It is both fitting and proper that Cornell University Press publish a work by a Cornell University professor challenging the thesis of Cornell's first president. Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896) was a Voltairean attack on Christian theology and the barriers it had created to prevent the growth of science. Finding antiscientific clerics or their supporters almost everywhere, White deplored the generally nefarious influence of churches on the progress of the human spirit. The paradigm was, of course, the Galileo affair, as it has remained until this day.

In recent years, this view has come under increasing attack. Such scholars as Richard Westfall, John Heilbron, Margaret Osler, and Edward Davis have revealed the importance for science of the religious dimension and shown that the "conflict" was more imagined than real. In particular, the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century looks more and more like a movement in which the basic ideas of science and theology were radically revised and the relations between the two areas fundamentally redefined. The result was not conflict but surprising harmony.

One of the major figures in this realignment, although not a giant of science, was the Minim monk Marin Mersenne. Mersenne has long been known to historians of science, of course, as one of the great correspondents of the Scientific Revolution who, through his letters, spread the good news of scientific discovery throughout the learned world of Europe. What Professor Dear has done in this work is to reveal a different dimension of Mersenne's activities. Here he appears as a natural philosopher wrestling with some of the philosophical problems raised by the New Learning and coming down quite sound-
ly on the side of modernity. If there is any warfare here, it is restricted to a few minor and barely detectable skirmishes. Instead, Mersenne, with the full approval of his clerical brethren, moved easily in the new world of ideas and devoted a good part of his energies to removing possible causes of conflict. Professor Dear's study is, therefore, a real contribution to the reevaluation of the relations between science and theology in the crucial period of the birth of modern science. It is no exaggeration to suggest that he has opened up a whole new world of the social history of science which he, and future historians, will no doubt eagerly explore to the edification of us all.

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