

*Modern Christian Thought***Volume 1: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century****A Study Guide by James C. Livingston and Beth Wright****Chapter One****The Enlightenment and Modern Christianity****Overview**

The Enlightenment (1648–1789) is the era that brought together the humanism of the Renaissance and the new ideas from the scientific revolution begun in the seventeenth century—it is typically seen as the beginning of the modern world. In the three centuries leading to 1800 a revolution occurred in Western minds and cultures, marking a clear break with the medieval era.

This chapter surveys the key features of the Enlightenment, all of which had significant influence on the development of modern Christian thought. These include the raising of individual reason and conscience to an autonomous, authoritative status; the embrace of a scientific method based on empirical, experimental reason; the equation of the reasonable and the natural; the underlying optimism of the dominant worldview; a belief in the inevitable progress of humankind; and a concern for religious tolerance.

Key names, titles, and terms

The Enlightenment
Descartes
autonomy
heteronomy
melioristic optimism
Condorcet’s “tenth époque”
Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*
Voltaire’s *The Lisbon Earthquake*

Review Questions

1. The philosophers of the Enlightenment rejected the earlier speculative reason of the seventeenth century. When these Enlightenment thinkers insist on reason, to what kind of reason are they appealing?
2. The *philosophes* call for a “return to nature.” Characterize what they mean by this expression.
3. Describe the different ways in which Leibnitz, Voltaire, and Rousseau explain or deal with the fact of evil. How do you respond to their treatment of this human problem?
4. Describe the various arguments offered by Bayle, Locke, and Lessing regarding the necessity of religious toleration. How might you critique one or more of their arguments? Do you believe that toleration results in relativism? Give your reasons why or why not.

Related Websites

1. Steven Kreis, “Lecture 10: The Vision of Human Progress: Vico, Gibbon, and Condorcet” on the site The History Guide: Lectures on Modern European Intellectual History
<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture10a.html#condorcet>
2. Garth Kemerling’s Philosophy Pages: Jean-Jacques Rousseau—biography, bibliography, further web resources
<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/rous.htm#links>
3. Michael J. Thompson, “John Locke in Jerusalem”—applying Locke’s liberal theories to the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis
http://www.logosjournal.com/issue_4.1/thompson.htm

Chapter Two

The Religion of Reason

Overview

The late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time when the new Protestant churches were shaping their distinctive doctrinal standards and forms of governance and worship. It was a time of doctrinal purification and orthodoxy. Both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism entered a period of “scholasticism,” i.e., of systematizing doctrines and insisting on their rational proof. This led to controversy, resulting in the bloody Wars of Religion (the Thirty Years War, 1618–48). This long period of religious dissention and strife produced efforts to resolve these religious conflicts and bring civil peace by discovering some universal, agreed-upon criterion of religious truth.

This chapter explores the responses of notable writers of the eighteenth century who sought to bring about such a reconciliation between biblical revelation and the demands of reason. Some of these thinkers were referred to as Rational Supernaturalists because, while they insisted that Christianity be reasonable, they also allowed a place for matters “above reason,” e.g., miracles and the Trinity. Other influential writers, called Deists, rejected any beliefs “above” or “contrary to reason” and proposed a group of religious beliefs that they insisted were both universally acknowledged and wholly reasonable. The chapter closes with a discussion of how these efforts to establish a pure religion of reason addressed the question of the Bible’s interpretation and authority, thus introducing some modern ideas and methods for the study of Scripture.

Key names, titles, and terms

“Scholasticism” in Theology

Lord Herbert of Cherbury’s *De Veritate* (1624)

Rational Supernaturalism

The Reasonableness of Christianity (1695)

Deism

John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696)

Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730)

Voltaire’s *Ecrasez l’Infame*

the German *Aufklärung*

H. S. Reimarus’s *Apology*

G. E. Lessing

“On the Proof of the Spirit and the Power”

Review Questions

1. Describe Lord Herbert of Cherbury’s attempt to find “common notions” upon which all humanity could agree. What were these religious beliefs?
2. Characterize John Tillotson’s defense of supernaturalism. Why did he believe rational religion required the supplementation of revelation? What does he see as the role of miracles?
3. The philosopher John Locke’s views of the role of reason and revelation in religion were influential. Summarize the distinctive features of his position on this subject.

How does he relate this to his defense of Christianity? Why does he believe that the religious “enthusiasts” are wrong?

4. John Toland and Matthew Tindal agreed that one could not appeal to matters “above reason” in defending Christianity. Characterize the distinctive features of their views on reason, revelation, and Christianity. In what ways are Toland’s views more radical?
5. Voltaire was severely critical of what he saw as the contradictions and primitive morals in the Bible and in some Christian doctrines, but he offered rational proofs for the existence of God. Describe the nature of these proofs and evaluate their value as proofs.
6. Lessing also offers a critique of the proof of Christianity from the Bible’s historical testimony concerning miracles and fulfilled prophecy. Characterize his critique. On what does Lessing ground the truth of Christ’s teaching? Offer your own judgment of Lessing’s argument.

Related Websites

1. Chris Atkinson, Thirty Years War—includes detailed historical review of all important events, a timeline, and an interactive map of Europe during the period
<http://www.pipeline.com/~cwa/TYWHome.htm>
2. Works of John Tillotson, Christian Classics Ethereal Library
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/tillotson/?show=worksBy>
3. Peter Gay, “Me and Him,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1999—Gay writes as two characters, himself and Rousseau, in a humorous take on Voltaire and his fellow *philosophes*
http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/10/24/bookend/bookend.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
4. “Pietism”—a basic overview of the movement and its leading figures
<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/pietism.htm>

Chapter Three

The Breakdown of the Religion of Reason

Overview

The assumptions of the Deists regarding the “religion of reason” very soon came under telling criticism by other Enlightenment thinkers. Here we explore the work of four European writers on religion of great importance in eighteenth-century Europe. They not only offer impressive criticisms of the Deists’ rationalism but also revolutionize the methods and grounds of religious belief—while insisting on the role of reason in religion. The writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Joseph Butler, and especially David Hume and Immanuel Kant today remain seminal works, a watershed between earlier theological discourse and modern Christian theology.

Key names, titles, and terms

William Law, *The Case of Reason* (1731)
 Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Reason* (1736)
 David Hume
 “Of Miracles”
The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779)
 Fideism
 Natural theology
 Immanuel Kant
The Critique of Pure Reason (1781)
The Critique of Practical Reason (1788)
a priori
 the categorical imperative
 the Counter-Enlightenment
 F. H. Jacobi
 Johann George Hamann
The Metacritique of Pure Reason
 Johann Gottfried Herder

Review Questions

1. In his “Profession of Faith” Rousseau describes his own religious creed. Specify some of the features of his religious profession. What does Rousseau find problematic about the claims of the various religions with regard to special revelations and miracles? For Rousseau, on what must one base one’s religious convictions?
2. What does Joseph Butler find problematic in the rationalists’ appeal to nature rather than to the Bible? Describe his “probabilistic” argument for belief in the Christian religion, e.g., a future life, miracles, and special revelation. In what way did Butler’s method of argument turn upon itself?
3. Outline the prominent features of David Hume’s critique of the use of miracles as evidence of Christianity in section ten of his *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.
4. Specify the several arguments that Hume offers against natural theology in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, with attention to the problem of analogy

between the human mind and God. Attempt to characterize Hume's own position in the *Dialogues*. Is he a skeptic, a fideist, a rationalist? What does he mean by "natural beliefs"?

5. Attempt to characterize what is central to Kant's so-called "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, i.e., to our knowledge of the world as, in crucial respects, conforming to our finite mind's own *a priori* forms of cognition or knowledge. What is the implication of such a view for our *knowledge* of an infinite God, e.g., the argument from design or the cosmological argument?
6. What does Kant mean in *The Critique of Practical Reason* that our knowledge of God is a *postulate*, not of our empirical (i.e., scientific) knowledge but of our practical moral reason, our sense of moral duty. What do you think of Kant's reasonable ethical theism, a theism that is separated from our knowledge of the natural world?
7. Describe the defense of a philosophy of faith in the thought of either Jacobi or Hamann.

Related Websites

1. Gale Prawda, "Socratic Dialogue Example"—a concrete example of a Socratic dialogue, with an explanation of its assumptions and main aspects
<http://www.philodialogue.com/Authenticity.htm>
2. Dr. Kelley Ross, "Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)"—a detailed discussion of Kant's life, studies, and philosophy, including an interesting comparison of his ideas and ancient Buddhist philosophy
<http://www.friesian.com/kant.htm>
3. Richard Wolin, "Answer to the Question What Is the Counter-Enlightenment?" sample chapter from his book *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (publisher has not included chapter's citations)
<http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i7705.html>

Chapter Four

Christianity and Romanticism: Protestant Thought

Overview

Various Enlightenment-era thinkers such as Hume, Kant, and those representative of the Counter-Enlightenment began to raise crucial questions about the claims of natural theology and the religion of reason. By 1780 a new generation of thinkers, though different in striking ways, shared a distrust of the claims of the older rationalism. They perceived other crucial dimensions of human experience, such as feeling and imagination, neglected by rationalism. These writers were later to be called the Romantics.

This chapter will characterize the dominant features shared by the Romantic writers and the movement as a whole. It then will explore how these shared ideas and sentiments are used by three Christian theologians to establish Christian belief and experience on entirely new grounds. These three include the English poet, literary critic, and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge; the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher; and the American Congregationalist minister, civic leader, and theologian Horace Bushnell. In examining the writings of these three we will seek to demonstrate the importance of Romantic thought and sensibility for Christian thought generally but, more especially, how they shaped much of what we today know as Protestant liberal theology.

Key names, titles, and terms

Romanticism

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Aids to Reflection (1825)

the Imaginative Faculty

Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit (1840)

Friedrich Schleiermacher

Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers (1799)

the feeling (*gefühl*) of absolute dependence

The Christian Faith (1830)

Horace Bushnell

Discourses on Christian Nurture (1861)

Review Questions

1. In what ways does Romanticism typify a religious consciousness?
2. Describe what Coleridge understands by the Imaginative faculty and his use of the terms Reason, the Understanding, and the Will in human life, i.e., in apprehending the truths of experience. How does Coleridge view the relation between Christian doctrines or beliefs and the moral life?
3. Characterize the views of Coleridge and Bushnell on biblical language, its interpretation, and the nature of its authority. What do you find persuasive or problematic in their views of the Bible?
4. Friedrich Schleiermacher grounds religious experience and its expressions in what he calls “the immediate feeling of the Infinite and Eternal.” Attempt to describe what he means by this unique religious feeling. What is he opposing as the claimed grounds of

religion? How does he understand the relationship between Christian doctrine and this unique religious feeling and experience?

5. Schleiermacher views Christian doctrines (dogmatics) “as the formulation in language of the prior Christian feelings.” Describe how he illustrates this method in his discussions of God, sin, and Christ’s redemptive work.
6. Give an account of Horace Bushnell’s understanding of language and its importance and how it shapes his open and liberal view of Christian doctrine, the interpretation of Scripture, and his appeal to what he calls “Christian comprehensiveness.”

Related Websites

1. “Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology” (hosted by the University of Virginia)—excerpts from his works
http://etext.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/phil_theo/phil_access.html
2. “Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schleiermacher/#Oth>
3. David J. Voelker, “The Apologetics of Theodore Parker and Horace Bushnell: New Evidences for Christianity” (History Department, Hanover College)
http://history.hanover.edu/hhr/95/hhr95_4.html

Chapter Five

Christianity and Speculative Idealism

Overview

In chapters three and four we have indicated the critical importance of the thought of both Kant and Schleiermacher on modern Christian thought. The German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel and his followers had a similar influence on Christian theology, particularly in the nineteenth century. In this chapter we explore the way in which Hegel seeks, through his philosophical speculation, to reconceive Christian doctrines.

The chapter also explores Hegel's critique of what he calls the historical "positivity" of Christianity and then draws out its rational and natural necessity and its world-historical significance. He does this by both "doing away with" the historical "positivity" of Christianity and, at the same time, "preserving" it on a higher level. The chapter then examines how Hegel carries this out in his interpretation of the fall of humanity, the incarnation of God, and the kingdom of the spirit or church. The chapter concludes with a review of the ways that Hegel's work influenced Christian theologians in both Germany and Britain to the end of the nineteenth century.

Key names, titles, and terms

G. W. F. Hegel
 the "positivity" of Christianity
 the dialectical process
aufgehoben
 the Unhappy Consciousness
 God realized as Subject
 the Kingdom of the Spirit
 Absolute Religion
 F. C. Baur
 A. E. Biedermann
 Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion* (1893)
 John Caird, *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* (1899)

Review Questions

1. Numerous modern thinkers, including Hegel, were concerned with Christianity's historical particularity ("positivity") and, at the same time, its claims to absoluteness and universality. Attempt to describe, in general terms, how these Hegelian thinkers sought to conjoin these historical *and* absolute dimensions of Christianity in order to establish it as both more compelling and reasonable.
2. Describe how Hegel carries out this joining of the historical and absolute in his interpretation of the Fall of Adam, the divine Incarnation of Jesus, and the advent of the Absolute (Holy) Spirit. Characterize some of the ways in which Baur and Biedermann were influenced in their interpretation of Christian history and theology by Hegel's ideas. Specifically, describe how they see Christianity as a historical, *developing* phenomenon, and how Baur understands the Incarnation and Trinity as a movement in the life of the eternal Spirit, or how Biedermann interprets the personality of God and the Incarnation.

3. Identify what both Baur and Biedermann see as the weakness in Hegel's speculative Christian theology, particularly his view of the historical Jesus and the Incarnation.
4. Describe the central points in Caird's three-fold process of religion to its absolute fulfillment in Christianity.

Related Websites

1. Paul E. Trejo, "Was Hegel Christian or Atheist?"—explores Hegel's thought in terms of his historical context and his views on Christian history, sectarianism, and so forth (Carnegie Mellon University)
<http://philosophy.eserver.org/hegel-christianity.html>
2. Garth Kemerling's Philosophy Pages: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)—biography, illustrations, bibliography, further resources
<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/hege.htm>
3. Dr. Peter M. Head, "Lecture Four: Ferdinand Christian Baur," from the History of the Interpretation of the Apostle Paul—an outline of themes and ideas in his major works
http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/staff/Head/Lent_04_Handout.htm

Chapter Six

Romanticism and French Catholic Thought: Traditionalism and Fideism

Overview

This chapter describes the reactions of four early-nineteenth century French Catholic thinkers to the rationalism and atheism of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment. These writers also opposed the radical social and political doctrines espoused by leaders of the French Revolution (1789–95), doctrines that were secular, anti-clerical, and resistant to the Catholic Church's intrusion into political affairs. These traditionalists called for a restoration of Catholic belief, tradition, and society.

The movement included four especially influential writers: the layman and popular author François René de Chateaubriand; Joseph de Maistre, a magistrate from the dukedom of Savoy, who had fled from the French revolutionaries and become a fierce apologist for a Catholic restoration and for papal supremacy; and Hughes-Felicité Robert de Lammenais, a complex priest, both traditionalist and liberal, who called for a strong papal Catholicism that would be the foundation of a new liberal society.

The Abbé Louis Bautain is the fourth writer here discussed. He held traditionalist views regarding the need for both faith and a primal revelation, but, as a philosopher, he focused his attention on rethinking the issues of faith and reason in a post-Kantian Catholicism.

Key names, titles, and terms

Traditionalism

François René de Chateaubriand

The Genius of Christianity (1802)

Joseph de Maistre

The Pope (1819)

Ultramontanism

Hughes-Felicité Robert de Lamennais

Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion (1817–23)

the *sensus communis*

L'Avenir (*The Future*) 1830

Louis Bautain

Philosophie de christianisme (1835)

Fideism

Review Questions

1. Describe the method of Chateaubriand's argument for Catholicism in *The Genius of Christianity* and give examples of his defense of Christianity.
2. Characterize de Maistre's view of human nature and individual reason, the role of the hero or genius, and the true forms of temporal and spiritual sovereignty or authority.
3. Describe Lamennais's three forms of modern religious *indifference*. He held that the human criterion of truth is found in what he called a *sensus communis* or common consent. Describe what he means by this term generally and how it relates to knowledge of the true religion, Catholicism.

4. Outline the main features of Lamennais's new Catholic social program as depicted in his newspaper, *L'Avenir*.
5. Depict the main features of Bautain's philosophy of faith. What does he mean by faith and its relation to the will? How does faith relate to divine revelation, an important theme of Traditionalism?

Related Websites

1. Steven Kreis, "Lecture 11: The Origins of the French Revolution" on the site The History Guide: Lectures on Modern European Intellectual History
<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture11a.html>
2. François-René Chateaubriand, "René," translated by Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1814)
<http://www.merrycoz.org/ssg/RENE.HTM>
3. Richard Lebrun, "The Joseph de Maistre Homepage"—biography, illustration, bibliography
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/history/links/maistre/maistre.html>

Chapter Seven

Romanticism and Anglo-Catholicism: The Oxford Movement

Overview

In previous chapters we have examined a number of movements that sought to counter modern or Enlightenment views of religion, reason, and authority. These included the German Counter-Enlightenment, the Romanticism of Coleridge and Schleiermacher, the Idealism of the Hegelians, and French Traditionalism. In this chapter we illustrate this response in England in what came to be called the Oxford Movement.

The Oxford Movement was an effort within the Church of England to resist modern religious rationalism, liberalism, and individualism, as well as the growing authority of the state over the church. The leaders of the movement looked to the riches of the Catholic Church before the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution to counter these influences. The chapter describes the beginnings of the Oxford or Tractarian Movement and the thought of its most prominent leaders. Among the themes discussed are its understanding of the church and the church's authority, its critique of the rational "evidences" of Christianity and its own distinctive doctrine of faith, the importance of its doctrine of Sanctification and its criticism of the Protestant emphasis on justification by faith alone, its emphasis on the essential role of the Christian sacraments and their objective reality and efficacy, and its efforts to return the English church to its Catholic doctrine and traditions.

Key names, titles, and terms

Oxford Movement

Tractarians

Erastianism

John Keble's "National Apostasy"

John Henry Newman's Tract 90

Isaac Williams, "On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge"

The canon (test) of St. Vincent of Lerin

Edward B. Pusey

Lectures on Justification (1838)

Review Questions

1. Describe the reasons for the Oxford reformers' opposition to the traditional view of the church and state relationship in England.
2. Describe the major features of the Oxford Movement's spirituality. What made it distinctive?
3. To what did the Oxford Movement leaders appeal in defending the authority of the church? Indicate how these arguments relate to the role of bishops and to the interpretation of Scripture.
4. Review some of the important points that John Henry Newman makes in his critique of modern demonstrative reason or proof. What, for Newman, is the relationship between religious knowledge and the moral life? What is the role of antecedent "probabilities" or "prepossessions" in seeking religious truth?

5. Describe what the Oxford revival means by sanctification and by the sacramental principle. How did these teachings reflect a return to earlier Catholic doctrine and religious practice?

Related Websites

1. Glenn Everett and George P. Landow, "High Church: Tractarianism," *The Victorian Web*—an overview of the Oxford Movement
<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/tractarian1.html>
2. Larry Crockett, "The Oxford Movement and the 19th-Century Episcopal Church: Anglo-Catholic Ecclesiology and the American Experience," *Quodlibet: Online Journal of Christian Theology and Philosophy* 1, no. 5 (August 1999)
<http://www.quodlibet.net/crockett-oxford.shtml>
3. James Kiefer, "John Keble: Priest, Poet, Renewer of the Church"—brief biography with a few of his poems and an illustration (from a church lectionary website)
http://satucket.com/lectionary/John_Keble.htm

Chapter Eight

Catholic Thought in Germany and England: The Tübingen School and John Henry Newman

Overview

A feature of movements of Christian thought influenced by Romanticism is their interest in historical development and its relationship to the idea of a primordial Christian revelation or early church tradition. Hegelian thinkers, the leaders of the Oxford Movement, and French Traditionalism all focused on this question: How does one account for the unity of early Christianity with the obvious fact of its later developments? Does Christianity change? This theological issue of historical development is dominant in the thinking of theologians associated with the Tübingen School of German Catholic theology in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

This was also an urgent question for John Henry Newman after his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845. This chapter first examines the writings of two prominent members of the Tübingen School—Johann Sebastian Drey and Johann Adam Möhler—as they wrestled with these issues. The chapter then concludes with an examination of two of Newman’s greatest works. *The Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) addresses the question: How does belief in a once-delivered, definitive, irrevocable truth, given to us in human language, thereby require continuous interpretation and development? *The Grammar of Assent* (1870) is a compelling description of the nature and necessity of human belief.

Key names, titles, and terms

The Tübingen School

Johann Sebastian Drey

Johann Adam Möhler

The Unity of the Church (1825)

Symbolics, or Presentation of the Dogmatic Differences between Catholics and Protestants (1832)

Ultramontanism

John Henry Newman

The Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845)

An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (1870)

the illative sense

Review Questions

1. Describe Drey’s understanding of the role of revelation, i.e., those spiritual occasions in history required by the human spirit. Indicate how he relates this to the education of the human race.
2. Review Drey’s understanding of the original Christian event, the Christian community or church, and the development of doctrine. According to Drey, how is the truth or error of doctrinal development to be judged? Describe Drey’s view of the *Reich Gottes*, the master “Idea” of history and its purpose.

3. Outline the relationship that Möhler draws, in the *Unity of the Church*, between the divine Spirit in history, the Church or community, and living tradition. How does Möhler's Catholic view of Scripture differ from that of Protestantism?
4. Characterize Möhler's view of the visible Catholic Church's authority. Why, for example, can it not be a purely spiritual authority but, rather, outward and visible? Describe Möhler's understanding of the church's infallibility and the role of the bishops and the pope. How can Möhler say that the Church "forms itself from inward out" in view of his discussion of Church authority, hierarchy, and the pope's primacy?
5. What are some of the criteria Newman offers in defense of the development of Catholic doctrine against modernism? Give a few examples of these criteria. Do you find these compelling or not? Why?
6. Describe Newman's criticism of the claim that inference and assent are not the same. Recount Newman's defense of what he calls informal inference and certitude or the "illative sense." Offer your own reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with Newman's defense of belief without proof.

Related Websites

1. "Tübingen School, Tübingen"—an overview of its history and impact on theology
<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/tubingen.htm>
2. Rady Roldán-Figueroa, "Johann Adam Möhler and His *Symbolik*," Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Modern Western Theology
http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/mwt/dictionary/mwt_themes_485_moehler.htm
3. Anton van Harskamp, "On Johann Adam Möhler's *Symbolik*: The Authority of the Church and the Problematic Nature of Modern Subjectivity"
http://www.bezinningscentrum.nl/teksten/anton_eng/mohler.htm
4. Newman Reader—biography, writings, and illustrations of John Henry Newman
<http://www.newmanreader.org/>

Chapter Nine

The Post-Hegelian Critique of Christianity in Germany

Overview

In chapters three through eight we examined a number of incisive criticisms of rational and natural theology and attempts to establish religion on the basis of reason alone. However, many of these thinkers also propose new arguments or grounds for Christianity itself, its beliefs and its traditions. In this chapter and in the one following, we will explore new philosophical and scientific ideas during the middle decades of the nineteenth century that also seriously challenged certain Christian beliefs.

In this chapter we focus on the writings of three radical German thinkers, all of whom were associated with the movement called “Left-Wing Hegelians” or the “Young Hegelians.” These writers, David Friedrich Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx all believed that Hegel’s effort to “reconceive” Christianity had failed, in fact had represented its dissolution. We will examine Strauss’s critique of Christianity’s historical claims, Feuerbach’s anthropological-psychological interpretation of Christianity, and Marx’s socioeconomic analysis and critique of religion. In each case, these thinkers’ insights and their limitations are explored.

Key names, titles, and terms

Left-Wing or Young Hegelians
David Friedrich Strauss
The Life of Jesus, a Critical Treatment (1835)
The nature of mythic language
Ludwig Feuerbach
The Essence of Christianity (1841)
self-alienation
Karl Marx
“Theses on Feuerbach” (1845)
The German Ideology (1845–46)
social alienation
the ruling-class ideology

Review Questions

1. Describe and give examples of what Strauss means by myth in the New Testament. For Strauss, what are the *negative* and the *positive* criteria for determining the presence of myth in the New Testament?
2. Characterize the main features of Feuerbach’s transformation of Hegel’s theology into an anthropological psychology. Describe how Feuerbach relates self-alienation to the idea of God as Creator. How does this idea anticipate Karl Marx’s critique of religion?
3. Describe the key features of Feuerbach’s humanistic “realized Christianity” of true love. Give your own evaluation of Feuerbach’s reduction of Christianity to anthropology. In Feuerbach’s program, what may be its insights as well as its limitations?

4. Karl Marx was early influenced by Feuerbach's humanistic critique of Christian theology, but later he criticized this analysis of Christianity. What did Marx find unsound in Feuerbach's treatment of self-alienation? What, for Marx, is the real source of human alienation?
5. Indicate what Marx means when he says religious alienation is not individual but is itself "a social product." For Marx, in modern life what social ideology dominates the "ruling class," and how does it produce social alienation? For Marx, what is required to do away with social alienation and bring about "the withering away of Christianity"?
6. Specify how Marx's secular view of liberation is analogous to the Christian view of the fall and redemption of humanity? What does this chapter indicate as problematic or unfounded in Marx's depiction and critique of Christianity? Offer your own evaluation of Marx's discussion of religion.

Related Websites

1. Marcus Borg, "David Friedrich Strauss: Miracle and Myth," *The Fourth R*, 4, no. 3 (May/June 1991)—an article by one of the leading Jesus Seminar scholars
http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R_Articles/Strauss/strauss.html
2. "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy—biography, bibliography of works in English, web resources
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ludwig-feuerbach/#Oth>
3. Eugen Schoenfeld, "Marx, Karl," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*—essay focuses on Marx's critique of religion in the context of his sociological and political analyses; includes a brief bibliography
<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/Marx.htm>

Chapter Ten

The Encounter Between Science and Theology: Biblical Criticism and Darwinism

Overview

Following the previous critique of Christianity in Germany, this chapter explores the challenges to Christianity resulting from the historical-critical study of the Bible and the sciences of geology and biology in mid nineteenth-century Britain.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of developments in German and British biblical criticism, using the new methods of historical research. Special attention is given to the significance of the book *Essays and Reviews* (1860) as marking the broader acceptance of biblical criticism by both the clergy and laity in Britain. The chapter continues with an examination of the Darwinian controversy in Britain and the issues it raises for Christianity and also how these are addressed.

Key names, titles, and terms

J. G. Eichorn (1752–1827)

W. M. L. de Wette (1780–1849)

Henry Hart Milman

John William Colenso

Essays and Reviews (1860)

Rowland Williams

Benjamin Jowett

Charles Goodwin

the Darwinian Controversy

William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802)

Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850)

Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–34)

Robert Chambers's *The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844)

Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859)

Aubrey Moore and Christian Darwinism

Charles Hodge and Anti-Darwinism

Lyman Abbott and Christian Darwinisticism

Review Questions

1. Describe some of the principles of biblical interpretation proposed by writers such as Williams, Goodwin, and Jowett.
2. Describe what view of biblical inspiration and authority the writers of *Essays and Reviews* oppose. What view of biblical inspiration do they propose? How do you respond to their view of the Bible's inspiration?
3. Describe Paley's argument in *Natural Theology*, and then show why Darwin's ideas in *Origin of Species*, and its mechanism of natural selection, appeared to challenge natural theology, earlier interpretations of Genesis, and the place of humans in natural history.
4. Describe the basic points made by Hodge against Darwinism. How do you evaluate his critique of Darwinism? Is he right in *not* separating science and theology into two distinct spheres?

5. Explain why Aubrey Moore thought theologians who spoke of “special creations” by God and supported the argument from the design of nature were heretical Deists. Why does Moore regard Darwinism as far from degrading humanity but, rather, elevating it?
6. Indicate in what ways Lyman Abbott’s theology represents both a pseudo-Darwinism and a distortion of some basic Christian beliefs.

Related Websites

1. Richard P. Aulie, “The Post-Darwinian Controversies,” *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 34 (September 1982): 163–68—part 3 of a four-part essay responding to a book on the Darwinian controversies
<http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1982/JASA9-82Aulie.html>
2. Matthew Ropp, “Charles Hodge and His Objection to Darwinism: The Exclusion of Intelligent Design”—a Fuller Seminary student’s paper exploring Hodge’s anti-Darwinism
<http://www.theropps.com/papers/Winter1997/CharlesHodge.htm>
3. Famous Trials in American History: *Tennessee vs. John Scopes*: The “Monkey Trial” 1925—trial excerpts, legal perspective on the issues, illustrations (including cartoons from the period), other resources
<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm>

Chapter Eleven

The Ritschlian Theology and Protestant Liberalism

Overview

In the years between 1870 and 1920 Protestant liberal theology grew increasingly skeptical of speculative metaphysics and theology. It turns, rather, to an emphasis on the moral-practical and empirical-historical components of Christianity. The call was “back to Christianity’s moral and historical sources.” These were the central concerns of what came to be called Ritschlian theology, named for its originator, the German church historian and theologian Albrecht Ritschl.

This chapter examines both the influence of Kantian philosophy on this new movement and its attention to the historical sources and development of Christianity as well as the issues raised for theology by our modern historical consciousness. We explore the background and distinctive themes in Ritschl’s theology. We then examine critical themes in the work of the theologian-philosopher Wilhelm Herrmann: his critique of metaphysical theology, his separation of moral faith and science, and his views on the relationship of faith and history.

The chapter concludes with (1) an examination of the historian Adolf von Harnack’s historical interpretation of Christianity and its significance, as well as his effort to specify the unique essence of Christianity, that which is of permanent validity in all its historical forms; and (2) the American theologian Walter Rauschenbusch’s development of liberal Ritschlian theology into what came to be called the Social Gospel movement.

Key names, titles, and terms

Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89)

The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation (1870–74)

the theory of value judgments

Wilhelm Herrmann (1846–1922)

Metaphysics in Theology (1876)

The Communion of the Christian with God (1884)

Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930)

History of Dogma (1885)

What Is Christianity? (1900)

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918)

the Social Gospel

Christianizing the Social Order (1912)

A Theology of the Social Gospel (1917)

the Kingdom of God

Review Questions

1. Describe how Ritschl and Schleiermacher differ in their views on the essence of Christianity and the nature of the religious experience of God and the essence of Christianity.

2. Review what Ritschl says about the two functions of the mind, i.e., making causal judgments about nature and making value judgments. Why are judgments of fact and judgments of value “mutually related”? How are judgments of value related to faith?
3. What does Ritschl find wrong about abstract definitions of God or Christ, e.g., in the Nicene Creed? How does Ritschl proceed in interpreting the New Testament portrayals of God and Jesus, including Jesus’ message and work?
4. Describe why Herrmann calls for freeing Christian faith from both scientific and metaphysical justifications. Why does he reject belief in or assent to doctrines as opposed to faith? How does Herrmann define faith? Explain why he does not separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith and yet is not concerned about a fearless commitment to the results of historical criticism. How might one criticize Herrmann’s use of the terms *historie* and *geschichte* in his discussion of the historical Jesus?
5. Harnack believed we must “overcome history by the study of history.” Describe how he applies this rule to the history of Christian dogma and why. Give examples of how, in Harnack’s view, some Christian beliefs and actions had served important purposes but may no longer be indispensable to Christianity.
6. Describe the historical circumstances to which the Social Gospel movement addressed its message. Describe some of the central themes of the Social Gospel theology as set forth by Rauschenbusch in his *A Theology of the Social Gospel*. What, as you see it, are the strengths and, perhaps, the oversights and flaws in Rauschenbusch’s distinctive liberal theology?

Related Websites

1. Karen-Louise Rucks, “Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1899): A Summary of his Introduction to A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation,” Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Modern Western Theology
<http://tinyurl.com/yrfe6o>
2. Adolf von Harnack’s *What Is Christianity?* Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter Term 1899–1900—the complete text of the lectures as they were published in translation
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/harnack/christianity.toc.html>
3. Modern History Sourcebook: Walter Rauschenbusch: The Social Gospel, 1908—an excerpt from *Christianity and the Social Crisis*
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/rausch-socialgospel.html>
4. Kyle Potter, “Walter Rauschenbusch: Baptist Social Reformer”—a student’s essays and resources on the Social Gospel leader and his historical and religious context
<http://spider.georgetowncollege.edu/htallant/courses/his338/students/kpotter/index.htm>

Chapter Twelve

Movements of Recovery and Conservation: The Princeton Theology

Overview

We have observed that in the early decades of the nineteenth century Christian thinkers took the offensive against the rationalism and the secularism of the Enlightenment. In these new cultural and intellectual contexts—Romanticism, Kant’s Copernican Revolution in philosophy, the influence of Hegelian ideas, and the advances in the sciences—both conservative and progressive efforts were undertaken to restore or to reconceive Christian thought in ways that would address the new situations.

Not surprisingly, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century the progressive and liberal schools of thought were challenged anew by Catholic and Protestant scholars and theologians who believed that these new ideas were undermining essential foundations of historical Christianity. In the following two chapters we will illustrate these renewed attempts at restoration and conservation in both Protestantism and Catholicism. Here we examine the Princeton theology, an important conservative school that, for a century in America, exerted great influence as the defender of orthodox Protestant theology.

Key names, titles, and terms

Princeton Theological Seminary

Old School and New School Presbyterianism

Archibald Alexander (1772–1851)

Francis Turrentin (1623–87), “The Thomas Aquinas of Protestantism”

Scottish Common Sense Realism

Charles Hodge (1797–1878)

the plenary verbal inerrancy of the Bible

the autograph copies of the biblical text

Pelagianism

Benjamin Warfield (1851–1921)

Review Questions

1. What did Alexander see as the *two* greatest dangers in the liberal New School theology? What is the doctrinal foundation of Alexander’s conservative theology?
2. Describe the primary features of Scottish Common Sense Realism and how Hodge used it as the basis of his inductive “scientific” theological method.
3. Hodge gives a great deal of attention to two modern approaches to theology, what he calls Rationalism and Mysticism. Describe what Hodge means by these two methods and specify the nature of his critique of each one. Characterize his views of the Bible’s inspiration, interpretation, and authority. How does Hodge’s view of the Bible differ from that of Coleridge and Bushnell?
4. Describe the nature of Hodge’s attack on what he called Pelagianism, using his critique of Finney’s and Bushnell’s account of humankind, sin, and regeneration.
5. Warfield follows his teacher Hodge in defending the full (plenary) verbal inerrancy of Scripture, but he also proceeds to offer additional proofs of the verbal inerrancy of the

original autograph copies of the Bible. Describe these additional proofs, and indicate what is problematical about Warfield's appeal to the original manuscript copies.

Related Websites

1. Paul K. Helseth, "Right Reason and the Princeton Mind: The Moral Context"—an essay on the nature of Princeton theology and its relationship to rationalism
<http://homepage.mac.com/shanerosenthal/reformationink/pkright.htm>
2. W. Frank Craven, "Witherspoon, John"—a brief biographical sketch with some analysis of his contributions as a preacher, college administrator, and philosopher
http://etcweb.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/witherspoon_john.html
3. George Marsden, "Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary by Lefferts A. Loetscher: A Review," *Theology Today* 40, no. 3 (October 1983): 357–59.
<http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/oct1983/v40-3-bookreview3.htm>
4. John A. Battle, "Charles Hodge, Inspiration, Textual Criticism, and the Princeton Doctrine of Scripture," *Western Reformed Seminary Journal* 4, no. 2 (August 1997): 28–41—an essay from a conservative Reformed perspective (a downloadable PDF)
www.wrs.edu/Materials_for_Web_Site/Journals/4-2%20Aug-1997/Battle%20-%20Hodge%20and%20Scripture.pdf
5. "Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield," *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, Digitization Project: Author Biography—a biographical sketch with photos, quotes from primary sources, and citations
<http://www.pcahistory.org/periodicals/spr/bios/warfield.html>

Chapter Thirteen

Movements of Recovery and Conservation: Ultramontanism and the Neo-Thomistic Revival

Overview

As we have learned, there were important progressive movements in nineteenth-century Catholicism after 1800. However, Roman papal power, i.e., Ultramontanism, grew gradually until it reached its climax with the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility in 1870. Concurrently, the Catholic Church was also undertaking the restoration of the thought of Thomas Aquinas to a new preeminence. This, too, was an effort to ground the Church's teaching and authority in a single, stable, theology that would counter the threats of secularism, disunity, and theological modernism.

In this chapter we examine the historical factors in the drawn-out debate over papal authority, the growth of Ultramontanism from the period after Napoleon through the reigns of Pope Gregory XVI and Pius IX to the first Vatican Council in 1870. We then canvass the debate over papal infallibility during the Council and examine the final definition of infallibility, its interpretations, and its significance.

The chapter then looks at the beginnings of the Neo-Thomistic theological revival, the core teachings of Thomistic philosophy, and the way that it was interpreted and applied in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by two influential Catholic Thomistic theologians, Cardinal Desiré Joseph Mercier, and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance.

Key names, titles, and terms

Conciliarism

Gallicanism and the "Four Articles"

Ultramontanism

Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621)

Pope Pius IX

Syllabus of Errors (1864)

First Vatican Council (1870)

Henry Manning, Archbishop of Westminster (1808–92)

J. J. Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890)

The Pope and the Council (1869)

Archbishop Richard Kenrick (1806–96)

Pastor Aeternus (1870)

ex cathedra

Neo-Thomistic Revival

Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* (1879)

Desiré Cardinal Mercier (1851–1926)

Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance (1877–1964)

Review Questions

1. Outline the principal articles of Gallicanism that opposed the pope's increased authority over the bishops and the state.
2. Describe Bellarmine's arguments concerning the nature of the pope's absolute rule over councils, bishops, and the state. Describe some of the extreme expressions of

papal authority and infallibility that were circulating prior to the First Vatican Council in 1870.

3. Characterize the objections of those opposed to the pope's infallibility. In what ways did the final constitution, *Pastor Aeternus*, define the pope's infallibility? Outline five *conditions* of papal infallibility set out by Bishop Fessler.
4. Describe some of the Aristotelian principles that are basic to Thomistic thought regarding our knowledge about and the characteristics of the natural world, essence and existence, and God as a being who exists necessarily.
5. Describe Cardinal Mercier's critique of Kant's epistemological challenge regarding human knowledge of God.
6. Describe how, in two or three instances, Garrigou-Lagrange defends Thomas's five proofs of the existence of God by attempting to refute the objections of modern philosophy and science.

Related Websites

1. "Gallicanism" and other related articles from dictionaries and encyclopedias, providing detailed analyses of the movement from various perspectives (evangelical, Catholic, etc.)
<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/gallican.htm>
2. Anthony S. Wohl, "Papal Infallibility"—a brief article discussing Victorian England's reactions to the decree of papal infallibility
http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/Papal_Infallibility.html
3. "How Infallible Is the Pope?" *BBC News Magazine*—a September 2006 article discussing the issue of papal infallibility in the contemporary context, related to public utterances by Pope Benedict XVI, and its history in the Catholic Church
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/5355758.stm>
4. "Who's Who: Désiré Mercier"—a brief discussion of Mercier's role in the resistance during Belgium's occupation in World War I (with illustration)
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/bio/mercier.htm>
5. "Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange and the Renewal of the Contemplative Life"—an essay on his significance for Christian spirituality, arguing that his ideas have been mostly lost by contemporary Christians
<http://www.innerexplorations.com/chmystext/reginald.htm>

Chapter Fourteen

Roman Catholic Thought at the End of the Century: The New Apologetics and Modernism

Overview

In chapter thirteen we observed how the Catholic authorities sought to embrace earlier traditions. This included strengthening papal authority and restoring medieval Thomistic theology to a preeminent role in order to stem the tide of modern autonomous reason, secularism, and unbelief. The Church had already identified Catholic schools of thought and Catholic apologists within the Church who were championing a new philosophy of faith, thereby challenging Aristotelian Thomistic epistemology and metaphysics and endangering the Church from within.

In this chapter we look at a variety of these Catholic “spiritualist” philosophies of faith and action about which the Church became increasingly suspicious. These philosophers were primarily French and stood in a line of succession from the philosopher Maine de Biran through Jean Ravaisson, Emile Boutroux to Leon Ollé-Laprune and Maurice Blondel. They all opposed the claims of a scientific positivism, mechanistic materialism, and secular rationalism as destroying human freedom, creativity, and the spiritual life. They emphasized the crucial role of the will, action, and faith in human life. The Church authorities perceived this philosophy as undermining the critical role of reason in the Catholic Thomistic tradition. They charged the new French “spiritualist” philosophers with what they called unorthodox volunteerism, fideism, and anti-intellectualism.

Between 1890 and 1907 another movement within the Church, dubbed by its opponents as Modernism, was later condemned in 1907 in the papal encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. This Modernist movement was made up of like-minded Catholic scholars and priests who wanted to bring the Church into dialogue with modern thought. Here we explore the ideas and contributions of three of the important figures in the Modernist movement: Alfred Loisy, a priest and a great Catholic biblical scholar; George Tyrrell, a Jesuit priest and theologian; and Edouard LeRoy, a Catholic layman and philosopher. We examine their efforts to reconceive Catholic thought and institutions and why these efforts were rejected by the Church.

Key names, titles, and terms

French “spiritualist” philosophy of action
François-Pierre Maine de Biran (1766–1824)
Jean Ravaisson (1813–1900)
Emile Boutroux (1845–1921)
Leon Ollé-Laprune (1839–98)
Le certitude morale (1880)
Maurice Blondel (1861–1949)
L’Action (1893)
Lucien Laberthonnière
Roman Catholic Modernism
Alfred Loisy (1857–1940)
The Gospel and the Church (1903)

Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*
 George Tyrrell (1861–1909)
Christianity at the Crossroads (1909)
 Édouard LeRoy (1870–1954)
Dogma et Critique (1907)
Lamentabili Sane Exitu (1907)
Pascendi Dominici Gregis (1907)
 “Integralism”
 the “anti-Modernist” oath (1910)

Review Questions

1. Review the main features of the new French “spiritual” philosophy that focused on human freedom and the unique role of human self-consciousness, the will, and action in knowledge. What were they opposing? What are some of the salient arguments of Maine de Biran, Jean Ravaisson, Emile Boutroux, and Leon Ollé-Laprune that illustrate their defense of the personal self and the spiritual life? What was it that the Catholic authorities found dangerous in their philosophy?
2. Characterize what Blondel means by the “actuated will” and its relation to transcendence and the supernatural. What is needed, finally, to supplement this self-transcending striving?
3. What points does Loisy make against Harnack’s Protestant position in defense of Catholicism? What, in this defense, did the Catholic Church find indefensible and dangerous?
4. What views do Laberthonnière, Loisy, and Tyrrell take toward Thomism, the Bible, the nature and role of doctrine or dogmatic definitions and their development, Jesus’ view of the coming Kingdom of God, and the Church and its transformations?
5. What for LeRoy are the *positive* and the *negative* ways in which dogmas function intellectually for the believer? Describe how these practical functions of dogma are used by LeRoy in his examples, “God is Personal” and “the resurrection of Christ.” Characterize the criticisms of LeRoy’s view of dogma.
6. Many Catholic thinkers today find much to commend in the efforts of both the French “spiritualistic” philosophers of faith and action and the Modernists. Describe your own assessment of these efforts to reconceive Catholic thought in view of developments in modern knowledge and experience.

Related Websites

1. Maine de Biran Biography—brief biographical sketch
http://www.biographybase.com/biography/de_Biran_Maine.html
2. Stefan Gigacz, “‘See, Judge, Act’ More than Truth by Consensus,” *Eureka Street*, June 27, 2007—discusses contemporary liberation theologians’ report using the “see, judge, act” method in relation to various Catholic traditions, including Ollé-Laprune’s ideas about life as action
<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=3055>
3. Dr. William F. Vallicella, “Blondel Notes”—a contemporary philosopher compares the existentialism or quasi-existentialism of Blondel and Heidegger
http://maverickphilosopher.powerblogs.com/blondel_notes/

4. Kenneth Rexroth, “The Catholic Modernists”—a review of John Ratté’s *Three Modernists: Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell, William L. Sullivan* (1967)
<http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/catholic-modernists.htm>

Chapter Fifteen

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche: Toward the Twentieth Century

Overview

This final chapter of volume one of *Modern Christian Thought* looks toward the twentieth century. Here we focus our attention on two nineteenth-century philosophers not widely known or representative figures in their own time. They both were astute critics of modern rationalism and proved to be prophetic figures for the twentieth century and, in their different ways, were possessed by Christianity—Kierkegaard as defender of its hard truths, Nietzsche as oracle of the “death of God.” Both thinkers were rediscovered in the twentieth century and became important figures in the discussion of both modernity and Christianity.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) has proven to be one of the critically important figures in modern Christian thought. He wrote his thirty volumes of work in Danish and lived his entire life in Copenhagen. This context is critical in understanding Romanticism, Kant, and Hegelian Idealism. Here we examine crucial events in Kierkegaard’s life, his important writings on the dialectic of human existence and truth is subjectivity, focusing especially on two works, the *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was the son of a German Lutheran pastor and became in his maturity one of history’s most severe critics of Christianity. His attack included equally forceful criticisms of metaphysics, rationalism, and traditional morality, all of which he saw as signs of modernity’s nihilism and decadence. We examine Nietzsche’s critical idea of the “death of God,” his view of the genealogy of morals, the concept of “the will to power,” his specific critique of Christianity and what he calls for as “God’s successor.”

While in many respects thoroughly modern men, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also represent the most relentless criticism, not only of the ideals of the Enlightenment but of the nineteenth-century optimistic ideas of history, progress, and reason. They foresee what later came to be referred to as postmodernity—the century after 1914 of World Wars, genocide, the Holocaust, and nuclear terror.

Key names, titles, and terms

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55)

The Point of View for My Work as an Author (1948)

Either/Or (1843), *Stages on Life’s Way* (1845)

Philosophical Fragments (1844)

Concluding Scientific Postscript (1846)

Attack upon Christendom (1954–55)

the existential dialectic (stages of life)

Religiousness A and Religiousness B

the Absolute Paradox, or the Absurd

the Moment

“the leap of faith”

Truth is subjectivity

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

the “Death of God”
 the parable of the Madman
The Will to Power (1883–88)
 “the will to power”
A Genealogy of Morals (1887)
 the Christian “slave revolt in morals”
resentiment
The Antichrist
Thus Spake Zarathustra (1883–85)
 the *Übermensch*
 the Eternal Recurrence

Review Questions

1. Kierkegaard is a difficult, complex author. Describe briefly what are some of the distinctive features of his authorship that add to this difficulty for readers and interpreters. What events in his personal life had special importance for his vocation as a writer?
2. Describe the main features of Kierkegaard’s personal three-fold dialectic of the stages of life. How does the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical stage occur? According to Kierkegaard, what are the failings of a rational ethical system such as Kant’s?
3. For Kierkegaard the religious stage offers two possibilities, Religiousness A and Religiousness B, or the Religion of Socrates and the Religion of Jesus. Specify how this contrast relates to the issue of knowing the truth and the role of the teacher. How does this relate to knowing the truth for the Christian? Characterize the Absolute Paradox and the Moment.
4. Describe the religious importance for Kierkegaard of the relations between historical knowledge, the historical paradox, passion, and his existential insistence that religious truth is subjectivity. What critical questions have scholars raised regarding Kierkegaard’s view of the necessary “leap of faith” in the religious sphere? What is your own assessment of Kierkegaard’s view of faith and truth?
5. What Nietzsche means by the term “the Death of God” is often mistaken. Indicate what he does mean by this term and why he sees it as so important.
6. What influence did Darwin have on Nietzsche? How did this help to shape his views of human nature and the development of morals?
7. Describe what Nietzsche means by the “will to power” and its significance for him in understanding the origins and history of Christianity.
8. Characterize the main features of Nietzsche’s understanding of Christianity and his critique of it. What is his view of Jesus? Why does he reject him? What does he despise about the teachings of the apostle Paul?
9. Nietzsche calls for a “revaluation of all values,” embodied in what he envisions as the coming of the *Übermensch* and the “Eternal Recurrence.” Describe what he means by these terms. Offer your own evaluation of Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity and what you think are its possible strengths and weaknesses.

Related Websites

1. Garth Kemerling's Philosophy Pages: Søren Kierkegaard—biography, bibliography, further web resources
<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/kier.htm>
2. D. Anthony Storm's Commentary on Kierkegaard—quotations from Kierkegaard's writings, commentary, illustrations, research aids
<http://sorenkierkegaard.org/>
3. Dera Sipe, "Kierkegaard and Feminism: A Paradoxical Friendship"—academic essay exploring Kierkegaard's thought from a feminist perspective
<http://www.publications.villanova.edu/Concept/2004/Kierkegaard%20and%20Feminism.htm>
4. "The Perspectives of Nietzsche"—a collection of quotations from Nietzsche's writings organized under major themes (e.g., Will to Power, Towards the Übermensch)
<http://www.pitt.edu/~wbcurry/nietzsche.html>
5. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, "Rumors: Wine, Women, and Wagner," chapter 1 of *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Random House, 2001)—sample chapter debunks thirty "rumors" about the philosopher
<http://tinyurl.com/3ct3rd>