J. Gresham Machen and the Culture of Classical Studies

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Abstract: This article deals with one of the most noted evangelical scholars of the first half of the twentieth century, J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937). His classical background helped Machen maintain a healthy balance between scholarship and fundamentalism.

Most of J. Gresham Machen's career was spent as a professional scholar of the New Testament. Yet, this essay will explore Machen's ties to classical studies: a discipline that he was trained in and influenced by. His relationships with other classicists will be examined as well as his reputation amongst several of America's leading classicists. Machen's classicist orientation will be established, and this will lead to a greater understanding of not only his life, but also of his scholarship and thought. An analysis of Machen's connections to classical studies sheds important light on his biblical scholarship, defense of the Bible, and disagreements with modernist scholars.

I. Classicism in the Late 19th Century

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the study of classical literature and languages—Greek and Latin—shaped American education. Indeed, Americans were deeply fascinated with, and interested in, the study of Ancient Greece and Rome. After Christianity,

classical studies were "the central intellectual project' of America prior to the late nineteenth century.[1]

Knowledge of Greek was a standard requirement for college entrance, and classical literature was taught to help structure "ethical, political, oratorical, artistic, and educational ideals, sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly."[2] In the late nineteenth century, the field of classical studies started to split into two separate directions. One direction was that of specialized "scientific" scholarship. The other direction was that of cultivated generalism. To combat this problem, many classicists attempted to embrace both approaches to scholarship; historian Caroline Winterer has labeled this model of learning as "cultivated erudition."[3] This way of doing scholarly work sought to navigate between the excesses of gereralism and the problems associated with hyper specialization. Cultivated erudition was instrumental in the development of early graduate programs in the United States, yet by 1910 this model of advanced study was considered unsustainable in American graduate programs.

Controversies and disputes arose in higher education as to the place of classical studies in the modern universities. Increasingly classical scholarship became less influential. No longer

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[1] Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 1. See also, Richard Bummere, *The American Colonial mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Meyer Reinhold, *Classical Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984); Stephen L. Dyson, *Ancient Marbles to American Shores: Classical Archaeology in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

[2] Ibid., 1.

[3] Ibid., 156.

would classical studies play such a prominent role in American collegiate education. The classical tradition shaped many gentlemen, ministers, statesman, and scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but by the early twentieth century the discipline was considered to be not only too elite but also contradictory to the utilitarian educational ideals of the modern university. It was in this educational and cultural milieu that Machen began his studies. The classical studies tradition was mediated to Machen in his home through his parents and though their friend Basil L. Gildersleeve—a classicist who is perhaps most associated with "cultivated erudition."

II. Machen's Early Exposure to Classicism

J. Gresham Machen grew up in a home where the study of classics and the classical languages were taken seriously. Machen's father, Arthur, was a lawyer but according to Machen he had an excellent knowledge of Greek and Latin and several other languages.[4] Arthur Machen's hobby was to collect first-rate editions of fifteenth century Greek and Latin classics for his sizable personal library. Machen was exposed to classical learning in both his home and in his primary and secondary schools. Yet, it was one of his family's friends—Basil L. Gildersleeve—who exposed Machen most thoroughly to the field of classical studies.[5] Gildersleeve was close to Machen's parents; they were fellow members at the Franklin Street Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. According to Ned Stonehouse, the Machen family remained

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[4] Machen, "Christianity in Conflict" (1932), D.G. Hart ed., *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (Philipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2004), 548

[5] Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 50.

"intimate" friends with Gildersleeve for well over forty years.[6] Gildersleeve wrote a brief mention of Minnie Machen's book *The Bible in Robert Browning's Poetry* (1903) for the *American Journal of Philology*. In addition, Minnie would often write to her son to provide updates on Gildersleeve.

When Arthur Machen died on December 19, 1915, Gildersleeve wrote a note to Minnie. Gildersleeve wrote, "My grief at the death of Mr. Machen is deeper than some of his intimates might suppose. . . [H]e was one of the few that understood my line of work for my work was his pastime and his smile was that of one who shared a weakness for nowadays a love of the ancient classics is a weakness."[7] Growing up, Machen knew Gildersleeve as a friend of the family but he soon discovered more about the man in the Hopkins classroom.

III. Machen and Basil L. Gildersleeve

Understanding Gildersleeve's thought and career helps when trying to grasp how Machen was influenced by this eminent classicist. In 1853 Gildersleeve received a Ph.D. in classical philology from the University of Göttingen in Germany. He was part of a new wave of German trained American philologists who brought German methods of critical scholarship back to the United States. He served as a private tutor in classical languages until 1856, when he was then appointed as a professor of Greek at the University of Virginia.[8]

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[6] Ibid., 50.

[7] Gildersleeve quoted by Stonehouse, 237-238.

[8] Ward Briggs, "Basil Gildersleeve," *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23-24; *Dictionary of Nation Biography* 6 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 280

Gildersleeve eventually contributed enormously to the study of classics by founding the *American Journal of Philology* in 1880 and serving as its editor for the next forty years.[9] He also contributed by teaching classics at the University of Virginia (1856-1876) and at the Johns Hopkins University (1876-1915). During his long career he wrote numerous scholarly books and belonged to various academic societies. He was a founding member of the American Philological Association (serving as president twice), the American Institute of Archaelogy, the American School for Classical Studies in Athens, and the American school in Rome, which became the American Academy at Rome.[10] He was the second classicist elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge universities in 1905. Machen's association with such an esteemed scholar gave him an opportunity that few others could claim, and it greatly enhanced his education. When Gildersleeve returned to the United States in the 1850s he greatly admired and promoted German methods of research. Yet as time progressed, Gildersleeve came to be deeply disturbed by the German emphasis on arid specialization. In 1898, late in Gildersleeve's career, Machen entered Johns Hopkins. Machen claimed to have become quite impressed with the university's intellectual atmosphere. In 1932, he wrote that as an undergraduate "he could appreciate to some extent the stimulus" of the university.[11] Nonetheless, Machen noted that he came to appreciate Hopkins even more when he started his work as a graduate student in Gildersleeve's Greek seminar. Even though Machen studied under Gildersleeve in his undergraduate years, it was the graduate seminar that Machen loved. He wrote,

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[9] *Dictionary of National Biography* 6, 281.

[10] Ibid., 281.

[11] Machen, "Christianity in Conflict," 550

> I shall never forget the hours that I spend with the little company of students that gathered around the table in his semina[r] room. There were no undergraduates in that company and no candidates for the master of arts degree. They were all men who intended to make the teaching of language their life work and who had altogether transcended the schoolboy or undergraduate point of view. Never was there an environment where earnest study had in more honor than in that group of students of Latin and Greek under Gildersleeve and C.W.E. Miller and Kirby Smith. In such a company Gildersleeve would let himself go. With a magisterial disregard of anything like system, he started with Greek syntax and then allowed his thought to range over the literature of the world.[12]

Machen was clearly impressed with the high level of scholarship and teaching that took place in Gildersleeve's seminar. The younger scholar was captivated by Gildersleeve's rapid-fire classical allusions, knowledge of world literature, and his precisionist philology.[13] In Gildersleeve's classroom the translation and interpretation of original texts was the foundation for the teaching of the classics.

After he finished his undergraduate degree and one year of graduate study at Hopkins, Machen's contact with Gildersleeve continued. In 1904, after two years at Princeton Seminary, Machen decided that he wanted to spend the summer studying German in Germany. Before going to Europe, Machen contacted Gildersleeve, and the elder scholar provided Machen with a

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[12] Ibid., 551-552

[13] D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 15.

letter of reference addressed to Gildersleeve's German friends and colleagues that explained Machen's excellent scholarly abilities. Gildersleeve wrote that Machen "was a young man of high character and unusual mental endowment, who distinguished himself greatly in his college course and has done good university work at the Johns Hopkins."[14] In another letter, Gildersleeve identified all the German classical scholars with whom he had some association, and who might be helpful contacts during Machen's trip to Germany. He especially recommended that Machen go to Berlin to study with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Mollendorff—one of the greatest of all German classical scholars. Gildersleeve told Machen to go "hear and see that genius Von Wilamowitz with whom I had some correspondence."[15] The friendship between the two continued.

Machen exchanged correspondence with Gildersleeve several times in 1909. In one letter Gildersleeve wrote, "You may always count on my special interest in all the words and works of one of the most sympathetic students I have ever had in my classroom."[16] In 1923, Machen sent a letter to Gildersleeve in which he thanked him for his contribution to his life's work. On October 23rd, 1923, several months before his death Gildersleeve responded,

> Dear Machen:
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> Those who have been with me longest are not always those who have understood me best. An old teacher often recalls the words of the Master to

[14] Basil L. Gildersleeve to J. Gresham Machen, letter, May 30, 1904, Westminster Seminary Archives.

[15] Basil L. Gildersleeve to J. Gresham Machen, letter, May 30, 1904.

[16] Basil L. Gildersleeve to J. Gresham Machen, letter, Oct. 9, 1909.

> Philip. You I have counted among my most congenial hearers. With best thanks for your kind words.
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> Yours Faithfully,
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> B.L.G.[17]

It is amazing that, after teaching classics for over sixty years, Gildersleeve would consider Machen one of his closest students. This is an important fact to recognize when trying to understand just how influential on Machen's though Gildersleeve was.

IV. Machen's Contact with Paul Shorey, James Loeb, and Ernest G. Sihler

Machen spent the summer of 1903 studying classics with one of Gildersleeve's colleagues Paul Shorey (1857-1934) at the University of Chicago. Shorey—who held a Ph.D. from Munich—had an international reputation as a prolific classicist and a conservative controversialist in the press. Shorey held Gildersleeve in the highest regard and claimed that Gildersleeve was "the ideal type of cultured and scholarly American."[18] The friendship that existed between Shorey and Gildersleeve is probably the reason why Machen went to study with Shorey. In a letter to his parents, Machen wrote that

> Shorey seems to deserve the high estimate put upon him by Dr. Gildersleeve. Certainly, as a teacher, at any rate, he is inspiring, since his sympathetic knowledge of literature keeps pace with his philological learning. Of course, he is

[17] Gildersleeve, quoted by Stonehouse, 51.

[18] Shorey quoted in Ward W. Briggs, "Basil L Gildersleeve," 107.

> no Gildersleeve, but in one respect—that of method in teaching—he may even be held to surpass him.[19]

Shorey became a leading critic of German scholarship and of the encroachment of scientism and utilitarianism in education and in society.[20] Shorey and Gildersleeve's influence appears to have let to Machen's classicist orientation, to his cautious approach to German scholarship, and to his view that German ideas were a threat to American society and the Christian faith. The German ideas that most alarmed Machen were progressive German theology and German biblical criticism. This is not to say that Machen did not deeply admire and respect German culture and German scholarship. Machen wrote,

> I have never been able to give myself the comfort which some devout believers seem to derive from a contemptuous attitude toward the men on the other side of the great debate; I have never been able to dismiss the "higher critics" *en masse* with a few words of summary condemnation.[21]

Nonetheless, Machen did believe that the higher critics—especially those in Germany—were responsible for what he called the "mighty attack upon the truth of our religion."[22] Machen

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[19] J. Gresham Machen quoted by Ned B. Stonehouse, 78-79.

[20] Winterer, 180-181

[21] Machen, "Christianity and Conflict," 557.

[22] Ibid., 557.

believed that, in order to combat the higher critics, orthodox Christians need to go "[m]uch deeper" in their scholarly defense of the faith.[23]

Machen's classicist orientation and views on the weakening of the classics in American education and society can be clearly discerned in a letter he wrote to the famous classicist James Loeb. On May 8, 1923, Machen wrote a letter to Loeb, who endowed the celebrated Loeb Classical Library, a series of texts and translations of virtually all classical literature. Machen described Loeb's library as a "great enterprise" and noted that he had "hardly gone anywhere' without one of the little pocket volumes.[24] Machen discussed how eagerly he awaited each volume and how the library opened up the "classics" like no other educational institution had ever done. But then Machen expressed his belief that the library itself would bring about intellectual and spiritual renewal. Machen wrote to Loeb,

> We are living in a materialistic age when the spiritual heritage of the race seems almost in danger of being forgotten. But in such an age, just because the classics are neglected they are all the more needed. And then you are laboring for the future; you are preparing, though this library, for the revival of true learning which sooner or later will surely come.[25]

Machen's praise about the Loeb Classical library reveals much about how important Machen thought the study of the classics were to society, education, and spiritual life. Machen received a gracious response from Loeb thanking him for his positive comments about his work.

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[23] Machen, "Christianity and Conflict," 557.

[24] J. Gresham Machen to James Loeb, letter, May 8, 1923, Westminster Seminary Archives.

[25] J. Gresham Machen to James Loeb, letter, May 8, 1923.

While we get a glimpse of Machen's thought in his letter to Loeb, there were relationships with other classicists which were much more developed.

From 1925 to 1930, Machen repeatedly responded to correspondence initiated by Ernest G. Sihler (1853-1942), longtime professor of Latin Language and Literature at New York University. Sihler first contacted Machen in 1925 concerning the views of New Testament scholar Samuel Angus, who taught at the Presbyterian Theological Hall in Sydney, Australia. Sihler was very interested in Angus's theological views and biblical scholarship, and in 1925 was preparing a book review of Angus's book *The Mystery Religions and Christianity* (1925).

Machen and Sihler held several things in common. Like Machen, Sihler also studied under Gildersleeve and in 1878 became the first person to earn a Ph.D. degree in Greek from John Hopkins. The two shared similar views about the Bible and theology, too. Both Machen and Sihler believed that Angus's scholarship was marred by what they considered to be its modernist orientation. Sihler labeled Angus an "odd fellow" and claimed that his theological perspective tried too hard to be "ultra modern and up to date."[26] According to Sihler, Angus's work represented a departure from historic Christian orthodoxy; Sihler claimed that is was "Deism in a new mask."[27]

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[26] Ernest G. Sihler to J. Gresham Machen, letter, August 22, 1925.

[27] Ernest G. Sihler to J. Gresham Machen, letter, August 22, 1925, Westminster Seminary Archives.

In the 1930s, Angus's progressive views on the Bible and theology created a furor in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the controversy was national news in Australia.[28] In written correspondence Machen told Sihler,

> He [Angus] impressed me, by what I have read of him, as a man who has little or no understanding of Christianity as a religion of redemption; I am interested in what he says about the environment of Christianity, but very little impressed with what he says about Christianity itself.[29]

Sihler was troubled by Angus' work too, and like Machen, he also seemed to be distraught with the entire school of liberal biblical scholarship. Sihler claimed that there was an "ocean of subjectivism and twist in almost all the articles I read."[30] For this reason Sihler sought Machen's help in evaluating different authors and books.

In several letters that Sihler wrote to Machen he promoted his book *Testimonium Animae or Greek and Roman Before Jesus Christ* (1908). Sihler's book dealt with religion and worship in the Roman and Greek societies prior to the time of Christ. Machen told Sihler on several occasions that the book was "notable" and that he held it in very high regard. Sihler's book was written from an aggressively conservative Christian perspective.

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[28] See Susan Emilsen, *A Whiff of Heresy: Samuel Angus and the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales* (Kensington, NSW, Australia: New South Wales University Press, 1991)

[29] J. Gresham Machen to Ernest G. Sihler, letter, August 19, 1925, Westminster Seminary Archives.

[30] Ernest G. Sihler to J. Gresham Machen, letter, August 22, 1925.

In his autobiography *Maumee to Thames and Tiber: The Life Story of An American Classical Scholar* (1930), Sihler gives some interesting hints about Gildersleeve's Christian faith. Sihler quotes several essays by Gildersleeve. In one essay concerning Julian, Gildersleeve wrote,

> Opposition to Christianity as such, no matter in what form, has its source deep in the human heart; and the deeper the heart, the more earnest the nature, the farther down we must sink the shaft of our investigation. Julian was a thorough Greek in his pride; and the doctrine of the cross could never have been other than foolishness to him.[31]

In another instance Sihler notes that Gildersleeve responded to a "neo-Pagan" poet—Swinburne—by confessing his "own Christian belief with fearless candor." Gildersleeve argued, "for there are times when a spotless religion and a full revelation are scouted and set aside, when men leave the bread of angels for the husks that swine do eat."[32] Sihler and Machen both appear to have admired Gildersleeve's Christian convictions. In a summary of one of Machen's letters to Gildersleeve Ned Stonehouse noted that Machen praised Gildersleeve for being a "true 'Grecian' without being a pagan."[33]

Machen affirmed Sihler too; he wrote, that "greatly do I rejoice in the astonishingly rich and varied service that you have rendered not only to the cause of classical scholarship, but to a

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[31] Basil L. Gildersleeve quoted in Ernest G. Sihler, *From Maumee to Thames and Tiber: The Life Story of An American Classical Scholar* (New York: New York University Press, 1930), 244.

[32] Gildersleeve quoted by Sihler in *From Maumee to Thames and Tiber*, 105.

[33] Machen's comments in the letter are summarized by Stonehouse, 52.

cause which is higher still."[34] Machen also wrote, "I am greatly encouraged by the fact that you share with me certain great convictions, and that you have devoted the resources of your learning to the defense of certain aspects of them."[35] These three classicists had a genuine faith connection, and overall Machen had a positive attitude towards Sihler's work on the history of classical antiquity.

V. Edward Capps, Machen's Greek Grammar, and John Adams Scott

Another distinguished classicist who had a favorable regard for Machen was Edward Capps (1866-1950), longtime professor of classics at Princeton University. Capps studied at Illinois College and received a Ph.D. in classics from Yale in 1891.[36] He then taught at the University of Chicago, where he was a colleague of Paul Shorey. In 1907, he became a professor at Princeton University, where he taught until his retirement in 1936. Capps had a brilliant career: he served on the advisory board of the Loeb Classical Library, was president of the American Philological Association (1914) and became the first president of the American Association of University Professors. In 1923, Capps nominated Machen to become a member of the American Philological Association and provided Machen with help in the production of

[34] J. Gresham Machen to Ernest G. Sihler, letter, October 2, 1928.

[35] J. Gresham Machen to Ernest G. Sihler, letter, October 2, 1928.

[36] William M. Calder III, "Edward Capps," *American National Biography* vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 365-366.

Machen's well-known *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (1923).[37] In the preface to this book, Machen wrote that Capps had been helpful to him. Machen wrote,

> The author is deeply grateful to Professor Edward Capps, Ph.D., LL.D., of Princeton University, who in the most gracious possible way, has examined the proof of the book throughout, and (of course without becoming at all responsible for any faults or errors) has rendered invaluable assistance at many points.[38]

Machen's work became the standard grammar in the field of New Testament Koine Greek. Daniel Penick, longtime professor of Greek at the University of Texas, praised Machen's work for the reader of *The Classical Journal*; saying that it was a "splendid success" and noted that Machen's grammar "may be the best" way of learning Koine Greek under the present educational circumstances.[39] Classicist Carrol N. Brown of the City College of New York wrote Machen to offer some suggestions for the grammar, but told him that he was "greatly impressed" with the grammar's "practicalness and accuracy."[40]

The majority of Machen's scholarly reviews were published in the *Princeton Theological Review* from 1907 to 1929. But when Machen left Princeton in 1929, the *Princeton Theological Review* ceased publication. After his departure Machen reviewed one book for a classics journal,

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[37] Machen's *New Testament Greek For Beginners* (1923) has gone through fifty re-printings and in 1999 was made into a 2nd edition.

[38] J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1923), x.

[39] Daniel A. Penick, "Review of *New Testament Greek for Beginners*" *The Classical Journal*, vol. 20 no., October 1924, 60-61.

[40] Carrol N. Brown to J. Gresham Machen, letter, February 22, 1924, Westminster Seminary Archives.

the *American Journal of Philology*, but never published in the more modernist oriented *Journal of Biblical Literature*. This is a small sign of Machen's classicist orientation.

In 1915, Machen was installed as an assistant professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary. His installation address titled "History and Faith" was sent out by Princeton Seminary to its alumni and others. In Rome, classicist Jesse Benedict Carter (1872-1917), Director of the American Academy of Rome, accidently opened a copy of the address that was intended for someone else whose forwarding address was unknown. Carter wrote Machen to say that he received so much pleasure from reading the essay that he was "selfishly unwilling to return your article to you on general principles."[41] He added,

> I have seldom read anything which has pleased me more, and when I noticed the footnote that you are to be professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis I was more pleased still, for that is the sort of spirit in which it seems to me New Testament literature should be treated.[42]

While one should regard this type of praise as somewhat rhetorical, it does show that Carter agrees with Machen's view of the New Testament. But Carter was not alone.

Perhaps the classicist who most exemplified first-rate classical scholarship combined with conservative Presbyterian views on scripture was John Adams Scott (1867-1947). Scott studied at Northwestern University and then received his doctorate in classics from John Hopkins, where he studied under Basil Gildersleeve.[43] Scott taught classics at Northwestern

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[41] Carter quoted by Stonehouse, 211.

[42] Ibid., 211.

[43] E. Christian Kopff, "John Adams Scott," *American National Biography* vol. 19 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 498-499.

from 1897 to 1938 and served as president of the American Philological Association from 1918-1919. He wrote numerous articles and several books, his most notable being *The Unity of Homer* (1921).

According to historian Caroline Winterer, Paul Shorey and Scott "vociferously opposed Germanic scholarship, which they associated with cultural narrowness and excessively specialized scholarship."[44] Scott was a critic of German scholarship and particularly German classicists like Friederich August Wolf (1759-1824), who initiated the argument that Homer was the product of multiple authors. Homericist Samuel Bassett believed that Scott's arguments wore down the German critics like "General Pershing." In 1965, Harvard's Sterling Dow wrote that Scott's *The Unity of Homer* "did more than any other book to defeat, though it do not annihilate, those who believed the epics were a patchwork of different poems."[45] Classical scholar E. Christian Kopff has noted that "Scott's attack on the German analysis of Homer was intimately linked with his repudiation of German higher criticism of the Bible."[46] Scott was a Presbyterian who believed in the "inerrancy" of the Bible and published several books of lectures that defended traditional Protestant Christianity.[47]

Scott has acquired an important reputation in the history of American classical scholarship: he was a major classicist who sought to defend the Bible from German critics in print. Like Machen, he studied under Gildersleeve. Even though Machen more forcefully

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[44] Winterer, 180-181.

[45] Quoted by Kopff, 498.

[46] Kopff, 498.

[47] Scott's works *Socrates and Christ* (1928) and *Luke, Greek Physician and Historian* (1930) were reprinted with two other essays in *We Would Know Jesus* (1936).

responded to the arguments of German biblical scholars than Scott did, it is indeed notable that Scott at least tried.

In 1927, Machen wrote a short article title "The Minister and His Greek Testament," which appeared in the periodical *The Presbyterian*. In this essay, Machen writes that disinterest in the study of Greek is connected to a lack of interest in the New Testament itself. Machen wrote, "The modern minister objects to his Greek New Testament or is indifferent to it, first, because he is becoming less interested in his Greek, and second because he is becoming less interested in his New Testament."[48] Machen did not confine his comments only to the clergy. Machen though that there were problems with seminary language instruction, but he also believed that this decline was connected to the decline in language study in America's colleges and universities:

> In many colleges, the study of Greek is almost abandoned; there is little wonder, therefore, that the graduates are not being prepared to use their Greek Testament. Plato and Homer are being neglected as much as Paul.[49]

In Machen's view, the decline in Greek language instruction was directly leading to spiritual decline across America.

The classicists with whom Machen associated were some of America's best. Yet, they were also classicists who were committed to a traditional approach to the classics. These

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[48] J. Gresham Machen, "The Minister and his Greek New Testament" (1927), D.G. Hart ed. *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 2004), 210.

[49] Ibid., 210.

classicists emphasized textual analysis and were primarily concerned with authorship, date of the text, manuscript versions, and the original meaning of the ancient text. Machen was arguably conservative Protestantism's most talented New Testament scholar in the first half of the twentieth century. Historian Mark Noll has written that when Machen died on January 1, 1937, "an era was over."[50] His death dealt a serious blow to conservative Protestant biblical scholarship.

VI. The Influence of Classical Scholarship on Machen's Thought

How could a scholar like Machen simultaneously be devoted to modern research *and* the conservative Christian fundamentalist movement of the 1920s and 1930s? Machen's thought and career has puzzled many historians. George Marsden has argued that Machen's fundamentalism was the result of his adherence to the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense.[51] Bradley Longfield has attributed Machen's fundamentalism to his adoption of the old Princeton theology and his Southern heritage.[52] In Terry Chrisope's intellectual biography of Machen and

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[50] Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 61.

[51] George Marsden, "J. Gresham Machen, History, and Truth," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 42 (1979), 157-75.

[52] Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 28-53.

his New Testament work, he devoted one page to Machen's relationship to Gildersleeve.[53] In a similar manner, D.G. Hart's biography of Machen devotes only two pages to Machen's training under Gildersleeve.[54] Hart did note, however, that "Machen's later concern for precise doctrinal expression and fidelity to the original meaning of scripture during the religious controversies of the 1920s can be traced in part to his studies with Gildersleeve."[55] Despite its importance in Machen's intellectual development, no one has offered a detailed historical account of the influence that Machen's classical studies background and orientation had upon his scholarly methods, ways of thinking, and subsequent conservatism.

There are three discernable areas of Machen's career and thought in which Gildersleeve, Paul Shorey, and other classicists influenced Machen. The first area in which Machen's classical training and orientation can be observed is in Machen's views on education and on the teaching of classical languages in primary and secondary schools and in higher education. Gildersleeve and Shorey were leading advocates for classical education in America, and Machen would emulate their efforts and ideas in his life and thought. The second area is that of scholarly methodology. Machen's approach to the New Testament mirrored the approach that conservative classicists took towards classical literature and history. These scholars put a heavy emphasis on textual analysis and grammar and were in many ways resistant to methods informed by the social sciences. The third area of influence is that of academic conservatism. Gildersleeve served as a stellar example of cultural and educational traditionalism for Machen.

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[53] Terry Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism* 1880-195 (Ross-Shire, U.K.: Mentor, 2000).

[54] Hart, 15-16.

[55] Ibid., 16.

VII. Education and Classics in the Progressive Era

Basil Gildersleeve was a longtime advocate of classical studies. In 1911, he complained to one associate that he had been arguing for the importance of classical scholarship since the mid-1850s. Gildersleeve wrote, "But if there is any subject that has been discussed to death, and that I have helped to discuss to death since 1854, it is the place of classics in American education."[56] As an ally to Gildersleeve, Paul Shorey fought for classical studies, too, and he defended the discipline from its critics in works such as *The Assault on Humanism* (1917).[57] Shorey railed against "modernists" and claimed that "the writings of the modernists plainly manifest an unreasoning and violent antipathy, not merely to the study of Latin, but to the Classics and all that the classics represent."[58] Throughout his books Shorey argued vociferously against the new modern educational system and its proponents. Standardization and utilitarianism became contributors to the decline of classical studies in American education.

The attitudes and attention that Gildersleeve and Shorey gave to the problems of classical studies in the modern schools, colleges, and universities are reflected in Machen's career and thought. Machen was active in combating what he thought were problems in modern education as well. Machen was a strong supporter of classical studies in America's schools and institutions of higher learning. To be sure, in 1926 Machen testified before the United States Congress against the creation of a federal Department of Education. He believed the consolidated power

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[56] Basil L. Gildersleeve to Robert Underwood Johnson, letter, Ward W. Briggs Jr. ed., *The Letters of Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 299-300.

[57] Paul Shorey, *The Assault on Humanism* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Company, 1917)

[58] Shorey, 72.

would allow federal authorities to have too much power to enact harmful reforms. These reforms he believed would undermine the classical curriculum. Another area that was especially important to him was the strength of private and Christian schools. He argued,

> A public school system, in itself, is indeed of enormous benefit to the race. But it is of benefit only if it is kept healthy at every moment by the absolutely free possibility of the competition of private schools. A public school system, if it means the providing of free education for those who desire it, is a noteworthy and beneficent achievement of modern times; but when once it becomes monopolistic it is the most perfect instrument of tyranny which has yet been devised.[59]

The utilitarian bent of modern education was a major concern for Machen. In his introduction to *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) Machen criticized the state of Nebraska for passing a 1919 law that forbid the study of any language other than English until a student could pass an exam in the eighth grade. Machen wrote, "In other words, no foreign language, apparently not even Latin or Greek, is to be studied until the child is too old to learn it well."[60]

Machen was also alarmed with a 1922 Oregon law that required all children to attend a public school. Such actions in Machen's mind were a direct attack on people's liberty to be educated in a school of their choice. The United States Supreme Court struck down both the Nebraska and Oregon laws shortly after they were enacted. Nevertheless, the situation was deeply troubling to Machen who connected the decline in classical studies to what he regarded as

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[59] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 13-14.

[60] Ibid., 12.

the spiritual decline in American life. Machen also believed there was a crisis in the fine arts. Machen argued,

> Despite the mighty revolution which has been produced in the external conditions of life, no great poet is now living to celebrate the change. . .Gone, too, are the great painters and the great musicians and the great sculptors. The art that still subsists is largely imitative, and where it is not imitative is usually bizarre.[61]

Machen held that utilitarian and science-oriented education was hurting the spiritual and artistic aspirations of humanity.

The decline of classical studies and the retreat of some evangelical Protestants from the universities into their own subculture were two important events in the history of American education and religion.[62] Studying Machen's career and thought helps one to understand how these two developments are related. By analyzing Machen, we can see how classical studies influenced Machen and how his ideas partly shaped the subsequent evangelical movement. Even though American evangelicalism has been somewhat anti-classicist, it cannot be denied that the movement via Machen has been influenced by classical studies. Also, Machen's classical studies training had a major impact on how he approached the study of the ancient world.

VIII. Traditional Classical Scholarship and the Study of the Ancient World

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[61] Ibid., 10.

[62] On classical studies see Winterer's *The Culture of Classicism* and on the retreat of Orthodox Protestants from American universities see Marsden's *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries classical scholarship became bifurcated between specialization and generalism. Gildersleeve thought both approaches were important. At the turn of the century there occurred another change in the field of classical scholarship: the influence of the social sciences upon classical scholarship.[63] In 1912, Cambridge University classicist Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1925) published her legendary work—*Themis*—on the social origins of ancient Greek religion.[64] In this and in other new studies, the influence of the social sciences can be seen in the study of classical texts, thought, and religion. Informed by sociology, social anthropology, and process philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), this new brand of classical scholarship held that religion was "social rather

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[63] See Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England 1830-1960* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Francis West, *Gilbert Murray: A Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984); Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1991); Christopher Stray ed. *Gilbert Murray Reassessed: Hellenism, Theatre, and International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Gal Gerson "Liberals and the Carnivalesque: Gilbert Murray and Francis Cornford on Ritual" *History of European Ideas* 24 (1998): 331-54; S.C. Humphreys, "The Work of Louis Gernet" *History and Theory* 10 (1971) 172-96.

[64] Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912). On Harrison's life and career see Sandra J. Peacock, *Jane Ellen Harrison: The Mask and the Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Mary Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Annabel Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Carol Burnside, "Jane Ellen Harrison's Contribution of the Study of Religion," *Religion* 24 (1994) 1:67-72; K.J. Phillips, "Jane Harrison and Modernism", *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 17 no. 4 (Spring 1991), 465-476.

than individual; it is emotional rather than intellectual; it is dynamic rather that static."[65] Religion was viewed by this group of scholars as a social construct. When this approach was applied to Christianity, a new and controversial understanding of Christianity's origins emerged. The idea that Christianity was just a product of its social environment was non-sensical to Machen who believed that Christianity was based on the life of Jesus Christ. Machen argued,

> Radical thinkers are drawing the conclusion. Christianity, they say, was not founded upon Jesus of Nazareth. It arose in some other way. It was syncretistic religion; Jesus was the name of a heathen god. Or it was a social movement that arose in Rome about the middle half of the first century.[66]

The evolutionary approach of the social scientific study of the ancient world conflicted with the approach of traditional classicists who held that ancient texts contained "timeless truths about the human condition which stood as binding upon the present."[67] Traditionally minded or conservative biblical scholars approached ancient texts in a manner similar to traditional classicists. Traditional classicists did not necessarily hold to New Testament supernaturalism, but because of their attention to a text's original meaning and their belief in the static nature of ideas, they were more willing to "regard Christianity as a fixed body of beliefs established by Christ and the apostles."[68] This more traditional approach can be seen in the works of classical

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[65] Ralph Hermon Tukey, "Review of Studies in Greek Religion," *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. 18 no. 2 (April, 1914), 296-299.

[66] J. Gresham Machen, "History and Faith," *Princeton Theological Review,* vol. 13 no. 3 (1915), 348.

[67] Hart, 20.

[68] Ibid., 20.

scholars like Paul Shorey, the Harvard classicist Clifford Herschel Moore (1866-1931), the Cambridge classicist R.D. Hicks (1850-1929), the NYU classicist Ernest G. Sihler (1853-1942), and others.[69]

To be sure, these classicists had a distinctly different approach to ancient texts than did classicists influenced by the social sciences. The devotion that traditionally minded classicists gave to the intellectual aspects of classical literature and history influenced Machen. Machen expressed his concern with historicist classicists and biblical scholars. In 1921 Machen wrote,

> The philosophy of the Hellenistic age was either openly skeptical or materialistic, as in the case, for example with Epicureanism, or at any rate it abandoned the great theoretical questions and busied itself chiefly with practical affairs. Epicureans and Stoics and Cynics were all interested chiefly, not in ontology or epistemology, but in ethics. At this point the first century was like the twentieth. The distrust of theory, the depreciation of theology, the exclusive interest in social and practical questions—these tendencies appear now as they appeared in the Hellenistic age. And now as well as then they are the marks of intellectual decadence.[70]

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[69] For more on this traditional approach to classical studies see Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903); Clifford Herschel Moore, *The Religious Thought of the Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916); and R.D. Hicks, *Stoic and the Epicurean* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

[70] J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 225.

Machen clashed with New testament scholars who stressed the importance of sociology in New Testament research. These scholars de-emphasized the intellectual history of the Bible in favor of the Bible's social history. What mattered to these new progressive biblical scholars were not the ideas, theology, or historical truthfulness of biblical events, but rather the historical and social setting.

These sociologically oriented scholars held that the Apostle Paul taught certain doctrines but that the early Christians appropriated Paul's instruction "from their own religious, cultural, and socioeconomic perspectives."[71] Christianity was a faith that attracted people from different social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Some historicist scholars rejected Christianity outright. Other historicists reasoned that because the New Testament developed in particular social circumstances, Christianity always had to be adapted to its cultural setting.[72] The search for the cultural and social origins of the Bible then allowed these scholars to dismiss the supernaturalism of the Bible by reference to the pre-modern/pre-scientific societies in which they emerged.[73]

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[71] Hart, 56.

[72] See William R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[73] See Shirley Jackson Case, *The Evolution of Early Christianity: A Genetic Study of First-Century Christianity in Relation to Its Religious Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1914); *The Social Origins of Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1923); *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933); *The Origins of Christian Supernaturalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946). On Case's career and thought see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research* vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 317-323; William J. Hynes, *Shirley Jackson Case and the Chicago School: The Socio-Historical Method* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1980); C.C. McCowan "Shirley Jackson Case's Contribution to the Theory of

Biblical scholars who adopted this sociological approach held that the supernatural events of the Bible were the result of ancient minds that were unfamiliar with the laws of nature. One leader of this school of thought was Shirley Jackson Case (1872-1947), who served for many years as a professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago. Case addressed the issue in this way: "The ancients knew no other way to validate religion. . .Failing to understand in any normal way the operation of nature's forces, one could only comprehend them in terms of otherworldly power impinging from without upon the conditions of daily life."[74] According to Case, "Christian supernaturalism arose to serve a functional need in the course of the new religion's expansion within its particular environment and in relation to characteristic modes of thinking prevalent in that day."[75] There would indeed be a response to the new social scientific study of antiquity and the Bible. Paul Shorey combated historicist scholars in his book *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (1903) by arguing that Plato's thought remained fixed. He disagreed vociferously with scholars who tried to create new revelations from Plato's thought every decade. In the same way Machen's *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1921) and his *Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930) were written to counter the arguments of historicist biblical scholars.

Sociohistorical Interpretation, " *Journal of Religion* 29 (1949), 15-29; Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, & Modernity 1900-1950* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003); Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century 1900-1950* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); On the problem of supernaturalism in American thought see Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, 2 ed. (New York: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1951) [first edition 1943].

[74] Case, 220-221.

[75] Ibid., 234.

One area in which conservative New Testament scholars and traditional classicists thought appears to be very similar is the primacy they gave to the ancient text itself and to a non-developmental view of the text. Those who maintained traditional approaches to ancient texts both paid close attention to the original meaning of the text. Yet scholars who adopted a more sociologically informed perspective moved away from the text and became more focused on the surrounding social, religious, and intellectual context. By disregarding any claims that the text might have, these scholars developed a way of understanding the ideas and thoughts of the ancient world by arguing that they were simply historically conditioned.

The historicist outlook that relied on a sociological interpretation had a specific philosophical viewpoint of its own. Historicists believed that all we can know is forged in a particular historical setting, that ideas can be explained by reference to their historical context, and that these ideas develop by functional laws of social development.[76] This viewpoint is particularly opposed to the possibility of permanent truth or universally normative values.[77] For traditionally minded classicists and biblical scholars, these new ways of approaching the past posed a serious challenge. The similarities between classicists who argued for Plato's or Homer's unity and biblical scholars who defended the historical trustworthiness of biblical events reveal a somewhat unknown connection. Machen's classicist orientation caused him to

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[76] Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 16. For more on the historicist viewpoint, see Michael Stanford, *A Companion to the Study of History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Franklin L. Baumer, *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1977); Glen Scorgie, *A Call for Continuity: The Theological Contribution of James Orr* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988).

[77] Chrisope, 26.

focus more on the theological and intellectual aspects of the text when many in New Testament studies were giving great weight to the social dimensions of Christian origins. Historicist scholars claimed that Paul's faith could be explained by reference to the surrounding social—Jewish and Hellenistic—context in which he lived. Machen disagreed with this approach and his arguments reveal the importance he gave to ideas and theology. Machen wrote,

> Religion in Paul does not exist apart from theology, and theology does not exist apart from religion. Christianity, according to Paul, is both a life and a doctrine—but logically the doctrine comes first. The life is the expression of the doctrine and not vice versa. Theology, as it appears in Paul, is not a product of Christian experience, but a setting forth of those facts by which Christian experience has been produced. If then, the theology of Paul was derived from extra-Christian sources, his religion must be abandoned also. The whole of Paulinism is based upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.[78]

Neither Machen's nor Shorey's arguments won over the majority of scholars in their respective disciplines, yet their work offered an alternative that was informed by the latest philological, historical, and archaeological research but yet had a non-historicist methodology. E. Christian Kopf has observed that although the "idea of Plato's gradual evolution remains the dominant one in Platonic studies, Shorey's case. . .has always won a minority assent, including that of such important scholars as Hans von Arnim and Werner Jaeger."[79] The fixed meaning perspective on

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[78] Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New Yok: Macmillan, 1991), 168-169.

[79] E. Christian Kopf, "Paul Shorey," eds. Ward Briggs Jr. and Herbert Benario, *Classical Scholarship: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

ancient texts that Shorey and other classicists held influenced Machen and other key evangelical scholars. Just as Shorey defended the fixed meaning of Plato, Machen defended the traditional understandings of Christ's virgin birth and Paul's relationship to Jesus. Shorey and Machen used modern methods of historical research, but they both appeared not to have accepted the philosophical underpinnings of a historicist approach.

It is interesting to note Werner Jaeger's (1888-1961) agreement with Shorey's approach. Jaeger, a Harvard classicist, is important to this study because of his connection to George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982). Ladd studied under Jaeger and Jaeger served as an examiner on Ladd's dissertation committee.[80] Ladd's importance to evangelical New Testament scholarship is enormous, and he has been considered one of the leading evangelical New Testament scholars of the second half of the twentieth century.[81] Ladd considered Machen the model evangelical scholar because Machen's books were the only books written by an evangelical author that his Harvard professors used. Ladd appears to have been influenced by Jaeger's traditionalist approach.[82] The connections between classicists committed to the "fixed meaning perspective" and the leading evangelical New Testament scholars are remarkable.[83]

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[80] John D'Elia, *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.

[81] For more on this see D'Elia and Noll's *Between Faith and Criticism*, 112-114, 221.

[82] D'Elia, 220.

[83] It would not be an overstatement to claim that Machen was the leading evangelical New Testament scholar of the first third of the twentieth century and that Ladd was one of, if not *the*, leading American evangelical New Testament scholar of the second half of the twentieth century. For more on this evaluation of their influence and their importance to evangelical biblical scholarship see Noll's *Between Faith and Criticism*, 54-7, 61, 112-14, 221-223.

The progressive attitude and spirit of many historicist biblical scholars aggravated Machen, Ladd, and other evangelical scholars. Machen attacked what he considered to be the progressive attitude towards the Christian faith that dismissed Christianity simply because it was an old faith. Machen wrote, "A type of religion certainly should not be commended simply because it is modern or condemned simply because it is old."[84] He knew that for many historicist scholars the truthfulness of biblical events was a non-issue. Machen believed that any defense of the truth of the Christian faith or of the Bible will seem to these "uninterested persons" like a defense for the position that the "earth is flat."[85] Ladd summed up the same point when he wrote that the historicist

> method is not at all interested in the truth of the Bible or in revelation. Hebrew religion is studied simply as one of many Near Eastern religions, and the religion of the early church is seen as a syncretistic movement which had its ultimate origin with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and which borrowed and blended important elements from the first century Jewish and Greco-Roman religions.[86]

Mostly because of their commitments to philosophical naturalism—the worldview that denies the possibility of the supernatural—many historicist scholars rejected traditional understandings of the Bible. The naturalistic viewpoint in biblical studies has its origins in the work of the German scholar F. C. Baur (1792-1860) and other biblical scholars associated with the

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[84] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 15.

[85] Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 9.

[86] George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Pub. Co., 1967), 196.

University of Tubingen in the nineteenth century.[87] These scholars believed that truly critical work had to exclude the supernatural. Machen deeply respected and admired the creativity and brilliance of "Baur" and the Tubingen scholars, and he noted, "we respect such scholars. . .whether they respect us or not." Yet Machen held they were trying to do the "impossible task of reconstructing the [New Testament world] on naturalist principals."[88]

Evangelical scholars complained that biblical scholars with a naturalistic viewpoint were biased in their *a priori* philosophical commitments. Historian Mark Noll described the situation this way:

> The conservatives saw themselves as critical scholars. They did not abandon criticism, for they, like most academics in . . .America, regarded the careful, inductive, scientific sifting of evidence as the royal road to truth. It was not criticism as such but what they perceived as prejudiced criticism. . .that they attacked.[89]

Perhaps one of the strongest influences that classical scholarship had on Machen was the concept of theological neutrality. The classical education that Machen received concentrated heavily on the detailed philological study of the classical text and was not as philosophically oriented as was

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[87] On this important issue see Horton Harris, *The Tubingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F.C. Baur* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[88] J. Gresham Machen, "The Attack on Princeton Seminary: A Plea for Fair Play," ed. D.G. Hart. *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2004), 310.

[89] Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 23.

German work. Historian Gerald Bray has noted that the German biblical scholars "were predominately philosophical in outlook."[90] Gildersleeve and Shorey's less philosophical, theologically neutral, textually and idea-oriented approach to the ancient world appears to have influenced Machen. Machen's traditionalist viewpoint and his methodology for studying the ancient world have roots in nineteenth century classical scholarship. These classicists uniquely prepared Machen for his career as a professor of New Testament. Another area in which they influenced him was in his academic conservatism.

IX. Classical Scholars, Cultural conservatism, and the Importance of the Past in the Progressive Era

Many parts of Machen's career and thought are reflected in Gildersleeve's life. Gildersleeve was a champion of modern methods of research and a respected academic. He was the first professor hired by Johns Hopkins when the German style, research-oriented university first opened its doors. He could be progressive yet conservative. He was a scholar of international fame, but he could also be provincial—he was intensely loyal to the South and its culture.[91] His Christian (Presbyterian) faith was reserved, but genuine.[92]

In many ways the world of classical scholarship prior to the 1920s mirrored the mainstream currents of American culture. Classicists and scholars in the humanities were by and

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[90] Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 571.

[91] Ward W. Briggs Jr. ed., *Soldier and Scholar: Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

[92] He was a longtime member of Baltimore's Franklin Street Presbyterian Church.

large not the cultural or religious radicals who challenged the moral and religious (largely Protestant) values of American life. Historian Laurence Veysey has written that the "humanities existed to uphold 'standards.'"[93] Classicists and other humanistic scholars were culturally conservative. To be sure, historian Bruce Kuklick notes, "The emergence of the humanities in the United States has little to do with the anti-Orthodox secular impulse associated with Renaissance humanism."[94] Classical scholars were not strongly progressive. Yet they did participate to "some extent in the pervasive onward and upward mood" that American academics had in the second half of the nineteenth century.[95] Basil Gildersleeve's convictions about the need for advanced American scholarship can be detected in a speech he gave at the College of New Jersey (Princeton) on June 20, 1877.[96] In this speech Gildersleeve discussed what he considered the appalling condition of American classical scholarship. He claimed that only a limited amount of serious American classical scholarship was being done. He observed it consisted only of "Latin Grammars and Greek Grammars, more or less adapted from the German, and editions of Virgil and of Cicero's orations, Xenopohon's Anabasis and Demosthenes' De Corona."[97] He said there was a "lack of special scientific work" and that

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[93] Laurence Veysey, "The Plural Organized Worlds of the Humanities," Alexandra Oleson and John Voss eds. *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America 1860-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 53.

[94] Bruce Kuklick, "The Emergence of the Humanities," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 89:1 Winter 1990, 203.

[95] Veysey, 52.

[96] Basil L. Gildersleeve, *An Address Delivered Before the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies of the College of New Jersey* (Princeton: Press Printing Establishment, 1878).

[97] Gildersleeve, Address, 14.

American classical scholars had a "lack of thoroughly honest attainments."[98] He argued that new modern research needed to be done, and he urged young American scholars to do it. Gildersleeve perhaps more than any other classicist pulled American classical scholarship into a new age through his labors and efforts. Progress became a key theme in American life, and the universities imbibed this attitude with only a few exceptions.[99] Some aspects of progress became a problem for Gildersleeve and Machen and their respective disciplines.

The futuristic and scientific mood and spirit of many university professors in this period led them to regard the past as archaic. Nonetheless, many leaders and advocates of classical scholarship "insisted that an acquaintance with the literary and artistic remains of the long-term past still ought to furnish the hallmark of the truly educated man or woman."[100] Gildersleeve remarked, "The Truly deplorable tendency of today is to break with the past altogether."[101] For Christians like Machen, then, this modernist attitude was problematic because as Machen wrote, "If such an attitude be justifiable, then no institution is faced by a stronger hostile presumption than the institution of the Christian religion, for no other institution has based itself more

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[98] Ibid., 15.

[99] See Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism;* Michael Dennis, *Lessons in Progress: State Universities and Progressivism in the New South 1880-1920* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); George Marsden and Bradley Longfield eds. *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); J. Leonard Bates, *The United States 1898-1928: Progressivism and a Society in Transition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976).

[100] Veysey, 52.

[101] Basil L. Gildersleeve to Robert Underwood Johnson, October 2, 1911, ed. Ward Briggs, *The Letters of Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 300.

squarely upon the authority of a by-gone age."[102] Gildersleeve's refusal to go along with the modernist attitude of his day appears to have influenced Machen.

The tensions between the past and future were acute for Christian scholars and professors of classics in the period between 1860 and 1930.[103] In 1925, Machen defended fundamentalism—or as he preferred to call it supernatural Christianity—to readers of the *New York Times* by writing that the movement did not "desire to be out of touch with our own time."[104] In the *Survey Graphic*, Machen asserted that fundamentalism was concerned about the material and social needs of the poor and claimed that the movement was not obstructing social progress. He noted, "if the intellectual defense of our faith causes us to neglect our duty to the poor, we have made ourselves guilty of a great sin."[105] Machen's conservatism parallels Gildersleeve's views.

Even though he was one of America's leading German trained scholars, Gildersleeve did not have the progressive spirit of an iconoclast. On the contrary, he did not despise or dismiss conservative ideas or theology out of hand—thoughts linked with the past. He did not

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[102] Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 4.

[103] See Kathleen Mahoney and Caroline Winterer, "The Problem of the Past in the Modern University: Catholics and Classicists, 1860-1900," *History of Education Quarterly* vol. 42 no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 517-543.

[104] J. Gresham Machen, "What Fundamentalism Stands for Now," [originally appeared in the New York Times, June 21, 1925, 9:1, col.1] ed. D.G. Hart, *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), 116.

[105] J. Gresham Machen, "Does Fundamentalism Obstruct Social Progress?", [originally published in the Survey Graphic 5 (July 1924) 391-92, 426-27], ed. D.G. Hart, *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 2004), 114.

necessarily believe the newest thinking was the best. In his introductory essay in his landmark *Pindar: The Olympian and Pythian Odes* (1885) he noted that brilliant ideas and sharp intellects can come out of the most "conservative" political, literary, and religious contests. He wrote,

> Pindar was born at Thebes, the head of Boetia-Boetia, a canton hopelessly behind the times, a slow canton, as the nimble Attics would say, a glorious climate for eels, but bad air for brains. Large historical views are not always entertained by the cleverest of minds, ancient and modern, transatlantic and cisatlantic; and the annals of politics, of literature, of thought, have shown that out of the depths of crass conservatism and proverbial sluggishness come, not by any miracle, but by the process of accumulated force some of the greatest powers, of political, literary, and especially religious life. Modern illustrations might be invidious, but modern illustrations certainly lie very near.[106]

One example from the history of the early Christian church that he used to argue his point was what he called the "despised" province of Cappodocia. He noted,

> A Cappadocian king was a butt in the time of Cicero; the Cappodocians were the laughing-stock of Greek anthology, and yet there are no prouder names in the literary history of the Church than the names of the Cappadocian fathers, Basil and the Gregories.[107]

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[106] Basil L. Gildersleeve, *Pindar: The Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885), viii.

[107] Gildersleeve, *Pindar*, viii.

Gildersleeve offered these comments as a defense of Southern culture against its critics; this gives some insight into his mindset. This provincialism or sectionalism in Gildersleeve's thought appears to have influenced Machen, who was completely willing to identify with Christian fundamentalism and its American subculture. Machen wrote, "If the disjunction is between 'Fundamentalism' and 'Modernism,' then I am willing to call myself a Fundamentalist of the most pronounced type."[108] Yet it must be noted that Machen preferred to be known as a "Calvinist." Gildersleeve and Machen were both deeply committed to modern research and educational advancement.[109] Nonetheless, they were unwilling to separate themselves from parts of American culture that were considered by many to be behind the times educationally (the South-Gildersleeve) or intellectually irresponsible (fundamentalism-Machen).

In 1924 Joseph V. Denny, the president of the AAUP and longtime dean and English professor at Ohio State University, wrote that fundamentalism "is the most sinister force that has yet attacked the freedom of teaching."[110] In Richard Hoftstadter's landmark volume *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1962), Hofstadter exempted Machen from his analysis o fundamentalism as a mass movement by noting that Machen was a "thoughtful" critic of

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[108] J. Gresham Machen quoted by Ned Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biological Memoir*, 426.

[109] On this point see Ward W. Briggs, "Basil L. Gildersleeve," *Classical Scholarship: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 93-118; Hart on Machen in *Defending the Faith*.

[110] Joseph V. Denny quoted by George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 325.

modernism.[111] Machen's twin commitments to high level academic discourse and fundamentalism made him a unique figure in the academic and religious controversies of the 1920s and 1930s. Regarding this situation George Marsden has written,

> In the context of the growing warfare against modernism, Machen also found himself with a peculiar set of allies, including Gray, Bryan, and Sunday. Thus, despite his ambition to penetrate the academic centers of the culture, he more often found himself invited to places like the Winona Bible Conference. There Machen, who was raised in a dignified tradition of Southern aristocracy, was appalled by the "rough house" element. "Practically every lecture, on whatever subject," he wrote in 1915, "was begun by the singing of some of the popular jingles, often accompanied by the blowing of enormous horns or other weird instruments of music." Nevertheless, Machen often returned to Winona. Likewise, when Billy Sunday spoke at Princeton in 1915, Machen defended him against sophisticate critics at the university.[112]

How could a scholar be devoted to both high-level academic research and fundamentalism? The evidence indicates that Machen's academic and cultural conservatism, views on education, and his approach to the ancient world have their origins in his classical studies education. The synthesis of Machen's classical education and evangelical theological convictions allowed him

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[111] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 123. Hofstadter recommends Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) to his readers.

[112] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of the Twentieth Century Evangelism 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 138.

to be cozy with popular evangelists like Billy Sunday, but also able to communicate with other scholars. Machen's classical orientation was shared by many scholars associated with orthodox biblical scholarship in the twentieth century. Moreover, this tradition continued to play a key role in the resurgence of evangelical New Testament scholarship in the 1940s and beyond. Machen's New Testament scholarship, as this essay has shown, has its origins in the field of classical studies.