

## **THE ANTI-TRINITARIAN ORIGINS OF LIBERALISM**

Answer to the Respondents, by Michael Allen Gillespie

First, many thanks to the reviewers for their thoughtful and helpful comments on my paper. As an outsider trespassing in this field I feel honored to have their counsel and guidance.

Second, an apology. Several reviewers had the impression that I was attempting to argue that Anti-Trinitarianism is the single source of liberalism and the modern notion of toleration. I did not intend to make such a claim, and obviously need to be more careful in spelling this point out. To be honest, I did not even consider the possibility of such an interpretation. I know that there are no mono-causal explanations for historical phenomena, indeed that historical causation is incredibly complicated and difficult even to approximate with any explanation. I am well aware that other forms of radical reformation thought as well as more mainstream Lutheran and Calvinist thought also had an important impact on the development of liberalism. My argument in this sense is genealogical rather than causal.

Third, the paper was actually written with a different audience in mind, as part of my continuing efforts to convince secular liberals that they are not as unreligious or irreligious as they believe. In discussing the Anti-Trinitarian origins of liberalism, I thus did not mean to deny that liberalism and tolerance have multiple other origins but simply to make apparent that secular liberalism is founded upon the notion of the sanctity of human life and the priority of the individual, both of which have a Christian origin that is contrary to the evidence of the evolutionary biology on which secular thinkers rely. By focusing on Anti-Trinitarianism, I thus hoped to show them the Christian core of their secularism.

Fourth, the paper is also part of an attempt to determine what happened to humanism during the wars of religion when it was forced to go underground as a result of the partisan conflicts. I pointed to this phenomenon in my *Theological Origins of Modernity* but didn't investigate it. I suspect that the position Erasmus tried to defend versus both Luther and more ardent Catholics ultimately played a much more important role in later (post-Reformation) thought than we generally believe. I was particularly struck by the way in which different forms of radical reformation thought carried forth the Erasmian project in Italy and Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century.

Fifth, the reviewers are certainly correct that the paper does not sufficiently spell out the impact of Socinianism on Hobbes, Locke, Newton, et al. This obviously requires a much longer argument—one that I hope to make in future work. I merely wanted to point to this connection here. Moreover, this part of the story is generally much better understood than the Italian and Eastern European one.

Finally, I again want to thank everyone for their thoughtful comments on my paper.