



The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America

Michael J. Lee

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Historians commonly agree that the understanding of the Bible as a supernatural text conveying both spiritual and historical truths came under devastating assaults from the natural sciences and German historical critics in the 1800s. According to this account, by the latter years of that century, the image of the Bible as a supernaturally inspired and infallible text eventually crumbled in the eyes of many intellectuals under the relentless opposition of secularizing forces. This book corrects this narrative by arguing that in America, the road to skepticism was unintentionally paved by the Scriptures' most able and ardent defenders. From the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century, theologically conservative Americans defended the Bible from critical attacks. However, the Bible's defenders altered their conceptions of revelation to preserve their faith in light of changing standards of plausibility. In doing so, they gradually yet radically undermined their traditional understanding Holy Writ by denuding it of its supernatural nature. Thus, skeptics were not responsible for knocking the Bible off of its pedestal; the fault lies with the Scriptures' orthodox apologists.

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