INTRODUCTION

BERNARD LIGHTMAN

The publication in 1874 of John William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* is widely seen as reflecting a turning point in the relationship between science and religion. Draper's book seemed to contemporaries and subsequent generations of scholars to justify the notion that conflict between science and religion was the norm throughout history. He is therefore regarded as one of the most powerful defenders of the "conflict thesis," and among the first to develop this thesis systematically. Draper, a chemist, pursued research on radiant light and heat, while also exploring the application of photography to chemistry and astronomy. But during the mid-sixties, he decided to quit science for history. His *History of the Conflict between Science and Religion* was one of the fruits of his labor as a historian. Throughout the book, Draper argued that the historical relationship was best described using terms such as "antagonistic" or "conflictual." In the preface he declared, "The antagonism we thus witness between Religion and Science is the continuation of a struggle that commenced when Christianity began to attain political power." In what followed, Draper traced the conflict all the way back to the very origins of Christianity, and then showed how it structured the relationship between "two contending powers" right up to the present, when modern

civilization had "come to the brink of a great intellectual change": science, he believed, had begun to win the war.[1] Published as part of the International Scientific Series (ISS), *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* was an international best seller. No other title in the hundred-odd-volume ISS sold as well. In the United States alone it passed through fifty printings over about fifty years. In the United Kingdom there were twenty-one editions in fifteen years, and there were numerous translations worldwide.[2]

In his *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, published in 1979, the historian James R. Moore argued that Draper's book, reinforced by Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), "captivated writers on the subject . . . for one hundred years."[3] The pervasive use of the military metaphor to describe the contending forces of religion and science reveals the influence of these two books within twentieth-century thought. Moore discusses how the military metaphor was welcomed by those on both the scientific and religious sides of the argument, including rationalists, religious historians, lay theologians, and historians of science right up to the 1970s.[4] Draper's and White's seductive military metaphor, Moore believed, had made historians prisoners of war. "One looks almost in vain for some new interpretation," Moore declared, "some better understanding, amid the tedious terminology of battles, truces, surrenders, combatants, and armaments which is supposed to describe Christian responses to Darwin."[5]

Of course, there were scholars before Moore who, like him, challenged the notion that science and religion are by their very nature opposed. Starting in his *Issues in Science and Religion* (1966), and in subsequent works such as *When Science Meets Religion* (2000), Ian Barbour, for example, argued that conflict was only one of four ways of understanding the relationship between science and religion. Independence, dialogue, and integration represented three more distinct models for conceptualizing this relationship.[6] Barbour's approach, however, was primarily theological and philosophical, not historical. Moore was one of the first historians to raise questions about the "conflict thesis." What Moore did in his *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, and what other scholars did in their contributions to the construction of a new historiographical model, was to historicize the conflict thesis. Instead of uncritically accepting it as an accurate description of what had occurred in the past, scholars began to treat the conflict thesis itself as a product of history, constructed by historical actors, and therefore requiring analysis. By asking when, how, and why the conflict thesis became established as a fact, they questioned its value as a historiographical model. As a

result historians have come up with two basic strategies for undermining the conflict thesis.

One strategy involves the examination of a major episode, or development, in the history of science and religion in order to show that the conflict thesis does not capture the historical reality. A good example of this first strategy can be found in the series of influential volumes edited and coedited by Ronald Numbers starting in 1986.[7] These edited collections contain chapters on Copernicus and Galileo, Protestant attitudes toward science, how Newtonians reconciled mechanism to Christianity, Darwin and evolution, the implications of modern physics for religion, and the Scopes trial and creationism. In each case the authors find that a nuanced, fuller analysis of these topics demonstrates that conflict was not the driving factor. In *Galileo Goes to Jail,* Numbers makes it clear that this scholarship is all about myth-busting. "The greatest myth in the history of science and religion," he asserts, "holds that they have been in a state of constant conflict."[8] The greatest myth is supported by twenty-five lesser myths, all of which are demolished by the authors. Catholicism was not uniformly hostile toward modern science; by placing the sun at the center of the universe, Copernicus promoted the Earth's status rather than demoting it; Galileo was not imprisoned and tortured for advocating Copernicanism; Newton's mechanistic cosmology did not eliminate the need for God; Darwin did not destroy natural theology; and modern science has not secularized Western culture. There is also one key episode that none of the contributors to Numbers's edited volumes attempts to deconstruct: the misreading of Draper's *History of the Conflict between Science and Religion.* Although he is usually seen as the first to present a fully developed conflict thesis, there is far more to Draper's view of the historical relationship between science and religion. Draper's real position was more complex than is usually thought, as he denied that science and religion were unavoidably at war and he looked forward to the reconciliation between them once Christians fully embraced the principles of the Protestant Reformation.[9] One of the great virtues of myth busting is that it clears the ground for new, and more nuanced, interpretive approaches.

The second strategy, less often pursued, is to incorporate the results of myth busting within an entirely new big picture for understanding the historical relationship between science and religion. The best examples of sophisticated attempts to build a big picture are those by John Brooke and Peter Harrison. Brooke's *Science and Religion*, first published in 1991, showed that it was possible to present a historical overview of the relationship between science and religion without relying on the conflict thesis.

Instead Brooke structured his account on what Numbers later dubbed the "complexity thesis."[10] For Brooke there was no single thesis—whether one of conflict or harmony or integration or separation—that explained the historical relationship over the centuries. In *The Territories of Science and Religion*, published in 2015, almost twenty-five years after Brooke's groundbreaking work, Peter Harrison has offered a more coherent narrative that resists conflict or any other simplistic thesis.[11] Harrison's big picture is grounded on the principle that science and religion, which began as interior virtues, were increasingly exteriorized after the Protestant Reformation. Only when exteriorization peaked in the nineteenth century was it possible for two bodies of knowledge to be opposed. In sum, the shared aim of both of these strategies is to reject the "conflict thesis" as simplistic while embracing the complexity embedded in Brooke's monumental *Science and Religion.*

But what exactly does Brooke, and those who have been inspired by his work, mean by complexity? Numbers, who once referred to Brooke's 1991 book as "the most important contribution to the historiography of the field since the appearance of Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* nearly a century earlier," sees Brooke as describing "a thoroughly entangled relationship."[12] Indeed Brooke insisted that there was a diversity of interaction between science and religion throughout history, including interactions of a conflictual nature. Although Brooke dismissed the conflict thesis as the basis of a sophisticated historical study of science and religion, he nevertheless acknowledged that there have been many instances of conflict in the past.[13] But he argued that historical analysis should not focus merely on instances of conflict as the by-product of the impact of science on religion. Rather Brooke urged his readers to consider how religious beliefs provided "presupposition, sanction, even motivation for science," in addition to affecting the formation of method and playing a selective role in the evaluation of rival theories.[14] No doubt Brooke's highlighting of complexity has shaped the study of the historical relationship between science and religion for more than twenty-five years.

Although the use of the "complexity thesis" has generated a rich body of scholarship, there are still some fundamental questions to be raised about it. Does Brooke's emphasis on complexity really amount to a thesis akin to the conflict or harmony theses? A number of the contributions to this volume tackle this question. In his chapter Harrison argues that Brooke has put forward a reaction to a thesis rather than a new thesis. Brooke himself, in his afterword, denies that he has put forward a thesis. To him complexity is both a historical reality as well as a critique of ahistorically simplistic

approaches to understanding the relationship between science and religion. A corrective to essentialism and the tendency to impose a priori models on the past, complexity is a heuristic principle that should guide our research so that we are sensitive to how different contexts shape past understandings of science, religion, and their dynamic interface. Brooke's complexity principle, then, is intended to encourage us to undertake rigorous empirical analysis of the past before coming to any conclusions about what theses or models, if any, might apply in a particular period.

This volume seeks to move the study of the history of modern science and religion forward by evaluating the utility of the complexity principle since it was first proposed in systematic form by John Brooke over twenty-five years ago.[15] We conduct the evaluation by raising two fundamental questions: First, if the term "complexity thesis" is actually a misnomer, then what kinds of stories can we tell about the relationship between science and religion? Are there narratives that are appropriate when the complexity principle casts doubt on all theses claiming universality? Second, have new scholarly approaches, such as recent developments in research on science and the history of publishing, the global history of science, the geographical examination of space and place, and science and media, cast doubt on the complexity principle? Or does it remain a useful heuristic principle? To answer these questions *Rethinking History, Science, and Religion* brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to explore the complexity principle from a number of different angles. The collection is organized into three sections focusing on the local and the global, the media and the public, and historiographies and theories.

In the first section on "The Local and the Global," the authors explore how an examination of the relationship between science and religion in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania point to the importance of taking into account the diversity of local contexts and religious traditions around the globe. These chapters illustrate how essential it is to go beyond the European and Christian context that is the focus of much of the previous scholarship.[16] They raise such questions as, How does a more global perspective change the story? Does it invalidate the big stories put forward by Brooke and Harrison? How do we deal with diverse stories that overlap in complicated ways?

Erika Milam demonstrates that paying closer attention to the American context in the 1970s can yield new insights into why the conflict thesis had staying power in the final decades of the twentieth century. In her chapter she analyzes the research on the social behavior of primates by the sociobiologist Irven DeVore, which by 1975 was attacked by social conser-

vatives as well as left-wing critics of biological determinism in academe. By comparing these well-known debates over evolutionary theory, we can see why evolutionists adopted scientism in response to the Right, which later shaped their responses to the second set of critics centered in the universities. As an evolutionist intimately involved in the debates over sociobiology, as well as a central figure in the formulation of the first new science curriculum that conservatives eliminated from public schools, DeVore was a key participant in both of these debates. His reaction, withdrawing from public view while embracing scientism, demonstrates how the notion of conflict between science and religion came to have such a powerful hold on both Christians and scientists.

De Asúa's case study of the trajectory of Catholicism in Argentina tests whether or not it is possible to extend the complexity principle to science and religion in South America. He argues that it is possible to discern an overall trend with respect to the interactions between science and religion. Examining the history of Argentina from the middle of the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, he discerns three distinct periods. During the first, the colonial period from 1750 to 1810, science in the Jesuit missions was the tool of the religious enterprise. He describes the relationships between science and religion as harmonious. The second period, which took place during the long nineteenth century, is marked by conflict. Tensions arose when evolutionary theory was used by the secularizing party of progress to illustrate the intellectual superiority of science over religion. In the third period, which began after the First World War, instances of conflict declined. The Church launched scientific projects that were part of the attempt to expand the presence of Catholicism in the 1930s and 1940s. In short, for De Asúa relations between science and religion in each of these periods could be categorized as, respectively, harmonious, conflictive, and indifferent.

In her chapter Sarah Qidwai argues that before we can assess the status of the complexity thesis any further, it is necessary to explore the historical relationship between science and religion outside Europe and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. She contends that we need a more global and comparative approach, and only then can we begin to draw some broader conclusions about historical patterns. She offers a discussion of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a nineteenth-century Indian Muslim reformer, as a step in that direction, focusing on two case studies of his views of science and its relationship to the Qur'an. The first case study explores Sayyid Ahmad's evolving views of the motion of the Earth. The second case study dissects Sayyid Ahmad's position on human evolution. Qidwai concludes by offer-

ing a new account of the depiction of Sayyid Ahmad as a materialist by the pan-Islamic preacher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. The debate between al-Afghani and Sayyid Ahmad illustrates the intricate relationship between nineteenth-century science and Islam.

John Stenhouse's chapter focuses on Christian missionaries and the sciences in a global context during the nineteenth century in order to assess the adequacy of John Brooke's complexity principle as an antidote to the alluring simplicities of the conflict and harmony metanarratives. He argues for the enduring significance of Brooke's emphasis on complexity by critically assessing the historian Ronald Numbers's important recent attempt to identify five key mid-scale processes transforming science–religion relations during the nineteenth century: naturalization, privatization, secularization, globalization, and radicalization.[17] For Numbers these are mid-scale processes as they take place over the course of a century or two. Exploring how and why missionaries spread varieties of science and medicine around the globe, he asserts that the evidence provides plenty of support for mid-scale conflict and harmony theses that are neither broad master-narratives nor highly focused local studies. According to Stenhouse, these significantly qualify at least the first four of Numbers's mid-level generalizations, not just in the wider world but also within Western scientific cultures, where those generalizations work best.

The chapters in the second section of the volume on "Media and the Public" evaluate the complexity principle in light of the recent scholarship in the history of science that draws our attention to media studies, including the history of the book, of periodicals, and of television.[18] This body of scholarship investigates how science is communicated to the public. It moves the focus away from intellectuals and toward editors, publishers, journalists, popularizers, documentary makers, the authors of textbooks, and their audiences. These chapters remind us of how little we know about the formation of public spaces for discussion about science and religion issues and about the "popular science" often to be found in these spaces, imbued at times with what Alan Gross has recently called "the scientific sublime."[19]

In my chapter on science, religion, and the periodical press, I discuss how the new English monthlies beginning in the 1860s, especially *Macmillan's Magazine*, rejected anonymity and encouraged contributors to state their own views publicly to allow for open debate and discussion on controversial topics. Whereas the old quarterlies, such as *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, and *The Westminster Review*, discouraged the development of a broader public space to discuss such topics by insisting that anonymous authors toe the party line, the new monthlies signaled

a real change. The chapter covers the role of Macmillan, the publisher, the editors, and the contributors to *Macmillan's Magazine* in the evolving public perception of the relationship between science and religion. Drawing attention to *Macmillan's Magazine* is intended to urge those who study the history of science and religion to incorporate the insights of print culture scholars into their work. In the process of extending the range of the complexity thesis since the appearance of Brooke's seminal *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*, we have focused far too much on key dramatic controversies, great thinkers, and their books, as a means of deconstructing the conflict thesis. The study of print culture has not only complicated how the definition of "book" has changed over time, it has also drawn attention to how reading publics are created through other forms of print, such as periodicals.

Sylvia Nickerson also investigates how the study of print culture provides new insights into the historical relationship between science and religion. Examining the flow of opinion between private and public spheres, this chapter reveals how the publisher John Murray brought Charles Darwin's works before the British public. Nickerson contends that publishers shaped public debate on science and religion in the nineteenth century. Along with editors and readers, publishers determined which opinions were published and which ones were rejected. As mediators of what appeared in print, Nickerson argues, publishers like John Murray are important historical figures. While collaborating in publishing matters and finding commercial success, Darwin and Murray held very different religious beliefs. The tensions between the conservative and devout Murray and the heterodox Darwin over evolution's religious implications complicated Murray's role as mediator of public opinion. Unable to publicly contradict one of his most famous authors, Murray staged repeated anonymous attacks upon Darwin in his journal the *Quarterly Review* and in his book *Scepticism in Geology* (1877). According to Nickerson, uncovering the animus behind the appearance of the harmonious collaboration between Murray and Darwin, the book history and print culture methodology support the complexity thesis, revealing no simple relationship between the scientific and religious worldviews.

Mehmet Alper Yalçinkaya continues the discussion of science, religion, and print culture, but moves the target site from mid-Victorian British publishing to Turkish media from 1950 to 1970. He points out that the situation in Muslim-dominant societies differs profoundly from the circumstances in largely Christian societies in the West. While much of the scholarly literature on complexity emerged as a response to the "conflict thesis," an influential discourse in Muslim-dominant societies is one that represents sci-

ence and Islam as in undeniable harmony. In his paper Yalcinkaya explores the cultural and political functions of this "harmony thesis" with a focus on the case of Turkey, using material from the Turkish conservative print press published during the early Cold War era. He argues that the positions taken regarding the question of Islam and science were related to struggles within the Turkish intellectual field in this period, which in turn had political implications. Representing the idea of a conflict between Islam and science as a consequence of materialist, if not communist, leanings, conservative intellectuals transformed the question into one on the qualities of the "authentic" Turkish intellectual. Texts written in this period asserted that denying the harmony between science and Islam was an indication of the alienation of some Turkish intellectuals that, if allowed to influence Turkish youth, would end in social chaos. Using this strategy of representing themselves as the "unalienated" intellectuals of the nation, conservative intellectuals attempted to challenge what they perceived as the "unfair" configuration of power within Turkish academia and the intellectual field.

Alex Hall's chapter on Jacob Bronowski's television documentary *The Ascent of Man* points to the importance of going outside print culture to enhance our understanding of public discourse about science and religion. He introduces the concept of "humanist blockbusters," big-budget documentaries that utilize a grand narrative centered on the progressive nature of scientific discovery, to show how *The Ascent of Man* was integral to the emergence of this way of speaking about science on television. This approach and narrative structure are part of a much longer tradition, the evolutionary epic, which stretches back to nineteenth-century ways of communicating evolutionary science. The chapter questions whether the adaptation of the evolutionary epic for a television audience affected popular public opinion on the relationship between science and religion. Beginning with an overview of the wide range of approaches and positions on science and religion taken across the BBC's output, he demonstrates that Brooke's complexity thesis can be usefully applied beyond the realm of print culture. However the majority of BBC shows on evolution did not discuss religion, and therefore, when thinking about the BBC's programming on evolution, a model based on the separation of science and religion may be more appropriate. Situating *The Ascent of Man* within a longer tradition of scientific humanism at the BBC, led by the biologist and science popularizer Julian Huxley, Hall makes the argument that while this approach to science documentary may treat religion as a separate other, it is still liable to alienate parts of its intended audience.

The final chapter in this section by Thomas Aechtner brings us back to

print culture, but this time to textbooks. Although the conflict thesis has been actively challenged by historians for several decades, chronicles of conflict rather than complexity persist in various academic disciplines. Such warfare legends are frequently presented to university students as the authoritative account of religion–science history. Taking into consideration twenty-first-century university-level textbooks and reference materials, this chapter explores the ways that the science–religion combat and complexity have been taken up across a variety of academic disciplines as pedagogically serviceable notions. Introductory materials from the fields of astronomy, biology, cultural studies, international relations, journalism, philosophy, and physics, as well as psychology, are surveyed and compared with what has been previously identified in social science textbooks. The results prove to be multifaceted, as many introductory publications are found to contain discredited conflict narrative anecdotes, while others exhibit complexity and nuanced explanations of religion–science interactions. Though misconceptions about the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution are scattered throughout many introductory works, other texts deconstruct science–religion myths and advocate for, in one form or another, some measure of complexity. What becomes apparent, then, is that while the notion of religion–science complexity is evidently pedagogically serviceable, discord narratives still persist within introductory publications ranging from the humanities to the sciences. More work is necessary to convey the importance of religion–science complexities to academics who persist in perpetuating the theme of conflict to undergraduates via textbooks.

The third and final section focuses on historiographies and theories. All of the authors of the chapters in this volume reject the conflict thesis. But if we are to repudiate conflict then should we seek a narrative to replace it? If we don't find a new narrative, then does opposition to the conflict thesis function to structure the scholarship? Does the attraction to complexity merely mask the fact that we are stuck with the conflict thesis as the principle around which we organize our work? In his *Reconstructing Nature*, coauthored with Geoffrey Cantor, Brooke declares that there are many stories to tell, and "henceforward we shall be avoiding master-narratives."[20] Ronald Numbers agrees that scholars should not retreat to "uncomplicated master-narratives." His solution is to search for mid-scale patterns or generalizations, such as naturalization, privatization, secularization, globalization, and radicalization.[21] But in his *Territories of Science and Religion*, Harrison defends the usefulness of a master-narrative—a narrative covering the period from the ancient Greeks to the present—that rises above the

mid-scale. However even Harrison would agree that his master-narrative is incomplete since it centers primarily on the Western world and gives little attention to the media and the public. Do we require a new meta-master-narrative that transcends Eurocentrism and the emphasis on intellectual elites? The chapters in this section discuss the thorny issues of narrative and scale. They provide some hints as to how we can begin to move between mid-scale, master-, and meta-master-narratives.

In his historiographical overview of the recent literature on science and religion, Ronald Numbers offers an explanation for why the conflict, or warfare, thesis remains powerful as a contemporary narrative. Although rumors of this war can be found back in the eighteenth century, the "warfare thesis" became influential only at the end of the nineteenth century. The works of Andrew Dickson White and John William Draper were particularly significant, as well as the writings of John Tyndall, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Ernst Haeckel. Although many scholars have recently pointed to how the historical record is distorted by references to "skirmishes," "battles," and "clashes" between science and religion, military metaphors remain ubiquitous. Despite being discredited by historians, the warfare thesis continues to be useful to Christian fundamentalists and New Atheists. It is an idea that refuses to die.[22] Numbers offers a discussion of why the conflict thesis remains popular in modern culture.

Ian Hesketh's chapter follows the lead of Brooke's complexity heuristic by thinking more critically about dominant conceptions of the history of science and religion, in this case by focusing on Freud's famous observation about the history of science being best understood as a series of dethronements of humanity's anthropocentrism. The first blow, according to Freud, occurred when Copernicus proved that the Earth was not the physical center of the universe. The second took place when Darwin questioned human superiority by arguing for our humble animal origins in the evolutionary process. The third blow was delivered by Freud himself. Psychoanalysis demonstrated that humans were not masters in their own house, as their true selves, embedded in the unconscious, were hidden from view. Freud's idea of the three blows to the human ego became an important trope in subsequent work on the history of science and religion. What this chapter shows is that Freud was not the first to point out that the history of science, focused around the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions, was really a history of successive blows to the human ego. Indeed, figures as diverse as the German physiologist Emil du Bois-Reymond and the biologist Ernst Haeckel to popularizers of science such as Grant Allen and John Fiske sought to deduce a grand meaning from the history of science by linking devel-

opments of astronomy with those of evolutionary biology. By uncovering this prehistory to Freud's observation, Hesketh makes it clear that these figures interpreted the connection between cosmology and evolution quite differently. More often than not they used the evidence derived from this connection to re-center rather than decenter humanity, thereby utilizing a historical understanding of science for their own very different purposes.

Diarmid Finnegan's analysis of scale, territory, and complexity draws on the work of historical geography to understand the diverse narratives about science and religion. How, he asks, might taking geography seriously shape the ways in which relations between science and religion are characterized or analyzed? This chapter addresses this question by arguing that the geography of science and religion matters in ways that cannot be reduced to the merely metaphorical, crudely material, or purely contextual. This argument is developed through an exploration of the categories of scale and territory and with reference to well-known episodes in the history of science and religion. For Finnegan the historical geography of science and religion provides much more than simply contextualist or localist studies. Considerations of scale allow us to understand how "context" may be constructed in historical studies. Spatial categories—the local, the national, the global, and so on—are conceptualized and used depending on how we treat the issue of scale.

Peter Harrison insists in his chapter that the motif of conflict has dominated both past and recent historiography of the science-and-religion field despite the attempt by historians to emphasize complexity. At one level, he declares, it has provided the basic plot for a problematic master-narrative about the history of science and religion. More recently it has determined the agenda of historian "myth-busters," whose efforts have been directed at showing the falsity of the conflict myth by establishing the "complex" nature of science–religion relations. In short, according to Harrison, the field has thus been dominated by a codependent relationship between conflict and complexity. His chapter explores possible future trajectories for the history of science and religion. It offers an account of the relationship between the conflict narrative and more general theories of Western secularization, suggesting that recent treatments of secularization are directly relevant to an understanding of both the deficiencies of the conflict story and its remarkable persistence. Harrison suggests that one way to deal with the historical complexities of science–religion relations is to interpret them through a rigorous theory of modernization or secularization. He believes that metanarratives can be good for the field and that they offer a way to move beyond mere complexity.

In an afterword, John Brooke responds to the discussions on science, religion, and complexity throughout the entire collection. He briefly reflects on the contribution each chapter has made to an appraisal of the "complexity thesis," but does so with reservations about the use of this designation, despite having been honored with its instigation. As a *thesis*, he asserts, it is easily trivialized, since it is almost a truism that historical realities are complex, predictably so—both philosophically and politically—when scientific and religious interests are involved. However as a *critique* of simplistic metanarratives, whether of essential conflict, harmony, or complementarity, an appeal to complexity can be a constructive antidote to the myths and anecdotes that pervade popular understandings. Brooke suggests we refer to a complexity *principle* to underline its use as a methodological tool. "Complexity" should not be seen as a single-word substitute for others that have claimed attention, such as conflict, independence, integration, and dialogue, the four characterizations advertised by Ian Barbour for relations between science and religion. Brooke maintains that, understood as a methodological *principle*, to take complexity seriously means having to exclude reductionist references to complexity itself. An objection most commonly leveled against prescriptive appeals to complexity has been that an undue stress on context specificity can mean missing the forest for the trees, and therefore militates against the identification of larger-scale trends (such as secularization) and patterns (such as the reactionary nature of religious institutions) that properly belong to the historian's craft. Addressing this objection, Brooke draws on his own work and particularly that of Peter Harrison and Ronald Numbers.

Although this collection is directed toward reflecting on the complex relationship of science and religion throughout history, it possesses a contemporary significance. The issue with which Brooke, Numbers, Harrison, and the other scholars in this volume are engaged is not merely a subject of historical importance. In our present time we see the reemergence of nationalist politics and other simplistic, conflict-enhancing ideologies. There are echoes of the conflict thesis, for example, in the influential notion of a "clash of civilizations," proposed by the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in his analysis of a new post–Cold War world order.[23] Such ideologies offer oversimplifications of international relations, reducing them to an "us versus them" dynamic, while dismissing the many levels of nuance and complexity. The contributors to this volume are not only exploring the complexities evident in science and religion; they are also upholding an open, critical intellectual tradition that is now unpopular and even under threat in some countries.

In *Rethinking History, Science, and Religion* the contributors have attempted to take the pulse of the field. Throughout the volume contributors raise a series of questions about how we should treat the historiographical principle of complexity in light of recent developments in scholarship. Although careful probing reveals subtle disagreements about the status of mid-scale, master-, and metanarratives, the patient is in good health. Lively debate is a sign of vitality. It prevents the stagnation that occurs when we become too comfortable with a particular historiographical model. After more than twenty-five years, the complexity principle has not yet outlived its usefulness. It continues to inspire, to provoke, and to challenge historians to explore the "territories" of science and religion.