

E.B. Tylor, religion and anthropology

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Abstract. Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) is often considered the father of the discipline of anthropology. Despite such eminence, his biography has never been written and the connections between his life and his work have been largely obscured or ignored. This article presents Tylor’s main theories in the field of anthropology, especially as presented in his four published books, the most famous of which is *Primitive Culture*, and in the manuscript sources for his last, unpublished, one on ‘The natural history of religion’. One of Tylor’s major areas of interest was the use of anthropological evidence to discover how religion arose. This pre-occupation resulted in his influential account of ‘animism’. Drawing upon biographical information not known by previous scholars, Tylor’s Quaker formation, later religious scepticism and personal life are connected to his intellectual work. Assumptions such as his evolutionary view of human culture and intellectualist approach to ‘savage’ customs, his use of the comparative method, and distinctive notions of his such as ‘survivals’ are first explained, and then the discussion is taken a step further in order to demonstrate how they were deployed to influence contemporary religious beliefs and practices. Tylor argued that the discipline of anthropology was a ‘reformer’s science’. Working within the warfare model of the relationship between faith and science, I reveal the extent to which this meant for him using the tools of this new field of inquiry to bring about changes in the religious convictions of his contemporaries.

Certainly in a British context and arguably more widely, Edward Burnett Tylor is generally acknowledged to be ‘the father of anthropology’.¹ In an oft-repeated phrase, Friedrich Max Müller, professor of comparative philology at Oxford University, even referred to the new discipline as ‘Mr. Tylor’s science’.² While appreciations in Festschriften are apt to be over-generous, they also tend to be careful about claims that might slight other eminent scholars. Even though the very contributors to the volume in Tylor’s honour were distinguished figures, such as Andrew Lang, J.G. Frazer and W.H.R. Rivers, nevertheless the preface declared unequivocally that Tylor was ‘the greatest of English anthropologists’, and the first chapter gave him pride of place as ‘the founder of this science’.³ Obituaries reaffirmed these generative claims, as have scholars ever since.⁴ Tylor is also widely credited with providing the first definition of ‘culture’ in its modern, anthropological sense.⁵ He also gave the English-speaking world its first,

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1 George W. Stocking Jr, *Victorian Anthropology*, New York: The Free Press, 1987, p. 300.

2 Peter Melville Logan, *Victorian Fetishism: Intellectuals and Primitives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009, pp. 89–114.

3 [Northcote W. Thomas (ed.)], *Anthropological Essays presented to Edward Burnett Tylor in honour of his 75th birthday Oct. 2 1907*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907, pp. i, 6.

4 ‘Late Sir Edward B. Tylor’, *Wellington Weekly News*, 10 January 1917, p. 8.

5 Joan Leopold, *Culture in Comparative and Evolutionary Perspective: E.B. Tylor and the Making of ‘Primitive Culture.’*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1980, p. 67.

proper, anthropological textbook.⁶ Even more clear-cut is the unique position Tylor occupied as the first holder of a professorship in anthropology in Britain (at Oxford University). Chris Holdsworth has also observed, ‘Tylor was the only nineteenth-century anthropologist who devoted his entire time to anthropology’.⁷

Given this level of significance, it is stunning to realize that there has never been a biography. In the Festschrift chapter entitled ‘Edward Burnett Tylor’, the historian is disappointed to read, ‘It has been no part of my conception of my task to enter into the details of Mr. Tylor’s biography’.⁸ This pattern of commenting on the work rather than on the life has been followed ever since.⁹ In contrast to many Victorians of his eminence, he was not the subject of a ‘life and letters’ volume: one suspects this was because he had made the mistake of living too long; by the time of his death, the younger generations of anthropologists did not wish to dishonour their founder by documenting how his theories had largely gone out of fashion. This paper is also mainly about Tylor’s work, albeit in relation to his personal life and beliefs. Still, several major and illuminating biographical details which are not in the existing scholarship have been discovered in the process of researching it.

The one biographical point which everyone highlights is that Tylor had been raised a Quaker. Nevertheless, scholars have failed to discern the most significant ways in which this influenced his work. Indeed, the most important alleged implication of Tylor’s Quaker formation is simply wrong. To take a recent example, his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states: ‘A Quaker by birth, Tylor was educated at Grove House, Tottenham, a school belonging to the Society of Friends. His faith, which he abandoned later in life, precluded a university education.’¹⁰ In fact, there was no required oath to prevent Tylor from gaining a full Cambridge education (albeit without obtaining the actual degree), or a Scottish higher education, diploma and all. (Edinburgh was a popular destination for English Quakers seeking a medical degree.) The most obvious option, however, was London, which, as part of its *raison d’être*, provided non-Anglicans of any stripe an opportunity to obtain a university degree. To take just one example to hand, the historian and lifelong Friend Thomas Hodgkin (nephew of his namesake who was a founder of the Ethnological Society of London) was a year older than Tylor and as they had both attended the same Quaker school it could hardly have escaped Tylor’s notice that Hodgkin had gone on to University College London.¹¹ In short, there was nothing in the letter or spirit of the rules and ways of either University

6 Edward B. Tylor, *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1881.

7 Chris Holdsworth, ‘Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917)’, in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, vol. 55, pp. 773–775; Stocking, op. cit. (1), p. 263.

8 Andrew Lang, ‘Edward Burnett Tylor’, in [Thomas], op. cit. (3), p. 14.

9 R.R. Marett, *Tylor*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1936.

10 Holdsworth, op. cit. (7), p. 773; Frédéric Regard, ‘Catholicism, spiritual progress, and ethnology: E.B. Tylor’s secret war of culture’, *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* (2004) 20, pp. 209–228.

11 G.H. Martin, ‘Thomas Hodgkin (1831–1913)’, *Oxford DNB*, vol. 27, pp. 476–477.

College London or the Society of Friends to have prevented Tylor from gaining a university degree in his own home country.

Tylor was born at Camberwell, Surrey, into a Quaker family. His father was the prosperous owner of a brass foundry. One of his older brothers, Alfred, would become a noted geologist while also having a flair for generating wealth in the family business. Edward was sent to the Quaker school at Tottenham, and then came to work at the brass foundry at the age of sixteen. His health was fragile, however, and in that wonderfully Victorian way for financially comfortable families this led to a life of pleasant trips abroad. Tylor's wife, Anna, compiled a diary of their life together which primarily consists of chronicling health concerns and travels. An early entry reads: 'Were [*sic*] engaged – He came to Linden – Chest delicate, & he spent the winter at Nice.'¹² The first significant such trip was a wander through parts of the New World which began in 1855. He spent 'the best part of a year' touring the United States, but the turning point of his professional life came on an omnibus in Havana, Cuba, in the spring 1856.¹³ There he happened to meet the ethnologist Henry Christy. Christy was planning a Mexican expedition to collect artefacts and Tylor agreed to accompany him, thereby learning to focus his intellectual curiosity upon the study of primitive culture.¹⁴

This initiation itself reflects a deeply Quaker lineage. At the time of their Mexican journey, both Christy and Tylor were devout Friends, and Christy would remain so.¹⁵ Tylor himself (by then a religious sceptic of long standing) reflected in 1884 on how Christy had become interested in ethnology:

He was led into this subject by his connection with Dr. Hodgkin; the two being at first interested, from the philanthropist's point of view, in the preservation of the less favored races of man, and taking part in a society for this purpose, known as the Aborigines' protection society.¹⁶

Thomas Hodgkin was a deeply devout Quaker. He founded the Ethnological Society of London, which would become the intellectual centre of the emerging discipline of anthropology. When T.H. Huxley served as president in 1871 he brought about a merger with an upstart rival that led to its becoming what is now entitled the Royal Anthropological Institute. The Quaker component in this story of the development of anthropological institutions was, of course, only one current and by no means the whole, but it is the germane one to highlight here because Tylor came into this field upon that particular current. In short, Quaker spirituality resulted in Friends being leading

12 Natural History Museum, London, Tylor Papers, MSs TYL 1, Anna Tylor, 'Notebook, chronicling the life of her husband Sir E.B. Tylor', [1917].

13 Edward Burnett Tylor, *Anahuac, or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* (1861), Boston: IndyPublish, 2007, p. 1.

14 I have judged that it would be tedious to be continually putting words in quotation marks, but the reader should understand that terms such as 'primitive' and 'savage' are used to aid a historical understanding of Tylor's mind, vocabulary and milieu.

15 Christy died a Friend in good standing: *The Annual Monitor for 1866*, London: A.W. Bennett, 1865.

16 E.B. Tylor, 'How the problems of American anthropology present themselves to the English mind', *Science* (19 December 1884) 4(98), p. 549.

humanitarian activists.¹⁷ Quaker abolitionism is well known. Another such cause was the interests of indigenous peoples who were being mistreated in colonial encounters. This religiously motivated concern, in turn, led on to a scholarly interest in savages.

R.R. Marett observed that ‘Tylor’s anthropological apprenticeship was served in Mexico.’¹⁸ Tylor decided that his travels with Christy could be the subject of a book. He had married Anna in 1858 and her diary entry for 27 June 1859 was: ‘E. going on with “Anahuac.”’¹⁹ *Anahuac, Or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* (1861) was Tylor’s first publication. This book has justly been ignored as not an important contribution to anthropology. It is not even clear that Tylor had a working definition of ‘Mexican’.²⁰ Nevertheless, one can see already present several subjects that would interest Tylor throughout his career (such as tracing decimal numeration to counting on fingers).²¹

The main scholarly examinations of *Anahuac*, a couple of articles by Frédéric Regard, aptly focus on its marked anti-Catholicism.²² Nevertheless, these and all other studies are hampered by ignorance of the chronology of Tylor’s spiritual autobiography. Regard elides this by merely saying that Tylor was the son of a Quaker.²³ In fact, Tylor was himself still a devout Friend when he wrote *Anahuac*. At one point his faith is on display in a reference to ‘our Saviour’.²⁴ There are numerous opinionated passages in *Anahuac* that reflect Quaker values, such as denunciations of gambling and showy clothing. He even praised the ‘good sense’ that George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, had shown in his practical wardrobe.²⁵ More importantly, Tylor’s Quaker anti-militarism is readily apparent.²⁶

In other words, Tylor was offering a Quaker critique of Catholicism. Friends practised one of the least elaborate versions of Christianity that existed in the nineteenth century. It was therefore easy for Tylor to condemn Catholic ways in the certainty that his own spiritual house was in order. He could attack Catholicism as priest-ridden, safe in the knowledge that there were no Quaker priests; decry their greedy schemes, confident that Quaker ministers did not receive any payments; object to the idolatrous treatment of statues, knowing that Friends did not even allow religious images, and so on. The polemical pay-off was the assertion that Catholicism was little better than the pagan religion of the Aztecs:

Practically, there is not much difference between the old heathenism and the new Christianity... They had gods, to whom they built temples, and in whose honour

17 For Friends during this period see Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

18 Marett, op. cit. (9), p. 29.

19 Anna Tylor, op. cit. (12).

20 Tylor, op. cit. (13), pp. 26–27, 107.

21 Tylor, op. cit. (13), pp. 67–68. For this interest of Tylor’s see H.H. Godwin-Austen *et al.* (eds.), *Hints to Travellers: Scientific and General*, London: Royal Geographical Society, 1883, p. 227.

22 Regard, op. cit. (10); *idem*, ‘The Catholic mule: E.B. Tylor’s chimeric perception of Otherness’, *Journal of Victorian Culture* (2007) 12, pp. 225–237.

23 Regard, op. cit. (10), p. 226.

24 Tylor, op. cit. (13), p. 33.

25 Tylor, op. cit. (13), p. 106.

26 Tylor, op. cit. (13), p. 72.

they gave offerings, maintained priests, danced and walked in processions – much as they do now ...²⁷

The message of the *Anahuac* was simple: Catholicism is like paganism and paganism is like Catholicism.

Tylor's anti-Catholicism was lifelong. Another way of saying that Catholics were pagans was to say that they were savages. Tylor's greatest work, *Primitive Culture*, is particularly thick with anti-Catholic gibes. For instance:

That the guilt of thus bringing down Europe intellectually and morally to the level of negro Africa lies in the main upon the Roman Church, the bulls of Gregory IX. and Innocent VIII., and the records of the Holy Inquisition, are conclusive evidence to prove.²⁸

Again and again, such parallels are made: the Catholic attitude to saints on high is no different from ancestor worship – or polytheism – or idolatry.²⁹ The man of science and Jesuit Alfred Weld unsurprisingly spoke of Tylor's 'hatred' of the Catholic Church.³⁰

Tylor's breakthrough book was *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865).³¹ A.C. Haddon identified *Researches* as a 'masterly work' which 'at once brought Tylor to the forefront as an ethnologist'.³² It has been observed that this volume never explored religion, and this omission is intriguing in the light of his next book, *Primitive Culture*, where examining religion literally fills half the book and intellectually engulfs the project.³³ Marett remarked that in *Researches* Tylor 'reserved the subject of religion as not yet ripe for treatment'.³⁴ As will be shown, the reason for this is that Tylor lost his faith while working on *Researches*. It was simply too soon: he was not yet willing or able to tackle religion directly from a sceptical perspective. Nevertheless, there are incidental clues. The most positive portrayal of Christianity in the book is a poignant account of a Lutheran worship service at the Berlin Deaf-and-Dumb Institute.³⁵ Tylor had experienced this when still a believer.³⁶ Elsewhere, scepticism can be seen encroaching. Tylor suggests that 'the idea of a future life' had occurred to savages through an unsound procession of reasoning.³⁷ He complains that Victorian society was too trusting of ancient authors. That this was a jab at the authority of the Bible is reinforced by other passages such as the seemingly irreverent glibness of comparing the story of Jonah with those of Tom Thumb and Little

27 Tylor, op. cit. (13), p. 185.

28 Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 2 vols., New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1874, vol. 1, p. 139.

29 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, pp. 120, 168–69, 331.

30 A. Weld, 'Our ancestors', *The Month* (1872) 17, pp. 78–106.

31 Edward B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, 3rd edn, London: John Murray, 1878.

32 A.C. Haddon, 'Sir E.B. Tylor, F.R.S.', *Nature* (11 January 1917) 98(2463), pp. 373–374.

33 Stocking, op. cit. (1), p. 161.

34 Marett, op. cit. (9), pp. 63, 102. Leopold, op. cit. (5), p. 17.

35 Tylor, op. cit. (31), p. 33.

36 Anna Tylor, op. cit. (12), an entry for 1862.

37 Tylor, op. cit. (31), p. 5.

Red Riding Hood and a reference to ‘the Jewish superstition that a man’s destiny may be changed by changing his name’ which sets a whole series of biblical narratives in a dismissive light.³⁸ Tylor complained that Archbishop Whatley had brought the notion of supernatural revelation into his account of human cultural development despite such a theory lacking ‘any real evidence’.³⁹

Before carrying on with his anthropological writings, it is necessary now to circle back chronologically somewhat in order to trace more of Tylor’s biography. The commonest reason why members left the Society of Friends during this period was because of marrying out: the society required all members only to wed a Friend, and to marry an outsider inevitably meant expulsion. It is a mark of his devout Quaker identity that Tylor conformed to this expectation. Anna Fox was from a Quaker family whose business was the Tonedale Mills, Wellington, Somerset.⁴⁰ More than merely marrying a Friend, Tylor actually met Anna at a religious meeting. Anna’s diary is devoid of comments on their inner lives and entries are usually confined to where they went. She recorded how their relationship started in 1857: ‘We met at Stoke Newington at Yearly Meeting time.’⁴¹ Yearly Meeting was the high point of the Quaker annual spiritual calendar – a time when Friends gathered from across the country for worship and fellowship and to conduct the business of the society. Tylor was living in the family home at Stoke Newington and the Stoke Newington Friends Meeting House would become his and Anna’s congregation as a married couple. The Yearly Meeting was generally recognized as an apt time for Friends to find a spouse, and Tylor conformed to this established custom. Edward and Anna were married on 16 June 1858. It was also a custom among Friends at that time to have the wedding ceremony in the bride’s home and it would seem they followed this tradition as well: their marriage was recorded by the West Somerset Monthly Meeting.⁴²

Edward and Anna then settled down to six years of married life as faithful Friends. Tylor’s move away from religion can be formally dated as he and Anna resigned their Quaker membership on 17 July 1864.⁴³ This fact has never before been uncovered, and indeed the Tylors themselves were prone to obscure it, perhaps because it was socially awkward given that close family members, including even Tylor’s geologist brother, kept the faith unto death. Anna did not mention it in the diary that she painstakingly prepared after Tylor’s death, although it is packed with much more trivial events (the most notable occurrence in 1864 is therefore not the severing of their Christian ties but rather a holiday at Teignmouth, Devon).⁴⁴ Likewise, Tylor would merely say that he had been ‘brought up among the Quakers’, thus eliding that he was himself a faithful Friend until the age of thirty-two.⁴⁵ Their resignation was a solemn act and a much more

38 Tylor, *op. cit.* (31), pp. 325–329, 346, 125.

39 Tylor, *op. cit.* (31), pp. 161–163.

40 ‘Death of Lady Tylor’, *Wellington Weekly News*, 1 June 1921, p. 8.

41 Anna Tylor, *op. cit.* (12), an entry for 1857.

42 Friends House, London, Digest of Marriages of the Society of Friends. I am grateful to Joanna Clark, assistant librarian.

43 Friends House Library, London, Devonshire House Monthly Meeting records, ref. 11 b c.

44 Anna Tylor, *op. cit.* (12), entries for 1864.

45 Tylor, *op. cit.* (16), p. 546.

decisive one than simply allowing one's Quaker identity to wither through neglect. Given Tylor's known religious scepticism thereafter, it is safe to assume that the resignation was prompted by a loss of faith. Moreover, the timing is significant: his *Researches* would appear one year later. By his own account, studying anthropology was his life's work from 1861.⁴⁶ It is therefore also reasonable to infer that Tylor's loss of faith was triggered by his concerted grappling with anthropological evidence and theories: he could not find a way to think anthropologically and as a Christian at the same time.

Tylor's *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* was published in 1871. It went through multiple editions and was also translated into French, German, Russian and Polish.⁴⁷ In his Festschrift it was referred to as his 'masterpiece', and at Tylor's death Haddon declared that *Primitive Culture* 'speedily became a "classic," and such will always remain'.⁴⁸ *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* appeared in 1881. Rather than weary the reader by presenting the contents of these volumes *in seriatim*, it seems more profitable to draw upon them (and other works where desirable) to present Tylor's major anthropological ideas, particularly those that have a strong bearing on his view of religion.

Tylor's anthropological thought was stadial, developmental and progressive, based in an evolutionary model of human culture. He was deeply indebted to the work of Auguste Comte. Comte believed that he had found a Casaubon-like key to all human progress, a law of a three stages: 'the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive'.⁴⁹ Such a scheme was overtly antithetical to Christianity: it placed theology in the earliest stage of development and marked it off as something that had to be dispensed with in the name of progress. Tylor sometimes used Comte's categories.⁵⁰ His standard scheme, however, was a deployment of an already existing pattern using older, pre-Comtean terminology: 'Human life may be roughly classed into three great stages, Savage, Barbaric, Civilized'.⁵¹ (To play with Tylorian language, it seems a curious survival of theological modes of thought that the stages in such schemes always needed to be three in number – one thinks of Joachim of Fiore's Trinitarian scheme of human history. J.G. Frazer would continue this convention, deciding upon magical, religious and scientific as his triad.) Although surely superfluous for his readers, Tylor's example of a savage was 'the wild Australian', while 'the Englishman', of course, was the very model of modern, civilized *Homo sapiens*.⁵² The South Sea islanders he discerned to be 'intelligent barbarians'.⁵³ Every human culture

46 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. vi.

47 [Thomas], op. cit. (3), p. 379.

48 [Thomas], op. cit. (3), p. 1; Haddon, op. cit. (32), p. 373.

49 Harriet Martineau (tr. and ed.), *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, vol. 1, London: George Bell & Sons, 1896, pp. 1–2.

50 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 109.

51 Tylor, op. cit. (6), pp. 23–24.

52 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 28.

53 Tylor, op. cit. (6), p. 374.

could be identified as occupying one of these three standard stages which Tylor had inherited.

Moreover, the arrow of history pointed in the direction of progress.⁵⁴ Tylor was influenced by the Pitt Rivers collection and he was one of the main anthropologists associated with it. Pitt-Rivers himself had arranged his artefacts as a ‘museum of development’ from the primitive to the most advanced. Tylor came to see this as revealing a general truth about all aspects of culture: ‘The principle that thus became visible to him in weapon-development is not less true through the whole range of civilization.’⁵⁵ For Tylor, cumulative progress was true not only in technology, but in all areas, including mental culture and morality.

Tylor’s stadial consciousness led on to his particular use of the comparative method. He believed that everyone at the same stage had the same patterns of thought. Therefore one could apply what one learned from one group of savages to another. Moreover, thinking of savages as ‘grown-up children’ was ‘in the main a sound’ comparison.⁵⁶ Have you ever noticed that they both are fond of rattles and drums?⁵⁷ The main pay-off of the comparative method was that the early history of ‘the white race’ could be recovered by studying contemporary savages.

Next came Tylor’s notion of survivals. In his lexicon, a ‘survival’ was something in a culture that did not make sense there in the present context but rather spoke of an earlier stage. It existed not by inherent logic but ‘had lasted on by mere conservatism into a new civilization, to which it is unsuited’.⁵⁸ Survivals were obsolete stock that had failed to be thrown out. Tylor would illustrate this from clothing fashions and would incidentally apply it to a range of practices such as vendettas.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Tylor’s mind was not really preoccupied with such matters but rather with what he acknowledged was a close synonym:

Such a proceeding as this would be usually, and not improperly, described as a superstition; and, indeed, this name would be given to a large proportion of survivals generally. The very word ‘superstition,’ in what is perhaps its original sense of a ‘standing over’ from old times, itself expresses the notion of a survival.⁶⁰

Tylor’s deployment of the doctrine of survivals was overwhelmingly in order to elucidate religion, and scholars have observed that the concept was developed in order to help him find a way to think about spiritual matters.⁶¹

Tylor’s anthropological approach to religion can now be examined. In *Primitive Culture*, he set out as a condition that ‘as to the religious doctrines and practices examined, these are treated as belonging to theological systems devised by human

54 Tylor, *op. cit.* (31), p. 191.

55 Tylor, *op. cit.* (16), p. 549.

56 Tylor, *op. cit.* (31), p. 106.

57 Tylor, *op. cit.* (31), pp. 138–139.

58 Tylor, *op. cit.* (16), p. 550.

59 Godwin-Austen *et al.*, *op. cit.* (21), p. 238.

60 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 1, pp. 71–72.

61 George W. Stocking Jr, ‘Animism in theory and practice: E.B. Tylor’s unpublished “Notes on Spiritualism”’, *Man* (1971) 6, pp. 88–104, 91; Leopold, *op. cit.* (5), pp. 51, 118.

reason, without supernatural aid or revelation'.⁶² In actuality, this methodology was undergirded by a much stronger, unstated conviction, namely that there were no souls or spiritual beings. Without ever addressing the matter, Tylor tacitly ruled out the possibility that people might believe in these things because they actually exist. Given that starting point, Tylor saw it as his task to account for how people had come to adopt these erroneous beliefs.⁶³

Tylor appropriated the term 'animism' for belief in spiritual beings and thus as a synonym for the indispensable essence of religion. His view of the origin of religion has been called the 'dream theory'.⁶⁴ The argument ran thus: when we dream it appears that a part of us leaves our body. Our body is sleeping at home, but we swim in a lake. Savages assume that this literally happens and therefore infer that they have a part of themselves separable from their body – this is how the notion of a 'soul' developed (as well as the supposition of an afterlife as the 'soul' can apparently exist without the body – a theory undergirded by the fact that dead people still come to us in our dreams, which savages interpret as an actual visit). The notion of a soul, in turn, leads on to spirits. Tylor viewed ghosts and demons as the fundamental spiritual beings in the early stages of religion. (One is delighted to learn that the traditional way to describe a ghost's voice is as a 'twitter'.)⁶⁵ Darwin's *The Descent of Man* affirmed: 'It is also probable, as Mr. Tylor has shewn, that dreams may have first given rise to the notion of spirits.'⁶⁶ Spirits, in turn, are ranked, leading to gods, and this eventually gives rise to thinking about a supreme god, the road to monotheism. Tylor summarized his own view as the 'theory that the conception of the human soul is the very "fons et origo" of the conceptions of spirit and deity in general'.⁶⁷

If some of this seems improbable to us, Tylor avers, that is precisely because we have advanced and therefore have a higher mental culture. The primitive mind is incapable of distinguishing between objective and subjective. We consider dreams 'subjective processes of the mind'.⁶⁸ That they could not think this way helps to account for how claims to divine revelation arose. Savages, as it were, did not have the imagination to realize that they were simply imagining something and therefore objectified it as the voice of a god. In the mystical tradition, this is typically physically induced by fasting, which generates hallucinations mistaken for interactions with spiritual beings.⁶⁹ Tylor also thought of modern spiritualism as primitive religion redux. Armchair anthropologist though he was, Tylor attended some seances as a sort of bit of fieldwork and recorded his observations. For one session his verdict was simply 'subjectivity', by which he meant that these people could not distinguish their own fancies from reality.⁷⁰ Tylor

62 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 417.

63 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 425.

64 Marett, op. cit. (9), pp. 112–113.

65 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 453.

66 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, London: John Murray, 1901, p. 144.

67 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 247.

68 Tylor, op. cit. (31), p. 6.

69 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 415.

70 Stocking, op. cit. (61), p. 95.

never tired of insisting that the primitive mind could not rise to the notion of a metaphor. Examples of literalistic thinking he always latched upon as indicative of the whole. He was delighted with St Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Dearg, as expressing the uncivilized assumption that purgatory must be a physical place to which one could walk.⁷¹ Literal also meant material. Tylor hoped that the American anthropologist Franz Boas would provide an artefact for the museum: 'I should much like to possess one or two genuine "soul-catchers." They are of the greatest value to enable the public to realise what the barbaric doctrine of souls really is.'⁷² Perhaps it will not be amiss to give an example of Tylor overreaching in this way as illuminating the groove in which his mind ran. In both *Primitive Culture* and *Anthropology* Tylor avers that the supreme god was originally literally the sky: 'Who, we may ask, is this divinity, calm and indifferent save when his wrath bursts forth in storm, but the Heaven himself?'⁷³ This Heaven-Father later evolves into our Father in Heaven. Tylor insisted that a survival of this can be found in language: 'Among all the relics of barbaric religion which surround us, few are more striking than the phrases which still recognise as a deity the living sky, as "Heaven forgive me!"'⁷⁴ The actual origin of such phrases is much more likely to be a reverent reluctance to say the divine name, which caused 'heaven' to be used as a euphemistic substitute, but Tylor instinctively assumed literalism.

For Tylor, animism was the scientific thought of savages. Magic was merely 'a sort of early and unsuccessful attempt at science', and the same can be said for religion.⁷⁵ In developing what we would term religious ideas, 'their purpose is to explain nature'.⁷⁶ When thinking about religion, civilized people tend to dwell on doctrines that developed quite late rather than on the true basis of spirituality in 'the primitive spiritualistic science which interpreted nature to the lower races'.⁷⁷ Animist beliefs were a rational effort by a limited mental culture.⁷⁸ Thinking has made progress, however, and therefore we know better.

By its subsequent critics, this view has been labelled the 'intellectualist' tradition in British anthropology – one that assumes that religion was the result of savage philosophers contemplating the natural world. For the purpose at hand, what needs to be highlighted is the way that Tylor's theory fuelled the warfare model of the relationship between religion and science.⁷⁹ This model was propounded by polemical secularists. It asserted that religion and science were locked in a zero-sum struggle over the same turf: whenever religion was accepted, it hampered scientific thinking, and whenever scientific

71 Tylor, *op. cit.* (6), p. 349; Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 2, p. 93.

72 Alison Brown, Jeremy Coote and Chris Gosden, 'Tylor's tongue: material culture, evidence, and social networks', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* (2000) 31, pp. 257–276, 268.

73 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 2, p. 249.

74 Tylor, *op. cit.* (6), p. 359.

75 Godwin-Austen *et al.*, *op. cit.* (21), p. 234.

76 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 2, p. 183.

77 Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, Tylor Papers, Manuscript Collections, Box 15, Notes and Proof Sheets for 'The Natural History of Religion', section on 'Christian Animism', p. 24 (handwritten note).

78 Tylor, *op. cit.* (6), p. 353.

79 George W. Stocking Jr, 'Edward Burnett Tylor and the mission of primitive man', in *The Collected Works of Edward Burnett Tylor* (ed. George W. Stocking Jr), London: Routledge, 1994, vol. 1, p. xviii.

thinking was accepted it dispensed with religion.⁸⁰ Sprinkled throughout Tylor's works are comments on how theology or priests thwarted scientific advances.⁸¹ Indeed, it would seem that he himself thought that he sometimes expressed this view too intemperately. In the proof sheets for his last, unpublished book was this sentence: 'It is often and not untruly complained that theological teaching was a great obstacle to the rise of geology.' Apparently deciding he had gone too far, Tylor deleted 'great'.⁸²

Another anthropological theory of Tylor's that needs to be set in the light of wider debates in the nineteenth century is his view on morality in early history. Tylor was concerned to keep morality and religion as discreet, unconnected categories: 'savage animism is almost devoid of that ethical element which to the educated modern mind is the very mainspring of practical religion'.⁸³ A section heading for a Gifford lecture he gave put it succinctly: 'Primitive morality independent of religion'.⁸⁴ Tylor also insisted, however, that savages were highly moral.⁸⁵ Many Victorians believed that religion was essential for maintaining morality. A major criticism of free thought was that it would undercut people's motivation for being moral. It seems that Tylor was covertly attempting to reassure people that they could abandon religion without fearing for morality: the future could be like the past in which people were moral without being religious.

There is more warrant to assume that he was tacitly furthering wider contemporary causes in his scholarship than there is for some others because Tylor himself commended his work for serving this purpose. The famous last words of *Primitive Culture* were that 'the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science'.⁸⁶ Tylor's task was 'to expose the remains of crude old culture which has passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction'.⁸⁷ *Anthropology* ends in the same sermonic way, with Tylor revealing 'the practical moral' of what his readers had learned, namely that they must apply these anthropological insights to 'the practical business of life' and therefore create a better world.⁸⁸ Tylor reminisced to an American audience about discovering this:

By and by it did become visible, that to show that a custom or institution which belonged to an early state of civilization had lasted on by mere conservatism into a newer civilization, to which it is unsuited, would somehow affect the public mind as to the question whether this custom or institution should be kept up, or done away with. Nothing has for months past given me more unfeigned delight than when I saw in the *Times* newspaper the corporation of the city of

80 James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1800–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 19–100. For a critique in the context of Tylor's thought see Dewi Zephaniah Phillips, *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 152, 160.

81 Tylor, op. cit. (6), p. 324.

82 Tylor, op. cit. (77), unnumbered chapter 'Deluge-Legends', p. 40.

83 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 360.

84 [Thomas], op. cit. (3), p. 399.

85 Tylor, op. cit. (6), pp. 406–409.

86 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 453.

87 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 453.

88 Tylor, op. cit. (6), pp. 439–440.

London spoken of as a ‘survival.’ You have institutions even here which have outlived their original place and purpose ...⁸⁹

The corporation of the city of London is a mere illustrative red herring. An American audience would presumably have found the monarchy and House of Lords survivals, but Tylor never declared that politics needed to be reformed. Indeed, his calls in earnest for reform were all exclusively confined to religion. Even in this area he much preferred to leave it to others to connect the dots, but he could not resist repeatedly declaring that his theories would necessitate some hard rethinking by theologians specifically, while he never commended them for the particular domains of politicians or lawyers or heads of Oxbridge colleges. For example, Tylor argued that the eastward orientation of the priest (which had been reinstated by Tractarians) should not be discussed as a point of liturgical correctness, but rather as a survival of sun worship:

How many years must pass before it shall be expected of every theologian that he shall have studied the development of religious ideas in the world before he reasons about them? Such a time will come, and with it the time when a theologian’s education will necessarily include an elementary knowledge of the laws of nature. On these two steps will follow the second Reformation in England, and it will be greater than the first.⁹⁰

The final prophetic pronouncement identifies Tylor with Huxley’s Christianity-puncturing, agnostic crusade, which he was pursuing under the banner of the ‘New Reformation’.⁹¹

The first person to hold a post as an anthropologist in Britain, Tylor was appointed a reader in anthropology at Oxford University in 1884 and elevated to a professorship in 1896.⁹² Tylor was also one of the first to give Gifford lectures, an endowed series on natural theology. Tylor gave these lectures at Aberdeen University beginning in December 1889. He intended to turn them into a book entitled *The Natural History of Religion* (echoing David Hume, who is a foil in the piece.) Working with Oxford University Press, Tylor proceeded so far as to have portions of it turned into proof sheets. The press date-stamped these sheets, revealing that this flurry of activity happened in 1899 and 1900. Tylor hand-corrected a reference to reflect the new sovereign, demonstrating that he was still at it in 1901, but he must have given up on working on it in earnest thereafter.

The proof sheets for *The Natural History of Religion* reveal Tylor deploying his established anthropological theories to reform society by challenging its religious beliefs. Chapter 1 was entitled ‘History of the doctrine of natural religion’. It was primarily an attack on the views of the eighteenth-century deists, who had identified natural religion as a simple, moral monotheism.⁹³ Even for the deists this was primarily a statement of

89 Tylor, op. cit. (16), p. 550.

90 E.B. Tylor, letter to *The Times*, 15 July 1875.

91 Bernard Lightman, ‘Interpreting agnosticism as a nonconformist sect: T.H. Huxley’s “New Reformation”’, in Paul Wood (ed.), *Science and Dissent in England, 1688–1945*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. 197–214. Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 449.

92 Peter Rivière (ed.), *A History of Oxford Anthropology*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007.

93 Tylor, op. cit. (77), Chapter 1, p. 5.

what people ought to have discovered rather than of what they did, but Tylor took it to be a theory about the actual beliefs and practices of early humans. He then pretended that this supposed theory of primitive culture is what orthodox Christians meant by natural theology. (Quite to the contrary, orthodox theologians standardly claimed that human beings were natural idolaters.)

The main argument of *The Natural History of Religion* was an attempt to show that all religions, however advanced and sophisticated, were based in the crude animistic theories of savages.⁹⁴ This is done through charts which endeavour to reveal the common elements in the religions of primitive societies, such as ‘Tasmanian Animism’ and ‘Algonquin Animism’ through to ‘Christian Animism’. Although he must have found this very telling, all he really seems to be demonstrating is his definition of religion, a general category which therefore necessitates that the items in the set have features in common. This method of exposé by classification is further compromised by the fact that Tylor had considerable liberty in deciding which features warranted inclusion.⁹⁵ He makes the links between primitive religions and Christianity stronger both by anachronistically importing elements back to earlier stages and by keeping explicitly rejected elements in later ones. As to the former, Aztec animism includes ‘Ecclesiastical Influence on Society’. (The use of the Christian term ‘ecclesiastical’ seems to be an attempt to show how the religions of the Aztecs and the Catholics are similar, thus bringing Tylor in his last attempt at a book back full circle to the argument of his first one, *Anahuac*.) At the other end of the scale, the ‘Christian Animism’ chart has as one of eight basic categories ‘Nature-Spirits and Polytheistic Deities’. This is apologetically accounted for with the parenthetical explanation, ‘retained in folklore’. As Christian teaching explicitly repudiates these things they cannot have a place in a chart of the Christian religion qua Christian. Tylor also insisted throughout that ‘Demons’ were the most basic category of religious belief, second only to the soul. ‘Guardian angels’ were just a subset of demons. While this categorization makes sense for ‘Greco-Roman Animism’, in Jewish and Christian thought this is reversed: angels are the basic category (though much more marginal to these faiths than second after the soul), and ‘demons’ are only a subset – ‘fallen angels’. It is possible that Tylor himself began to feel the force of some of these critiques and that is why he abandoned the project. An additional factor might have been that another anthropologist, Andrew Lang, a friend and one-time disciple, had come out with a book which argued that monotheism was part of primitive culture.⁹⁶ Tylor’s unease about this conflict with Lang is demonstrated by his multiple attempts to describe it in the right tone, with crossed-out, handwritten efforts piled on top of each other.⁹⁷

The proof sheets also contained a chapter that was unnumbered and it is tempting to see this as a reflection of the fact that there was no obvious place to put it, as it is not clear

94 Tylor, op. cit. (77), Chapter 2, p. 25.

95 George W. Stocking Jr, ‘Charting the progress of animism: E.B. Tylor on “The Common Religion of Mankind”’, *History of Anthropology Newsletter* (1992) 19, pp. 3–10.

96 Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion*, London: Longmans, Green, 1898.

97 Tylor, op. cit. (77), Chapter 3, p. 27.

how this material would have contributed to any formal, overarching argument being pursued in the book. It was entitled 'Deluge-Legends'. Tylor was well aware that Christian apologists averred that the existence of stories of a great deluge in so many different, scattered cultures was evidence for the historical veracity of the biblical narrative. In his earlier work, Tylor had tended to counter this with the claim that missionaries had probably infected these cultures with these stories rather than found them there. As more evidence emerged, however, this suspicion did not hold up and so a new theory was needed. The argument of this chapter was that the story of the flood had indeed disseminated from a single source across the globe but this was not because of a historical event or from the Jewish account but rather from the Babylonian one (which Tylor asserted is plagiarized in the Hebrew Bible). As this watery excursus does not connect to the unfolding argument of the rest of the book it seems to have been included simply as additional material that undermines Christianity. This suspicion is supported by a section on how higher critics have discerned that biblical books are compilations from multiple authors. This theory unsettled some conservative Christians – which again seems to be why it interested Tylor – but it was not relevant to the chapter's thesis. Tylor himself half realized this from the start, writing by way of apology in the typeset version, 'Although this division has not such importance in the present inquiry as it has theologically'.⁹⁸ He nonetheless traced the seams in the Pentateuch with relish. Reading it over again, Tylor himself apparently realized that this material was not germane to the ostensible theme of the chapter and therefore decided it had to be excised.

Tylor's anti-Christian stance has been generally acknowledged by scholars. Holdsworth noted, 'Tylor was openly hostile to organized religion.'⁹⁹ Henrika Kuklick has observed that it was typical of that generation of anthropologists. She quotes an observation made in a memorial tribute to A.C. Haddon: 'In their day, to be an anthropologist was generally considered equivalent to being an agnostic and freethinker.'¹⁰⁰ George W. Stocking Jr emphasized the way that Tylor's animus against Christianity was expressed in some verses of poetry he wrote which were published anonymously, the key lines being: 'Theologians all to expose, – / 'Tis the *mission* of Primitive Man.'¹⁰¹ In other words, Tylor avowed that anthropology discredited Christian doctrine. While in *Anahuac* Tylor laboured to demonstrate that Catholicism was essentially paganism, from *Primitive Culture* onwards this approach was broadened to the claim that Christianity in general is fundamentally pagan. Throughout his writings Tylor worked to lead the reader to this conclusion, both by describing savage religion with words familiar from Christian contexts (for example referring to a Maori rite as baptism and to Sioux theologians) and by insisting that Christian beliefs were no different to

98 Tylor, op. cit. (77), unnumbered chapter 'Deluge-Legends', p. 46.

99 Holdsworth, op. cit. (7), p. 775.

100 Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 79.

101 Andrew Lang, *XXXII Ballades in Blue China*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888, p. 46; Stocking, op. cit. (79).

savage ones. For instance, here is how one ought to think about the doctrine of the virgin birth:

in the Samoan Islands such intercourse of mischievous inferior gods caused ‘many supernatural conceptions;’ and in Lapland, where details of this last extreme class have also been placed on record. From these lower grades of culture we may follow the idea onward.¹⁰²

This is not the place for a systematic evaluation of Tylor’s anthropological thought, but in exploring its relationship to religion, it is worth noticing a few critiques. Even when he was at the height of his career not everyone was enamoured with Tylor’s thought. Weld satirized Tylor’s unexplained assumption that there was no spiritual realm, comparing it to ‘if a historian were to discuss the origin of the widespread belief in the exploits of Alexander of Macedon, without touching on the hypothesis that such a conqueror perhaps really did exist’.¹⁰³ Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of what came to be called Darwinism, made the same argument. On another point, he argued that it was wrong to assume that humanity was making general progress. Finally, in a critique which is even more apt when applied to the unpublished *Natural History of Religion*, Wallace observed:

We are constantly told that each such belief or idea ‘finds its place,’ with the implication that it is thus sufficiently accounted for . . . Any great mass of facts or phenomena whatever can be classified, but the classification does not necessarily add anything to our knowledge of the causes which produced the facts or phenomena . . . Although the details given on these subjects are so numerous . . . they are yet altogether one-sided. They have been amassed with one object and selected, no doubt unconsciously, so as to harmonize with the *à priori* convictions of the writer.¹⁰⁴

Andrew Lang came to agree with Weld and Wallace that Tylor had begged the question of the existence of spiritual realities.¹⁰⁵ Even in his Festschrift tribute to him, Lang was not above just flat-out mocking Tylor’s deployment of the doctrine of survivals:

Protestants in Germany, says Wuttke, get Catholic priests to lay ghosts for them. Why not, if the ghost be a Catholic priest? The Rev. Mr. Thomson of Ednam, father of the author of *The Castle of Indolence*, was slain by a ghost, obviously not Presbyterian . . .¹⁰⁶

Marett was clearly embarrassed by Tylor’s ‘harsh’ attitude toward religion and repeatedly noticed it with regret.¹⁰⁷ Here is Marett’s exasperation at Tylor’s habit of only finding literal and scientific meaning in any statement:

One might even construct a myth of one’s own to the effect that the first story-teller was interrupted in the middle of his moving recital by someone who asked, ‘Was that really so?’

102 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 190.

103 Weld, op. cit. (30), pp. 78–106.

104 Alfred R. Wallace, ‘Physical science and philosophy’, *Academy* (15 February 1872) 3, pp. 69–71.

105 George W. Stocking Jr, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888–1951*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, pp. 56–60.

106 [Thomas], op. cit. (3), p. 7.

107 Marett, op. cit. (9), pp. 72, 76, 146.

that he promptly slew the stupid fellow with his stone-axe; and that ever afterwards there has prevailed a certain tolerance of poetic licence.¹⁰⁸

Eventually, the new school of functionalism swept away Tylor's notion of survivals. It rejected the assumption that any practice should be viewed as a now-pointless relic maintained by mere conservatism, insisting instead that these practices must be serving a contemporary function. An anthropologist's task, then, is to explore that current function and not to chase antiquarian Brer Rabbit trails regarding how the practice initially arose. Anthropologists also abandoned Tylor's evolutionism. The First World War helped to dislodge the assumption that the human story was one of progress, as it were, on all fronts.¹⁰⁹

Some of the difficulties in Tylor's theories may be highlighted by introducing a corollary notion of his to survivals, namely 'revivals'. He introduced it thus:

Sometimes old thoughts and practices will burst out afresh, to the amazement of a world that thought them long since dead or dying; here survival passes into revival, as has lately happened in so remarkable a way in the history of modern spiritualism . . .¹¹⁰

The first thing to notice is that Tylor never offered a theory as to why revivals happen: he merely observed that they do happen. The second point is that revivals are in tension with his assumption that technological advance could be generalized to all-round progress. The point of the technological model was that advances, once made, were not unmade. A few quirky examples notwithstanding, if technology was the only field considered then no category of revivals would have been needed: there are simply not enough cases of societies freely choosing to revert to more primitive technologies to necessitate the creating of a theoretical category for this phenomenon. 'Revival', of course, was a common word in Victorian society as a spiritual event, a term cherished by many Christians. It is therefore quite possible that Tylor chose it deliberately as a way of baiting believers. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that as well as introducing revivals in his anthropological sense, Tylor also spoke with open abuse of revivals in the spiritual sense:

Medical descriptions of the scenes brought on by fanatical preachers at 'revivals' in England, Ireland, and America, are full of interest to students of the history of religious rites . . . These manifestations in modern Europe indeed form part of a revival of religion, the religion of mental disease.¹¹¹

Tylor's anthropological thought as a religious sceptic was littered with survivals (to adapt his parlance) from his Quaker past. Huxley waggishly referred to Comte's Religion of Humanity as 'Catholicism *minus* Christianity', and one might describe

108 Marett, *op. cit.* (9), pp. 86–87.

109 Kuklick, *op. cit.* (100), pp. 19–20, 95, 277. For a recent exploration of the limits of Tylor's thought see Logan, *op. cit.* (2), pp. 89–114. For a twenty-first-century critique of Tylor's anthropological thought in relationship to religion see Phillips, *op. cit.* (80), pp. 146–182.

110 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 1, pp. 16–17.

111 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 2, p. 421.

Tylor's mature views as Quakerism minus Christianity.¹¹² Most generally, he maintained a lifelong disdain for priests and saw every religious image as an idol. Quaker anti-ritualism was no doubt behind his judgement that the religion of the Native Americans 'expressed itself' in 'useless ceremony'.¹¹³ The Friends were one of the very few Christian groups which did not observe the ordinances of baptism and communion, and one can read *Primitive Culture* as culminating in an attack on the sacraments. Quaker plainness continued to prompt Tylor to object to jewellery. He saw earrings as a savage survival: 'the women of modern Europe mutilate their ears to hang jewels in them'.¹¹⁴ If no piercing was involved, then perhaps one had graduated a stage, but it was still uncivilized: 'our ladies keep in fashion barbaric necklaces of such things as shells, seeds, tigers' claws, and especially polished stones. The wearing of shining stones as ornaments lasts on'.¹¹⁵

The most dominant continuing Quaker attitude was Tylor's anti-militarism. Even in his anthropological textbook he could not refrain from offering an editorial opposing the existence of the military.¹¹⁶ In *Primitive Culture* Tylor insisted that one of 'the lessons' to be learned from studying savages was that order can be kept without the need for a police force.¹¹⁷ War caused a society to regress back to an earlier stage.¹¹⁸ And here is a rather peculiar definition: 'A constitutional government, whether called republic or kingdom, is an arrangement by which the nation governs itself by means of the machinery of a military despotism.'¹¹⁹ Quaker traces continue to the end. The 'Christian Animism' chart in *The Natural History of Religion* betrays the fingerprints of Friends. For example, it includes 'Oath' and 'Religious Belief legally enforced', which in no way define Christianity but which loomed large for Quakers as issues that set them apart from other religious groups, while leaving out the sacraments (which have been far more universal and essential throughout Christian history, but are obscured in Quaker practice and thought).¹²⁰ While Tylor's Quaker mindset undoubtedly hindered his anthropological work when it came to reflecting on aspects of culture such as ritual and images, it also provided illumination. For instance, no British community was more attuned to questions of exogamy and endogamy than the Quakers.¹²¹ Tylor's attentiveness to a chanting voice in worship was undoubtedly informed by his experience of

112 Adrian Desmond, *Huxley*, London: Penguin, 1997, p. 373. The difference between Comte and Tylor is revealing on this point. Raised as a Catholic, Comte continued to think fondly of the trappings of Catholicism and wanted to retain them even in a post-theological context, while Tylor always retained the disdain for the trappings of Catholicism which he had acquired in his Quaker formation, simply going on to expand this critique to include the basic tenets of Christian theology in all its forms as well.

113 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 1, p. 31.

114 Tylor, op. cit. (31), p. 1.

115 Tylor, op. cit. (6), p. 243.

116 Tylor, op. cit. (6), p. 228.

117 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 405.

118 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 414.

119 Tylor, op. cit. (28), vol. 2, p. 434.

120 Tylor, op. cit. (77), 'Christian Animism' section, p. 24.

121 Tylor, op. cit. (31), p. 279.

the sing-song habit of Victorian Quaker preachers.¹²² Finally, a book review reference might reveal that Tylor thought in a Quaker way even about his own apostasy from the Quaker way. Observing that the bishop of Manchester had conceded some ground to the views of biblical critics, he remarked, ‘Having once “let in the reasoner” (as the old Quaker phrase goes), Dr. Fraser would probably feel obliged to admit . . .’.¹²³ This was a common Quaker expression for allowing doubt to undermine faith. Tylor himself had ‘let the reasoner in’, and he did find that there was no apparent way to stop scepticism from undermining religion as a whole thereafter.

One of the limitations of Tylor’s notion of survivals was that, in practice, it seemed almost inevitably to become contaminated by the anthropologist’s own prior disposition toward a practice or belief. Tylor could pronounce wearing necklaces barbaric and wonder that it continued on, but this was merely an expression of a personal preference. An emotionally distant person could just as well deem hugging a savage practice that had inexplicably survived into civilized culture. This arbitrariness may be illustrated by some details regarding the last period of Tylor’s life. In 1912, Tylor was knighted. One might suspect that a progressive reformer would judge that knighthood was a survival that needed to be eliminated, but Tylor offered no such leadership on that front, underlining once again how exclusively he confined his concerted reforming agenda to religion. Relatedly, Edward and Anna Tylor had drawn closer to the Anglican world in their latter decades, presumably a manifestation of a desire for greater social prominence, ease and respectability. Oxford University had Anglican worship woven into its fabric, and Tylor even lectured in 1898 at the intentional Anglican community, Toynbee Hall.¹²⁴ In her diary, Anna took to noticing that things happened on days in the church calendar. For instance, ‘Joe’ died on ‘Good Friday’, and several years later ‘Isabella’ died on ‘Easter Sunday’.¹²⁵ One might even go so far as to say that Tylor learned part of his anthropological methodology from the Quakers. For example, Friends rejected the traditional names of the days of the week as derived from pagan gods, substituting numbers instead. Tylor would have been trained to use this Quaker nomenclature, but reverted to the more traditional terms. One might see this as a classic revival of a survival. Moreover, day names are just one of numerous such Friendly critiques of common practices. In other words, it was the Society of Friends that taught Tylor to think in terms of paganisms that have survived into the present, but which need to be purged.¹²⁶ Finally, no scholar has ever mentioned Tylor’s funeral or apparently found a report of it. Nevertheless, it turns out that, in the end – presumably at his own request,

122 Tylor, *op. cit.* (6), p. 291; *idem*, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 1, p. 175. Isichei, *op. cit.* (17), p. 95.

123 [E.B. Tylor], ‘Mythology among the Hebrews’, *The Spectator*, 21 April 1877, pp. 508–509.

124 Anna Tylor, *op. cit.* (12), February 1898.

125 Anna Tylor, *op. cit.* (12), 5 April 1901, 15 April 1906.

126 There is also probably a negative influence as well. Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay has recently observed that because some Victorian Quakers retained outmoded ways such as archaic forms of speech and styles of dress, Tylor in all likelihood was observing practices in his own community that seemed unfortunate survivals. Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860–1915*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010, p. 75.

and certainly with Anna's approval – Sir Edward Burnett Tylor received a spectacularly Anglican funeral: no fewer than three priests presided and the choirs of both Wellington parish church and All Saints' Church sang.¹²⁷ In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor himself described what happens to a ghostly pagan soul that survives into a more respectable religious environment: 'the doleful wanderer now asks Christian burial in consecrated earth'.¹²⁸

127 'Late Sir Edward B. Tylor', *Wellington Weekly News*, 10 January 1917, p. 8.

128 Tylor, *op. cit.* (28), vol. 2, p. 29.