



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism

Berg, J. van den

Citation

Berg, J. van den. (2018, November 8). *Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/66795>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/66795>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/66795> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Berg, J. van den

Title: Thomas Morgan (1671/2-1743): from presbyterian preacher to Christian deist : A contribution to the study of English deism

Issue Date: 2018-11-08

Chapter Five: Morgan's answers to his critics

*

§1: Reactions against five opponents

*

Morgan reacted very quickly to the first attacks on his *Moral philosopher*. Already in July 1737, he published anonymously a pamphlet of forty pages entitled *A defence of the moral philosopher; against a pamphlet, intituled, "The immorality of the moral philosopher"*, which was directed against Hallett. This work contained a much more harsh critique of the Old Testament than the first part of *The moral philosopher*. This was even observed abroad: the great book might have been entitled 'the philosopher in a good humor', the little one 'the philosopher in a bad temper'.¹

The two works by Leland and Chapman did nothing to abate Morgan's energy. On the contrary, they led him to produce a second volume of *The moral philosopher*. It is amazing to see how fast he worked in those days. In a few months time he wrote an answer. In March 1739, *The moral philosopher, being a farther vindication of moral truth and reason* appeared in London, again under the pseudonym Philalethes. The preface was dated February 10th 1739.²

This second volume no longer uses the form of a dialogue. In fact, it is not a continuation of Volume one, but a refutation of the work of these two critics of the first volume. In Morgan's view, Chapman writes with 'much more candour and caution' than Leland, whom he sometimes calls Sophronius.³ Besides the nascent historical critical observations⁴, new points in comparison with the first volume are not mentioned, but the tone has become sharper and the criticism of the Old Testament is more detailed.

In August 1740, the third volume of *The moral philosopher, superstition and tyranny inconsistent with theocracy* appeared in London, again under the pseudonym Philalethes. Again, the speed with which Morgan wrote an answer in just a few months is amazing.⁵ This volume was directed against the second volume of Leland's *Divine authority*, as well as against Lowman's *Dissertation on the civil government of the Hebrews*. The book has the same tenor as Volume two and repeats it in many respects. Many observations from Volume three have already been mentioned before. At the end of Volume three, Morgan ironically thanks Moses Lowman 'that he has done me the honour to take a particular notice of me, as the author of the *moral philosopher* ... he has attack'd me very warmly'.⁶ He realized only too well that negative comments in books and pamphlets about his *Moral philosopher* were the best propaganda for his book. Morgan was a man with a flair for publicity.

¹ *Bibliothèque Britannique*, 10/1 (1737) 14: 'Le gros livre pourroit être titulé: le philosophe en belle humeur, & la brochure, le philosophe en colère'.

² It has a preface of thirty pages and an introduction of ten pages. The main body consists of two parts. The first part of 263 pages, divided in ten sections, is against Leland, *The divine authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*. The second part with 80 pages paginated separately is directed against Chapman, *Eusebius*.

³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, xxvi; Volume 2, second part, 11.

⁴ See below § 7; Gerdmar, *Roots*, 32 note 12, misses this historical point, when he concentrates on the first volume alone.

⁵ It has a preface of ten pages and a main body of 357 pages, consisting of a large introduction and six chapters, and an index of ten pages.

⁶ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 325, 340.

In 1741, he published under his own name a pamphlet of seventy pages entitled *A vindication of the moral philosopher; against the false accusations, assaults, and personal abuses, of Samuel Chandler*. It is dated May 25th 1741, and is directed against Samuel Chandler.⁷ In it, Morgan refers to false charges which Chandler charged him with in a public place and company. They had also exchanged letters on this subject, letters which ‘are still at my bookseller’s shop, Mr. Cox’s, under the Royal Exchange, where many gentlemen have seen them’. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these letters is unknown. In this work, Morgan acknowledges that his opinions have changed in the course of time. ‘After twenty-five years farther examination and study, I have effectually confuted my former self’. An honest observation about the modifications in his opinions during all those years.⁸

*

§2: Warburton

*

Morgan’s last publication appeared in February 1742 anonymously: *A brief examination of the Rev. Mr Warburton’s Divine legation of Moses ... by a society of gentlemen*, dated September 18th 1741.⁹ He again chose anonymity, probably because his opponent William Warburton was already at that time living in higher circles, being chaplain to the Prince of Wales. Only once in the book does Morgan refer to his alter ego, *The moral philosopher*.¹⁰ The aim of the book was to settle the essential difference and distinction between the true universal religion of God and nature, founded in eternal, immutable reason and the moral fitness of things, and the sacerdotal superstition or false religion.¹¹ The book is full of the same kinds of attacks on the Old Testament that were found in the volumes of *The moral philosopher*. But the tone is even more furious: ‘We the Deists and Free-thinkers of *Great-Britain* ... can see nothing in the *Hebrew* story ... that discovers any extraordinary or supernatural conduct of Providence, under that Dispensation, more than any other’.¹² It is fair to say that Morgan became more and more embittered in his old age. Warburton never reacted to the *Brief examination*, but his biographer supposes that he could not have failed to have been moved by it.¹³ Morgan’s last published work, the *Brief examination*, contains the only place where he himself admits ironically to being part of the group of ‘the deists and freethinkers of *Great-Britain*’, in a bitterly fulminating style.

*

§3: The criterion of religion: Reason and common sense

*

The Jews – ‘that dark dispensation’ – never believed anything but miracles. Therefore, in the preface to volume two, Morgan gives a clear definition of religion: ‘Religion is a clear,

⁷ Hudson, *Enlightenment*, 175 note 60, erroneously observes the *Vindication* as an answer to Samuel Squire.

⁸ Th. Morgan, *A vindication of the moral philosopher*, London, 1741, 3, 12.

⁹ It has a preface of 84 pages and a main body of 175 pages; see for the context of this publication Chapter 4 § 4.

¹⁰ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination* 159.

¹¹ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, iii.

¹² (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 1, 9-10.

¹³ J.S. Watson, *The life of William Warburton, d.d.*, London, 1863, 218; see van den Berg, ‘Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton’.

rational, intelligible thing, most adequate to the natural capacity, reason, and understanding of man ... in short, religion is reason and common sense'. Reason and common sense are characteristic for the religious views of Morgan. He nicely remarks that as the Christian religion is the best in the world, the Christian superstition is the worst. Here again appear often, as in the first volume, the moral truth, reason and fitness of things.¹⁴ We already observed above the development of Morgan's view in the direction of reason above Scripture.¹⁵ Now in this volume he can state: 'Reason itself is a natural revelation from God'.¹⁶ This is a typical Lockean phrase, which once again is proof of Morgan's esteem for Locke.¹⁷

*

§4: Criticism on miracles and revelation

*

In comparison with Volume 1, it may be said that Morgan criticizes the miracles of Moses more vehemently. Natural causes are the best explanation. About the passage of Israel through the sea he comments:

They were conducted only by night, or in a thick dark fog, with only the confused light of fire and smook, which kept them always in a cloud. Under such circumstances, so ignorant and stupid a people, and so infinitely fond of prodigies and special favours, might be easily persuaded, that the dry ground which they marched over, was the bottom of the sea, which God had cleared of all the water, rocks, and quick-sands, to make way for them.¹⁸

He repeats in Volume 3 his criticism on miracles with nearly the same phrase which he uses in Volume 2: 'It is highly improbable, and not to be admitted, that God should work miracles, or interpose by an immediate, divine power, out of the way of natural agency'.¹⁹ He returns in Volume 3 to the same type of criticism about the miracles, which we already found in the first volume. The Hebrew historians ascribe the most common and natural events to supernatural causes. All the stories are subject the same limitation: the Hebrew author never regards the literal truth, he relates nothing but miracles.²⁰ Their vision of God and religion is outdated. They generally ascribe things to God, in a sense very different from what we should do now. The text of the Bible is not infallible. The great difference between Leland and Morgan is, as he declares himself, that he cannot believe the infallibility of the Hebrew historians.²¹ A phrase which comes back at the end in the second part against Chapman: 'I do not believe in

¹⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, ix, xxiii-xxiv, 10, 17.

¹⁵ In Chapter 2 § 11.

¹⁶ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 26.

¹⁷ A.C. Fraser, ed., *John Locke, An essay concerning human understanding*, Volume 2, Toronto, 1959, book 4, chapter 19, paragraph 4, 431: 'reason is natural revelation'.

¹⁸ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 66.

¹⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 169; see Volume 2, 32.

²⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 41, 60.

²¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 114, 166.

the infallibility of the biblical historians'.²² These observations return in Volume 3. Morgan starts this volume with the observation that revelation is not infallible. The Hebrew historians were never under the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost. He charges Chandler with maintaining the fundamentally false principle, that the Hebrew history derives from positive divine authority and immediate inspiration, and that those historians were working all along under the unerring guidance and infallible direction of the Holy Ghost.²³

*

§5: Moral criticism on the Old Testament

*

Morgan has a more negative view of the Biblical patriarchs. These patriarchs looked after their own interests. Moses and Aaron never received a commission and authority from God, as they pretended they had. They had the ambition of forming a kingdom of their own. The two brothers Moses and Aaron were mere worldly politicians, who looked after their own tribe and family. It was more politics than religion. This might be right in human policy, but not in religion.

He refers many times to the Mosaic era, now criticizing almost everything. There were many things under the Mosaic economy which would not be right now, and which could not have been right at any time. Moses was at best an astute politician. In short, the law of Moses was merely temporal or political. At the end of the introduction to Volume 3, Morgan gives a nice example of his vision about the details of Mosaic law. With respect to the law of jealousy in Numbers 5, he observes that 'the Christian woman may thank God, that this revelation has been repeal'd by another revelation'.

Along with this we find a typical moral sneer, which Morgan gives in his commentary upon the alleged father of Samuel. He

might be nearer ally'd to the high priesthood than this writer imagines. The historian let us know, that Samuel's mother could never had a child by her husband . . . , till she went up and made the case known, . . . to the priests, . . . We are also assured that Eli's sons lay with the women who came up . . . to the sanctuary.²⁴

Morgan has many negative things to say about the Biblical figure of David. He calls King David the most artful dissembler that ever lived, and a divine hypocrite.²⁵ In this respect, Morgan is sharper and more cynical than Pierre Bayle in his article about King David in his famous *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. To give an example of Bayle's criticism:

The deep respect that we have for this great king and prophet should not prevent us from condemning the flaws that are to be found in his life. Otherwise we should give cause to secular people to reproach us by saying that for an action to be just, it is enough for it to be performed by people whom we venerate. Nothing could be more damaging for

²² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 64.

²³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, iv; Morgan, *A vindication*, 16.

²⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 69, 110, 115, 118, 307-8.

²⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 177, 179: 'his deep and most detestable hypocrisy' with respect to the fate of the messenger of the death of king Saul in 2 Samuel 1; cf already Volume 1, 323.

Christian morals than that.²⁶

Bayle asks many questions about the conduct of David, but he does not use the words that Morgan utters about David. Morgan quoted Bayle only three times, but not in relation to King David.²⁷ He also has a very low opinion of the prophets of Israel. They were disturbers of their country, rebelling against their kings and spiritual politicians. These moral comments on the stories of the Old Testament shows his aversion of the Jewish traditions in full scale.

*

§6: Christianity

*

Returning to his conclusions, Morgan finally states: ‘My Christianity is the eternal, immutable religion of God and nature’. At last he advises Leland to distinguish well between Judaism and Christianity.²⁸ In the second part against Chapman he states that Jesus Christ was not the Jewish prophetic Messiah. The miracles of Jesus were not wrought with any such design to prove himself to be the Jewish Messiah. For that matter Morgan wrote that no Jew can rationally and consistently embrace Christianity upon the basis of Moses and the prophets. On the contrary, St. Paul was the best and only expositor and interpreter of Jesus Christ.²⁹ About the New Testament he repeats his position from Volume 1 of *The moral philosopher*: Peter and Paul preached two different gospels. Again, he underlines the opposition of the Judaizing party of Peter and John against St. Paul. ‘Christianity ... at first was but a new scheme of Judaism; but after its establishment ..., it degenerated into a grosser and more enormous state of idolatry’.³⁰

*

§7: A pioneer of the historical-critical method

*

The only, rather new element in Volume 2 of Morgan’s work are his critical observations about the origin of the Biblical books. Morgan appears, as we already saw in Chapter 3, also as a pioneer of the historical-critical method. Many assumptions have been made about the origins of the historical-critical study of the Bible. The most common names in this respect are Richard Simon and Benedict Spinoza, Johann Salomo Semler, and Ferdinand Christian Baur.³¹ But there is also an English line, along persons like Thomas Hobbes about the Pentateuch, Anthony Collins about Daniel, and our friend Thomas Morgan. Morgan was familiar with the work of Hobbes and of Collins.

Morgan knows of the critical observations about the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but only a small part of it. ‘It does not appear that Moses writ

²⁶ S.L. Jenkinson, ed., *Bayle, political writings*, (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), Cambridge, 2000, 42.

²⁷ *The moral philosopher*, 2, 214; (A Society of Gentlemen), *A brief examination*, 37-8.

²⁸ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 220, 273.

²⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, second part, 33, 15, 37, 45.

³⁰ (A society of gentlemen), *A brief examination*, xlv, xxix.

³¹ Kl. Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der historisch-kritischen Theologie*, (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus 10/23), Munich, 1966, 7.

any thing himself but the original book of the law, which was to be kept in the ark'.³² It is clear that although he does not quote him here, Morgan follows the line of the text in Chapter 33 of *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes: 'though Moses did not compile those books entirely, ... he wrote ... the volume of the law, ... which Moses commanded the priests and the Levites to lay in the side of the arke'.³³ But in contrast to Hobbes, Morgan gives a very harsh moral critique of Moses. Moses is responsible for falsehood and imposture, unnatural cruelty and violence, murder, blood and rape.³⁴ In this context, he refers to the commandment to exterminate the Canaanites. The conquest of Canaan was the most bloody, cruel, and outrageous act that had ever been known, and beyond all example till modern times. In this context, he calls the Israelites holy butchers. But not only Moses, also his successors laid hold of the sword. 'This godly method of propagating religion by force of arms, and establishing faith by fire and sword, was the plan of Moses, and pursued by David'.

For Morgan, it is more probable that Samuel played a greater role in the concept of writing the history of Israel. He thinks it is likely that Samuel wrote the whole history of that nation down to his own time. Many parts of the Pentateuch were 'never collected and digested as we have it now, till Samuel's time'. But Samuel was not a holy man. He plotted against and contrived the ruin of Saul and his family.³⁵ The idea of Samuel's authorship of part of the Pentateuch reappeared a century later in the work of the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso.³⁶ Colenso has been called the predestined champion of reform in the study of the Old Testament in England.³⁷ Still in the twentieth century the idea found a defender: 'The Pentateuch, or Torah, was composed, or rather compiled, at the time of Samuel and under his direction'.³⁸ This defender appears to be an outsider of the traditional postexilic date of the Pentateuch by modern Old Testament research.

Many critical insights were proposed by Morgan about the origins of the Biblical books. Some Biblical books were written long after the facts they describe. So 'the two books of Chronicles, and the books of Daniel and Esther were evidently wrote long after the captivity'.³⁹ This we already find in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Chapter 33.⁴⁰ About the Psalms he states that the Book of Psalms is plainly a collection of poems and songs, composed by several hands at great distances of time.

The same happened with the Books of the Prophets. They 'have been revised and altered by after-editors, who took the liberty to add and supply what they thought fit'. He knows of the

³² *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 69.

³³ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by C.B. Macpherson, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1985, 418.

³⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 73; see for the view of the deists about Moses Gawlick, 'Zwischen Religionsphilosophie und Religionskritik', about Morgan especially 243-46.

³⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 291, 70, 77, 69, 176.

³⁶ J.W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and the book of Joshua critically examined*, Volume 2, London, 1863, 223-9: 'Was Samuel the Elohist writer of the Pentateuch?'; see on Colenso J.A. Draper, ed., *The eye of the storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the crisis of biblical interpretation*, London, 2003.

³⁷ T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament criticism*, London, 1893, 196.

³⁸ E. Robertson, *The Old Testament problem: a re-investigation*, Manchester, 1950, 59.

³⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 193, 68.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 419-21.

beginning discussions about the exilic parts of Isaiah. The theory of the post-exilic Isaiah: ‘There are several passages and whole chapters in Isaiah that must have been writ after the Babylonish captivity, as relating to the state and circumstances of the people at that time’.⁴¹ A view, which as a harbinger of the theory of the Deutero-Isaiah wins weight especially in Germany in the end of the eighteenth century. So the Professor of Oriental Languages in Jena, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, wrote in 1783 that he, when reading the second part of Isaiah, did not see a pre-exilic date for these oracles.⁴² But I did not find any quotation of Morgan’s work by Eichhorn in this respect. Morgan produces the same criticism about Daniel. Some of the stories of Daniel are perfectly romantic and contrary to all true history. About the composition of the book of Daniel he states that our present book of Daniel contains historical memoirs and remains of several different persons living at very distant times.⁴³

In Volume 3 Morgan continues with his critical observations about the Biblical books. He observes once again that it cannot be proved, or be made to appear, that Moses ever wrote the historical parts of the Pentateuch. As an example, he interprets the text of Genesis 15, verse 16 (‘the Amorites ... were not then in the land, when this promise was made to Abraham’) as a forgery, or interpolation from later ages. About the Book of Judges, he writes that it has perplexed and confounded all chronology. He finds so many inconsistencies that he finally utters ‘It would require a book ... to consider all the gross and palpable errors and inconsistencies of these antient Hebrew historians, especially in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel’.⁴⁴

He makes an interesting observation about Biblical history, which has to be ‘read critically, and interpreted by the same rules of natural and rational probability and credibility as we read all other history’.⁴⁵ There should be no difference between the study of Biblical and Non-Biblical texts. So the ‘critica sacra’ gives place to the ‘critica profana’, such as later stated by Semler.⁴⁶ This will be repeated by British scholars a century later including Benjamin Jowett, the Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford, who exclaimed: ‘Interpret the Scripture like any other book’.⁴⁷ For this reason, the interpretation of the Bible by the same rules as all other history, Morgan has been named a more original thinker than Tindal, and one possessed of considerably more historical sense.⁴⁸

With respect to the books of the New Testament, he denies the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that ‘it is plain to me, that it is not written in that apostle’s style

⁴¹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 68, 163.

⁴² ‘ie öfter ich die Orakel vom 40sten bis 52sten Kapitel Jesaias lese, desto weniger will es mir einleuchten, dass sie vor dem babylonischen Exil abgefasst seyn sollen’, quoted by E. Sehmsdorf, *Die Prophetenauslegung bei J.G. Eichhorn*, Göttingen, 1971, 53.

⁴³ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 217.

⁴⁴ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 226, 234-6, 248-9.

⁴⁵ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 140.

⁴⁶ H.J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 2nd edition, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969, 93: ‘die “Critica sacra” musste der “Critica profana” das Feld räumen’; 107-8.

⁴⁷ B. Jowett, ‘On the interpretation of Scripture’, in: Fr. Temple and others, *Essays and reviews*, 7th edition, London, 1861, 330-433 (377).

⁴⁸ Harrison, ‘*Religion*’, 168; Gerdmar, *Roots*, 29, and 35, has no eye for Morgan’s historical reflection.

and language'.⁴⁹ But that is since the discussions in the old church about the authorship of the epistle nothing new.

His observation that natural and revealed religion are essentially and subjectively the very same, and that the only difference lies in the different ways or methods of teaching, conveying, and receiving the same truths, is interesting too. It recalls his observation at the end of *A defence of the moral philosopher* of 1737: 'The religion of nature itself may be lost, and restored again by revelation'.⁵⁰

*

§8: A forerunner of the Protestant Tübingen School of Theology

*

With all the phrases about the differences between Peter and Paul in mind, we can now understand why Morgan has been called a forerunner of the Protestant Tübingen School of Theology. He has been described as one of those 'forgotten labourers in the vineyard of the *Tübingen* theology', and is called a forerunner of the theory of Ferdinand Christian Baur, the father of the Tübingen critical school, about the two parties in the early church, the Petrine (judaizing) and Pauline (universalizing) tendencies and their effect on the development of the New Testament.⁵¹ This refers to the publication of Baur's '*Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche*', in which Baur first enunciated his famous thesis of a conflict between Petrine and Pauline parties in the primitive Church.⁵² His basic point is that 'primitive Christianity developed through internal oppositions'. People have sought a Hegelian influence in the theory, but Baur's article was published well before he first read Hegel.⁵³ Probably Baur found the idea already with the theologian Johann Salomo Semler, who has been called a predecessor of the Tübingen School. It has been maintained that Semler indeed already in 1750 defended a view that the early church contained a Pauline and a Petrine party.⁵⁴ In any case, Semler wrote in 1775 clearly about the two parties in the fourth part of the *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*.⁵⁵ We have proof that Semler knew the

⁴⁹ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 2, 100.

⁵⁰ *The moral philosopher*, Volume 3, 148; (Morgan), *A defence*, 39.

⁵¹ Patrick, 'Two English forerunners', 564; O. Pfleiderer, *Lectures on the influence of the apostle Paul on the development of Christianity*, (Hibbert Lectures for 1885), London, 1885, 284-5; Jackson-McCabe, ' "Jewish Christianity" and "Christian Deism" in Thomas Morgan's *The Moral Philosopher*', 107.

⁵² Published in 1831 in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*.

⁵³ P.C. Hodgson, *The formation of historical theology. A study of Ferdinand Christian Baur*, New York, 1966, 212, 22.

⁵⁴ W. Geiger, *Spekulation und Kritik, die Geschichtstheologie Ferdinand Christian Baur's*, (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus, 10/28), Munich, 1964, 92: '*Die Unterscheidung eines judaistischen und eines paulinischen Christentums hat er wahrscheinlich bei Semler kennen gelernt*'; P. Gastrow, *Joh. Salomo Semler in seiner Bedeutung für die Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Streites mit G.E. Lessing*, Giessen, 1905, 83; Robertson, *A history of freethought*, Volume 2, 922.

⁵⁵ J.S. Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*, Volume 4, Halle, 1775, preface b 8 recto/verso: '*Es ist aus den ältesten uns noch übrigen Schriften erweislich, dass es lange Zeit eine Partey von Christen gegeben, die zu der Dioces von Palästina gehört, folglich Schriften dieser Apostel, welche unter die Beschneidung eigentlich ihre Dienste verwendeten, angenommen haben; und an diese Christen die zu Jacobi, Petri, Dioces gehörten, hat Paulus seinen Briefe nicht gerichtet; sie hat also auch sie nicht unter ihren*

work of Thomas Morgan via his teacher in Halle, Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten.⁵⁶ It might be possible that Semler picked up the idea of the two parties from *The moral philosopher*. This picture of the development of Christianity undoubtedly goes back to Semler and, behind Semler, to Thomas Morgan.⁵⁷ But we also have to make a reservation. The difference between Morgan and Baur, lies clearly in the fact that, according to Baur after the antithesis between Jewish and Pauline tendencies there follows a synthesis in primitive Christianity.⁵⁸ A synthesis which Morgan denies and which in his view has been only a step towards a deformation of Christianity.

*

§9: Summary

*

Morgan responded intensively to those critics whose rebuttals were published during his lifetime. It is amazing to see the speed with which he answered voluminous combatants, such as Leland, Chapman and Lowman, but also minor polemicists such as Hallett and Chandler. In those responses Morgan does not alter principally the starting points of *The moral philosopher*, but the tone in general becomes sharper. He repeats his criticism of miracles, his negation of inspiration and infallibility of the Biblical historians, his moral criticism of various Biblical figures and his criticism of the Jewish people. In short, he continues the line of thinking of the first volume. A new point in Volumes 2 and 3 is the increasing historical criticism of the Biblical books as documents. We saw in Volumes 2 and 3 of *The moral philosopher* some specimens of Morgan's Biblical criticism about the Pentateuch, the Prophet Isaiah and post-exilic books in general. Moses wrote only a small part of the Pentateuch, various chapters of Isaiah are post-exilic, many Biblical books were written much later than indicated by themselves. Many Biblical books were also revised by later editors. Therewith, Morgan stands in a tradition which started in England with Thomas Hobbes. Just like Semler, Morgan is called a forerunner of the critical Tübingen School of Ferdinand Christian Baur, but his view on the subsequent development of Christianity was different. The premise about the differences between the Pauline and Petrine church is the same, but the result differs. For Morgan, there was no synthesis between those two, but only a Christianity malformed by Jewish elements.

*

Lehrschriften gehabt. Dagegen hat die Partey Christen, welche zu Pauli Dioces gehörten, auch gar wohl gewusst, dass Jacobus, Petrus, Judas, an sie keine Briefe geschickt hatten; sie haben folglich diese Schriften auch nicht unter ihren Gemeinden aufweisen und einführen können. Beide Parteien sind Christen, und haben sich von die Juden abgesondert; aber die Denkungsart der palästinensischer Judenchristen ist noch niedriger, und an mancherley locale Ideen und geringe Bilder gewöhnet, als dass andere Christen, welche nicht unter diesen Einwonern leben, eben diese Lehrart für sich, und zu ihrem nächsten Vorteil annemen konnten. Die Abgeneigtheit der Anhänger Petri von den Schülern Pauli ist aus den ältesten Ueberbleibseln einer Geschichte unleugbar'.

⁵⁶ J.S. Semler, ed., *Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten's Geschichte der Religionspartheyen*, reprint of the Halle 1766 edition, Hildesheim, 1966, 76, 96, 100, 146-8, 950; see also D. Lincicum, 'F.C. Baur's place in the study of Jewish Christianity', in: F. Stanley Jones, ed., *The rediscovery of Jewish Christianity*, (Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Studies 5), Atlanta, 2012, 137-166 (144).

⁵⁷ J.C. O'Neill, *The Bible's authority: a portrait gallery of thinkers from Lessing to Bultmann*, Edinburgh, 1991, 120-1.

⁵⁸ Hodgson, *The formation*, 207-12.