science and religion. Mullins tried to meet the challenge of modernism by keeping the spheres of science and religion separate. Science dealt with systematizing physical facts of the universe, with matter. Religion, on the other hand, dealt with the personality of the individual, with spirit. As Mullins wrote, "The Bible is the inspired literature of religion. Science is the uninspired literature of nature. These two literatures move on different levels. They can never collide any more than an eagle flying high in the air can collide with a lion walking on the earth." Machen disagreed with Mullins at this very point. Machen believed that Mullins's radical separation of science and religion "leads logically into an abyss of skepticism." Though the Bible was not a textbook on science, when the Bible dealt in the realm of science, it "represents the facts as they are." Further, the Bible could not be shielded from science, for the doctrines at the heart of Christianity must be "scientifically" appraised. The resurrection and the doctrine of God's existence both were established on testimonies that could be appraised by the "science" of history and the canons of philosophy. In Machen's view, to claim a special sphere for religious truths that cannot be examined by science was naïve and anti-intellectual.³⁸

These two differences between Mullins and Machen point to larger disagree-

ments, ones that shaped and colored the nature of their respective theologies. One disagreement was philosophical in nature. Though Mullins disingenuously claimed that "philosophy cannot supply a stable basis for religion," he was indebted to the same epistemology—experiential foundationalism—that shaped liberal theological thought at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁹ Mullins used insights from historicism, particularly as developed in the personalism of Borden Bowne and the pragmatism of William James, in order to craft a progressive, mediating position. Mullins hoped that this mediating position would shield faith from the corroding acids of the new history. Ironically, Mullins's mediating position, though progressive at the turn of the century, appeared "conservative" by the time fundamentalists challenged theological liberalism in the 1920s. Moreover, because Mullins drew upon the same philosophical tradition as the modernists, he was not able to distinguish his mediating position from his opponents.⁴⁰

Machen, on the other hand, was indebted to the Princeton version of Scottish Common Sense Realism. Though at times Machen appeared to embrace "ahistorical" positions, declaring that Christianity was based on "timeless facts" that did not change, Machen's realism had more nuance than some interpreters give him credit for. He wrestled with the relationship of faith and history throughout his work in New Testament studies and came to conclusions that were restrained for someone often deemed a "fundamentalist." Yet Machen's theory of knowledge differed from the position staked out by Mullins because Machen emphasized the unconditional nature of truth, a reality that was not dependent upon individual

experience. "A thing that has happened can never be made by the passage of the years into a thing that has not happened," Machen wrote. "All history is based upon a thoroughly static view of facts. Progress can never obliterate events."⁴¹

These divergent epistemological starting points explain the different emphases that each theologian employed. Because Mullins's theory of knowledge emphasized the role of experience in providing a sure foundation for knowledge, Mullins's theological endeavor took humankind as its starting point. This led to Mullins's most famous contribution to Baptist theology—the doctrine of "soul competency." Though the idea of soul competency was muddled during the recent controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention, soul competency meant that "the individual is competent to believe and thus to experience the truth of Christianity." Though soul competency, thus defined, would seem merely to provide a basis for the free offer of the gospel to all people, Mullins used "soul competency" to assert a radical individualism from all external authorities. Mullins wrote in *Axioms of Religion* that "direct access to God through Christ is the law of the Christian life. It is a species of spiritual tyranny for men to interpose the church itself, its ordinances or ceremonies, or its formal creeds between the human soul and Christ." Human beings were free to interpret the Scriptures for themselves: "Since the Reformation this axiom has found expression in nothing more than in the exercise of the individual's right of private interpretation of the Scriptures. It guarantees the right of examining God's revelation, each man for himself, and of answering directly to God in belief and conduct." Human beings served as the center and the final judge in Mullins's

theology.⁴²

Machen, in contrast, emphasized the sovereignty of God. Both of Machen's attacks on theological modernism began by critiquing the modern approach to God. For Machen, "rational theism, the knowledge of one Supreme Person, Maker and active Ruler of the world, is at the very root of Christianity." The knowledge of this God was the basis of religion. God has not remained silent but has revealed himself to his creatures. God took the initiative in the salvation of humankind by the incarnation and the crucifixion event; and God takes the initiative in the application of redemption by regeneration. At every point along the way, the priority of God's sovereignty was the center of Machen's theology.⁴³

Mullins and Machen also conceived of the theological task differently. Whereas Mullins believed that theological restatement was the task for theologians in each generation, Machen viewed himself as the conservator of an interpretative tradition. This was seen most clearly in their contrasting attitudes on creeds. Mullins argued that there was a "need for restating its [the Christian religion's] doctrines in terms of the living experience of each generation. Human creeds are valuable as such expressions. But they do not serve all the ends of doctrine. We must ever return to the Scriptures for new inspiration. We must ever ask anew the questions as to Christ and his relations to the needs of each generation." If theology was simply the restatement of Christian experience for each generation, and if creeds were the expressions of restated theology, then there is nothing wrong with developing new creeds. Mullins claims that "new credal statements are put forth to prevent government by the 'dead hand.'

That is why there are so many Baptist confessions of faith. No group of Baptists can bind another group by any such statement of beliefs. Creeds tend to become stereotyped in the course of time. New and vital statements are needed. To keep our faith alive we restate it from time to time." In contrast, Machen argued that theological advance would come by reformation, not innovation. Doctrines are not a summary of Christian experience but rather "are summary statements of what God has told us in His Word." If doctrines were to be understood with greater precision in a later age, Machen doubted that "the doctrinal advance which it or any future age might produce would be comparable to the advance which found expression in the great historic creeds." Machen did not see this position as "inimical" to progress; rather, having a creed or confession that was viewed as true and that had a long, rich, historic tradition, "removes the shackles from the human mind and opens up untold avenues of progress." Unlike Mullins, who argued that churches must innovate and restate doctrines according to present experience of the age, Machen believed that churches should return to the traditions of past generations, particularly, the traditions of the Reformed faith. This was only way that churches can make "doctrinal advance."⁴⁴

The tension between doctrine and experience, science and religion, was not simply one felt at the beginning of the twentieth century; this same tension remains to the present day. At the end of the twentieth century, the tension between doctrine and experience has been resolved decisively on the side of experience. Two examples will suffice. One of the most popular books published in the 1990s was *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby and

Clyde King. In the opening paragraph in the first chapter, the authors wrote, "Jesus said that eternal life is knowing God, including God the Son—Jesus Christ. Jesus did not mean that eternal life is 'knowing about God.' In the Scriptures knowledge of God comes through experience. We come to know God as we experience Him in and around our lives. You will never be satisfied just to know *about* God. Really knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to you." Although the authors emphasized in a later chapter some attributes of God that could be considered "doctrinal," they set doctrine ("knowing about God") and experience (knowing God) in opposition with the emphasis decidedly upon experience. Moreover, the attributes of God that the authors set forward are divine love, omnipotence and omniscience; no mention of God's holiness, righteousness, or justice is made. Why? Perhaps these latter doctrines would change the authors' picture of God's relation to humankind. The reason God created humankind was to pursue a "love relationship" with them. Yet it appears that this "love relationship" is denuded of content, is sentimental and syrupy, and worst of all, neglects large portions of the biblical account of discipleship. One reason for this imbalanced view of discipleship is that the authors of *Experiencing God* resolved the tension between doctrine and experience on the side of experience. Blackaby and King's understanding of discipleship has little doctrinal content.⁴⁵

It would not be a far leap from discipleship with little doctrinal content to salvation with little orthodox doctrinal content. Such was offered as an "evangelical" solution to the problem of world religions

by Clark Pinnock, a former professor at a Southern Baptist Convention seminary during the late 1960s. Pinnock argued that there is such a category as “pagan saints,” who stand outside the Christian church but fear God and seek righteousness. Because God is immanent in the world, because God granted knowledge of himself through creation, and because God exercises prevenient grace to all men, Pinnock argued that it is possible for those who are “pagan saints” to be saved. Pinnock wrote, “Faith is what pleases God. The fact that different kinds of believers are accepted by God proves that the issue for God is not the content of theology but the reality of faith.” Religions may help or hinder the individual’s “subjective faith”; for Pinnock, objective religion mattered very little. If an individual was a Buddhist, “we must not conclude ... that his or her heart is not seeking God. What God really cares about is faith and not theology, trust and not orthodoxy.” In both Pinnock and the authors of *Experiencing God*, the tension between doctrine and experience was resolved in favor of experience. For Blackaby and King, the result is a thin, sentimental view of the Christian life; for Pinnock, the result is something far worse. And yet, there is a connection between the two positions.⁴⁶

Indeed, there is a connection between these contemporary positions and Mullins’s own views. By so emphasizing experience, Mullins often sounded no different from the theological modernists of his own day. That he remained thoroughly orthodox was due as much to his upbringing and denominational context as to his theological speculation. Machen’s evaluation of Mullins’s approach to apologetics was on the mark: “The epistemological error (so we are constrained to regard it)

in certain passages in the book is not altogether important; for however the consequences may be avoided (through a salutary inconsistency) by Dr. Mullins himself, those consequences are likely not to be altogether avoided by others. It is dangerous to adopt the shibboleths of modern anti-intellectualism in the course of an intellectual defense of the Christian faith.” For over seventy years, Southern Baptists have harvested the shallow discipleship and vapid theology that resulted from sowing Mullins’s theological seeds of experience. It is time to return to the emphases of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention, trained in the hardy doctrinal tradition of the Princeton theology. If we do, perhaps God would be pleased to grant us a new Reformation that will lead to a new Renaissance.⁴⁷

ENDNOTES

¹The best study on theological liberalism is William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976; reprint, Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); See also Daniel D. Williams, *The Andover Liberals: A Study in American Theology* ([1941] New York: Octagon, 1970); Sydney Ahlstrom, “Theology in America: A Historical Survey,” in *The Shaping of American Religion*, ed. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) 279-308; Stow Parsons, “Religion and Modernity, 1865-1914,” in *The Shaping of American Religion*, 369-401. The best collection of documents is William R. Hutchison, ed., *American Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985).

²Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1986) 17, 23-24, 47-62; Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); William V. Trollinger, *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

³I am not making a distinction here between theological liberalism and theological modernism; in my view the differences between the two are essentially a matter of semantics, *contra* William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*. I do, however, recognize a distinction between theological and cultural modernism, as pointed out by D. G. Hart, "When Is a Fundamentalist a Modernist? J. Gresham Machen, Cultural Modernism, and Conservative Protestantism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997) 605-633.

It is important to make a further distinction between *modernism*, theological or cultural, and *modernity*. Theological modernism was a theological shift precipitated by the rise of historicism, the affects of which are described below; cultural modernism was a move away from Victorian moral codes toward a cynical realism best represented by writers such as H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis. In distinction to these two uses, modernity is an ethos shaped primarily by

Enlightenment faith in reason. Curtis Freeman faults Mullins for accommodating modernity in his theological formulations; however, it is difficult to point to any theologian after 1750 who did not adapt to modernity, if modernity is understood as that ethos shaped by Enlightenment faith in reason. Cf. Curtis W. Freeman, "E. Y. Mullins and the Siren Songs of Modernity," *Review and Expositor* 96 (1999) 23-42; Timothy D. F. Maddox, "E. Y. Mullins: Mr. Baptist for the 20th and 21st Century," *Review and Expositor* 96 (1999) 87-108.

⁴Bill Thomas, "Edgar Young Mullins: Baptist Exponent of Theological Restatement," (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963). The best biographical source for Mullins is William E. Ellis, "A Man of Books and a Man of the People": *E. Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985); the best biographical source for Machen is D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

Interestingly, Robison James draws a parallel between Machen and Mullins in his article, "Beyond Old Habits and on to a New Land" in *Beyond the Impasse? Scripture, Interpretation and Theology in Baptist Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992) 125-127. Although he does get to the heart of the difference between Machen and Mullins—the relationship between doctrine and experi-

ence—the discussion is so clumsy as to negate the very point James tries to make. James was corrected by R. Albert Mohler, Jr., in *ibid.*, 249-250.

⁵Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion*, Vol. 2, *The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991) 15-58; Robert A. Schneider, "Voice of Many Waters: Church Federation in the Twentieth Century," in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 95-121; Samuel Cavert, *The American Churches in the Ecumenical Movement, 1900-1968* (New York: Association, 1968), esp. 112-113; *idem*, *Church Cooperation and Unity in America: A Historical Overview, 1900-1970* (New York: Association, 1970); Eldon G. Ernst, *Moment of Truth for Protestant America* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972); D. G. Hart, "Christianity and Liberalism in a Postliberal Age," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994) 35-36; D. G. Hart, "The Tie that Divides: Presbyterian Ecumenism, Fundamentalism, and the History of Twentieth-Century American Protestantism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998) 85-107; Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954; reprint, Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1987) 240-297, 303-314; Hart, *Defending the Faith*, 45-47. The report that includes the Plan of Church Union is in the *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (1920) 117-122.

⁶J. Gresham Machen, "Proposed Plan of Union," *Presbyterian* 90 (10 June 1920) 8-9; J. Gresham Machen, "For Christ or Against Him" *Presbyterian* 91 (20 Jan 1921) 8-9; J. Gresham Machen, "The Second Declaration of the Council on Organic Union," *Presbyterian* 91 (17 Mar 1921) 8, 26; William J. Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism: Competition in a Protestant House* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997) 21-48, 59-101.

⁷In between Machen's trip to the 1920 General Assembly and the publication of *Christianity and Liberalism*, he delivered an informal address to the Chester Presbytery Elders' Association on November 3, 1921. That address was published in the *Princeton Theological Review* as "Liberalism or Christianity?" *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922) 93-117 and served as the basis for Machen's well-known book.

⁸J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: MacMillan, 1923; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 1, 2, 4-5, 6-7.

⁹Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 7; Hart, "Christianity and Liberalism," 329-344; idem, *Defending the Faith*, 65-83.

¹⁰Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 23, 27, 29, 44-46, 47. For Machen's balance of doctrine and experience, see also Paul Kjos Helseth, "The Apologetic Tradition of the OPC," *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998) 109-129, who argued convincingly *contra* Wacker, A. H. Strong.

¹¹J. Gresham Machen, "God Transcendent," in *God Transcendent*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerd-

mans, 1949; reprint, Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1982) 15-22. Importantly, the shortest chapter in *Christianity and Liberalism* is the one on the Scriptures, raising questions concerning the alleged importance of biblical inerrancy for the Princeton Theology; see D. G. Hart, "A Reconsideration of Biblical Inerrancy and the Princeton Theology's Alliance with Fundamentalism," *Christian Scholar's Review* 20 (1991) 362-375, *contra* Thomas H. Graves, "Biblical Authority and the Forgotten Spirit," *Review and Expositor* 95 (1998) 538-541.

¹²Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 160-167. D. G. Hart rightly points out that Machen's logic against church union over a minimalist creed cuts against fundamentalist unions as well; see "The Tie that Divides," 85-103.

¹³Gerald Birney Smith, "A Short and Easy Way of Dealing with Liberals," *Journal of Religion* 3 (1923) 541-544; W. O. Carver, Review of *Christianity and Liberalism*, *Review and Expositor* 21 (1924) 344-349.

¹⁴J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?* (New York: MacMillan, 1925; reprint, Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1991) 13-14, 18, 23.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 26, 28, 29, 40.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 50, 54, 59, 65, 75 (emphasis his), 91-92, 98, 102, 121, 154.

¹⁷J. Gresham Machen, "The Modern Use of the Bible," in *What is Christianity?*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 200.

¹⁸Ellis, "A Man of Books and a Man of the People," 63-64, 73. For Mullins's relationship with Strong, Matthews,

and Harper, see the correspondence in the Mullins Papers, Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

¹⁹Ellis, "A Man of Books and a Man of the People," 128; E. Y. Mullins, "The Jesus of 'Liberal' Theology," *Review and Expositor* 12 (1915) 174-192. I think Ellis is correct in his appraisal of Mullins's theological development in the 1910s, which makes his evaluation of Mullins's theology in the 1920s curious. As Mullins worked through the controversies of the twenties, Ellis sees Mullins becoming more conservative, moving away from his earlier progressive positions in an effort to maintain a mediating position (Ellis, "A Man of Books and a Man of the People," 185-208; cf. Fisher Humphreys, "E. Y. Mullins," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David Dockery [Nashville: Broadman, 1990] 343-345). However, it seems more likely that Mullins remained essentially static in his theological development, while other progressive theologians moved to more radical positions. This caused Mullins to look quite conservative in comparison, masking his essentially progressive theological positions.

²⁰E. Y. Mullins, "The Present Situation in Theology," *Review and Expositor* 20 (1923) 129-132.

²¹*Ibid.*, 133-137.

²²Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (New York: George H. Doran, 1924) 17-19, 30, 32-33.

²³*Ibid.*, 31-32.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 33, 39, 43, 273.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 240, 244-253.

²⁶E. Y. Mullins, "Christianity in the Modern World," *Review and Expositor* 22 (1925) 474, 478, 480.

²⁷Mullins, "Christianity in the Modern World," 483, 484, 485. The "recent liberal writer" is undoubtedly Harry Emerson Fosdick. See his *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), chap. 4, "Abiding Experiences and Changing Categories."

Interestingly, W.O. Carver reviewed Fosdick's *Modern Use of the Bible* very positively in *Review and Expositor*. Of the chapter, "Abiding Experiences and Changing Categories," Carver wrote, "It will also be found that which is most likely to be a turning point to faith and peace for many a puzzled soul. It will help any who care to do so to understand Dr. Fosdick more than anything else he has written." And though he has some minor criticism of the book, particularly when compared to his review of Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, Carver closes by writing, "In an epilogue the author bears 'a personal testimony' of his own experience with the Bible, after saying: 'Here, then ends our study where any study of the Bible ought to bring us, standing in reverence before our Lord.' Are there any who are unwilling for Dr. Fosdick to stand thus in the company of the reverent before our Lord?" (*Review and Expositor* 22 [1925] 257-261). For a very different view of Fosdick's book, see Machen, "The Modern Use of the Bible," in *What is Christianity?*, 185-200.

²⁸Mullins, "Christianity in the Modern World," 486.

²⁹Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 276.

³⁰J. Gresham Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," *Princeton Theological Review* 24 (1926) 38, 41, 42.

³¹*Ibid.*, 45, 46, 47, 50-51; Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 86.

³²Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," 53-55, 57-60.

³³*Ibid.*, 61, 63, 64.

³⁴E. Y. Mullins, Review of *What is Faith?*, *Review and Expositor* 23 (1926) 199, 200-202.

³⁵Mullins, Review of *What is Faith?*, 203-204. Machen makes the same complaint about Mullins's use of the "science"; see Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," 51.

³⁶E. Y. Mullins, "The Testimony of Christian Experience," in *The Fundamentals*, 4 vols., ed. R.A. Torrey, et al ([1917] Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 4.319-320, 323; *idem*, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1917) 10-11; *idem*, "The Theological Trend," *Review and Expositor* 2 (1905) 519.

³⁷Machen, *What is Faith?*, 94.

³⁸Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 26; Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," 46-47.

³⁹On the epistemic revolution at the turn of the century, see the following: Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985) 27; *idem*, "The Demise of Biblical Civilization," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cul-*

tural History, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 121-138; Theodore Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Ante-Bellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); George Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia" in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); *idem*, "Everyone One's Own Interpreter? The Bible, Science and Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Bible in America*, 79-100; E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentleman Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978); Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," *Church History* 24 (1955) 257-72.

⁴⁰Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 172; *idem*, *Why is Christianity True?* (Chicago: Christian Culture Press, 1905) 4; Thomas J. Nettles, "Edgar Young Mullins," in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 65; Humphreys, "E. Y. Mullins," 343-345; Clyde J. Hurst, "The Problem of Religious Knowledge in the Theology of Edgar Young Mullins and Walter Thomas Conner," *Review and Expositor* 52 (1955) 166-182; William Ellis, "Edgar Young Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership," *Foundations* 19 (1976) 171-185; Leo Sandon, Jr., "Boston University Personalism and Southern Baptist

Theology," *Foundations* 20 (1977) 101-108; Maddox, "E. Y. Mullins: Mr. Baptist for the 20th and 21st Century," 95-97. For one example of Mullins's use of both Bowne and James in the same article, see Mullins, "The Testimony of Christian Experience," passim.

⁴¹J. Gresham Machen, "Does Fundamentalism Obstruct Social Progress?" in *What is Christianity?* ed. Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 244. On Machen's epistemology, see J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1936) 87-102; George Marsden, "J. Gresham Machen, History and Truth," *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1980) 157-75; Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong*, 21-24; D. G. Hart, "Common Sense and Princeton Mind," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984) 1-25; Paul Kjos Helseth, "Right Reason and the Princeton Mind: The Moral Context," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 77 (1999) 13-28; idem, "The Apologetic Tradition of the OPC," 109-129.

⁴²Mullins, *Axioms of Religion*, 94-95; Freeman, "The Siren Songs of Modernity," 34-37; William D. M. Carrell, "Edgar Young Mullins and the Competency of the Soul in Religion," (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1993) 98; E. Glenn Hinson, "E. Y. Mullins as Interpreter of the Baptist Tradition," *Review and Expositor* 96 (1999) 109-122; James Dunn, "Church, State, and Soul Competency," *Review and Expositor* 96 (1999) 61-74; Molly T. Marshall, "Exercising Liberty of Conscience: Freedom in Private Interpretation,"

in *Baptists in the Balance: The Tension Between Freedom and Responsibility*, ed. Everett Goodwin (Valley Forge: Judson, 1997) 141-150.

⁴³Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 55-56; idem, *Christian Faith in the Modern World*, 13-31; idem, "My Idea of God," in *My Idea of God: A Symposium of Faith*, ed. James Newton (Boston: Little, Brown, 1926) 37-50; idem, *The Christian View of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1937) 1-83.

⁴⁴Mullins, *Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, 10; idem, "Baptists and Creeds," in *The Axioms of Religion*, ed. Timothy and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman, 1997) 187; J. Gresham Machen, "The Creeds and Doctrinal Advance," in *God Transcendent*, 158-159, 166.

⁴⁵Henry T. Blackaby and Clyde V. King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1994) 7-8, 79.

⁴⁶Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 105, 111-112; Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, 111-144. See also Molly T. Marshall, *No Salvation Outside the Church? A Critical Inquiry* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1993) and Ralph C. Wood, "Whatever Happened to Baptist Calvinism? A Response to Molly Marshall and Clark Pinnock on the Nature of Salvation in Jesus Christ and in the World's Religions," *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994) 593-608.

⁴⁷Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," 63. Though Curtis Freeman deems the view that the founders of the SBC were Calvinistic an "etiological

myth," he does not make a significant case for a variant point of view (Freeman, "E. Y. Mullins and the Siren Songs of Modernity," 33).